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COLONIAL OUTLOOK CAN'T
FIX CLIMATE ISSUES NOW

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ASHES COULD REVOLVE AROUND CON-
TEST BETWEEN CUMMINS, ROOT

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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'I WANT TO
ACT IN FILMS
UNTIL I DIE'

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CITING OMICRON, 'MASSIVE THIRD WAVE' WARNING FROM IMA

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) today urged the government to announce 'additional' doses of Covid vaccine for healthcare, frontline workers, and immunocompromised individuals amid concerns over Omicron, 21 cases of which have been detected in India so far. It also demanded that the government expedite the proposal of vaccinating individuals aged 12 to 18 years. At a press conference, the doctors' body said that cases of the latest variant of coronavirus were reported from a number of major states of India, and the tally, which is in double digits, is bound to increase.

SPICEJET TO DEPOSIT \$5 MILLION IN 2 WEEKS OR FACE LIQUIDATION: COURT

Madras High Court has ordered winding up of private carrier SpiceJet Limited and directed the official liquidator attached to the High Court to take over its assets, in a plea filed by a Swiss company over unpaid dues. The airline had failed to make payment of over \$24 million to a Swiss company SR Technics for maintenance, repair and overhauling of aircraft engines, modules, components, assemblies and parts. The order was passed by the high court on December 6, 2021.

JAYALALITHAA EX-AIDE VK SASIKALA MEETS RAJINIKANTH IN CHENNAI

VK Sasikala, the aide of late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, met actor Rajinikanth at the superstar's house in Poes Garden in Chennai on Monday evening, news agency ANI reported. Sasikala greeted Rajinikanth on his Dadasaheb Phalke award and also enquired about his health, it said. The superstar had undergone a Carotid revascularisation procedure in October this year. In January this year, VK Sasikala, expelled from the AIADMK following an internal power struggle, was released from jail in Bengaluru after serving a four-year imprisonment in a disproportionate assets case.

STEEP FALL IN TRANSFER OF FUNDS FROM NGOS TO ASSOCIATIONS

The transfer of foreign funds received by parent Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to its associations has witnessed a steep fall in the financial year 2020-21, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai informed on Tuesday. In a reply to a question over foreign contribution to NGOs, Rai said that in the financial year 2020-21 just 69 NGOs transferred Rs 38.91 crore foreign funding as compared to Rs 1314.40 crore transferred by 729 NGOs in the year 2019-20.

Provide loans to farmers and women, CM appeals to bankers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has said that the burden of Rs 30,000 crore was placed on the State government due to the Covid-induced pandemic. The State government could alleviate the situation with the cooperation of the banking sector, he said and thanked the bankers for their support.

The Chief Minister said the annual loan plan of banks was Rs 2,83,380 crore, of which 60.53 percent, which is Rs 1,71,520 crore, was disbursed in the first six months alone.

Similarly, the annual loan target for priority sectors was Rs 2,13,560 crore, of which 47.29 percent,



which is Rs 1,00,990 crore, was disbursed by banks in the first six

months of this year and congratulated the banks for their support.

He chaired the 217th State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) meeting at his camp office here on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said the momentum of the country's economic recovery is picking up and GDP growth rate for the second quarter of the financial year has registered 8.4 percent growth and the overall growth rate for the first half has been 13.7 percent. He expressed apprehensions over the third wave of Covid due to Omicron variant and said the economy is set for a boost otherwise. He hoped that the possibility of the third wave of Covid would have a low impact on the economy.

7 years on, Kakinada petro complex still a non-starter

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

Even seven years after it was first promised, the stalemate is still continuing over establishment of Petrochemical Complex at Kakinada that can help generate revenue for cash-starved Andhra Pradesh as the Centre once again had thrown the ball in the court of the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government.

This comes months after a working group was set up in June by the Union Petroleum Ministry on the request of the State government to find a solution to the Viability Gap Fund (VGF) that had turned a sticky wicket between both the Centre and State government to set up the capital intensive project.

After Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy met the then petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan in June and a follow-up meeting by State Industries Minister, Mekapati Goutham Reddy with the Union Minister, it was reliably learnt that the Union government had, in

Oil PSUs sought annual interest-free loan for 15 years from project zero date

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

It was in the last leg of the previous N Chandrababu Naidu regime that the State government wrote to the then Union petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan seeking reduction in Internal Rate of Return (IRR) threshold for the proposed petrochemical cracker unit in the

State. HPCL and GAIL had come forward to set up the cracker unit provided the State government assured VGF based on the estimated IRR. The State government requested the Union government to consider to reduce IRR of the proposed Greenfield petrochemical complex to around 10 to 12

percent from the initial proposed threshold of IRR of 14 percent on the lines of HPCL's Barmer refinery-cum-petrochemical complex, in Rajasthan for which the viability gap funding has been reduced from Rs 3,736 crore to Rs 1,123 crore per year by adjustment of IRR to 12 percent.

TRS to boycott Parliament session over farmers' issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Accusing the Centre of being "anti-farmer", the TRS announced on Tuesday that its MPs will boycott both houses of Parliament for the remainder of the Winter Session and said it wants the BJP-led government to go.

Shouting slogans against the government and in support of farmers, the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MPs staged a walk-out from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha of Tuesday. All of them were dressed in black.

Party leader Keshav Rao accused the Centre of being insensitive to farmers' demands, while asserting that the TRS is an opposition party, not a fence-sitter, and it wants this government to go.

Now, 5% land in private layouts to be handed over to State govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a surprise development, the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government has decided to take 5 percent land in the private layouts for YSR Jagananna colonies planned for the poor.

The government issued orders amending certain rules of Section 585 of the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Corporation Act, 1955 and a few other relevant Acts in this regard.

According to the new amendments, 5 percent of layout area should be handed over by the layout owners/developers of private layouts, to the concerned District Collector.

If the owner/developer is not able to hand over 5% additional land within the current layout, the owner should hand over 5% land



within 3 km range from the original layout.

The private owner/developer also has the option of paying the basic value of such 5% of layout area to Development Authority, and in case of the areas which are

not covered in Development Authority, to the concerned Urban Local Body (ULB).

The government said such 5% additional land reserved will be utilised for YSR Jagananna Housing Projects for the poor.

Address 'historical injustice': TS to KRMB

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has written to the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) to remove the Nettempadu project as well as Jurla projects from Schedule 2 and include them in Schedule 3.

The state government requested the KRMB to also treat the Nettempadu Lift Irrigation Scheme as a single component in the KRMB Gazette Notification, instead of two components.



The government also wrote that Jurla project and all the

components related to it lie entirely within the Telangana

area and serve only Telangana area without any common territory shared with Andhra Pradesh.

Further, telemetry has already been implemented in all the outlets from this project. Therefore, Jurla project components are not required to be kept under the direct control of KRMB and this project could be excluded from the Schedule -2 list and included in the Schedule-3. Muralidhar, Engineer-in-Chief, Irrigation, wrote in his letter to the KRMB Chairman.

Kashi-Vishwanath corridor to be celebrated by Varanasi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Varanasi will host a month-long cultural exercise following the inauguration of the "Kashi Vishwanath Dham" (Kashi Vishwanath corridor) by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 13, and all BJP chief ministers and deputy CMs will attend the ceremony which will be broadcast live from over 51,000 places nationwide, the party said on Tuesday.

Lauding Modi as a hero of Indian culture for fulfilling his resolve to transform the holy city, BJP general secretary Tarun Chugh said in a press briefing that it was almost after 250 years that a renovation and beautification exercise around the famous Kashi Vishwanath temple has been done.

IT officials raid Guntur offices of Sakku Group

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Income Tax department officials conducted raids on the Sakku Group of companies across the country, including Guntur.

According to official sources, the IT officials conducted raids at 23 places simultaneously on the company's offices across the country. Sakku Group of companies has earned a reputation in the egg business in Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

The IT officials inspected the Lakshimpuram main branch in Guntur and thoroughly examined the accounts and other documents.

In addition, the Sakku group of companies is also involved in chilli exports and spinning Business. About 50 IT officials participated in the inspection of accounts and assets of the companies.

During the IT officials' inspection of the office, no one was allowed to go outside or enter the office. Sources said that the IT officials seized mobile phones of the staff. The raids were carried out simultaneously by IT officials following reports that they did not pay taxes properly on transactions worth Rs 100 crore.



Special drives brought
down liquor, ganja
smuggling: SEB

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Will quit active politics if BJP fails to win in 2024: Somu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To the surprise of all BJP leaders, State party president Somu Veerajulu has announced that he would not be in active politics after 2024 if the BJP fails to win.

Addressing the media persons here on Tuesday, Veerajulu said that he has been in active politics for about 42 years. He said that the BJP is the only major opposition party in the State and appealed to the people to give a chance to BJP in the coming elections. Veerajulu stated that he did not work for the party expecting any positions or favours and claimed that he did not aspire for the post of Chief Minister. He revealed that TDP chief Naidu had offered the Rajahmundry seat and a ministerial post during the 2014 elections. "However, I showed no interest and the opportunity went to A Satyanarayana."

NIT-AP team develops nano-powered food packing materials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

National Institute of Technology-Andhra Pradesh (NIT-AP) researchers, collaborating with other Institutes, have demonstrated how the concept of nanotechnology can be used to develop food packaging materials that enhance the shelf-life, maintain quality, retain flavour and colour of packed food materials.

A group of interdisciplinary researchers, led by Dr. Tingirikari Jagan Mohan Rao, Assistant Professor, Department of Biotechnology, NIT-AP, have published an article in the prestigious peer-reviewed Journal of European Food Research and Technology.

The article was co-authored by research scholar, Akriti Tirkey, Ph.D., Mizoram University, along with Dr. Punuri Jayasekhara Babu,



Assistant Professor, Biomaterials and Bioengineering Research Laboratory, Department of Biotechnology and Pachhunga University College, Mizoram

University.

Nanotechnology is an emerging area of research as its application is growing day by day in various sectors including food and agriculture

due to their wide physical, chemical, and biological properties which are functionalised with several biomolecules to enhance the properties of packing and storage materials. The applications of nanotechnology at the global level are estimated to be around US\$ 3 trillion.

Nanoparticle-based materials offer a greater advantage over conventional and non-biodegradable packing materials by enhancing the functional properties of foods such as bio-availability, taste, texture, flavour, and shelf-life. Additionally, nano-materials in the form of sensors can be employed to maintain temperature, detect pathogens, pesticides, toxins, and other chemicals in packed foods.

Explaining the key aspects of this research, Dr. Tingirikari Jagan Mohan Rao, said, "The research emphasises the role of nanoparti-

cles to provide mechanical stability to packing material and shows how the nano-sensors can be developed to detect pathogens, contamination, pesticides, and allergens and enhances the antimicrobial properties of packing material to prevent food spoilage and contamination."

Further, Dr Jagan Mohan Rao, explained, "In addition to this, the role of inorganic nanoparticles in food preservation is to increase shelf-life and release of antioxidants protecting the food from harmful ultraviolet radiations. The research also discusses the food safety aspects related to nanomaterials and follows eco-friendly practices such as proper labeling on the food items, following safety regulation for disposal, to perform cytotoxic studies on humans and animals."

Public discomfort sends danger signals to AP government!

Palpable discomfort among sections of the public over politically-influenced stances of the Jaganmohan Reddy government on vital issues such as the One Time Settlement scheme relating to housing beneficiaries, growing dissatisfaction among government employees over delay in the implementation of the Pay Revision Commission recommendations, and sub-optimal performance of the state government in tackling the grim floods which had claimed at least 60 lives of people in different parts of the state has sent danger signals to powers that be.

Various sections of people in Andhra Pradesh have felt the pinch over the questionable attitude of the state government. Central to it is a grave fact that there is acute shortage of funds for taking up developmental works. Poor and middle class people who had benefited from



housing programmes taken up by previous governments over the years have not been spared under OTS.

With the state government desperately looking for ways to pool funds even for its routine programmes, anything it contemplates on the finance front becomes suspect. This explains why there are intractable issues with regard to OTS, which initially appeared to have come to the rescue of the government in fund raising. Even those houses that were sanctioned with loans sanctioned during the regime of N.T. Rama Rao appear in the lists meant for OTS. The task of collecting money from the housing beneficiaries under OTS has been entrusted to the staff working in village secretariats. They have been given daily targets for collecting money under OTS. This has sparked other issues relating to certificates needed by

The shocked beneficiaries questioned the propriety of the government in asking money under OTS for the houses that they got from previous governments. Instead of giving money, some of the beneficiaries, in utter frustration, offered to the collection staff asbestos sheets, slab, stones, doors and windows from their houses.

those beneficiaries. Hence, there was chaos when the official staff approached the beneficiaries.

The shocked beneficiaries questioned the propriety of the government in asking money under OTS for the houses that they got from previous governments. Instead of giving money, some of the beneficiaries, in utter frustration, offered to the collection staff asbestos sheets, slab, stones, doors and windows from their houses. One angry beneficiary described the implementation of OTS as 'nothing but performing my marriage with my own wife'.

Oral instructions reportedly given by a mandal development officer to lower level staff on fixing of targets for collection of money under OTS seem to have sent shock waves to the housing beneficiaries as well as the general public. This incident came to light when Telugu Desam Party leaders aired audio clips of purported telephonic conversations of that particular officer with lower level staff of the village secretariat. One



Minister made a vain attempt to establish that people are voluntarily paying OTS.

At last, the government stated that only Rs.4000-crore dues relating to housing loans under OTS would come to the state exchequer, following which the authorities would provide registration for the houses of the beneficiaries. The TDP questioned the propriety of the gov-

ernment in collecting dues from people under OTS, considering that the present regime did not provide land, loans for the housing programmes executed by previous governments.

YSR Congress party had assured free registration to those housing beneficiaries, but the YSRC government is committed to collect dues under OTS. Regardless of the merit of the Jagan government's decision, the OTS payment has become an unbearable burden for countless beneficiaries. It has also triggered fears of non-receipt of benefits of government schemes and terminal benefits, including pensions and caste certificates, should they not agree to payment under OTS.

Government employees have been raising their voices for the immediate implementation of PRC. Claiming to be a force to reckon with as voters, they boast that they could unseat the present regime. They do hope

that the PRC would be implemented soon.

History bears witness to the adamant attitude of employees who went on an indefinite strike that lasted 64 days during the regime of the Congress' towering personality in undivided Andhra Pradesh Kasu Brahmananda Reddy in the mid '60s. The State government employees then played a crucial role in the change of guard in the 2004 elections during Chandrababu Naidu's rule as well!

Inept handling of the flood situation in various districts of AP has also dented the image of the government. The unprecedented floods claimed 60 precious lives of people in different parts of the state. The breaching of Annamayya project in Chittoor district brought worst ever tragedy for people in its vicinity. The Centre expressed its view that the AP government was not alert enough to handle the grim flood situation and questioned

as to whose responsibility it was to operate the project. Interestingly, AP Irrigation Minister Anil Kumar Yadav went on to claim that Union Minister for Jalshakti Gajendra Singh Shekawat 'lied' in Parliament on the subject. The issue may get political colour once the central expert committee pays a visit to the Annamayya project for inspection, 'case study' or whatever. If it comes out with a list of 'dos and don'ts' on water management, it may sound as disrespect to the AP government.

The foregoing issues give room for a lot of embarrassment for the AP government. It may not be easy for it to deflect public resentment. These developments may become hurdles for the ruling party to drum beat its case for retaining power.

It is a different matter that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has started planning for retaining power in the 2023 polls.

Special drives brought down liquor, ganja smuggling: SEB

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) Commissioner Vineet Brijlal has said that the SEB is taking all measures to control illegal transportation of liquor, sand and ganja. He stated that the interstate smuggling and bootlegging of liquor reduced considerably. He further said that the manufacturing, transportation and consumption of illicitly-distilled (ID) liquor showed a decline as a result of the effective implementation of the Prohibition Laws.

Brijlal said that after the formation of the SEB, 2,99,969 kg of ganja was seized in 2,572 cases. Under the direct super-

vision of the Director General of Police, SEB, along with the police, took up the destruction of ganja plantations in the Agency mandals of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts under the name 'Operation Parivarthana' from October 30.

The official said that under Operation Parivarthana, ganja crops in 6,416.10 acres worth Rs. 4,000 crore were destroyed in 253 hamlets/villages in 11 mandals. As many as 313 police teams participated in the drive. He said that the police filed bind-over cases against 476 NDPS offenders and 300 history

sheets were opened against the offenders.

Brijlal explained that in 2019, the total cases detected were 37,046 in which 1,33,573 liters of IMFL and 1,76,114 litres of ID liquor were seized and 45,74,488 litres of FJ wash was destroyed.

In 2020, the total cases detected were 80,967 in which 4,58,994 litres of IMFL and 5,02,457 litres of ID liquor were seized and 1,19,84,657 litres of FJ wash was destroyed. In 2021, the total cases detected were 97,792 in which 8,59,584 litres of IMFL and 6,28,886 litres of ID liquor were seized

and 2,09,21,602 litres of FJ wash was destroyed.

Brijlal explained that as many as 1,63,518 cases were booked in connection with illegal transportation of liquor and sand from May 16, 2020 till date, in which 2,18,751 persons were arrested by seizing 12,88,741 litres of IMFL and beer.

He said that the total ID liquor seized was 10,12,153 litres, 2,99,13,781 litres of FJ wash was destroyed and a total of 40,692 vehicles were seized. He stated that smuggling of NDPL and manufacturing of ID liquor came down considerably due to the efforts of SEB.

TRS to boycott ...

Continued from Page 1

"This is an anti-farmer government, insensitive to the demands of the farmers. Today, piles of grains are rotting on the roads in Telangana for the simple reason that the FCI is not lifting the produce," he said, adding that no elected representative likes to boycott Parliament, but the TRS is being forced to do so by the Centre.

"Please be clear that we are against this government. We are an opposition party, not a fence-sitter, and we want this BJP-led government to go," Keshav Rao said while interacting with reporters after announcing that the party will boycott the remainder of the session. The nine Lok Sabha MPs and seven Rajya Sabha MPs of the party will not attend the rest of the session, he said.

Provide loans to farmers...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister said the importance of credit growth could not be over-emphasised at this juncture. The national level bank credit of scheduled commercial banks to a tune of Rs 112 lakh crore demonstrated a growth rate of 7.1 per cent, which is good.

The Chief Minister urged the bankers to focus on disbursing agriculture term loans and providing Kisan Credit Cards to the farmers who did not receive them yet. He said tenant farmers should get loans and banking services need to be started in 4,240 RBKs and urged the banks to complete them very soon.

The Chief Minister urged the bankers to provide Rs 35,000 as loan at 3 per cent interest to women for housing scheme and also called for a focus on providing loans for TIDCO

houses. He said there are 8.3 lakh accounts related to MSMEs of which 1.78 lakh accounts were restructured and urged the banks to support MSMEs for one-time restructuring of their loan accounts.

The Chief Minister said there are 9.1 lakh beneficiaries under Jagananna Thodu scheme and requested the banks to complete the processing of the applications very soon. He said Rs 12,243 crore was required for setting up 16 medical and 16 nursing colleges across the State and urged the banks to support the state government in regard to loans.

The Chief Minister urged the bankers to extend their support for transforming schools under 'Nadu Nedu' scheme. The Chief Minister listed out the revolutionary changes being brought in Education, Health, Women Empowerment and

other sectors. The Chief Minister requested the bankers to set up ATMs at Village Secretariats and RBKs. The bankers said they would set up ATMs at some locations as pilot project and extend later.

Agriculture Minister Kurasala Kannababu has requested NABARD to support for setting up 10,778 custom hiring centers (CHCs) in RBKs. Finance Minister Buggana Rajenderanath has requested the bankers to focus on giving priority to MSME sector and also on education and housing loan limits.

Union Bank MID, CEO and SLBC President Raj Kiran Rai lauded the welfare initiatives of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and assured support from bankers' side. He said they will look into the requests of the State government including setting up of ATMs and banking services in RBKs.



Will quit active politics if BJP fails to win in 2024: Somu

Continued from Page 1

He said that as a BJP activist, he would work with a commitment for the party.

He alleged that corruption had reached its peak during the Jaganmohan Reddy government. The Chief Minister has been indulging in indiscriminate borrowings to fund his populist schemes and failed to run the government properly and systematically.

The BJP leader said the Centre had been releasing funds for the Polavaram project in tune with the expenditure incurred by the State government and completion of works. He found fault with CM Jaganmohan Reddy, who had alleged that Naidu had increased the Polavaram project cost indiscriminately and is now asking the Centre to release funds as per the escalated cost, he alleged.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹204
Without Skin	₹224
Broiler at Farm	₹110
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	442
HYDERABAD	435
VISAKHAPATNAM	440
RETAIL PRICE (IN VIKATAM)	₹4.42

Address 'historical injustice': TS to KRMB

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The Nentempadu LIS, originating from Jurla project, had adequate tmc of water earmarked by the Telangana government and it was commensurate with the ayacut envisaged by the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh government.

The same fact was conveyed to the KRMB several times, including through a letter written in June 2020 itself. Therefore, the components could be deleted from Schedule I and 2 of the gazette notification.

Giving the backdrop of the project, he said the then Hyderabad State government had proposed three projects to Mahbubnagar through gravity -- Bhima, Tungabhadra Left Canal, Upper Krishna projects. But after 1956, upon reorganisations of the States, the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh government did not pursue these

projects with the Union Government and these projects did not reach Telangana ayacut. Thus, later on left irrigation schemes became inevitable.

Though Jurla project (Stage I gravity 23 tmc, Stage II Lift 28.8 tmc) was proposed by the then government in 1970 because of the severity of the Telangana agitation. Later on, it was represented to the Tribunal to give first priority to the Andhra projects. Subsequently, the Jurla dam was constructed not with the originally proposed capacity of 30 tmc, but a barrage with 11 tmc capacity was constructed.

But, instead of the originally proposed gravity-based scheme under the Bhima lift scheme, dependable waters to some extent were to be given to the ayacut under the Jurla left canal; yet, no dependable waters were given on the left side.

7 years on, Kakinada petro complex...

Continued from Page 1

However, instead of an announcement on the new modalities, the Centre reiterated that it is up to the government to take a call on the project.

"Oil Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) have indicated to the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) that Viability Gap Funding (VGF) is necessary to make the project viable. GoAP has requested the Government of India (GoI) to fund the Viability Gap for this Project. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has conveyed to GoAP that Refinery and Petrochemical Projects are capital intensive projects and require huge amounts of investment. It was also conveyed that the proposed project shall have a direct, indirect and induced impact on the economy of Andhra Pradesh which shall, besides industrialization, result in substantial increase in

Oil PSUs sought annual interest-free loan for...

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Based on the preliminary financial appraisal by SBI Caps, with a debt-equity ratio of 2:1, the project will yield an IRR of 9.8 per cent as against the hurdle rate of 15 per cent. In order to bridge this gap, the project proponents initially sought viability gap funding in the form of an interest-free loan of Rs 1,438 crore per year to be provided for a period of 15 years

beginning from project zero date. The interest-free loan of Rs 1,438 crore per annum will be repaid by GAIL/HPCL Joint venture Company commencing from the 16th year onwards and ending in the 30th year after project zero date, free of any interest. Later, after several discussions, the VGF was revised to Rs 975 crore.

As the Centre has asked for Rs 948 crore per annum under VGF

for 15 years, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy in the June meeting requested Pradhan to cut down the VGF since the State could not bear such a burden in the present circumstances. Jaganmohan Reddy also said that members have already been nominated for the Working Group on behalf of the State government to discuss the project modalities and asked the Centre to issue immediate directions to start the project.

Kashi-Vishwanath...

Continued from Page 1

The mega cultural outreach exercise assumes extra significance as the BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh is headed for assembly polls early next year, and the party's work on its Hindutva agenda, including ongoing construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, is a major component of its campaign besides development works undertaken by its governments at the Centre and the state.

The inauguration ceremony has been named "Divya Kashi, Bhavya Kashi" (divine Kashi, grand Kashi).

In Varanasi the BJP will also hold a conference of its chief ministers and deputy chief ministers on December 13 and 14 where they will deliberate on their governments' welfare agenda and how to further help people, Chugh said, adding that they will leave on December 15.

Delivery of F-16 wing reflects heights of Hyderabad aerospace ecosystem

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Lockheed Martin has formally recognized Tata-Lockheed Martin Aerostructures Limited (TLMAL) as a potential future co-producer of fighter wings. IT and Industries Minister K T Rama Rao participated in the TATA Lockheed Martin Aerostructures Ltd 'Fighter Wing Qualification Ceremony' at Adibatla on Tuesday.

Addressing a gathering at the ceremony, Minister said: "The successful certification and delivery of F-16 wing is a great testimony to the heights Hyderabad Aerospace & Defence ecosystem has grown to in a relatively short span of time."

Lockheed Martin and TLMAL signed an agreement to develop a fighter wing prototype in 2018. Through this prototype project, TLMAL

demonstrated the capability to perform detailed part manufacturing and delivery of a fully compliant representative fighter aircraft wing shipset. Through this it supports F-21 offering for procurement of 114 new fighter aircraft - exclusively for India and the Indian Air Force - by proving additional indigenous production capability.

He said: "The repeat investments announced by the leading OEMs, including Lockheed Martin, is a great indicator for the robustness of our ecosystem, which is being lauded as the true hub for 'Make in India' in the defence sector."

KTR said, "Leading global manufacturers from the US, the UK, France, Israel and other nations have chosen Hyderabad to establish their state-of-the-art manufacturing, engineering, training, and innovation centres in India."

NIT-AP team develops nano-powered food packing materials

Continued from Page 1

Prof C S P Rao, Director, NIT Andhra Pradesh has appreciated the work done by the faculty members and the scholars. He also encouraged the staff for such interdisciplinary based collaborative research work for emerging applications.

Speaking about his recent work, Dr. Punuri Jayasekhar Babu, Pachhunga University College, Mizoram University, said, "Very less amount of work has been done to evaluate the toxic effects of nanoparticles on mammalian cells under in-vivo conditions. Inorganic nanoparticles are insoluble and pose a great challenge of bioaccumulation in human cells which may cause bio-toxicity on a longer run, thus hampering its use in the food processing industry."

Beware! Rs 2,000 notes are vanishing!

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of Rs 2,000 currency notes in circulation has decreased to 223.3 crore pieces or 1.75 per cent of total notes in circulation (NIC) in November this year, compared to 336.3 crore pieces in March 2018.

Printing of banknotes of particular denomination is decided by the government in consultation with the Reserve Bank to maintain desired denomination mix for facilitating transactional demand of public, said Pankaj Chaudhary, Minister of State in Finance Ministry, in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.

"As against 3,363 million pieces (mpcs) of Rs 2,000 denomination banknotes in circulation on March 31, 2018 constituting 3.27 per cent and 37.26 per cent of NIC in terms of volume and value respectively; 2,233 mpcs were in circulation on November 26, 2021, constituting 1.75 per cent and 15.11 per cent of NIC in terms of vol-



ume and value, respectively," he said. Chaudhary further said that no fresh indent has been placed with currency printing presses for the banknote from 2018-19 onwards.

"The decrease in circulation of Rs 2,000 note issued after demonetisation is because no fresh indent has been placed for printing of these notes from 2018-19 onwards.

Further, notes also go out of circulation as they get soiled/mutilated," he said.

On November 8, 2016, the government had decided to demonetise the then prevailing Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 banknotes to curb black money, among other objectives.

Following demonetisation, Rs 2,000 note and a new series of Rs 500 note were introduced.

Later, banknote of denomination of Rs 200 too was introduced.

In another reply, the minister said demand for currency depends upon several macro-economic factors, including economic growth and level of interest rate.

Precautionary demand generated by the public during fiscal 2020-21 due to Covid-19 pandemic induced uncertainties is also an important factor in currency demand.

"Combination of greater public demand for cash and a contraction in GDP has led to an increase in Currency in Circulation (CiC) as percentage of GDP from 12 per cent during 2019-20 to 14.5 per cent during 2020-21," Chaudhary said.

However, year-on-year growth in CiC has decelerated sharply to 7.9 per cent in November 2021 from pandemic influenced surge to 22.2 per cent a year ago, he added.



Steps apace for hassle-free ‘Bhavani Deeksha Viramana’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivas Rao has said that all arrangements shall be made for the relinquishment of Bhavani devotees starting from December 25 to 29. Speaking at a meeting on the arrangements for the programme with the officials concerned, the Minister said that all the department officials should coordinate and ensure that no inconvenience was caused to the devotees. Velampalli said that during the relinquishment, the devotees would do giri pradakshina and darshan of Goddess

Kanaka Durga. There would be prasadam distribution as well. All the programmes should be conducted smoothly, he said, and directed the officials to make arrangements in accordance with the COVID-19 guidelines. On December 18, the Kalashajyothi procession will be taken out from Sivarama Kshetram in Satyanarayanapuram to Kanakadurga Nagar at 6 pm and tight arrangements shall be made for the procession. District Collector J Nivas said that four fire-altars (Homakunda) have been arranged at the foot of the hill

and the fire brigades will take security measures. Special arrangements shall be made for women for changing clothes, water will be distributed to devotees in the queue, and separate queue lines will be there for senior citizens and visually-impaired persons. Darshan timings will be announced well in advance, boats and expert swimmers will be kept handy at Punnami ghat and special care will be taken to ensure an uninterrupted power supply. Temple trust board chairman P Somi Naidu said that during the six days, all the

Bhavani devotees would be given free darshan, all services in the temple will be kept on hold and darshan will be held from 3 am to 10.30 pm. Temple EO D Bramarambha said that five queue lines would be arranged during the Bhavani devotees' relinquishment. Around 15 lakh devotees are expected, she added. MLA Malladi Vishnu, Mayor R Bhagyalakshmi, VMC Commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh, Joint Collectors Dr. K Madhavilatha and K Mohan Kumar, Sub-Collector GSS Praveenchand DRO M Venkateswarlu and others were present.

AP govt staff stage black-badge protest

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP government employees started their phase-wise agitation on Tuesday demanding the implementation of the 11th PRC's recommendations and solution to many long-pending issues. The employees wore black badges during the lunch break in protest against the government and would continue the protest till December 10. The employees demanded an immediate solution to their issues. They had started an agitation against the State government with 71 pending demands. The primary demands were the release of the 11th PRC, cancellation of CPS and implementation of OPS, 55 percent fitment, the release of seven pending DAs and regularisation of contract employees among others. AP JAC chairman Bopparaju Venkateswarulu said that the government was doing injustice to the government employees by ignoring their long-pending demands. "The government's adamant attitude has forced the employees to take this step. All talks with the government officials failed that has led to the announcement of the phase-wise agitation. We do not want to cause inconvenience to the public and appeal to the

State government to fulfil our justifiable demands immediately," he added. He said there was no response from the officials on why the government was delaying the PRC. The government did not even disclose the PRC report citing silly reasons. He said that the government was least bothered about the employees' welfare. The JAC leaders had issued a strike notice to Chief Secretary Sameer Sarma on December 1 mentioning their phase-wise protest against the government to fulfil their demands. As per the strike plan, the employees will attend the duty wearing black badges from December 7 to 10. They will stage lunch-hour demonstrations at the government offices on December 10 and stage protests at all mandals and revenue divisions on December 13. The employees will stage protests at Taluka, Division and head offices of APSRTC on December 16. Later, they will stage protests at district headquarters from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on December 21. The first conference will be held in Visakhapatnam at 4 pm on December 27. The conferences will be held at 4 pm at Tirupati on December 30, at Eluru on January 3, 2022, and at Ongole, on January 6.

My comments were twisted: APNGO leader

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

APNGOs union leader Bandi Srinivas Rao on Tuesday claimed that his statement made during an internal meeting was twisted to project that he was against the State government. He said, "We are part of the State government and not against it." The APNGO leader said a chief minister was like a father for the people of the State and the employees were part of it. "It is quite natural that the employees get upset when their demands are not met, just like children who get angry with their parents at times," he clarified. He further described Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy as employee-friendly. Srinivas Rao went on to say that the CM was in favour of resolving the demands of the employees. "If the CM is adamant, how can he say that he would announce the Pay Revision Commission report within 10 days?" he wondered.



CM was like a father for the people of the State and the employees were part of it. "It is quite natural that the employees get upset when their demands are not met, just like children who get angry with their parents at times," he clarified.

Foetus in boiled egg supplied by Anganwadi to kids, women

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a bizarre incident, a foetus was found in a boiled egg supplied by the Anganwadi teachers to students and women at Parvatinagar in Maredubaka limits in Mandapeta mandal in East Godavari district on Tuesday. While there are allegations about the poor quality of eggs being supplied to the Anganwadi by the agencies, the presence of a chicken foetus in a boiled egg created commotion in EG district. The silence of ICDS project officials over the incident has drawn flak from all quarters. The government provides



boiled eggs daily to children, pregnant and lactating women in the Anganwadi area. The Anganwadi teacher distributed eggs to about 30 children, neonatal women and pregnant women in Maredubaka. A beneficiary

removed the peel off the egg and was shocked to see a 'boiled fetus of chicken' inside. Local women said that the Anganwadi teacher immediately took back the eggs from everyone. A complaint was lodged with the local panchayat authorities in this connection. Doctors say that the eggs had fertilised into the foetus as they were stored for a longer period. Local people demanded action against the agency that supplied the eggs to the Anganwadi. Expressing their anger at the Kapileswarapuram ICDS project authorities for not responding to the issue, they wanted the government to initiate action against them too.

Chase HR-focused jobs, students told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

There is a demand for technical recruiters and in the post-Covid scenario, the requirement has increased sevenfold. To make most of the situation, the AP State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) has initiated training for the students of degree and engineering colleges for Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) jobs, said Challa Madhusudhan Reddy, Advisor to Skill Development & Training, Government of AP. Addressing the students at Andhra Loyola College at a sensitisation programme on Skill Training for RPO jobs held on Tuesday, Madhusudhan Reddy stated that the whole industry was shifting from program-



ming-based jobs to RPO-based jobs. "This will provide an opportunity for the second and third year students to earn up to Rs 20,000 per month while pursuing their degree courses. It also helps them to interact with clients based in the US and have an idea about the emerging job markets. Ratnakar Pandugayala, Special Representative to North

America, Government of Andhra Pradesh, has said that RPO jobs could fetch more money than programme-based software jobs. Recently, there is a shift in providing jobs. The industry wants to provide jobs locally. Earlier, IT jobs were available in cities, whereas, the industry is focusing on providing jobs locally in small towns. CM Jagan Mohan Reddy is

focusing on these two aspects of providing infrastructure in small towns and villages to meet emerging needs. Dr. Ravi K Gujjula, CGM - Technical, APSSDC, has said that the interested students with good communication skills and fluency in English could register through APSSDC website. They should be highly-motivated, passionate and result-driven. The selection for the training will be based on a basic English test followed by submitting a self-made short video. Selected students will be provided with 40 hours of training through Nandi Foundation on Communication & Life Skills, Business & e-mail etiquette, negotiation skills & Time management skills, he said.

NITI Aayog VC Rajiv Kumar for Bhupalapally today

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

District Collector Bhavesh Misra has directed the district officials to make all arrangements for the visit of NITI Ayog Vice Chairman Dr. Rajiv Kumar who is scheduled to visit the district on Wednesday to discuss productivity, processing, marketing of chilli crops with women chilli farmers at Rytu Vedika in Chelpur of Ghanpur Mandal. He has reviewed the arrangements for Rajiv Kumar's visit with officials here on Tuesday. Later, he inspected the Rytu Vedika in Chelpur.

Five persons found involved in child pornography videos

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The police found five people reportedly doing child porn videos illegal business in Vijayawada and the Vijayawada Cybercrime police initiated a thorough investigation. Earlier, the police found the accused Sohail Ahmed belonging to Fakirgudem of Vijayawada city purchasing child porn videos and reselling the same through social media platforms. The police arrested the accused and registered the case. According to the sources, the police further conducted the investigation in the illegal child porn videos business and found another five persons involved in the city. The accused reportedly managed to escape hence the police started efforts to nab

them with the help of modern technology. Earlier, Sohail, a techie who worked in various multinational companies, was addicted to porn on the internet. He came across an advertisement online about the sale of porn videos so he contacted the advertiser to purchase porn videos. The accused received a web link through which he downloaded nearly 4,000 child porn videos and started reselling the same by posting advertisements on online platforms. Child activists posing themselves as purchasers contacted the accused and lodged complaints with the police who arrested the accused Sohail on November 27. Now, the police are all set to nab more persons involved in the illegal child porn videos trade.



Illegal structures to be removed in Guntur city

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Municipal Commissioner Challa Anuradha has directed the officials to take steps to remove all illegal constructions which inhibit the flow of sewerage. She visited Himani Nagar, Telecom Nagar and Vishnupriya Nagar here on Tuesday and inspected the drainage canals and sanitation. She directed the officials to issue notices to those who had constructed houses illegally without getting approvals from the municipal corporation. She instructed the officials to take steps to remove the houses if the

owners did not respond. Anuradha directed the ward secretariats to visit the areas every day and ensure that construction material should not be dumped in the drainage canals. She directed the officials to take steps to remove silt from the outfall drain at Himani Nagar. Later, she inspected the health centre, which is under construction, at Brundavan gardens and instructed the engineer to ensure that quality is maintained in construction. SE D Sriivas, Deputy city planar Madhu Kumar ACP Ajay and DEE Srinivas Reddy were among those who accompanied the Commissioner.

PROMOTION OF HANDLOOM PRODUCTS

APCO, AP Crafts Council join hands

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

APCO and Andhra Pradesh Crafts Council will collaborate for branding handloom products. Council Secretary Ranjana, Treasurer Jayashree, APCO Chairman Ch Venkata Naga Mohanarao and MD Ch Nagarani discussed the issue in-depth on Tuesday and reached a preliminary understanding. Speaking on the occasion, the APCO Chairman said that the handloom industry was the second largest employment sector in India after agriculture. He said during the current scenario, handloom products lacked publicity. The youth aren't aware of handloom products either. He said APCO had decided to collaborate with the Andhra Pradesh Crafts Council to overcome the present crisis and the council had come forward voluntarily to provide their services. MD Nagrani explained that the handloom sector had not been able to provide the range of garments required for the new generation. She said that the two organisations would work together to introduce new designs to cater to the tastes of the youth. Awareness seminars, group discussions and



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exhibitions would be organised to improve the sales of handloom products. Nagarani said the meeting also discussed organising

handloom exhibitions and setting up permanent outlets in metro cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Ahmedabad.

Ranjana and Jayashree of the Andhra Pradesh Crafts Council said they would do their part to strengthen the handloom sector. They are confident that they will be able to make the people aware of the uniqueness and significance of the traditional handloom textiles through the awareness seminars they organise. After the meeting, the council members visited the APCO mega showroom on the headquarters premises.

SCR bags 4 natl awards for energy conservation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The South Central Railway (SCR) has received four National Energy Conservation Awards. The awards will be presented during the 31st National Energy Conservation week being celebrated from December 14 to 21 throughout the country. National Energy Conservation Awards are being announced every year to recognise the efforts of various industrial units/establish-

ments/organisations that have shown exemplary performance in the conservation of natural energy and effective utilisation of available energy. Two of the four awards were won by Vijayawada. In the buildings category, the Divisional Railway Hospital, Vijayawada won the first prize in Hospitals Sector and in Electric Traction Training Centre, Vijayawada got the second prize in the CPWD, State PWD & PHD sector of

Institutions category. South Central Railway has been consistently receiving the National Energy Conservation Awards for the past 10 years from the Ministry of Power. The innovative and effective implementation of energy conservation measures by the Zone and strictly adhering to the same has helped the Zone in receiving these awards. Gajanan Mallya, General Manager, South Central Railway complimented

Principal Chief Electrical Engineer, SCR, Divisional Railway Managers, Vijayawada, Secunderabad, Hyderabad and officers & staff of Electrical department who were instrumental in achieving this distinction. He said that receiving the prestigious awards at national level indicates commitment shown by each and every employee of the zone and it further acts as a motivation to maintain consistent performance in future.



Welfare schemes aimed at uplift of the poor: Balineni

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Energy Balineni Srinivasa Reddy has reiterated that the YSRCP government is implementing welfare schemes for the uplift and welfare of underprivileged sections.

The Minister was the chief guest at the swearing in ceremony of the Chilakaluripet market yard committee chairman held at Chilakaluripet on Tuesday. Viswanatham took oath as Chilakaluripet market yard committee chairman and Venkata Subramanyam, as vice-chairman.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the YSRCP government was committed to providing social justice to the underprivileged sections. He said that leaders belonging to a particular community had been contesting from the Chilakaluripet constituency for a long time, but the YSRCP gave the ticket to Vidudala Rajani, who belonged to the BC community.

"The government is aiming to uplift the people belonging to weaker sections and is committed to their welfare. Welfare schemes were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is fulfilling all the promises which he



made to the people," he said.

The minister said that Jagan Mohan Reddy would be the chief minister for the next 30 years. He wished that MLA Vidudala Rajani would scale heights in politics with the blessing of the Chief Minister. Taking a dig at former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the Minister said that Chandrababu Naidu made N T Rama Rao grieve by dethroning him from the CM's post then and now, Naidu is crying for his sin.

Minister for Housing Chadavalada Sriranganadha Raju alleged that the Opposition party leaders were politicising the One-Time Settlement (OTS) scheme. "Using the OTS for political

mileage amounts to doing injustice to the poor," he said. He said that the government wanted to register houses in the names of 15 lakh beneficiaries under Jagananna Sampoorna Gruha Hakku with the OTS and appealed to people to utilise the opportunity.

"When Chandrababu Naidu was the chief minister for nine years and then five years, his government collected money from beneficiaries and now he is creating obstacles for OTS," he alleged. The Housing Minister lashed out at the TDP for misleading campaigns on the OTS.

Sriranganadha Raju rubbished TDP's assurance that registration would be done

without collecting money from beneficiaries if the TDP was voted to power. MLAs Ambati Rambabu, Namburi Shankar Rao, Kasu Mahesh Reddy, ZP Chairperson Hendry Christina and Guntur Mayor Manohar Naidu were among those who were present.

Interestingly, Narasaraopet MLA Lavu Sri Krishnadevarayalu was not invited to the swearing-in ceremony. His name did not figure in the invitation card either. A YSRCP leader said that the squabbles between the MLA and MP Sri Krishnadevarayalu had been exposed once again. However, the MP clarified that he was in New Delhi as Parliament sessions were being held.

Teacher thrashed for misbehaving with Class X girl

PNS ■ ELURU

A school teacher of a private school in Tadepalligudem allegedly misbehaved with a 10th Class girl student. Irate parents beat him and demanded action against him.

The parents of the girl said that the teacher of the school - Rajesh - resorted to sexual harassment on a 10th Class girl student studying at the school. Knowing about his misbehaviour with the girl, the irate parents, along with some other villagers, went to the school and beat up the teacher.

The parents and villagers alleged that the teacher misbehaved with some girl students earlier also. They squatted on the road in front of the school and raised slogans demanding action against the teacher.

The agitating parents alleged that a cleaner of the school bus of the same school harassed some girl students previously.



Attack on medicos: Jr docs at Guntur GGH go on strike

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Junior doctors of the Guntur Government General Hospital went on strike here on Tuesday in protest against the delay in taking action against those who attacked the medicos on duty.

Police said that some youths brought an injured person to the GGH on the night of Sunday. The junior doctor on duty provided him treatment and asked him to wait to make stitches to the injury on

the head. But the friends of the injured person attacked the junior doctors for the delay in making stitches.

They claimed that they were affiliated with the Republican party and relatives of the Chief Minister. The doctors made stitches and sent them. They complained about the incident to the GGH Superintendent Prabhavati.

When no action was taken against the culprits even after 36 hours of the incident, the

junior doctor went on a lightening strike today. They squatted in front of the superintendent's office and raised slogans demanding action against the attackers.

With the strike of junior doctors, the medical services in some wards came to a halt in the GGH.

However, the agitating junior doctors relented and called off a stir with the assurance of GGH superintendent Prabhavati that the culprits would be arrested.

Bhoomi Puja for shopping complex

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Education Adimulapu Suresh performed Bhoomi Puja for the construction of a 30-room shopping complex in Yerragondapalem town on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the construction of the shopping complex would help increase revenue to the panchayat. He said special attention was being paid to permanent works in Yerragondapalem. He said that the RTC bus station was set up in the heart of the town for the convenience of the people.

The construction works of the rythu bazar on Pullalacheruvu Road is in full swing. The TTD is constructing a function hall. Construction of market yard godowns and construction of roads are underway, he added.



The minister said that the works of the 100-bed hospital were progressing at a brisk pace. He said the process of converting all internal roads in Yerragondapalem town into cement roads was almost com-

plete. AMC Chairman Ongolu Murthyreddy, MP Donta Kiran Gowd, JDPTC Vijayabhaskar, Sarpanch Ramawath Arunabai, Panchayat Secretary Rajasekhara Reddy were present on the occasion.

YSRCP MP asks Centre to carry out repairs to NSP, SP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Narasaraopet MP Sri Krishnadevarayalu raised the issue of maintenance of major projects Nagarjuna Sagar (NSP) and Srisailem project (SP) in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

The MP speaking in the Lok Sabha on the maintenance of the two major projects, asked the Central government that repairs should be carried out to the NSP and SP under the Central scheme 'Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP)'.

He said that two Telugu states Andhra Pradesh and Telangana depended on the two major irrigation projects



NSP and SP which were located across the river Krishna in the two states. He informed that the Srisailem Project is the second project to generate the

highest quantity of hydropower.

Sri Krishnadevarayalu explained that the winding pool of Srisailem project is in a bad state and appealed to the Centre for a comprehensive study and repairs to the project. The MP said that since the crest gate of the NSP right canal crashed, a huge quantity of water gushed out downstream.

The NSP and SP are under the Krishna River Management Board jurisdiction and the JJM should take the responsibility of maintenance of the two major projects, the MP said and appealed to set up a special committee for the purpose.

Red sanders logs worth Rs. 20L seized, 4 held

GUNTUR: The police seized red sanders logs worth Rs 20 lakh when they were being transported illegally in two vans at Nagarjuna Sagar on Tuesday and arrested four persons. Police here on Tuesday said that on a tip-off the police conducted checking of vehicles at Andhra-Telangana states border at Nagarjuna Sagar. They found red sanders logs were being transported in two mini-Bolero vehicles to Chirala from Hyderabad. The red sanders logs were concealed in the vans beneath the fish feed bags. The police said that they seized red sanders logs worth Rs 20 lakh in the market. The police arrested four persons in this connection and seized the two vehicles. Additional SP Rishant Reddy appreciated the Sagar border check post staff.



Nallamala Sagar project tunnel works inspected

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Andhra Pradesh Water Resources Principal Secretary Jawahar Reddy and Engineer-in-Chief Narayana Reddy on Tuesday inspected the construction works of Nallamala Sagar project tunnel at Kottur in the area and the Gottipadiya Gap works on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Jawahar Reddy said that plans have been made to impound 10.6 TMC of water in the first phase in Nallamala Sagar. He said "If the project is completed, millions of people in Nellore, Kadapa and Prakasam districts will get water for irri-

gation as well as for drinking water.

He said that 1.19 lakh acres could be cultivated in Prakasam district under the project. He said that he inspected the tunnel structures at Kottur and said that he would review the various irrigation project works going on in the district. He also inspected the manual construction works going on in the second tunnel from there.

The approach tunnel from the first tunnel to the second tunnel at the 14th km was also inspected. Joint Collector Venkata Murali and Veligonda project officials accompanied the principal secretary.



'HUGE' TRAGEDY



The carcass of an elephant found in an agricultural field after it was electrocuted when it came in contact with an electric fence, at Vepanapalli village in Bangarupallyam mandal of Chittoor district on Tuesday.

Special drives to check movement of criminal gangs

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Superintendent of Police Malika Garg has directed the police officials in the district to conduct special drives and be on high alert in the wake of the movement of criminal gangs in the district.

The SP asked the officials to pay special attention and alert the people living in apartments and colonies located on the outskirts. She asked the officials to ensure that CCTVs were installed at the residential areas.

In a video conference with the DSPs, CIs and SIs on Tuesday, she enquired with the officials on how many strangers were identified in their jurisdiction. The officials told the SP that they had identified over 1000 strangers and their details were uploaded in the non-local app.

The SP had given the officials details about notorious criminals like 'Cheddi gang', 'Pardhi gang', 'Bhavarya' and 'Irani' gangs, their behaviour and modus operandi in com-

mitting crimes. The gangs conduct reece during day time and commit crimes during night. "The gangs do not hesitate even to kill people during their robberies," the SP told the officials.

She directed the officials to intensify night patrolling and checking of vehicles on the NHs and other vulnerable places.

OSD K Chowdeshwari, DSP B Mariyadasu, DCRB CI Bala Murali and other officials were present.

With bills unpaid, contractors refuse to take up new works

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The contractors in East Godavari district are refusing to take up new works in protest against the non-payment of their bills for the works done earlier.

The contractors said that they had appealed to the Ministers, MPs, MLAs and ZP chairman many times about the non-payment of their bills for works they had done earlier. No contractor is coming forward now to take up road repairing works since the government had not paid their money for the works they had done previously.

With the contractor's denial of taking up new works, there is no possibility of repairing the roads. The R&B officials made it clear that they could not do anything till they received funds from the government. The government has to release about Rs 200 crore to clear the bills of the contractors in the district for the works they had done earlier.

The condition of roads is in a pathetic state in the district and the bad roads are causing road accidents. The Janasena party leaders and activists carried out agitation against the government's indifference in getting roads repaired. They even repaired roads under the 'Sramadanam' programme at some places.

Though the ministers are exerting pressure on the officials on payment of bills to the contractors, the officials made it clear they were not in a position to do anything in this regard as the government is to release funds.

Since the ministers and MLAs are not capa-



ble of approaching the Chief Minister to ask him to release funds, the road repairing works could not be carried out. The R&B officials identified 616 KMs of roads badly damaged due to rains in EG district and Rs 198 crore required to carry out repairs to the damaged roads.

The officials invited tenders five times for repairing 159 KMs of roads at a cost of Rs 79 crore and 457 KMs of the road at a cost of Rs 119 crore but no contractor has come forward to bid. As a final attempt, the R&B officials personally approached the contractors and pressured them to take up the works but the contractors did not yield to the pressure.

The R&B officials made it clear that about Rs 200 crore is to be paid to the contractors in the district for the works which they carried out earlier. The contractors told the officials that they had borrowed huge money to carry out works but they had not received money from the government for the works they had done so far.



INDIA CORNER

Rahul demands compensation, jobs for kin of farmers killed during farm laws stir

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday demanded compensation and jobs from the Centre for the next of kin of farmers who died during the year-long agitation against the three farm laws on the borders of the national capital. Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, Gandhi slammed the Modi government for its inability to maintain data on the death of farmers during the year-long agitation and tabled a list of farmers who were paid compensation and given jobs in Punjab and Haryana. Congress members demanded a statement from the government on the issue and walked out of the House along with NCP and DMK members while raising slogans against the government. "Around 700 farmers died in farmers' agitation. The prime minister apologised to the farmers and accepted his mistake. On November 30, agriculture minister was asked a question - 'how many farmers died in the agitation?' Agriculture minister said he had no data," the Congress member said.



Deshmukh probe: Former Maha chief secretary Sitaram Kunte appears before ED

Former Maharashtra chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte on Tuesday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to record his statement in connection with a money laundering case registered against former state home minister Anil Deshmukh, sources said. Kunte, who is currently the principal advisor to Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, reached the agency's office at Ballard Estate in south Mumbai around 11 am, they said. The ED had summoned Kunte earlier also but he failed to appear before it due to his busy schedule, according to sources. The ED had arrested Deshmukh, a senior NCP leader, in connection with a multi-crore money laundering case. Notably, the ED had recently recorded the statement of suspended Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh in connection with its money laundering probe into alleged irregularities in the Maharashtra police establishment.



Bengaluru doctor who recovered from Omicron is Covid positive again

The city-based doctor, one of the two earliest cases of Omicron variant of Covid-19 to be detected in the country, has tested positive for the virus again, while the other, a South African national who flew out of here without informing the authorities, has been booked by the police. The South African, of Gujarati origin, who was quarantined here, later flew to Dubai. "It is true that the doctor who was infected with Omicron variant has once again tested positive for covid-19," a Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike official told PTI. Requesting anonymity, the official said the doctor is under isolation, but was asymptomatic. Meanwhile, police have registered a case against the South African national for flying without informing the authorities in violation of the quarantine norms. The management and staff of a five-star hotel here have also been booked for allowing the infected person to leave without informing the health officials.



Rs 20,353 cr undisclosed credits in Panama, Paradise leaks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday said undisclosed credits amounting to Rs 20,353 crore have been detected with respect to 930 India-linked entities in the Panama and Paradise Paper Leaks. Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary also informed that taxes collected so far amount to Rs 153.88 crore in the Panama and Paradise Paper Leaks. "As on October 1, 2021, total undisclosed credits amounting to Rs 20,353 crore have been detected with respect to 930 India-linked entities in the Panama and Paradise Paper Leaks," the minister said in a written reply. He said tax department takes appropriate actions in case of persons, who are found to be involved in violation of the provisions of various Acts administered by the Income Tax Department like the



Income Tax Act, 1961, and Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 etc. "Such actions under direct tax law include searches and seizure, surveys, enquiries, assessment and reassessment of income, levy of taxes along

with interest, levy of penalties, filing of prosecution complaints in criminal courts, wherever applicable," he said. In 52 cases of Panama and Paradise Paper Leaks, criminal prosecution complaints have been filed under the Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and

Imposition of Tax Act, 2015. Further, in 130 cases proceedings under Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015 have been initiated. Some Indian names have been released in the media which are allegedly linked to the Pandora Papers Leak. Chaudhary further said the government has taken cognisance of the same and for the purpose of coordinated and speedy investigation brought the Pandora Papers Leak under the umbrella of Multi Agency group (MAG). The MGA has been constituted under the convenorship of Chairman CBDT, with Directorate of Enforcement, Reserve Bank of India, Financial Intelligence Unit India and Foreign Tax and Tax Research division of CBDT as its members agencies. Further, investigation is under progress, the minister added.

PM Modi inaugurates major fertiliser plant, AIIMS in UP's Gorakhpur

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Before 2014, the country was known for importing urea, and the shortage of fertilisers used to make headlines, but the situation has improved now, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday as he inaugurated a fertiliser plant here. Addressing a rally in Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's home turf Gorakhpur ahead of the assembly elections in the state, Modi said his government stopped misuse of urea, and issued soil health cards to farmers so that they know which type of fertiliser is needed. The prime minister said his government also took steps to hike urea production by reviving closed fertiliser plants.

RLD chief formally announces alliance with SP, flays BJP's politics

PNS ■ LUCKNOW.

Rashtriya Lok Dal president Jayant Chaudhary on Tuesday formally announced his party's alliance with the Samajwadi Party and said if they come to power in Uttar Pradesh next year, the first work will be to build a memorial for 'martyrs' of the farmers' protest. Slamming the BJP government in the state for the recent leak of a government competitive examination question paper and subsequent cancellation of the test, Chaudhary said because of such incidents youngsters are not getting appointments, and they have to migrate and work in other places. The BJP will get a befitting reply from the people in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls next year as they have understood its politics of hatred, the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) chief said while addressing a rally along with Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav in Meerut. Talking about the alliance, Chaudhary said, "Akhilesh ji and I are together, and I am



making an announcement in this regard. The first work our double-engine government will do is to construct a memorial for martyr farmers, who died during farmers' protest here in the land of Chowdhury Charan Singh." The BJP talks of "hatred" and "our Babaji (Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath) starts with Aurangzeb and ends with the Kairana exodus", the RLD leader said. The BJP during the last assembly elections had claimed that many Hindu

families had migrated from Kairana town in fear of criminals. The claim of migration has been contested by some political parties. "The paper (competitive exam) is leaked, youths are not getting appointments. Youths from here migrate due to lack of opportunities and work in other states. Now this time, people will not fall in the trap of 'nafrat ki baatein' (talks of hatred)," he said. The RLD leader said, "Babaji becomes angry very fast. You have never seen him smiling.

Nagaland calls off Hornbill Festival over civilian deaths

PNS ■ KOHIMA

The cabinet of Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Tuesday called off the ongoing Hornbill Festival in protest against the killing of 14 civilians by security forces, state ministers said. The state government also decided to write to the Centre demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, they said. The 10-day Hornbill Festival, the state's largest tourism extravaganza held at Naga Heritage Village in Kisama near the state capital, was scheduled to end on December 10. During an emergency meeting, the cabinet was briefed about the action taken following the killing, including setting up of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by an IGP rank officer and grant of ex-gratia to the next of kin of the deceased by the state and central governments, ministers Neiba Kronu and Temjen Imna Along later told reporters. The cabinet has directed the SIT to complete the investigation within a month, they said. Kronu said that altogether 14 civilians have died in the incident, while two seriously injured are undergoing treatment in neighbouring Assam,



Officer of major general rank to head Army's court of inquiry into Nagaland

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army has ordered a court of inquiry headed by an officer of major general rank into the Nagaland firing incident in which 14 civilians were killed, official sources said on Tuesday. Former senior Army officers on Monday called the incident "unfortunate" and "tragic", adding that the botched up operation was likely a result of wrong

intelligence. The sources said an officer of major general rank would head the court of inquiry to probe the operation of the 21 Para Special Forces that took place in the state's Mon district on Saturday evening. The inquiry will focus on the "intelligence" and the "circumstances" on which Saturday's operation was based on, they noted.

and six are being treated in Dimapur. The firing incidents took place in Oting-Tiru area on December 4 and Mon town on December 5. "All activities of Hornbill Festival 2021 should cease in view of mourning announced

for the deceased in the firing incidents in Mon district," Kronu said. After the announcement, the tourism department, the main organiser of the festival, held a solemn closing ceremony at the Naga Heritage Village.

PM's jibe at Samajwadi Party on 'red cap' and 'red alert'

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Taking a swipe at the Samajwadi Party ahead of assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday equated "red cap" with "red alert" for the state. Addressing a public meeting here after dedicating to the nation three mega projects, including an AIIMS and a fertiliser plant, Modi said, "Today, the entire UP very well knows that those wearing red caps are concerned about red beacon ('laal batti') and they are not bothered about your pain and sorrows." "The red cap people want power to commit scams, fill their coffers, indulge in illegal grabbing (of resources) and to give complete freedom to the mafia," he said. Stepping up his attack on



the rival ahead of the assembly polls early next year, Modi said, "The red cap people want to form government to show favour to terrorists and to free them from jail. Hence, you should remember that those wearing red caps are red alert for UP, in other words alarm bells." Red cap is a trademark of Samajwadi Party leaders as well as workers.

TMC leader poses with gun inside govt office

PNS ■ ENGLISH BAZAR

A purported photo of a TMC leader posing with a gun in a government office in West Bengal's Malda district went viral on social media, triggering a political furor on Tuesday. In the purported photo, Mrinalini Mondal Maity, the president of Old Malda Panchayat Samiti, was seen posing with the gun in one of her hands while being on her official chair. Maity is also the president of the district unit of TMC women's wing. Hitting out at the TMC, the BJP alleged that the ruling party has turned the state into a dump yard of explosives. "If she is searched, police will also get bombs and rifles. This is TMC's culture.

Center plans to amend Notaries Act

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government proposes to amend the Notaries Act to restrict the number of terms a person can practice as a notary to allow more young legal practitioners enter the field, the Law Ministry said on Tuesday. In a statement, the ministry said the proposed amendment bill also seeks to extend power to suspend the certificate of practice in cases of professional misconduct by the appropriate government for conduct of inquiry. The proposed amendment bill also seeks to digitise notarial work undertaken by notaries. As of now the number of terms of renewal of certificates of practice of a notary is



unrestricted after the initial appointment." ... it is proposed to restrict the overall term of notaries for a period up to 15 years (initial term of five years and two renewal terms of five years each) by curtailing renewals of unlimited terms..." the ministry said.

BJP's West Delhi MP Parvesh Verma raises drug menace issue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP MP Parvesh Verma on Tuesday raised in the Lok Sabha the issue of drug abuse in the national capital and accused the Delhi government under chief minister Arvind Kejriwal of taking no "concrete steps" to deal with the growing menace. Asking a question in the

House in this connection, the BJP MP said while an increasing trend of substance abuse in the country is a matter of concern, Delhi figures in the list of top five states when it comes to alcoholism and drug abuse. "On the one hand the Delhi government blows its own trumpet saying it has improved the quality of its educational

institutions, on the other hand it leaves children of beggars in streets to die. These children use injection (for drug abuse) which increases the risk of HIV and Hepatitis," Verma said in the Lok Sabha during the Question Hour. He also hit out at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi over its new excise policy, saying it is open-

ing as many as 824 liquor 'Theka' (vends) to increase its revenue even as the national capital figures in the list of top five states when it comes to alcoholism, substance abuse, use of injection for drug abuse. "Trend of the use of party drugs is increasing fast. Bollywood stars, or their children or children of beggars that we see at red lights--all

these are completely involved in drug (abuse)," he said. The West Delhi MP said that Delhi Police in his Lok Sabha constituency has deported more than 300 foreign nationals who were involved in peddling of banned substance, congratulating Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who was present in the House, for this.

Muslims should hand over mosque in Mathura

PNS ■ BALLIA

Uttar Pradesh minister Anand Swarup Shukla has said Muslims should hand over a mosque close to a temple at the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura to Hindus, referring to it as a "safed bhavan" (white structure). In provocative remarks on Monday, he said while the court had resolved the Ayodhya issue, the "white structures" in Varanasi and Mathura hurt Hindus. "A time will come when the white structure in Mathura that hurts every Hindu will be removed with the help of the court," Shukla, the minister of state for parliamentary affairs, told reporters Monday evening.



"Dr Ram Manohar Lohia had said that the Muslims of India would have to believe that Ram and Krishna were

their ancestors and that Babar, Akbar and Aurangzeb were attackers. Do not associate yourself with any building built by them," he added. The minister said, "The Muslim community should come forward and hand over the white structure located in the Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi complex in Mathura to Hindus. Time will come when this work will be completed." He said on December 6 (1992), 'karsewaks' had removed a "blot on Ramlalla" and now a grand temple is being constructed there. He was apparently referring to the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya by Hindutva mobs. Asked about the conversion

of former Shia Waqf Board chairman Syed Wasim Rizvi to 'Sanatan dharma' (Hinduism), he said Muslims should follow and do 'ghar wapsi' (return to Hinduism). "All Muslims in the country are converted. If they see their history, they will find that 200-250 years ago they converted to Islam from Hinduism. We will like all of them to do 'ghar wapsi'," he said, hailing Rizvi for his "courageous" step. "This step is a challenge for Maulanas and Maulvis who live in the country and promote a Talabani mindset," Shukla said. He said India's basic culture is of 'Hindutva' (Hinduism) and 'Bhartiyata' and they are complementary to each other. He termed the Samajwadi

Party, its founder Mulayam Singh Yadav and president Akhilesh Yadav as "anti-Hindu" and accused them of "ordering firing" on unarmed 'karsewaks' in Ayodhya. On Sunday, BJP MP Ravindra Kushwaha had said when the Narendra Modi government can repeal the farm laws keeping in mind the protests by farmers, it can also withdraw the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 to pave way for the construction of a grand temple at Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura. Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya had also offered support for a new temple in Mathura.

PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission launched

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government launched the PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission on October 25 this year to fill the gaps in the healthcare system based on experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Tuesday. The mission aims to develop the capacities of primary, secondary and tertiary care health systems, strengthen existing national institutions and create new institutions to cater to detection and cure of new and emerging diseases, Minister of State for Health



Bharati Pravin Pawar said in written response to a question

in the Upper House of Parliament.

Balancing act

Putin used the Indian soil to take a snipe at the US, putting it in a spot

The summit meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin has tested India's ability to do a balancing act so as not to get caught between the brittle relationship between the US and Russia over Ukraine and the proposed Summit for Democracy. For the record, Modi and Putin reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing ties. Significantly, it was Putin's second visit outside Russia since the pandemic's outbreak, after he visited Geneva this June to meet US President Joe Biden. The New Delhi visit underlined Russia's importance to India as a provider of defence systems. Russia handles over half of all Indian arms imports, technology and joint production agreements. Russia has also agreed to lease a nuclear-powered submarine to India. The icing on the cake is Russia's long-range S-400 ground-to-air missile defence system which initially attracted the displeasure of the United States. It was expected at one time that despite the warm relations between the US and India, Washington might sanction India under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), which warns of sanctions for any country buying arms from Russia. That has not come to pass yet, but the fact remains that India looked to Russia, and not the US, for its defence needs. In the case of the nuclear-powered submarine, too, it looked to Russia. Interestingly, the AUKUS pact of September will allow Australia to become the first non-nuclear weapons



State to acquire a similar nuclear-powered submarine. Even as Modi and Putin vowed to cement their unique ties, New Delhi realised that Russia used Indian soil to take a snipe at the US. Its Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recalled that the US tried to undermine Russia-India cooperation on the S-400 deal and tried to make India obey American orders. "We", Lavrov said, witnessed how the US tried to make India "to follow the American vision of how this region should be developed". It appears that Russia used Putin's visit to put the US in a spot by leaning more heavily than required on its friendship with India. That line of thinking is open to interpretation because the US has not followed up on the sanctions threat. After all, it understands the challenges India faces from its neighbours in the west and east. Also, the US and India have their association in the Indo-Pacific in the form of QUAD. Lavrov's statement, however, may have more to do with two areas of current friction between Russia and the US. One is the Russian troop movement near Ukraine's borders amid speculations of a conflict. Lavrov's remarks came just a day before the Biden-Putin virtual summit on the issue. The US has said it will send reinforcements to Nato's eastern flank if Russia invades Ukraine. The second issue is Biden's invite to 100-odd countries to his Summit of Democracy on December 9 and 10. Ukraine has been invited to the summit, but Russia stands excluded.



A view of the snow-covered Himalayan range, in Shimla

Dam it!

Tamil Nadu's ban on *Dam 999* continues since 2011, and on a flimsy narrative

The DMK and its natural allies, the Communists, are always in the forefront to agitate against the violation of the right to free speech. But it is shocking that the Dravidian Government continues to ban a 2011 production, *Dam 999*. The movie, which bagged several national and international honours, was shortlisted for even the Oscars. However, the TN Government banned it citing law and order problems. Though bans were earlier imposed on certain films like *Vishwaroopam* and *Thuppakki* fearing reprisal from a minority community, the issues were resolved within days and those were released to a grand welcome. Meanwhile, the State Government's reason for banning the movie is ambiguous. "The film's story is woven around the Mullaperiyar Dam; the core issues are pending before the Supreme Court. If the ban is lifted, there may be widespread agitation and disruption of peace," states the November 22, 2021, order issued by the Additional Chief Secretary. Film's producer-director Sohan Roy says that there was nothing in *Dam 999* which could upset law and order in Tamil Nadu.

"The movie was released all over the world, except in Tamil Nadu, though we had hired many artists and technicians from that State for the project, including national award-winning designer Thotta Tharini. The film makes no reference to the Mullaperiyar Dam and the storyline was based on the bursting of the Banqiao Dam in China in 1975, which resulted in the death of 2.5 lakh people. I never had Mullaperiyar in my mind when I was shooting the movie," Roy adds. The ban is seen as the "true colours" of the Dravidians, according to noted author and film critic PK Sreenivasan. "History is repeating itself in Tamil Nadu. MG Ramachandran was thrown out of the DMK for questioning the party leadership's stance on a number of issues. We cannot expect anything different from them even now," Sreenivasan comments on the ban issue. The truth is that Tamil Nadu does not like to discuss the Mullaperiyar Dam. The term '999' evokes nervousness in the powers that be there since they know that the 999-year-long agreement is a fraud perpetrated on the people of Travancore by the then Madras Province. How an incident that reportedly happened in China could force the people of Tamil Nadu to violate law and order is anybody's guess. Dams should not be used for damning creativity!



Propaganda around China's 'infallibility'

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the seeds of Mao's manipulative propaganda tactics have mushroomed like never before in China

In the early days of 'helmsman' Mao Zedong's Chinese revolution, propaganda assumed a key role in shaping the Chinese optics, discourse and popular narrative. In 1958, the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party, *People's Daily*, wrote: "...today, in the era of Mao Zedong, heaven is here on earth..." — ironically, this was also the year of the start of the Great Chinese Famine that has been regarded as amongst the greatest manmade disasters in human history, accounting for millions (estimates ranging from 15 to 55 million) deaths. The instinctive cover-up reaction of the Chinese officialdom entailed releasing propaganda posters of Chinese children standing atop surreal green fields of wheat so dense that they could hold their weight — the reality of the 'fields', actually made of deliberately transplanted stalks with a bench to hold the children, was hidden from the masses.

Today, in Xi Jinping's China, the seeds of Mao's manipulative propaganda tactics have mushroomed like never before, and the curation of the 'Chinese Dream' is a zealously guarded effort that brooks no contrarian viewpoint. Xi's barely concealed and insidious efforts to "tell China's story well" comes packaged with the usual spirit of defensive and reactive censorship, heavily massaged headlines, deflections to even outright buying out international opinions eg. *South China Morning Post*. Awkward subjects like the ensuing dissonance in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet or the Dalai Lama remain subject to editorial manicuring with the requisite smoke-and-mirrors to ensure that the domestic audience does not get 'brainwashed' to what Xi calls "western values of journalism". An important aspect of this control phenomenon is to define the so-called redlines that necessitates the continuing maintenance of the official charade of the Communist Party's supremacy, infallibility and perfection — anyone questioning the same risks immediate threat or, in Chinese context, mysterious disappearances.

Last year, flamboyant Chinese entrepreneur Jack Ma, at



the cusp of the world's largest public offering of his company ie The Ant Group (a flourishing empire including the Alibaba, then valued at well over \$1 trillion), was subjected to a reality check of overstepping the mandated redlines (in this case, criticising Chinese regulatory policies) in Xi's hypersensitive China, and soon disappeared. Since then, Ja Ma has gone under the radar with patchy, dubiously organised and sanitised public appearances, that are typical of China's treatment of anyone blowing the lid off the official narrative. Many others like award-winning photographer Lu Guang, businesswoman Duan Weihong, actress Zhao Wei, artist and activist Ai Weiwei, real estate tycoon Ren Zhiqiang — all followed the patented route of inexplicable 'disappearances'. No criticism of the leader, party or its policies is ever tolerated.

Now, the hardly curious case of former No 1 women's tennis doubles player, Peng Shuai, follows the exact same path. Her crime: Calling out the bluff of so-called discipline, propriety and morality within the top ranks of the CCP by accusing former Chinese Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault. Expectedly, Chinese social media platform Weibo took down Peng Shuai's post and discussions about her



THIS IS THE THIN ICE ON WHICH THE CHINESE SOCIETY, GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY IS PREDICATED; XI JINPING KNOWS THIS, AND THEREFORE AMONG HIS PREDECESSORS, HE PREFERS MAO ZEDONG'S HARD PROPAGANDA APPROACH

sudden disappearance were heavily censored within the controlled realm of Chinese media, and her physical whereabouts remained unconvincingly scanty. Following a concerted effort by the World Tennis Association (WTA), the Chinese Tennis Association issued perfunctory assurances that Peng Shuai was safe and "not under any physical threat". In a throwback to Ja Ma's carefully calibrated 'reappearances' that raised a lot more questions than it addressed, Peng Shuai too has started making what is increasingly getting dubbed as 'hostage videos'. For an internationally active player, there has been an inexplicable curb on access and ability to reach out to her with strangely incommunicado and stage-managed 'sightings', dished out as means of meaningless reassurances of normalcy. Unfortunately, and embarrassingly so for the Chinese, the WTA Tour has suspended its tournaments in China and upped the ante, exactly what the Chinese were seeking to avoid, in their quest to suppress the truth and the accompanying outcry. Crucially, this specific disappearance (unlike countless others) could further sully the Chinese perceptions, weak as they are in the COVID era, to derail the Winter Olympics which are due in a

couple of months.

It's not so much about defending Gaoli's personal reputation (who too remains away from public gaze) as much as it is about defending the linear mirage of the 'Chinese Dream' (read, Party's governing capacity and infallibility) and of, therefore, avoiding the dangerous precedent of 'questioning' any of its imperatives. The *People's Daily*, which noted the "heaven on earth" analogy in 1958, launched its English daily tabloid, *Global Times*, in 2009 with the same level of propagandistic enthusiasm — so it noted WTA's action as "pursuit of political correctness", "forcing her to comply in accordance with the imagination and expectations of Western public opinion" and as "politicisation of sports", all the while remaining deflective on the specifics of Peng Shuai's disappearance. This is the thin ice on which the Chinese society, governance and sustainability is predicated; Xi Jinping knows this, and therefore among his predecessors, he prefers Mao Zedong's hard propaganda approach to the relatively reformist approach of Deng Xiaoping.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUND BITE

There is no need to panic. I request you all to maintain social distancing and wear masks.



Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal

Right now, the drug companies have set the prices at whatever the market will bear.



US President —Joe Biden

Today I completed 25 years in our wonderful film industry. I am, and will always be, eternally grateful.



Actor —Arshad Warsi

As I have said earlier and saying it again, Virat Kohli is the best Test captain India has ever had.



Former Indian cricketer —Irfan Pathan

The BJP has made the country economically weak and has created a rift between people of different communities.



SP chief —Akhilesh Yadav

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PANDEMIC IS PERHAPS INVINCIBLE

Sir — No country, no community, no individual is safe until everyone across the world is safe. The emergence of a new Coronavirus variant has once again brought the spotlight on how unprecedented the pandemic is and how precarious the situation we're all in. We may have come to think that the pandemic is over, but the virus is still with us. As we speak, scientists across the world are scrambling to gather more data on the Omicron variant to understand how dangerous it is in terms of transmission and severity, and whether the currently available vaccines will be effective against it. The World Health Organisation has designated Omicron — the B.1.1.529 lineage of Sars-Cov-2 — as a variant of concern, leading to fears of another global surge in cases.

Dozens of countries have imposed travel bans from South African nations, where the Omicron variant was first identified. Others have imposed stricter measures to curb the spread of the Omicron variant. As on date, at least 38 countries have confirmed Omicron cases. Meanwhile, a number of countries have started booster vaccinations as a preventive measure against the new strain. But the question is: As long as vaccine inequity is not addressed, can the world think of defeating the Coronavirus pandemic and restoring normalcy?

Gautam SR | Bhopal

KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE

Sir — Russian President Vladimir Putin's India visit should bolster bilateral ties between the two countries. Foreign policy is a matter of costs and benefits; no two nations are permanent foes. New Delhi, of course, is not on a slippery slope as far as its military and trade ties with Moscow are concerned. An old and traditional connection cannot go haywire just like that, and that was exemplified in no uncertain terms by Putin's India visit. The 2+2 meeting between the defence and foreign ministers of both the countries was held in a conducive atmosphere. India holds 2+2 ministerial meetings with

Numbers make all the noise



Despite climbing to the third position in the list of most wicket-takers in Test cricket in India and leading the team to victory innumerable times, Ravichandran Ashwin continues to be criticised and compared. He has done remarkably well as an off-spinner for Indian cricket time and again. Whether it is ODI, T20 or Test cricket, Ashwin adjusts as per the format and situation on ground and plays a pivotal role.

He has won the 'Man of the Series' award nine times in his illustrious career. He stands up to the challenge when the chips are down and can perform with the bat as well.

Ashwin came, saw and conquered the cricketing field with a purpose. Ironically, the last wicket of New Zealand cricketer Henry Nicholls was taken by the ace spinner to hasten the end of Kiwi innings in the two match Test series. Ashwin has reached a historic milestone in test cricket. The off-spinner went past Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh in taking 50 wickets in a calendar year for the most number of times. Ashwin is a star spinner and instead of criticising him or comparing his bowling figures with other bowlers, we should remember the times he held the fort and saved the day for Team India.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

the United States, Japan and Australia and, thus, Russia became the fourth country to be accorded that importance. President Putin hailing India as a "great power" should do wonders for healthy bilateral relations.

Military, space, power, energy and infrastructure sectors between India and Russia are all set to be further expanded in the aftermath of President Putin's short but crucial visit. Interpersonal relations between the two have always been above board. There is nothing unusual in differences of opinion between the two friends. Putin kept away from the G20 and rescheduled his Beijing visit amid the pandemic; but kept his word on attending the summit in India. New Delhi, therefore, has to engage Russia on a personal level keeping with its dehyphenation policy on international relations.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

THE BJP SHOULD LEARN TO BE HUMBLE

Sir — There is little doubt that the repeal of the three contentious farm laws that were hastily passed in September last year is a victory for the farming community,

and the triumph justly connotes the popular saying, "Farmers are the backbone of the Indian economy." However, the about turn made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is nothing but a sheer political opportunism with an eye on the forth-coming assembly elections in the key States of UP, Punjab and Uttarakhand, and as well in the wake of the BJP's recent dismal performance in bypolls.

The rollback of the farm laws shows how politically difficult it will be for India to overhaul a sector that supports about 60 per cent of the country's population. The farmers' victory is a tribute to their unprecedented struggle that it not only withstood the multi-fanged State repression, but, in fact, increased its defiant resistance massively for a year. The ruling BJP must have learnt a hard-hitting lesson that a community, which is strongly united for a cause, can never be defeated.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

WTO AND COMMON IP FOR COVID VACCINES

Dissent persists on whether a waiver is answer to shortage and inequitable distribution of vaccines



PK **VASUDEVA**

The WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), scheduled to be held in Geneva, stands postponed again because of the outbreak of the Omicron Coronavirus variant. At MC12, whenever it is now held, ministers will be reviewing the functioning of the multilateral trading system, delivering prepared statements, and taking action on the WTO's future work programme. As is known, the Doha Development Round, launched in 2001, has had a very rocky journey with a low level of achievement. Its main success was the adoption of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation at MC9 in 2013. There is, therefore, considerable pressure for a successful outcome at MC12 at a formal meeting of the Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) on November 18, WTO members agreed to keep actively engaging up until the WTO's MC12 in order to find a common intellectual property (IP) response to Covid-19. Members adopted the oral



status report of the TRIPS council The text provides a factual overview of discussions held at the Council since October 2020, on the proposal by India and South Africa requesting a waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19 and the proposal by the European Union for a draft General Council declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health in the circumstances of a pandemic. On the waiver request, the report indicates that disagreement persists on the fundamental question of whether a waiver is the appropriate and most effective way to address the shortage and inequitable distribution of, and access to, vaccines and other COVID-19-related products. The role of IP in the context of the pandemic has become the centre of attention in the run-up to MC12, and a pragmatic and tangible outcome of these discussions would be a strong and positive signal to the Ministerial Conference and the global community as a whole. The chair of the WTO's agriculture negotiations, Ambassador Gloria Abraham Peralta, told heads of delegations at a meeting on 15 November that she plans to circulate a revised draft negotiation text as soon as possible. The first draft negotiation text was introduced on July 29, with the chair proposing suggestions for a possible agriculture package at MC12. The text encompasses the seven main negotiation topics — domestic support, market access, export restrictions, export competition, cotton, public stockholding for food security purposes (PSH) and a special safeguard mechanism (SSM) as well as cross-cutting transparency issues. The chair emphasized the draft was based on members' discussions as well as her consultations in various configurations and served as a starting point for the final text-based negotiation phase before MC12. The chair also reported to WTO members on the state of play in the negotiations. She said the most recent consultations have focused on engaging members to find convergences on three primary issues: domestic support, public stockholding for food security purposes and, to a lesser extent, market access. Other members reaffirmed that a meaningful MC12 outcome on agriculture will address the compelling issue of food and livelihood security in light of the pandemic and commit members to continuing agricultural reform to make the agriculture trading system fit for purpose. Singapore presented a paper outlining its responses to the questions posed by India regarding an initiative that calls for exempting the World Food Programme's humanitarian food purchases from any export restriction. The initiative has gained wide support from most members and was described by many as a "low-hanging fruit" for MC12.

(The writer is former senior professor, international trade and member, Vivekananda International Foundation. The views expressed are personal.)

Colonial outlook can't fix climate issues now



ASHWANI **MAHAJAN**

Singling out coal won't serve the purpose. India's argument that other fossil fuels used by the rich nations are equally responsible for emissions is logical

Recently the United Nations Environment Conference 'COP 26' concluded in Glasgow, UK. India was praised at this conference, for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Panchamrit" commitment for safe environment. Today's environmental crisis is actually linked to the existence of humanity. The devastation caused by the changing climate is now affecting the common man all over the globe.

Cloudbursts in the Himalayan region of Uttarakhand, excessively low rainfall in some regions and excessive rainfall in some others, and resulting droughts and floods, and causing diseases and resulting in climate change inducing natural calamities, all are impacting lives in the country today. Globally, life on small islands is endangered due to rising sea levels. Environmental hazards are also becoming the cause of large-scale displacement. If we do not rise to the occasion, this earth will not remain a habitable place in the next few decades.

In view of this concern, environmental conferences are being organized under the auspices of the United Nations annually since 1994. These conferences are also called 'United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change'. At the Environment Conference held in Kyoto, Japan a treaty was signed, known as the 'Kyoto Protocol', (with amendments in Doha's Environment Conference in 2012), according to which countries announced targets to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. The 'Kyoto Protocol' was the last such agreement in which developed countries accepted their responsibility to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases emissions; and the less developed and developing countries were exempted from the responsibility of reducing the emission of these gases for some time.

After the 2015 Paris's Environment Conference, India, with a liberal change in its earlier stance, unilaterally pledged to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and made it clear that India would not only live up to its ambitions but also raise the same. But India had also made it clear that developed countries should desist from blaming India for environmental degradation or global warming. The reality is that if seen from the historical perspective, today the world is suffering the consequences of what happened in the last 100 years. Whereas the United States is responsible for 40 per cent of greenhouse gases emissions, Europe's and China's contribution is 10 per cent and 28 per cent respectively, India is responsible for merely three per cent for these emissions.

India had said that while the rich countries are responsible for a major part of the emissions, they had not lived up to their promise, made in Copenhagen, to provide \$100 billion to the developing and least-developed countries to deal with the



THE NEED OF THE HOUR IS THAT IF THE EARTH IS TO BE KEPT HABITABLE, THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES HAVE TO MAKE AVAILABLE THEIR RESOURCES AND TECHNOLOGY FOR IT. THEY WILL HAVE TO COME OUT OF THEIR COLONIAL MINDSET THAT THEY ARE THE RULERS OF THE WORLD AND CAN DO ANYTHING THEY DESIRE

(The writer is a Professor in PGDAV College, University of Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)



environmental crisis. Moreover, given the magnitude of the problem and the efforts needed to deal with the same, even \$1 trillion may fall short of the requirement. Unfortunately, there is no reference to the commitment of \$100 billion in COP26's final document. Rather, all efforts are being made to put the blame on India for the environmental crisis due to over usage of coal. In the draft of the final document of the Environment Conference of Glasgow (UK), the rich countries included the condition to phase out of coal in the draft declaration, and when India refused to accept the same, a campaign was started in the western media to defame India that it is becoming an obstacle in the way to solution of environmental crisis.

Whereas the media in the west is trying to portray India as the villain of the environmental crisis for not accepting the condition to phase out coal usage in the final document, countries like the US, Europe and China, who are main culprits, are nowhere close to being held responsible. We need to understand that singling out coal will not serve the purpose. India's argument that other fossil fuels like petroleum and gas are equally responsible for emissions is a logical one. However, since the US and Europe have an advantage in

using them (petroleum and gas), there is no mention of reducing emissions from these fossil fuels in the final document, which is downright unfair.

Today, when the developed countries are calling India a hindrance to the environmental treaty, they have to introspect and realize that the reason for the present environmental crisis is the uncontrolled consumption by those countries, which is reflected in the fact that the US and Europe alone — where only 14 per cent of the total world's population lives — account for 50 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions in the last 100 years.

Not only this, even today the per capita emission of greenhouse gases in India is only 1.77 metric tons, while in America it is 14.24 metric tons and in England it is 4.85 metric tons, and in China also the per capita emission of greenhouse gases is 7.41 metric tons. The main reason for excessive greenhouse gas emissions in developed countries is wasteful and irresponsible consumption, which is due to their lifestyle. Developed countries today are not ready to concede that the present environmental crisis is due to their stubbornness to not change their lifestyle. The people of these countries and their leadership will have to realize that they have to control

their consumption to overcome the current environmental crisis. Whether it is the goal of not allowing the world's temperature to rise more than 1.5 degrees from the pre-industrial level, or the reduction in smoke, the only solution is the control of consumption, for which the developed countries have the main responsibility.

Apart from this, the efforts made by developing countries and underdeveloped countries like India to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases and global warming will require the use of technology. This technology is available mainly with the developed countries, which they want to share only for a hefty price. On the other hand, developing and underdeveloped countries will have to increase the use of renewable energy such as solar energy, wind energy, etc., for which they will need more investment and technology. The need of the hour is that if the earth is to be kept habitable, the developed countries have to make available their resources and technology for it, rich countries will have to come out of their colonial mindset, that they are the rulers of the world and can do anything they desire. It should not be forgotten that heat emanating from global warming will not spare even these rich countries.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WE WILL SOON WRITE TO THE CENTRE AND MEET THE UNION HOME MINISTER, URGING TO OPEN TRADE WITH NEIGHBOURING PAKISTAN.
—PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER
CHARANJIT SINGH CHANNI



THE NEIGHBOURING NATION SHOULD FIRST STOP KILLING INDIAN SOLDIERS, THEN WE WILL TALK ABOUT TRADE.
—FORMER PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER
CAPT AMARINDER SINGH

The Congress faces a host of challenges before 2024

All Opposition parties might be willing to unite under Sonia Gandhi's leadership; however, they have reservations against Rahul Gandhi

Will Congress perish as West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and others believe? Even in the past, many predicted the end of Congress, but it survived many onslaughts. The latest was in 1998 when Sonia Gandhi emerged, Sphinx-like, to revive it and rule from 2004-2014. The 2019 Lok Sabha results gave Congress 12 crore votes, though seat-wise it got only 52. Even in its second successive defeat in 2019, the party retained a solid block of 20 per cent votes. The Gandhi family is complacent, believing that the voters will get disenchanted sooner than later and return to the Grand Old Party. No doubt they live in a fool's paradise as there is an urgent need to revive the



KALYANI **SHANKAR**

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

party. Undoubtedly, Congress faces a leadership crisis and challenges from many sides.

The first is to quell the internal indiscipline and revolt. The group of 23 led by Ghulam Nabi Azad is an example and this disenchantment is prevalent in almost all states.

The second comes from within the Opposition bloc. Of late, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's attack, backed by the wily NCP chief Sharad Pawar, has intensified. Now that Mamata has decided to bid for the Prime Minister's post in 2024, she is trying to edge out Congress from the opposition bloc. As a first step, Banerjee is preparing to broad-base her party and also gain pan-national recognition.



The third is the shrinking Congress party in many states and even regions. Congress should now aim to build upon the 12-crore voter base instead of embroiling itself in self-made controversies. Of the 186 direct fights between BJP and Congress in 2019, the former won 170 seats, amounting to a 91.4 per cent strike rate. It bagged 162 of these seats in the 2014 elections. The Congress, which won 24 of these seats in 2014, has come down to 15. In Uttar Pradesh,

Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh, and West Bengal, where it ruled in the past, Congress won only 10 out of 286 seats. The party has no representation from 20 states. Further, BJP has taken over the opposition space in Odisha, Tripura, and West Bengal, where Congress was traditionally the main opposition. Also, the regional parties continue to put up a much better fight than Congress.

So, what are the options for the party now that there are cracks within the opposition?

The first is to think of a long-term strategy and start preparing for 2024. Mamata is

doing precisely that. Congress is involved in short-term quick-fix solutions, often messing up the party's chances as they did in Punjab recently. But before that, the party needs to resolve its leadership crisis, which has been going on since August 2019.

The second is that the party needs enormous resources and committed booth committees to compete with BJP. Once these two are addressed, the other things are more manageable.

The third is to find ways of uniting the opposition. Sonia Gandhi has the stature to do this as almost all opposition parties might be willing to unite under her leadership, but they have reservations against Rahul Gandhi. If necessary, the Gandhi family

should pave the way for some other leader.

The regional leaders realize that though they could contain BJP in their states, they do not have a pan-national presence. Even today, therefore, they need a party like Congress; every village has a congressman.

Last Sunday, Shiv Sena mouthpiece *Saamna*, in its editorial, said that pushing the grand old party away from national politics and creating an Opposition grouping parallel to the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) would only strengthen BJP and "fascist" forces. Though Mamata tried to woo the Sena during her recent visit, Sena does not want to lose its government because Congress is its coalition partner in Maharashtra.

Rahul Gandhi has been in politics since 2004, but he is not yet accepted as the opposition face. Rahul's efforts to befriend second-generation leaders like Akhilesh Yadav have not succeeded. He needs an image makeover.

The fourth and more complex option is to give a call to all those leaders who had left Congress to come back. This idea springs up on and off. Congress has been the parent of many ruling parties like the NCP, TMC, YSRCP. There have been suggestions that such a united party could function under a presidium and collective leadership. But the parent party is hesitant to take such a plunge. A united Congress, than a divided opposition, is a more formidable opponent to BJP.

Citroen to hike C5 Aircross SUV price by up to 3 pc

■ NEW DELHI

Automaker Citroen India on Tuesday said it will increase price of its premium SUV C5 Aircross by up to 3 per cent from January next year to offset the impact of rising input costs.

The effective price increase will be up to 3 per cent on the existing ex-showroom prices of the Feel and Shine variants of the model, the automaker said in a statement.

A continued rise in the cost of commodities and ocean freight costs has necessitated this price increase of the vehicle, it added. The price of C5 Aircross currently starts at Rs 31.3 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi).

Some carmakers have already announced a hike in vehicle prices from next month such as Maruti Suzuki and luxury automakers Audi and Mercedes-Benz.

Sensex soars 887 pts on global market trend

■ MUMBAI

Recovering from a two-session carnage, equity benchmark Sensex rebounded 887 points on Tuesday, led by gains in index majors ICICI Bank, HDFC twins and Infosys amid a positive trend in global markets.

According to experts, global equity markets are slightly relieved after studies pertaining to the Omicron strain of COVID-19 suggest that even though it is fast spreading, it is largely milder than the Delta variant.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 886.51 points or 1.56 per cent higher at 57,633.65. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rallied 264.45 points or 1.56 per cent to 17,176.70.

Tata Steel was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, advancing nearly 4 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Bank, SBI and Bajaj Finance.

On the other hand, Asian



Paints was the sole laggard.

"Markets rebounded sharply after two days of the selloff on account of positive global cues. Investors are following the buy-on dip strategy and thus accumulating quality stocks at a cheaper price," said Arijit Malakar, Head Research (Retail) of Ashika Stock Broking.

Further, he said studies pertaining to the Omicron strain of COVID-19 have shown that it is largely milder than the Delta variant and that provides some relief to global equity

markets.

Additionally, RBI is expected to keep the interest rates steady when the MPC will announce the outcome of its meeting on December 8, Malakar added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended with gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading on a positive note in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude rose 2.26 per cent to USD 74.73 per barrel.

Centre disburses Rs 2,071cr loan for 4k projects

■ NEW DELHI

The government has so far disbursed Rs 2,071 crore for 4,003 projects under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Tuesday. Tomar, in a written reply to the Lok Sabha, said a total of 8,488 projects have been sanctioned under the scheme so far with a loan amount of Rs 6,098 crore. "Out of which, Rs 2,071 crores have been disbursed for 4,003 projects," he said. Out of 8,488 projects sanctioned so far, a maximum of 1,954 projects were from Madhya Pradesh, followed by 1,424 projects in Andhra Pradesh, 900 projects in Karnataka, 684 projects in Uttar Pradesh, 654 projects from Rajasthan and 555 projects in Maharashtra. About 5,067 projects sanctioned belonged to primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACS), 2,576 projects of agri-entrepreneurs, 685 projects of individual farmers, 61 projects of farmer producer organizations and 53 projects belonged to start-ups, showed the data placed before the Lower House.

Global stocks follow Wall Street higher amid virus fears

■ BEIJING

Global stock markets followed Wall Street higher Tuesday as anxiety about the coronavirus's latest variant eased and China reported stronger November trade figures than expected.

London and Frankfurt opened higher. Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong advanced. Oil prices rose more than \$1 a barrel for a second day.

Wall Street futures were higher after the chief White House medical adviser said Monday the omicron variant might be less dangerous. That might allow travel and business restrictions to ease.

Reports from South Africa, where omicron first was spotted, that hospitals haven't been overwhelmed "is fuelling some optimism" among traders who sold earlier, said Yeap Jun Rong of IG in a report.

In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London gained 1% to 7,302.61 and Frankfurt's DAX advanced 1.6% to 15,623.97. The CAC 40 in Paris added



1.7% to 6,982.63.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 future was up 1% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average advanced 0.8%.

On Monday, the S&P 500 rose 1.2% while the Dow added 1.9%. The Nasdaq composite gained less than 0.1%.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index rose 0.2% to 3,595.09 after November imports surged 31.7% over a

year earlier in a sign domestic demand might be strengthening.

The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo gained 1.9% to 28,455.60 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 2.6% to 23,983.66.

The Kospi in Seoul advanced 0.6% to 2,991.72 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 gained 1% to 7,313.90.

India's Sensex rose 2% to 57,871.21. New Zealand and Southeast Asian markets gained.

On Wall Street, more than 85% of stocks in the S&P 500 rose Monday, led by technology and banks.

Airlines, cruise lines and other travel companies that stand to gain from avoiding more anti-coronavirus controls advanced after Dr Anthony Fauci said early indications suggested omicron may be less dangerous than the earlier delta variant.

It will still take a few weeks to learn whether omicron is more contagious, causes more severe illness or evades immunity.

MONEY MATTERS

Reliance Capital says corporate insolvency resolution started

Reliance Capital on Tuesday said the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has admitted the case of the company for the corporate insolvency procedure. Shares of the company declined by more than 4 per cent to trade at Rs 14.10 on BSE. Pursuant to order dated December 6, 2021 of the National Company Law Tribunal, Mumbai, corporate insolvency resolution (CRIP) has been initiated against Reliance Capital Ltd., the company said in a regulatory filing. Nageshwar Rao Y has been appointed as the administrator of the company, via order dated December 6, 2021, it said further. The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Monday admitted the Reserve Bank's plea to initiate insolvency resolution proceedings against Reliance Capital. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had filed an application for the initiation of Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) against the company last week.



Sebi amends delisting rules to make M&A more convenient

■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has amended rules pertaining to delisting of equity shares of a company following an open offer as part of efforts to make merger and acquisition transactions for listed companies more convenient.

Under the new framework, promoters or acquirers need to disclose their intention to delist the firm through an initial public announcement, according to a notification.

If the acquirer is desirous of delisting the target company, the acquirer must propose a higher price for delisting with suitable premium over open offer price.



In case the open offer is for an indirect acquisition, the open offer price and indicative price will be notified by the acquirer at the time of making

the detailed public statement and in the letter of offer.

"The indicative price shall include a suitable premium reflecting the price that the acquirer is willing to pay for the delisting offer with full disclosures of the rationale and justification for the indicative price so determined that can also be revised upwards by the acquirer before the start of the tendering period," Sebi said in a notification on Monday.

In the existing framework, if an open offer is triggered, compliance with takeover regulations could take the incoming acquirer's holding to above 75 per cent or perhaps even 90 per cent.

MedPlus Health IPO to open on Dec 13 at Rs 780-796/share

■ NEW DELHI

MedPlus Health Services Ltd, a pharmacy retail chain, on Tuesday fixed a price band of Rs 780-796 a share for its Rs 1,398 crore initial share sale, which will open for public subscription on December 13. The three-day initial public offering (IPO) will close on December 15. The bidding for anchor investors will open on December 10. The initial share-sale comprises fresh issuance of equity shares worth 600 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to equity shares aggregating up to Rs 798.30 crore by promoter and existing shareholders.

MFI industry shows improvement after 2nd wave

■ MUMBAI

After the setbacks during the second wave of the pandemic, the microfinance industry showed an improvement in disbursements, asset quality and new loan inquiries in the September quarter, a report said on Tuesday.

The portfolio outstanding for the industry, which typically provides small ticket loans to micro entrepreneurs and women borrowers, increased to Rs 249 lakh crore as of September, up 2.1 per cent when compared with the figure in June and 6 per cent when compared with the year-ago period, it said.

Unpaid loans, which had become a concern because of



the economic activity getting affected during the second wave in the April-June period, also seem to be reducing if one were to go by the 30-day overdue period, the report by CRIF Highmark, a credit information company, said.

The 30-plus days overdue loans declined to 10.4 per cent in September from June's 15 per cent, while those unpaid for over 90 days remained stable at 3.3 per cent, it said.

India has exported 9.39L tonnes of sugar so far



Sugar mills have exported 9.39 lakh tonnes of the sweetener till the first week of December during the ongoing 2021-22 marketing year that started from October 1, and are not in hurry to sell further stock in view of sluggish global price trend, trade body AISTA said on Tuesday.

About 4.68 lakh tonnes of sugar is in transit, the All India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA) said in a statement. Mills have contracted to export 33 lakh tonnes of sugar without the government subsidy so far in the 2021-22 marketing year, it added. The sugar marketing year runs from October to September. Sugar exports this year are being undertaken without the government subsidy. According to AISTA, mills have exported a total of 9.39,435 tonnes of sugar from October 1 to December 6, 2021. "Indian mills are not in a hurry to sell sugar as previous sales are yet to be executed. Also, they do not like the current global prices, which shall have to move up to attract more Indian sales," AISTA said.

Over 2L farmers in Nagaland get Rs 299 cr under PM-Kisan

The Centre has transferred Rs 299.26 crore to more than 2 lakh beneficiary farmers in Nagaland since the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme in February 2019, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.



Under the PM-KISAN scheme, a financial benefit of Rs 6,000 per year is provided to eligible farmer families, payable in three equal installments of Rs 2,000. Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, in his written reply to the Lok Sabha, said: "A total of 2,06,523 beneficiaries have been given the financial benefits of more than Rs 299.26 crore through various installments under PM-KISAN Scheme in the State of Nagaland."

Nestle India gets govt approval for PLI scheme



MCG major Nestle India on Tuesday said it has received approval from the government for the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for processed fruits and vegetables. In June 2021, the company had submitted its proposal towards the Indian

government's PLI for the food processing sector under the eligible categories of ready-to-eat/ready-to-cook and processed fruits and vegetables, Nestle India said in a regulatory filing. It further said that on December 6, 2021, the company has "received communication from the Government of India that its proposal with respect to processed fruits and vegetables has been approved". Thanking the government for the approval, Nestle India said it has "always believed that the PLI scheme for the food processing sector will help farmers and the food processing industries".

Steps to protect bonafide decisions of bank: FM

■ NEW DELHI

The government has taken various measures to protect bona fide commercial decisions of banks to alleviate the fear of any unwarranted hardships to officials or senior executives taking key decisions, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday in the Rajya Sabha.

These include amendments to Prevention of Corruption Act (PC Act), 1988, requiring prior permission before initiating investigation against a

public servant, setting up of Advisory Board for Banking and Financial Frauds (ABBF) for first level of examination of suspected frauds of banks and financial institutions in excess of Rs 50 crore, finalisation of Consolidated Staff Accountability Framework etc, she said. The government, in consultation with Central Vigilance Commission, has recently finalised a consolidated Staff Accountability Framework for non-performing assets (NPAs) accounts up to Rs 50 crore, other than fraud cases, she said.



Ather Energy opens 2nd outlet in Surat

■ MUMBAI

Electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy inaugurated on Tuesday its new retail outlet at Vesu (Surat), its second such facility in the state and 25th in the country.

The latest showroom at Surat aims to educate customers about every aspect of the vehicle and witness the engineering and mechanical efforts that go into the making of each Ather scooter, the company said. The company also said it has installed two fast-charging points, Ather Grid at Surat and plans to add 8-10 more to strengthen the charging network and make the transition to electric scooters stress-free and convenient.

Decision to link price of desi coking coal to imported one

■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday said that for higher supply of coking coal in the country and to ensure that it is provided at a cheaper rate, it is considering measures like linking the price of domestic coking coal to the imported dry fuel.

The development assumes significance in the wake of an inter-ministerial panel suggesting formulating an import parity-based pricing mechanism for domestic coking coal factoring the quality parameters.

"For higher supply of coking coal in the country and to



ensure it is provided at a cheaper rate, the decision to yet reduce ash percentage with upgraded technology and the price of coking coal to be linked to imported coal are the measures under consideration," the coal ministry said in a statement.

The committee, headed by the coal additional secretary,

has also suggested the identification of additional coking coal blocks for production by Coal India Ltd (CIL) and the private sector and auction of CBM overlap coking coal blocks.

Recently, the formed inter-ministerial committee, including industry stakeholders, to strategise augmentation of coking coal production in India has submitted its recommendations, the ministry said in the statement. Based on this, the coal ministry has set up the mission coking coal to evolve a road map for increasing production and utilisation of domestic coking coal.

Rupee rises 4 paise to end at 75.41 against \$

■ MUMBAI

The rupee erased most of its initial gains but managed to settle marginally 4 paise higher at 75.41 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday as heavy buying in domestic equities supported the local unit. Analysts said that uncertainty around the new coronavirus variant Omicron and foreign capital outflows continued to check rupee's rise. At the inter-bank forex market, the local unit opened strong at 75.31 against the greenback and witnessed an intraday high of 75.26 and a low of 75.49 during the day's trade.

Govt cuts short tenure of NHPC Director N K Jain by 2 months

■ NEW DELHI

NHPC Director (Personnel) Nikhil Kumar Jain has been relieved from the service two months before the completion of his tenure on performance ground, sources said on Tuesday.

On December 2, 2021, the Ministry of Power had conveyed to NHPC about its decision to curtail Jain's tenure. Following the directions of the ministry, Jain was relieved from the post with immediate effect, they said.

"His tenure was till February 2022. Even after several warnings from the Ministry, he was not improving his performance. By not contributing to the development of the organisation, he was obstructing the progress of the company," the sources said. According to them, Jain was appointed to the post on February 7, 2017, for a period of 5 years. Prior to his role at NHPC, he was the Director (Personnel) at Air India Limited since 2012.

"He was not performing in

his earlier roles also. This will be an example for all those who are not performing in PSUs," a source in the government said. Jain holds a bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from IIT Roorkee. He completed his LLB from Delhi University in 2010.

When contacted, Jain refused to comment on the matter. An NHPC official, who was reached out for response, said the move to relieve him from the service by the company was taken following the orders of the Ministry of Power.

Microsoft launches cybersecurity skilling program

■ NEW DELHI

Microsoft on Tuesday launched a cybersecurity skilling programme that aims to skill over one lakh learners by 2022 as part of efforts to address the skills gap and empower India's workforce for a career in digital security.

The programme is designed to give learners hands-on experience in the fundamentals of security, compliance, and identity, a statement said.

Microsoft will conduct these courses along with its strategic consortium of partners including Cloudthat, Koenig, RPS, and Synergetics Learning, it added. The course modules are designed to support all levels of learners, regardless of where they are in their cybersecurity journey.

"Trust and security are at the heart of who we are as a company, and we work closely with governments, civil society, and organisations across the world



to help them stay secure. Investing in cybersecurity skilling and preparing the next generation of security leaders is a big part of that effort," Microsoft India President Anant Maheshwari said. He added


that Microsoft is deeply committed to democratise skilling for all and this programme is a strong step in making cybersecurity skilling accessible and affordable for all. Microsoft has introduced four new security,

compliance, and identity certifications, of which the accredited certification for fundamentals will be offered at zero-cost for any individual who attends the associated training through this initiative, the statement said. Additionally, in collaboration with its partners, Microsoft, offers learners deeply discounted offers on the rest of the advanced role-based certifications to drive deep skills for addressing cybersecurity challenges, it added.

Tanla to provide secure solutions

Tanla and Vodafone Idea on Tuesday announced a pact under which Tanla will provide solutions to secure, encrypt and enhance performance for international messaging traffic on the telco's network. Announcing the alliance, the companies in a joint statement said that India's international messaging market (messages originating outside India and terminating in India) is estimated to be Rs 3,500 crore annually.

Riz Ahmed on working with Micheal Pearce



Riz Ahmed is known for his versatile and phenomenal acting skills all over the world. His on-point dialogue delivery, apt expressions and the movies he chooses to act in are appreciated by people. He is coming back on big screens and on Amazon Prime Video with *Encounter*, a science-fiction film. The movie is about a decorated Marine who goes on a rescue mission to save his two young sons from a mysterious threat. As their journey takes them in increasingly dangerous directions, the boys will need to leave their childhoods behind. Riz Ahmed talks about what made him say yes to the role and how he prepared himself to do justice to Malik and impress the director.

Riz Ahmed says after reading the screenplay he was immediately intrigued by the character of Malik, Ahmed impressed by the sophistication of the writing. "It's quite rare to read a script like this one that's emotionally engaging and grounded in character while also having the momentum of a chase thriller with sci-fi elements. That combination was very appealing to me."

The actor was also a huge fan of director Micheal Pearce's first film. "Beast is a nuanced character portrait and a film about relationships, but at the same time it manages to play like a mystery thriller, and

the script for *Encounter* pulls off something similar," says Ahmed. "Not a lot of directors can walk a fine line like that, but Michael is definitely one who can. It was clear to me that he was one of the great directors in the making, so the combination of the script and working with him made this project a no-brainer for me."

Determined to convince Pearce he was the right choice for Malik, Ahmed arranged to meet with the filmmaker over coffee and personally lobbied to play the character. "My ultimate goal was simply to put myself in his hands and just trust him, because I believed in him that much." The character was originally written as a white man, so one of the initial topics of conversation between Ahmed, who is of Pakistani descent, and Pearce was reimagining the protagonist as a South Asian and what that would mean to the overall story.

Ultimately, they agreed that seeing a father and sons who looked like the Khan family being chased across the Southwest would significantly raise the stakes of the film. "When you consider all the baggage and preconceptions around a character like Malik Khan, we both felt it could actually increase the potential alienation he felt, and would naturally heighten the tension as he and his kids are being pursued," says the actor.

Kept Akshay, Dhanush, Sara in mind while creating music for *Atrangi Re*, says AR Rahman

Music maestro AR Rahman said he has created the soundtrack for filmmaker Aanand L Rai's upcoming film *Atrangi Re* keeping in mind the on-screen and off-screen persona of the lead actors. The romantic-musical drama, written by Rai's long-time collaborator Himanshu Sharma, stars Dhanush and Sara Ali Khan in the lead. Akshay Kumar features a special role. At the music launch of *Atrangi Re*, when Rahman was asked if he keeps actors in mind while working on a film's soundtracks, the composer replied, "Yes. Because I am working with a director so closely and he (Rai) keeps talking about the actors like what Dhanush, Sara, and Akshay Kumar do. He told me Akshay has a collection of songs and I thought there is so much competition and that I need to make something cool as he has a lot of choices."

"Then the song came with keeping Akshay in mind. Dhanush's song came from how he mixes some of English, Hindi, and Tamil. We had a song for Dhanush. It was a tough one. The way Sara dances, we had to give her a dance song, which is *Chaka Chak*, Rahman said at the event last night."

Crediting Rai for his vision, Rahman said he has been a huge fan of the filmmaker. The two had previously collaborated on the 2013 romantic drama *Raanjhanaa*, which also featured Dhanush in the lead.

The musical journey always starts with the director coming and engaging and saying I want to do this crazy love story. I am a big fan of his (Rai) work, his screenplay, how he brings villages to life and makes it so international so the whole world can see our culture, our joy, sadness, hope, faith, everything.



"He is a very important director in my life. Working with him, Irshad and Himanshu has been an amazing ride," the Oscar-winning composer said.

Rahman shared that it was during the coronavirus pandemic that the team, including lyricist Irshad Kamil, came together to create five songs. Irshad Kamil, who has penned the lyrics of *Atrangi Re*, said Rahman would often ask him to describe the one hook word for the song.

Whenever we work together, it is not like music comes first or lyrics, we just sit and chat, sometimes music comes first, sometimes lyrics. He (Rahman) tells me to give me one word that can be the anchor of the song, like I gave him the word *Chaka Chak* and he created magic, Kamil, 50, said.

Rai said the film's album is all about love.

To get a word (for a song) to describe the situation and character is the much tougher task than writing the full page.

"The song *Rait Zara Si* is the soul of the film. The song that gives the entire emotion of my film in three-four minutes is this. The album is all about love, once you listen to the music you will fall in love," he added.

Kumar, who has teamed up with Rai for the first time, said he instantly fell in love with the story of *Atrangi Re*.

The actor said working with the filmmaker has been a fun experience.

"Aanand ji reminds me of my childhood. He is just like a child, he fights, he smiles, he laughs, he eats. It has been fun working with him and his team. I remember, when I heard the story, within half-an-hour my role is not that big, the whole film belongs to Sara and Dhanush but I wanted to be part of it because if he can think of this story, why can't I be a part of it," he said.

Sara said she feels grateful to get an opportunity to work with Rai and senior actors like Kumar and Dhanush so early on in her career.

"Dhanush sir is an outstanding actor. He is so humble and supportive. He has worked with Aanand ji before and they know each other so well but I never felt out of place. They are such inspirations. I am grateful to have shared screen with Akshay sir. I have been a huge fan of his. His star power and energy are unparalleled. Even with his stardom, he is a humble person who is so easy to work with," she added.

Atrangi Re, produced by Bhushan Kumar-led T-Series, Rai's Colour Yellow Productions and Cape of Good Films, will release on December 24 on Disney+Hotstar.

Colin Farrell to reprise Penguin role for HBO Max's *The Batman* spin-off series

Actor Colin Farrell has signed on to return as DC comic villain the Penguin in *The Batman* spin-off series, set at streaming platform HBO Max.

Farrell, who will be making his debut as the Penguin in Matt Reeves-directed *The Batman* movie, will also serve as executive producer on the series.

According to *Variety*, the show centres on the villain's rise to power in the Gotham criminal underworld.

Lauren LeFranc is attached to write the script.

Reeves and *The Batman* film's producer Dylan Clark will executive produce the Penguin series under their 6th and Idaho and Dylan Clark Productions banners, respectively.

Warner Bros Television will produce. The Penguin, aka Oswald Cobblepot, is one of the most iconic villains from DC's Batman universe. The character has previously been played by actors Burgess Meredith, Danny DeVito, and Robin Lord



Taylor.

The Batman movie, starring Robert Pattinson as the titular superhero, is scheduled to be released on March 4, 2020.

Release of Prabhu Deva-starrer *Thael* gets postponed

The release of director Harikumar's *Thael*, featuring actors Prabhu Deva and Samyuktha Hegde in the lead, has been postponed, its makers announced late on Monday.

Studio Green Productions, the production house that has produced the action thriller, said in a statement that the release of *Thael* had been postponed because of "unforeseen situations."




A new release date will be announced soon, they said, adding: "We will meet you soon with the film."

"Thael", which means 'scorpion' in Tamil, was originally scheduled to hit screens on December 10. The film has music by C. Sathya and cinematography by Vignesh Vasu. It has been edited by National Award winner K.L. Praveen.





Interestingly, Prabhu Deva, who is known for his dancing skills, does not have a single dance number in this film.






ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK






SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

	1	2	3	4	
5					6
7			8		
9				10	
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GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

	7		2			9		
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	7			5		8		

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

1

A three-sided figure

7

Shoplifter

8

A compass direction

9

Coming to a finish

10

Something worn on a foot

12

Shove

14

A skateboard has these

17

Precise

18

Water vapour

19

A blown musical instrument

4

Titter

5

Triad

6

Trio

11

Picked

13

Wee

15

Vote into power

16

Famous celebrity

SOLUTION

E	L	E	P	H	A	N	T
I	L	O	E				
E	G	G	S	C	R	E	A
C	H	O	I	E			
I	L	O	R	E			
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N	M	S	R	A			
S	I	M	P	L	E		
L	I	E	O	L			
L	C	O	N	C	R	E	T

DOWN

1

Bronze medal place in a race

2

Toddler

3

Smell with this

Romance is Shaheer Shah's go-to genre for every mood

K RAMYA SREE

Actor-model Shaheer Sheikh, who rose to fame after playing Arjuna in *Mahabharat*, is known for playing intriguing characters on the small screen. His professional and personal life is the most talked about in the telly town. The actor recently welcomed his first child with his wife Ruchikaa. Photographs he shares on social media along with his wife gives one the real couple goals vibes, making it seem like Shaheer is leading the most romantic life of all.

Now, who better than Shaheer Shah to become the face of the latest romance campaign?

Tata Sky Romance is a one-of-a-kind service that will offer a variety of romantic content across Hollywood, Bollywood, and Television, curated for the good old-fashioned romantics. Small screen divas Shaheer Sheikh along with Sana Makbul have been roped in as the faces of the campaign that highlights a quirky way to test one's romance quotient.

Shaheer, who bagged this opportunity, is on cloud 9 as his audiences will enjoy every shade of him.

"Personally, romance is my go-to genre for every mood in life, and to have a platform that curates the hits, classics, and cults of the genre is a gift, I believe everyone will love to have. The gamut includes evergreen Hollywood movies as well as some popular Urdu shows that are known for their romance," shares an excited Shaheer, adding, "Larger-than-life romantic dramas and movies have always been close to my heart. This service will allow audiences to get access to more international content on their TV screens."

For Shaheer, *50 First Dates*, *The Notebook*, and *Descendants of The Sun* are his top three favourite romantic films.

Having spoken much about the actor's favourite genre — romance — wondering about the actor's best on-screen romantic life that has captured a lot of hearts? Let him



answer this for you in detail: "While I have played various characters and been associated with various projects, people still remember

me as Anant from *Navya* and I still receive overwhelming love and appreciation for that. I am extremely happy that my audiences

enjoy every shade of me but they prefer the romantic characters somehow, therefore I thought it would be great to get them a service that allows them to enjoy romantic content from across the West in the language we prefer."

Sharing his experience shooting for this project, the *Pavitra Rishta* actor shares, "It was great fun to shoot for the campaign film. Sana and I really had a good time shooting for the campaign and I am looking forward to seeing what the audience feels about this association."



Larger-than-life romantic dramas and movies have always been close to my heart. This service will allow audiences to get access to more international content on their TV screens.
— SHAHEER SHEIKH

Meanwhile, Shaheer has just finished shooting for *Pavitra Rishta* and *Kuch Rang Pyaar Ke*. He is planning not to take up anything long-term right now he says his fans will see him in a few music videos and a short film very soon.



Slow Slow is a perfect mix of all ingredients

As 2021 draws to a close, the multi-talented actor Abhishek Singh is all set to wow music lovers once again, as he joins forces with none other than the musical sensation Badshah along with the ravishing Seerat Kapoor. Rightfully termed as the dance anthem of 2021 — *Slow Slow* shows the tall, dark and handsome actor in a suave avatar. Abhishek Singh has delighted us with his charismatic presence earlier in stellar music videos and the recent one tops the chart on every aspect. It's great to witness the IAS officer climbing the ladder of success, moving quickly from one achievement to the next. Abhishek surely has become the most sought-after stars to feature in top rated music videos in the country!

An excited Abhishek shares with *The Pioneer*, "It's wonderful to be a part of such an energetic and melodious song — *Slow Slow*. This is the third music video that I have shot for and I am loving the entire experience! Badshah is a dear friend and collaborating with him is truly an honor. We are absolutely confident that the foot-tapping song and its tasteful video will be loved by music lovers all over the world."

Talking about the song alongside Badshah and Abhishek Singh, Tollywood diva Seerat Kapoor shares, "Something else about a team that clicks together like a house on fire! Badshah is born natural and very enthusiastically makes room for everyone on set to feel equally involved, invites creative inputs and above all ensures that the team enjoys the shooting process. Collaborating with him has truly been memorable."

Sharing fun moments on screen, Seerat Kapoor further adds, "Can't think of one! With badshah on set, we don't know which next min the entire team would break into a laughter."

Slow Slow has been creating waves since the moment it was launched. The magical voice of Badshah coupled with the brilliant performance by Abhishek Singh makes this a complete chartbuster!



Dealing with the aftermath of a toxic relationship? Here are some tips

Toxic relationships can be different for everyone. They don't always start out toxic, so it can be tricky to identify if you are in an unhealthy relationship. Even if you have identified it, it can be really hard to leave the partner for many different reasons.

While everyone's recovery is different, here are some tips on how to heal after a toxic relationship.

- Practice good self-care and take some extra time out for yourself and your emotions. The more you know yourself and practice radical self-acceptance — including the dark emotions that show up, the more love you will have for yourself.
- Be socially active with supportive friends and family members
- Stop blaming yourself for the relationship not working out. Stop living in guilt.
- Learn to forgive yourself. Be kind to yourself and respect yourself. Learn to let go and free yourself from your past.
- Don't be in a rush to jump into another relationship. Take your time. The loneliness you may be feeling is better than being in another toxic relationship. Besides, you may need to work on yourself and deal with the trauma before starting a fresh relationship.
- Healing from heartbreak takes time and a strong, supportive community to help you shed all those layers of shame, self-doubt and feelings of perhaps not being good enough.

(THE AUTHOR, DR VIHAN SANYAL, IS A PSYCHOTHERAPIST)

Impressive debuts of 2021

-SHIKHA DUGGAL

There are so many die-hard fans of cinema; they always have an eye on who's the next fresh talent to step into the industry. Be it an actor, actress or a director. Yes, we are talking about the recognized debuts of 2021 that carried an affective intensity on the film audiences and were continuously in news. Pointing out to a new future, any new debut always adds on more to the cinema's mettle. However, each to its own, every debutante carries their own distinct style too and that's what sets them apart from one another. Let's look at some of the most versatile, latest and promising debuts of 2021

KRITHI SHETTY



Krithi Shetty made a sensational debut in *Uppena*, and the film brought her many coveted offers. She currently is acting in nearly half a dozen movies as per news reports. The makers of her next release on block titled *Bangaraju* have released the first look of Krithi Shetty from the film too and it has garnered so much of positive response. At the moment, the actress is hoping to strike back with another bang!

SANDHYA RAJU

Hyderabad-based Kuchipudi dancer Sandhya Raju, made her feature film debut with *Natyam* that made her a sensation down-south. In the *Namah Shivaya* song, one can see that Sandhya's efforts have paid off watching Kamal's transformation as a Kuchipudi dancer. Sandhya Raju deserved an appreciation for venturing into a territory not many would dare to. Sandhya Raju had taken the mantle to expand her repertoire to Telugu cinema basically.



KETIKA SHARMA

Before actually taking a shot at films, Ketika Sharma enjoyed her professional career as a swimmer at state-level championships. Then her debut movie *Romantic* had managed to get a fair amount of buzz with the teaser and trailer. With crime and fortune that entails the actions of the lead, the climax of the movie left Ketika as the remembered one. And, now her upcoming film *Lakshya*'s trailer left a remarkable impression among viewers too.



VAISHNAV TEJ

Vaishnav's debut film in Telugu, *Uppena*, made fans mega happy. Now, Vaishnav is gearing up for his upcoming project with director Krish. Vaishnav Tej's breathtaking first look for *Kondapolam* film also created a huge buzz on social media, however the film received mixed response. Panja Vaishnav Tej sported a rather intense expression that was remembered by the fans! But his former romantic love story featuring Krithi Shetty as the female lead, became a blockbuster giving a solid debut.



SREELEELA

Sreeleela made her Tollywood debut with K Raghavendra Rao's *Pelli SandaD*, starring popular actor Srikanth Meka's son Roshan Meka. Although the film bombed at the box office, failing to sell as many tickets as it was expected to, Sreeleela with her performance grabbed much attention. The actress has apparently received many offers but she at present she took a break from acting to concentrate on her medicine examinations.



VIJAY KANAKAMEDALA

Young director Vijay Kanakamedala made his Tollywood debut this year with a super-hit crime courtroom drama *Naandhi*. Vijay, did not choose foot-steps of entertainers for his directorial debut but made a serious film and impressed both moviegoers and critics alike. And now, if reports are to be believed, Vijay Kanakamedala is in plans to make his second film with Akkineni Naga Chaitanya.



LAKSHMI SOWJANYA

Lakshmi Sowjanya made her directorial debut with family entertainer *Varudu Kavalenu*, starring Naga Shaurya and Ritu Varma in the lead roles bankrolled by Sithara Entertainments. It was so much of a hyped affair because the director ensured promotions to next level. The lead pair of the film were seen attending real weddings as per the theme of the movie goes, something that has never taken place before in Telugu cinema. Now she has penned a script for her next that revolves around the concept of identity and the Aadhar card.



PRAVEEN KANDREGULA

Praveen made his directorial debut Kandregula with *Cinema Bandi*, it took a massive roll on Netflix. Every documentary lover had *Cinema Bandi* rolling on their lips. Praveen pitched the story to filmmaker duo Raj and DK at the NFDC Film Bazaar in 2018. He concedes that the documentary *Supermen of Malegaon* was one of the inspirations! Praveen weaved a wonderful commentary about why Veerababu wanted to make a feature film in the first place and how he discovers that it's easier said than done.



SUJANA RAO

The new-comer's *Gamanam* explores how characters in story cope with distress following torrential downpour. She has said that she wanted to explore how flooding affects people in different age groups, from an infant to an elderly person, to represent the circle of life. It is reported that *Gamanam* is a compilation that recounts three stories!



Ashes could revolve around contest between Cummins, Root

It will be 181st Test match between the two teams in Australia and 352nd overall. Australia have won 95, lost 57 and draw 28 in 180 previous Test matches played against England at home. Overall, Australia have won 146, lost 110 and draw 95 in 341 Test matches played against England

Australia have won 33, England 32 in 71 Ashes series played between the two teams. The remaining six series ended in a draw. The last series played in England in 2019, were drawn, both teams have won two matches each while one match ended in a draw



AP ■ BRISBANE

One particular contest between bat and ball could shape this Ashes series. Pat Cummins is set to lead the home team, putting a fast bowler's perspective on Australia's test cricket captaincy for the first time since the 1950s. Joe Root is primed to lead England with the bat again in a series he thinks may define his career.

"A bowling captain for Australia and a batting captain for England — two captains going toe to toe will be great," England wicketkeeper Jos Buttler said on the eve of the first test.

Root was already feeling some pressure before it was confirmed that Jimmy Anderson, England's all-time leading test wicket taker, will

miss the first test starting Wednesday at the Gabba. Buttler said the senior players in the team were ready to step up to support Root, and the return of inspirational all-rounder Ben Stokes would also help.

"We know he's our best player, we want to support him, help him, share that load," Buttler said of Root "He's been in incredible form. He comes here determined to continue that. "It's a massive series for him." Root heads into this series as the leading test batsman in the world, having scored 1,455 runs in 12 tests in 2021 at an average of 66.

But England has lost nine of the 10 tests it has played in Australia since its drought-breaking series win Down Under in 2010-11, mostly by big margins. Root has been on the

last two tours, and was captain for the 4-0 loss in 2017-18. And then there's England's record at the Gabba, where it hasn't won a test since 1986 and has recorded only two wins since 1946.

Buttler said England was only looking back as far as January, when an injury-depleted India squad clinched a series win by ending Australia's unbeaten record at the Gabba that dated to 1988.

"I don't think we have anything to lose ... (rather) everything to gain," he said. "You know to do that against Australia here, you have to be at your best."

England released a 12-man squad later Tuesday, leaving most speculation over the formation of the bowling attack. Stuart Broad, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood and Ollie Robinson were included as specialist pace

ENGLAND-AUSTRALIA TEST ENCOUNTERS				
Venue	M	Eng won	Aus won	Draw
In England	171	53	51	67
In Australia	180	57	95	28
Total	351	110	146	95
At Gabba	21	4	12	5

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS		
England in England:	903-7dec in 335.2 overs at The Oval	1938
England in Australia:	644 in 177.5 overs at Sydney	2010-11
Australia in England:	729-6 dec in 232 overs at Lord's	1930
Australia in Australia:	662- 9 dec in 179.3 overs at Perth	2017-18

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS		
England in England:	52 in 42.1 overs at The Oval	1948
England in Australia:	45 in 35.3 (4-ball) voers at Sydney	1886-87
Australia in England:	36 in 23 overs at Birmingham	1902
Australia in Australia:	42 in 37.3 (4-ball) overs at Sydney	1887-88

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES		
England in England:	364 Len Hutton at The Oval	1938
England in Australia:	287 Tip Foster at Sydney	1902-03
Australia in England:	334 Don Bradman at Leeds	1934
Australia in Australia:	307 Robert Cowper at Melbourne	1965-66

BEST BOWLING IN AN INNINGS		
England in England:	10-53 Jim Laker at Manchester	1956
England in Australia:	8-35 George Lohmann at Sydney	1886-87
Australia in England:	8-31 Frank Laver at Manchester	1909
Australia in Australia:	9-121 Arthur Mailey at Melbourne	1920-21

BEST BOWLING IN A MATCH		
England in England:	19-90 Jim Laker at Manchester	1956
England in Australia:	15-124 Wilfred Rhodes at Melbourne	1903-04
Australia in England:	16-137 Bob Massie at Lord's	1972
Australia in Australia:	13-77 Monty Noble at Melbourne	1901-02

LAST FIVE ASHES SERIES			
Season	Venue	Winner	Result
2013	England	England	3-0 (5)
2013-14	Australia	Australia	5-0 (5)
2014	England	England	3-2 (5)
2017-18	Australia	Australia	4-0 (5)
2019	England	Drawn	2-2 (5)

FAISEL FEATURES

THE ASHES 2021-22		
Australia vs England Test Series		
Dec 8-12, 2021	1st Test	Brisbane Cricket Ground
Dec 16-20	2nd Test*	Adelaide Oval
Dec 26-30	3rd Test	Melbourne Cricket Ground
Jan 5-9, 2022	4th Test	Sydney Cricket Ground
Jan 14-18	5th Test	Perth Stadium
*Day and night match		KBK SportsGraphics

bowlers, and left-arm spinner Jack Leach was also in the mix. The starting XI will be confirmed at the coin toss.

Cummins revealed his starting XI well ahead of time, giving himself plenty of time to adjust to his new job. That now includes attending the pre-match news conferences and going out for the coin toss instead of marking out his run-up to prepare to bowl.

The 28-year-old Cummins made his test debut as a teenager in 2011 and was elevated to the captaincy when Tim Paine quit last month after media reports he'd been investigated four years earlier by cricket administrators for sending an explicit text to a work colleague.

He said he plans to rely heavily on his experienced deputy Steve Smith, who was replaced as Australia's test cap-

tain by Paine in 2018 after the infamous Sandpapergate scandal in South Africa.

He served a suspension from leadership positions and was the leading batter when Australia retained the Ashes in England in 2019.

"Smithy and I have been really good mates for a long time. When I was 18, I'd sleep on his couch on occasions," Cummins said. "He's a legend of the game. Of course I'll be leaning on him for ideas at times."

"There'll be times when I need a rest — I'll have no problem handing over to him."

Alex Carey was given the wicketkeeper gloves to replace Paine and Travis Head was retained to bat at No. 5.

The Australians haven't played a test since the 2-1 series loss to India in January, while England has played in Sri Lanka

and India and hosted New Zealand and India in series.

But the wet weather and quarantine requirements means neither team is going into the series with a lot of red ball cricket form.

The bulk of the Australian team was involved in the Twenty20 World Cup victory in the United Arab Emirates last month, where coach Justin Langer gave the playing group more control over the preparations.

It's something Cummins wants to carry into the test arena.

"The environment we created at the World Cup is a blueprint," he said. "The relaxed environment, empowering everyone to do it their own way. Tailor the preparation. They're great lessons we learnt the World Cup that worked."

Hardik undergoing rehab in Mumbai, decides to skip Hazare Trophy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Out of favour India all-rounder Hardik Pandya has decided to skip Vijay Hazare Trophy (National One Dayers) starting across the country from Wednesday as he is undergoing an extensive rehabilitation programme in order to regain his bowling fitness.

"The Baroda Cricket Association (BCA) had sent an e-mail to Hardik enquiring about his availability for the Vijay Hazare Trophy. He has rarely played for Baroda in last three years. However he gave a one-line reply that he is currently doing rehab in Mumbai," a senior official privy to developments in BCA told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Asked what is the injury he is carrying at the moment, the official said: "Even the BCA doesn't know. It is understood that he is trying to do some strength and conditioning module for his back which is no longer in best of shape post surgery in 2019," the source

revealed.

The official informed that Hardik's elder brother Krunal had joined Baroda's pre-Hazare camp for a week after he was instructed by the state board that attending the camp is mandatory for being part of the final squad.

"BCA told Krunal that he can't just land up during tournaments and he has to be a part of the camp. Then he came and trained with the team for a week," the source said.

If Hardik doesn't play the domestic tournaments, he will not be considered for a comeback in the Indian side for the white ball tournaments. "The current national selection committee has told all the players that all those who are not in the India squad should go back and play domestic cricket — Hazare and Ranji Trophy," the source added.



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian fringe players would get one last chance to impress ahead of the IPL Mega Auction in the Vijay Hazare Trophy one-day cricket tournament beginning on Wednesday. The auction is slated for January and a stand out performance in the 50-over event could lead to a hefty pay package with an IPL franchise.

AP ■ DHAKA

Offspinner Sajid Khan claimed a career-best 6-35 as Pakistan reduced Bangladesh to 76-7 and produced a glimmer of hope of forcing a result in the second and final test on Tuesday.

After day three was washed out, Pakistan resumed the fourth day from 188-2 and declared at 300-4 after lunch. Then spinners Sajid and Nauman Ali got to work until stumps was called an hour early because of bad light. Bangladesh trailed by 224 runs and still needed 25 runs to avoid the follow-on at the end of a dramatic day.

"After the declaration, our target was to give us the best chance to win the game and attack relentlessly and that's what we did," Sajid said.

"Fortunately, there was turn and bounce aplenty. We two spinners bowled in partner-

Chance for youngsters to impress ahead of IPL mega auction

chise.

The likes of Harshal Patel, Rahul Chahar, Deepak Chahar, who were not retained by their respective franchises in the IPL, would look to make it count when they represent their respective states in the domestic one-dayers.

The IPL has seen a number of youngsters making it big overnight as it also has served a big platform to represent the country and it would be no different this time around.

In the opening day's action, defending champions Mumbai will take on Tamil Nadu who would be riding high on the confidence of winning Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy recently. All-rounder Shams Mulani will lead

Mumbai in their Elite Group B campaign in Trivandrum. Mulani had also captained the team when they had toured Oman and in absence of senior players, who are on national duty. The team will have formidable left-handed opener Yashasvi Jaiswal along with Arman Jaffer, crisis man Siddhesh Lad and all-rounder Shivam Dube to bank upon, while the bowling attack will be led by experienced Dhawal Kulkarni.

The Tamil Nadu side would be bolstered by the inclusion of Dinesh Karthik and Washington Sundar as they would look to make amend of their show last season when they failed to make the last-eight.

Bengal will be boosted by the inclusion

of senior batsman Anustup Majumdar who will give stability to their side as they open their campaign against Baroda who capped a poor show in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy winning just one match out of five.

Sudip Chatterjee-led Bengal impressed in patches before bowing to Karnataka in the quarterfinals of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy and they would look to go the distance in the fifty-over format.

In Maharashtra, all eyes would be on Ruturaj Gaikwad who was retained by his franchise Chennai Super Kings after a stupendous show as an opener that saw the MS Dhoni-led side clinch their fourth IPL title.

Bangladesh trying to avoid follow-on with one day left



ship. We will try to get the three wickets tomorrow and force them to bat again and win the game." Bangladesh's last hope to

avoid the follow-on was Shakib Al Hasan on 23. Taijul Islam was with him, the tailender yet to score after facing 10 balls.

With the light insufficient to allow any more than just the one over from fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sajid and Nauman bowled relentlessly in a desperate bid to win the rain-hit game.

Rain and bad light have eaten up the majority of the game and just 63.2 overs were possible in the last three days.

Nauman was slightly luckless, ending up without a wicket, but he gave the control that allowed Sajid to rip through the Bangladesh lineup.

Sajid dismissed all but skipper Mominul Haque, who was run out for 1 by a direct hit from Hasan Ali at point.

The Bangladesh batsmen, however, also invited the trouble by playing rash shots as if it was a Twenty20 game.

Harbhajan set to join support staff of major IPL franchise for next season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India off-spinner Harbhajan Singh will be seen in a different avatar during next year's Indian Premier League as a key member of the support staff in one of the high-profile franchises. The 41-year-old Harbhajan, who featured in a few matches during the first phase of last IPL for Kolkata Knight Riders, didn't play a game in the UAE leg of the league. Harbhajan is expected to officially announce his retirement from competitive cricket some time next week and after that he will decide on one the offers he has

got to be a part of the support staff of at least a couple of franchises.

"The role could be that of a consultant, mentor or part of the advisory group but the franchise with which he is talking are keen to use his vast experience. He will take active part in also helping the franchise decide on their auction picks," an IPL source privy to the development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Harbhajan has always shown keen interest in grooming players and that was also his role in the later years with Mumbai Indians where he spent a fruitful decade.

I-League to start on Dec 26, to be played in four venues in and around Kolkata

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

This year's I-League season will kick off on December 26 in Kolkata with a match between TRAU FC of Manipur and All India Football Federation's developmental side Indian Arrows.

The matches will be played across three venues -- Mohun Bagan Ground in Kolkata, Kalyani Stadium and Naihati Stadium.

With three new entrants -- Sreenidi Deccan FC of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan United FC and Kenkre FC of Kolhapur -- this season, the number of teams has increased to 13.

All of them, along with the referees, officials and volunteers, will be housed inside bio-



secured bubbles in four different hotels across Kolkata.

"The AIFF has been a pioneer in Indian sporting ecosystem in hosting sporting events from inside bio-bubbles, and we are happy to continue providing a safe haven for players, referees, and everyone else

involved in running the league," said AIFF Leagues CEO Sunando Dhar in a release.

"We need to thank all our partners, because the logistical and financial effort to house 13 teams in a bio-bubble for an entire season would not have been possible without their

help."

Rajasthan United FC and Kenkre FC have made their way to the I-League by virtue of finishing first and second in the Qualifiers.

As per the tournament format, all the teams will play against each other once in a round-robin format in Phase 1, before being split into two groups in Phase 2 of the league. The top seven teams will make up Group A and the bottom six will make up Group B.

Once the divisions are made after the end of Phase I, the teams of each group will play against each other in a single leg round-robin format. While the teams in Group A will play to determine the champions, those in Group B will be in a relegation battle.

Ruturaj to lead Maha in Vizay Hazare

MUMBAI: Ruturaj Gaikwad will lead a 20-member Maharashtra team in the Vizay Hazare Trophy one-day cricket tournament beginning on Wednesday.

Rahul Tripathi was named Gaikwad's deputy by the selection committee.

Maharashtra have been clubbed with Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Uttarakhand and Chandigarh in Elite Group D to be played in Rajkot. They play their first match against Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday.

The Squad:

Ruturaj Gaikwad (capt.), Rahul Tripathi (vice-capt.), Yash Nahar, Naushad Shaikh, Azim Kazi, Ankeet Bawane, Shamsuzzama Kazi, Mukesh Choudhary, Pradeep Dadhe, Manoj Ingale, Ashay Palkar, Divyang Hinganekar, Jagdish Zope, Swapnil Fulpagar, Avdhoot Dandekar, Taranjit Singh Dhillon, Siddhesh Veer, Yash Kshirsagar, Pavan Shah, Dhanraj Pardeshi.

Organisers say Novak Djokovic set to play in ATP Cup



AP ■ SYDNEY

Novak Djokovic has been named in the Serbian team for January's ATP Cup, an indication that Djokovic could play in the Australian Open a week later despite controversy over his vaccination status.

Organizers on Tuesday said 18 of the world's top 20 players will take part in the 16-country tournament in Sydney from Jan. 1-9, with Djokovic leading top-seeded Serbia. Djokovic hadn't publicly committed to defending his Australian Open title at Melbourne Park or revealed

his vaccination status, with a mandate that he needs to be double-vaccinated to play.

While the ATP Cup doesn't have the same entry criteria, his inclusion for the ATP Cup means he now appears likely to chase a 10th title and 21st Grand Slam singles title at Melbourne Park, which would break a tie for major singles wins with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal.

To play without being vaccinated in Sydney, the New South Wales state government would have to apply for an exemption for Djokovic and the 34-year-old would have to undergo 14 days of quarantine upon arrival.

'I want to act in films until I die'

K RAMYA SREE

Tollywood's heartthrob Shriya Saran is back to entertain her fans on big screens with an intriguing project — *Gamanam* — where she plays Kamala, yet another hard-hitting character. Shriya, who is the mother of a baby girl now, wants to do films that make her daughter proud.

Her approach to choosing any character has changed after motherhood, says the *Manam* actress.

Shriya who is carrying the same grace and courage she did 20 years ago, explaining in detail the kind of projects she wants to do, says, "My attitude towards movies has changed now. I want my daughter and my family to feel proud when they watch my movies. My soul should feel happy with the kind of characters I play. I don't want my daughter to feel I do the same kind of roles."

The actress who is very happy to play Kamala in *Gamanam* lost her beloved friend while shooting for the film, yet she remained strong and continued to shoot. She says she feels very proud of her work.

"When the story was narrated to me, I had tears rolling down my cheeks. That's when I decided to do this movie. I am looking forward to doing such challenging characters," asserts Shriya, who is happy that she is able to entertain audiences for the last 20 years and wants to continue the same.

The actress who precisely remembers shooting for her first film says she could come this far only because of her fans. Shriya, who wants to do movies until she breathes her last, further tells, "During Covid, many people experienced many kinds of difficulties. Many were left without work. Now the film industry is recovering. I want to keep acting and make movies till my last breath. ANR *garu* acted even during his last days for *Manam*. I want to be such an actor who continues to act even during their last days."

The actress in her 20-year-long career has worked with many female directors. When asked the difference between working with female directors and their male counterparts, she explains, "Until now, I have worked with many female directors. I did a movie called *Midnight Stories*, directed by a woman. This is the first time in Telugu that I working with a female

director. Working with them can be very comforting. We can open up about personal issues too with."

The actress finds all three stories in *Gamanam* to be very inspiring. "The story revolves around how people get trapped in a natural disaster escape. This is not a woman-oriented movie," she says.

Shriya apparently learned sewing clothes to make her character Kamala look even more natural in the film.

Shriya had her own *mantra* of dealing with pregnancy and post-pregnancy issues. Despite being very active on social media, none figured out that she was pregnant. "Many changes took place since pregnancy. I did workouts and focused on fitness and practiced Kathak. My mom taught me yoga from a young age. Doing yoga improved my health and fitness," says the actress who feels more responsible after giving birth to a child.



Prabhas donates Rs 1 cr to AP

Actor Prabhas on Tuesday introduced a donation of Rs 1 crore to the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Relief Fund to assist flood victims within the state. Recently, heavy rains lashed Tirupati and its surrounding areas, leaving many distressed.

Moved by the plight of the flood victims, earlier, stars resembling Chiranjeevi, Mahesh Babu, Jr NTR and Ram Charan had contributed Rs 25 lakh every to the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

During the devastating rains in Hyderabad and coronavirus-induced lockdowns in 2020, the Telugu movie fraternity had come ahead to assist the needy. While Prabhas donated Rs 4.5 crore, different celebrities too contributed considerably.

On the work entrance, Prabhas has romantic drama *Radhe Shyam* set to launch on January 14. The actor lately wrapped up the filming of *Adipurush*. He is presently busy taking pictures for *Project Okay* and *Salaar*.

Pooja Hegde says she is a proud Karnataka girl

Kannada cinema lovers on social media are celebrating after their favourite popular actress Pooja Hegde, who made it big in the Telugu and Tamil film industries, stated that she is proud of her roots.

Pooja Hegde was in Bengaluru to launch an awards event when she said that she loved the fact that she hailed from Karnataka and the coastal town of Mangaluru in Dakshina Kannada district. Pooja maintained that she grew up in Mumbai, yet she always insisted

that she was from Karnataka, born and brought up in Mumbai. She said she was very happy to have come from a state that has produced great talent for Indian cinema.

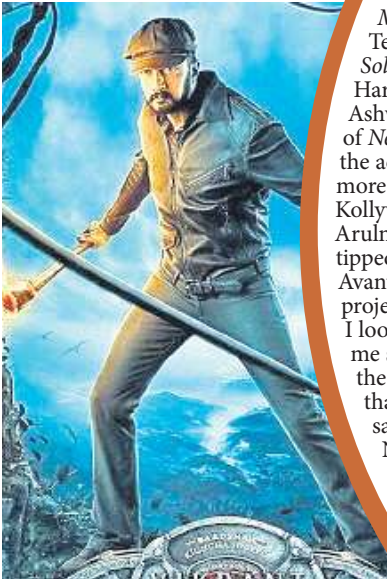
Pooja, who made her acting debut in 2016 in the Hrithik Roshan-starrer *Mohenjo Daro*, added that whenever Karnataka is mentioned, people ask her if there is something in the water that produces so many beautiful actresses and good-looking women.

A much sought-after actress in Tollywood today, Pooja said she was ready to act in a Kannada movie if she's approached with a good script. That was music to the ears of her fans in her original home state.

Vikrant Rona gets release date

Ega's beloved villain Kichcha Sudeep's fantasy action-adventure thriller — *Vikrant Rona* — finally got its release date. The film will open in theatres on February 24, 2022, worldwide.

The movie will be released in 3D format in five languages. Actors Anoop Bhandari, Neeta Ashok, Siddu Moolimani, Madhusudhan Rao, among others will be seen in significant roles. Jacqueline Fernandez has done a special number for the movie. However, the female lead of the film is yet to be revealed. Speculations are rife that Milana Nagaraj is the heroine of the movie, which is yet to be confirmed by the team. A major portion of the shooting has happened at Annapoorna Studios in Hyderabad. The movie has already created high expectations with its promos and posters will be one of the biggest releases in Sandalwood in the next year.



Avantika Mishra grabs all attention

All eyes are on Avantika Mishra, as the actress bags promising projects in both Kollywood and

Tollywood. From a successful model to a shining actress, the journey of Avantika Mishra is nothing but the product of talent and hard work, coupled with graceful looks. The Delhi native, who studied in Bengaluru, represented many popular brands before making her cinema debut with Neelakanta's *Maaya*. She then played the lead in *Meeku Meere Maaku Meme* alongside Tarun Shetty. After films like *Vyshakam*, *Meeku Maathrame Cheptha*, and *Bheeshma* in Telugu, she is making her Tamil debut with *Enna Solla Pogirai* being directed by debutante Hariharan for Trident Arts production co-starring Ashwin Kumar Lakshminathan. She is also part of *Nenjamellam Kadhal* and *D Block*. These apart, the actress is set to sign on the dotted line for a few more promising projects in both Tollywood and Kollywood. In *D Block*, she is acting alongside Arulnidhi. Directed by Vijay Kumar Rajendran, it is tipped to be a college-based drama. An elated Avantika said, "I am so happy to bag interesting projects which have offered me good roles. All that I look for is challenging characters that provide me scope to perform. I am so happy to receive the love of the Telugu audience and am thankful to them. I am sure I will receive the same from the Tamil audience too, as Tamil Nadu is always known for recognising talent. I will continue to act in both Tamil and Telugu movies."

Ask her whether she has faced any language barrier while acting in south Indian languages, the actress said, "No, not at all. Art has no language. As an artist, it is my duty to make the audience happy no matter what the language is."



Parthiban wants public to contribute to armed forces



Stating that 'mother' and 'motherland' were not different from one another, actor Parthiban has made an emotional appeal to the public, asking them to donate generously to the Armed Forces on Flag Day on Tuesday. In a video clip that the actor shared on his timeline on social media, the actor-director says, "December 7 is Flag

Day. Even when someone, who is relatively unknown to you, does you some good, we usually ask them, 'How are you bro?' and we look to return the favour in some small way or other." Pointing out that "our brothers who protect our motherland which is like our mother, must be healthy and prosperous," the actor urged people to donate generously on Flag Day,

which he said one could also call Philanthropy Day. "How we live as beautiful humans deep inside our hearts is determined by the manner in which we share our wealth. A day that brings out the godliness in us is this Flag Day. Therefore, to help protect the interests of our brothers, let us all willingly donate and participate in this Flag Day," he said.