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I BECAME A CRICKETER  
ACCIDENTALLY: ASHWIN

HYDERABAD, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 27, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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VAISSHNAV TO  
COLLABORATE  
WITH MANAM  
ENTERTAINMENTS

Page 11

## SENSEX POSTS WORST DAY IN 11 MONTHS, SINKS 1,940 POINTS

The BSE SENSEX crashed about 1,940 points to post its biggest single-day fall in nearly 11 months and the NSE Nifty plunged over 568 points to crack below the psychological 15,000-mark on Friday, tracking global selloffs triggered by a panic in bond markets overseas. Investors also turned cautious ahead of the third quarter GDP data release, besides keeping an eye on simmering geopolitical tensions between the US and Syria. At the day's close, the 30-share BSE SENSEX settled 1,939.32 points or 3.80 per cent lower at 49,099.99 its worst one-day fall since May 4 last year



## POLL OFFICIALS FRONTLINE WORKERS, WILL BE VACCINATED: ELECTION BODY

Election officials will be eligible for COVID-19 vaccination, the Election Commission said on Friday as it announced dates for assembly polls in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry. Election officials are frontline workers and they will be vaccinated, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said in the news conference in Delhi. Voting time has been increased by 1 hour because of the pandemic, he added. During filing of nominations, only two people will be allowed to accompany the candidate, he said. This is the first major set of elections to be held in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic after the Bihar election.



## SMRITI IRANI RIDES A SCOOTER IN BENGAL, DAY AFTER MAMATA BANERJEE

Union Minister Smriti Irani was seen negotiating the narrow lanes of suburban Kolkata on a scooter as part of a BJP motorcycle rally on Friday, just a day after Trinamool Congress boss Mamata Banerjee was seen riding pillion to work. On a day the Election Commission is expected to announce dates for the Bengal elections, due in April-May, along with other states across the country, the BJP's big guns Rajnath Singh and Smriti Irani are campaigning on Mamata Banerjee's turf. Rajnath Singh will be in Balurghat along with state BJP president Dilip Ghosh while Irani took part in the rally in the Baruipur-Sonarpur area, a TMC stronghold.



## MUMBAI'S HIGH-SECURITY ARTHUR ROAD JAIL AWAITS NIRAV MODI

With a UK court ruling in favour of extradition of fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on charges of fraud and money laundering in Punjab National Bank scam case, Mumbai's Arthur Road jail has kept a special cell ready to lodge him, an official said today. The jail official said that once Nirav Modi is brought to Mumbai, he will be kept in one of the three cells of barrack No. 12, which is a high-security barrack. "Preparations for lodging Nirav Modi in the jail have been completed and a cell is ready for him, whenever he is extradited," he said.

B'desh High  
Commissioner meets  
Assam CM Sonowal

5

The way  
forward for the  
Insolvency Code

2

PM asks banks to  
come out with  
innovative prod-  
ucts for startups

8

## TODAY

## ALMANAC

**Month & Paksam:** Magha & Shukla Paksha  
Panchangam  
Tithi : Purnima: 01:46 pm  
**Nakshatram:** Magha: 11:18 am  
**Time to Avoid:** (Bad time to start any important work)  
**Rahukalam:** 09:34 am – 11:01 am  
**Yamagandam:** 01:56 pm – 03:23 pm  
**Varjyam:** 06:44 pm – 08:13 pm  
**Gulika:** 06:39 am – 08:06 am  
**Good Time:** (to start any important work)  
**Amritkalam:** 09:02 am – 10:32 am  
**Ahijit Muhurtham:** 12:05 pm – 12:52 pm

## HYDERABAD WEATHER

**Forecast:** Partly cloudy  
**Temp:** 34/18  
**Humidity:** 30%  
**Sunrise:** 06:35 am  
**Sunset:** 06:21 pm  
Current Weather Conditions  
Updated February 26, 2021 5:00 PM

## Five Assembly polls to begin March 27, counting on May 2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Voting for five Assemblies will begin on March 27, with West Bengal conducting the maximum eight phases continuing till April 29, and votes for the polls in the four states and one union territory will be counted on May 2, the Election Commission said on Friday. As many as 18.68 crore voters will be eligible to cast their votes at 2.7 lakh polling stations for 824 assembly seats across Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

The elections for the five Assemblies are expected to witness a determined attempt by the BJP to put a strong show, including in Assam where it is already in power, as well as in West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry where the saffron party has been pushing hard in recent years. Elections in Assam will be conducted in three phases on March 27, April 1 and April 6, while polling in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will take place in a single phase on

■ 18.68 cr voters will be eligible to cast their votes at 2.7 L polling stations for 824 Assembly seats

■ Assembly polls in West Bengal will be held in eight phases, up from seven last time



April 6. Elections for the West Bengal Assembly will be held in eight phases, up from seven last time, beginning with polling for 30 seats on March 27, Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora said while announcing the poll schedule.

The second phase of West Bengal's assembly elections has been scheduled for April 1 and will cover 30 constituencies, followed by the third phase on April 6 for 31 seats, the fourth on April 10 for 44 constituencies, the fifth on April 17 for 45 seats, sixth for 43 seats on April 22, seventh

## Tirupati, N Sagar schedule soon

PNS VIJAYAWADA:

Curiously, the Election Commission of India failed to mention by-polls for the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh and Nagarjunasagar Assembly constituency in Telangana while releasing the schedule for elections in four States and the Union Territory of Puducherry. It was largely expected that the ECI would also announce the dates for the by-polls in the two Telugu states, but going by the absence of any mention in the poll panel briefing, it appears that such a schedule would be announced separately, perhaps in the next few days.

phase on April 26 for 36 seats and last and eighth phase on April 29 for 35 seats, Arora said.

2

## Bengal, TN's last-minute sops before announcement

PNS ■ CHENNAI

At least two of the five poll-bound states today rushed to announce populist schemes hours ahead of the election dates being announced.

Tamil Nadu and West Bengal introduced various policy changes seemingly aimed at electoral prospects. The model code of conduct, which comes into effect immediately after the Election Commission declares the poll dates,

2

## SC nixes plea to implement NGT fiat on Kaleshwaram

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking implementation of National Green Tribunal order on the expansion of Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project in Telangana.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said it was not the executing court of the NGT order and for that matter any tribunal.

The apex court was hearing a plea filed by advocate Thummanapally Srinivas and others seeking implementation of NGT's October 20, 2020



order. The NGT had held that environmental clearance was granted to the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project in Telangana "ex post facto" in

violation of legal requirements and formed a committee to assess the damage caused as also to suggest restoration measures.

2

## Dattatreya 'manhandled' in Himachal Assembly, 5 Cong MLAs suspended

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya was allegedly manhandled by some Congress members in the Assembly complex on Friday, following which five MLAs were suspended for the remainder of the Budget Session.

The incident took place outside the Speaker's office when the Governor was leaving for the Raj Bhavan after he cut short his address in the House following a ruckus create by the Congress on the opening day of the Budget session.

Speaker Vipin Parmar said the Opposition members tried to stop the Governor, who was accompanied by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, when he was going towards his cavalcade.

They hit on the Governor's back with copies of his address.



Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur, HP Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and State Legislative Assembly Speaker Vipin Parmar arrive to attend the Budget session, in Shimla on Friday

They also hit the bonnet of the Governor's car, the Speaker said, adding that he is examining the Assembly rules to lodge an FIR against the Congress legislators.

The Speaker told PTI that this is for the first time in the history of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly that a

Governor was manhandled by Opposition members.

After the incident, the Speaker suspended Leader of Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri and four other Congress MLAs Harsh Vardhan Chauhan, Satpal Raizada,

2

## India exits recession, GDP raises at + 0.4%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After contracting for two quarters in a row, the Indian economy entered the positive territory with a growth of 0.4 per cent in the October-December quarter, mainly due to good performance by farm, services and construction sectors, official data showed on Friday.

Trade and hotel industry registered a contraction of 7.7 per cent during the third quarter this fiscal, as the sectors continued to suffer on account of coronavirus pandemic.

According to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the farm sector recorded a growth of 3.9 per cent, and the manufacturing sector output grew by 1.6 per cent in the quarter under review.

The construction sector

advanced by 6.2 per cent, while electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services clocked a 7.3 per cent growth.

The NSO said, "GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q3 of 2020-21 is estimated at Rs 36.22 lakh crore, as against Rs 36.08 lakh crore in Q3 of 2019-20, showing a growth of 0.4 per cent".

The gross domestic product (GDP) had expanded by 3.3 per cent in the corresponding period of 2019-20.



2

## State to promote 'Telangana brand' of meat and fish

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State has now set its sight on branding of meat and fish produced in the State. Encouraged by the success of its ongoing programmes to give fillip to rural economy and uplift of families involved in traditional sheep rearing and fisheries, the State Government now wants to help boost farmers' incomes through quality processing and value addition in respect of sheep meat (mutton) and fish.

Like in the case of branded milk and drinking water products that come with some assurance in terms of certain levels of quality and hygiene standards, it is now time for meat, fish and other non-vegetarian products produced in the State by local

■ Unauthorized, temporary facilities on the chopping block

■ Second modern abattoir coming up at Chengicherla

farmers to have brand value in the market.

Upon being marketed as "Telangana brand" meat and fish, the products should give confidence to consumers who have become health and quality conscious after the pandemic, according to sources working on the concept.

2

## Fuel prices will come down: Pradhan

PNS ■ VARANASI

Allaying concerns of people over the upward spiralling of fuel price, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday said the price will decrease as winter season ends.

2

## AP pitches for Natl academy of Correctional Admin

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh is pitching for the establishment of the National Academy of Correctional Administration in the state.

The state government will put forth this proposal to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the Southern Zonal Council meeting, sched-

uled to be held in temple-town Tirupati on March 4, authoritative sources said.

As the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy is located in Hyderabad, the AP government wants the National Academy of Correctional Administration (NACA) established in the state.

"The proposed academy will cater to the needs of middle

and senior level prison administrators in terms of training, policy formulation and overall development of prison administration," a senior bureaucrat in the state Home Department told P T I.

This would also bring in uniformity and standardise norms and procedures related to prison administration, the official said.

"The prestigious Academy will be established in AP," he added.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, who reviewed the preparedness for the Southern Zonal Council meeting, asked the state officials to prepare a detailed proposal for presenting to the Centre.

2

## Covid jab in pvt hospitals: How costly it is?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With memories of pricey Covid-19 testing in private hospitals and testing centres still fresh in their minds, notwithstanding the 'cap on testing charges' set by the TS government back in June 2020, most people are now afraid of going for the jab in private hospitals, which are now bracing up to complement governments' vaccination drives.

What would be the cost of each dose of the Covid-19



vaccine; if at all people choose to get vaccinated in private hospitals? There is animated

discussion on this moot question among many people as the state government has

declared that all those aged 60 years and above as well as those who are 45 years but with co-morbidities can undergo vaccination either in government hospitals or in listed private hospitals.

According to Director of Public Health Dr Srinivasa Rao, the price of each dose of the vaccine could range between Rs 300 and Rs 400 in private hospitals. A clear picture will emerge shortly.

It may be recalled that the state health authorities have been vaccinating government

and private medical professionals as well as frontline workers free of cost so far.

As of now, there is no consensus on who should supervise the vaccination programme in private hospitals. It is not yet clear whether the vaccines would be supplied to private hospitals through the vaccine centres or directly from the companies. According to Dr Srinivasa Rao, clear guidelines are yet to emerge from the Centre.

2



One of the main reasons for the success of the insolvency code (IBC) is its design. Earlier, the insolvency legal regime was tilted in favor of debtors who retained control over management and operations of the company during the bankruptcy process. In contrast, the new insolvency code shifts the control over day-to-day working of the company towards creditors and professionals.

During insolvency proceedings, this has reduced the freedom available to company managements to decide on what evidence to present before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). Now, the NCLT and the professional have near complete control over evidence and conduct of the case from start to judgment.

Another distinct feature of the new insolvency regime is the way the proceedings are conducted. Earlier insolven-

# The way forward for the Insolvency Code

cy proceedings followed the adversarial system. In this system the court acts as a referee between the prosecution and the defence and the whole process is a contest between two parties. The underlying principle was to create a distance between the investigation and the person who ultimately decides the outcome. Here, courts acted like a referee between the debtors and creditors, such as in the recovery of claims by unsecured creditors by filing civil suits or petitioning the High Court for winding up if the debtor was a company.

The process under the present insolvency regime has substantial characteristics of the inquisitorial system. Some of the noteworthy features of the process followed in the new insolvency code

**First, the trial is in the hands of the NCLT. The NCLT plays an active role assisted by the Insolvency Professionals (IPs) and the Insolvency Professional Agencies (IPAs). The trigger for starting the IBC is a petition to the NCLT**

and their resemblance to the inquisitorial system are discussed below.

First, the trial is in the hands of the NCLT. The NCLT plays an active role assisted by the Insolvency Professionals (IPs) and the Insolvency Professional Agencies (IPAs). The trigger for starting the IBC is a petition to the NCLT. This petition is called an insolvency petition. When an insolvency petition is filed, the role of the NCLT is to identify whether the debtor has com-

mitted a default in repayment of an undisputed debt to the petitioning creditor. If the NCLT finds that the debtor has defaulted to the creditor; and has not disputed the claim of default by the creditor beforehand, the NCLT must allow the petition to go through, or else it must dismiss the petition.

Second, case management in the insolvency code depends upon the NCLT members, so their contribution is very high for the disposal of any case. Case man-



DR. SAMEER SHARMA

agement is effective as members of the NCLT sit with the debtors and creditors and exchange views in making decisions for the speedy disposal of any case. This is in contrast to the adversarial legal system, where representatives from each party take opposing positions to debate

and argue their case, whilst the Judge's role is to uphold principles of fairness and equality and to remain neutral until the very end when she gives judgment.

Less reliance on judicial precedents is the third similarity to the inquisitorial system. Conventionally, judicial precedent is set by "case law" which helps flesh out the statutory laws and in some cases new substantive law comes from pronouncements where statutes and precedents are silent. There is little use of judicial precedent in inquisitorial systems. This means Judges are free to decide each case independently of previous decisions by applying the relevant statutes. As the current insolvency regime is of recent origin, there are hardly any

judicial precedents available. This gives a great degree of leeway to the NCLT while deciding in insolvency proceedings.

The insolvency code confers partial executive powers on the NCLTs and it is this expansion of the range of functions that has transmuted the NCLT from a pure judicial forum to a hybrid one with judicial plus executive powers. However, appeals are made to the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) and the Supreme Court; thus, there is a clear separation of judiciary from the executive at upper levels.

This fusion of judicial and executive powers in one entity/person is not new. Prior to the amendments made in the Criminal Procedure Code

in 1973, judicial and executive powers were combined in executive magistrates in India.

In short, there are two distinct design features of the insolvency code. First, there is a changeover from a debtor in control to a creditor-driven insolvency process. Second, in practice the NCLTs follow an inquisitorial system, even though tacitly.

Therefore, the way forward is to build on these unique features of the insolvency code. Efforts should be made to include more and more ingredients of the inquisitorial system in the insolvency process and discourage any move to bring about "equality of arms" between the debtors and creditors.

(Author has a PhD from the USA and a DLitt from Kanchi University. The article is based on his research and practice and views are personal)

## AP pitches...

Continued from page 1

The catch, however, is that neighbouring Telangana is also said to be pitching for the same academy. Telangana is said to have already identified required land for the Academy while the AP government is yet to do so.

"We are in the process of zeroing in on a suitable location for the Academy and the land required will also be earmarked soon," the bureaucrat here said.

The AP government would submit a comprehensive proposal to the Centre for approval, he added. The Chief Minister is expected to personally take up the issue with the Union Home Minister during the Southern Zonal Council meeting.

# Muted response to Bharat Bandh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Protests at few places by the Left parties and trade unions affiliated to them in Telangana marked the 'Bharat Bandh' to protest against the fuel price hike.

The shutdown call given by All India Traders' Association evoked poor response in the state. Few shops and business establishments downed shutters in parts of Hyderabad and some other towns.

The bandh had no major impact on normal life. Good transport activity, however, came to a halt as the truck owners' association joined the shutdown. As the All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) backed the shutdown, the truck-



ers in the state joined too the protest demanding some relief from the Centre.

Protesting the steep hike in price of diesel, Telangana Lorry Owners Association supported the bandh call.

The association claimed that

nearly one lakh transport vehicles will remain off roads during the day.

They demanded that the Central taxes on diesel be slashed to ensure uniformity in the price across the country.

Truck operators have threat-

ened to launch indefinite strike if the Centre failed to respond positively to their demands.

A section of traders including Kirana merchants and steel merchants in Hyderabad took out a rally to the Collector's office to submit a memorandum of demands.

They demanded the authorities to simplify GST process. The traders alleged that several new clauses and rules were being used to harass them.

Left parties and trade unions affiliated to organised protests in Hyderabad. CPI state secretary Chada Venkat Reddy led the protest. He demanded that the fuel prices should be uniform across the country and GST should be simplified.

CPI-M also backed the

bandh call. The party organised a dharna at LB Nagar cross-roads in Hyderabad. The protestors alleged that the steep hike in prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas has made the life of common man miserable.

Holding banners and placards denouncing the price hike, the protestors raised slogans against the government. Police detained the protestors and shifted them to a police station.

Party's state secretary T Veerabhadram said the hike in fuel prices has imposed heavy burden on common man. He said taxes on fuel were adding the burden. The CPI-M leader demanded that the Centre and states take initiative to cut the taxes to provide some relief to people.

# State to promote...

Continued from page 1

When the 'branding concept' materializes, the consumer will get details on the package such as animal's age, gender, date of slaughter, shelf life of the processed product, etc.

The Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department, according to sources, is contemplating to devote the next financial year 2021-22 towards this goal. It proposes to set up a second modern abattoir unit with international standards at Chengicherla for hygienic processing, value addition and packaging.

Of 65 acres of land allotted for abattoirs in Chengicherla, one unit has been operating from 2008 in 33 acres and the government has transferred 24 acres to the Telangana Industrial and Infrastructure Corporation for setting up another major facility.

The Animal Husbandry Department will also scout for lands available with the Revenue Department and TSIC to set up sheep and fish markets as well as basic meat processing units in all the districts to help the local sheep and goat rearing communities to sell their livestock.

"The goal is to make properly processed meat available

to consumers and discourage unauthorized and temporary facilities", they said.

About 2,500 meat outlets operate in the organized sector under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits, apart from 150 mobile meat and fish units. Besides, another 5,000 to 6,000 temporary units operate in the city limits.

After promoting sheep rearing through sheep distribution scheme, the sourcing of sheep from other States had reduced drastically, sources said. Post-Covid, there is demand from entrepreneurs too to set up intensive sheep farming units, value addition to give 'preferred cuts' to the consumers and invest on marketing facilities.

After the sheep distribution scheme was launched in the State in 2017, a total of 3.66 lakh sheep farmers became members of Primary Sheep Breeding Cooperative Societies at the village level and each family earned an average income of about Rs.60,000 a year by producing over 77,000 tonnes of meat till 2020.

The meat consumption pattern in the State is different as people here prefer sheep meat (mutton) than goat meat, sources said.

## Dattatreya 'manhandled'...

Continued from page 1

Sunder Singh and Vinay Kuma for the entire Budget session till March 20 on a motion moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Bhardwaj.

Earlier, the Congress MLAs created a ruckus in the House during the Governor's address. He then skipped to the last sentence after reading initial few pages and stated that the entire speech should be deemed as read.

Suspended Congress MLA Harsh Vardhan Chauhan told PTI that they were waiting outside the Speaker's office and just wanted to ask the Governor why he cut short his address but they were not allowed to do so.

He alleged that it was Deputy Speaker Hans Raj who manhandled the MLAs, a charge denied by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Bhardwaj, who said the Congress legislators had planned to create a scene. Chauhan also said they did not have any intention of manhandling the governor.

"If any FIR is registered against us, we will not go to the court for bail, rather we will prefer to be arrested," he said, adding that the suspended Congress MLAs will sit outside the Assembly during the Budget session.

## Covid jab in pvt hospitals: How...

Continued from page 1

Meanwhile, the Centre is busy updating and patching up the glitches-prone CoWIN mobile application and is trying to bring out an updated version of the mobile application with certain changes.

Private hospitals may be required to record vaccine stock details via the application. Since people can get vaccinated only after registering

via the mobile application, details such as how many doses have been used and the stocks remaining should be recorded via the application. Government officials claim that the vaccination programme can be continued in a fool-proof manner even in private hospitals. So, some officials would be appointed to monitor the programme, they said. Dr Srinivasa Rao said that the vaccine would be admin-

istered in private hospitals charging some fees, though the vaccine is given free of cost in government hospitals. Therefore, he advised people to take the vaccine free of cost. In all, 1,250 hospitals, including major hospitals like Gandhi and Osmania as well as PHCs will administer the vaccine free of cost. The vaccine will be made available in future in over 4,500 health sub-centres.

# Bengal, TN's last minute...

Continued from page 1

Prohibits governments from making fresh welfare announcements so as to minimise any undue advantage accruing to ruling parties.

The Commission held a press conference on Friday at around 4.30 pm to announce the dates for the assembly elections in Kerala, Puducherry, and Assam, apart from West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

# Five Assembly polls to begin Mar 27, counting on May 2

Continued from page 1

The Election Commission will appoint two special observers for West Bengal and a third can also be sent if required, Arora said in response to queries on whether enough arrangements are in place for the polls in the state, where many have been raising questions about political violence.

Arora also said everyone on election duty for the upcoming polls will be vaccinated against COVID-19 before polling day. Voting will take place for 126 seats in Assam, 234 in Tamil Nadu, 294 in West Bengal, 140 in Kerala and 30 in Puducherry.

Arrangements will be put in

place for candidates to file their nominations online. Voting will be allowed for an additional hour, keeping in mind COVID-19 safety guidelines, he said.

Also, webcasting arrangements will be in place at polling stations in critical and vulnerable areas, while adequate CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces) deployment will be ensured, Arora said. All critical and vulnerable areas have been identified and advance teams have been already deployed across the four states and one union territory, he added.

He said door-to-door campaigning will be restricted to five persons, including the

## CM directs officials to...

Continued from page 1

KCR called for efforts to strengthen the Horticulture University. He announced the allocation of 300 acres in the Agriculture University for setting up a Centre of Excellence in respect of horticulture crops.

The Chief Minister also decided to increase the number of seats in Ontimamidi, Ramagiri Khilla agriculture polytechnic colleges, and appoint four senior officials especially for cultivation of fruits, vegetables, green vegetables and oil palm.

Addressing a high-level review meeting on a comprehensive and integrated plan for development of horticulture crops at Pragathi Bhavan here on Friday, KCR said that agriculture sector was doing well, thanks to the irrigation projects and schemes like Rythu Bandhu investment assistance schemes. In the undivided State, horticulture crops like vegetables and fruits did not get due importance. It was time for encouraging farmers

to profitably cultivate horticulture crops that were not water-intensive, he said.

Agriculture and Horticulture departments should formulate a plan to give special incentives, along with Rythu Bandhu, to farmers willing to set up horticulture nurseries or cultivate horticulture crops, including flowers.

The Chief Minister said that by promoting horticulture crops around municipalities and towns in the State, the requirement to source large quantities of vegetables and fruits can be brought down. Eventually the State would be in a position to export vegetables and fruits.

The Horticulture Department officials explained that horticulture farmers could earn more profits by going for short-ture crops that utilize less water.

The Chief Minister appreciated the use of technology to guide farmers in agriculture and horticulture. He suggested that, to the extent possible, cotton cultivation should be extended.

## Fuel prices will come down: Pradhan

Continued from page 1

"Increase in petroleum price in international market has affected consumers too. Prices will come down a little as winter

goes away. It is an international matter, price is high due to increase in demand, it happens in winter. It will come down as the season ends," Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

## Technical issues at Nasarlapalli feeder disrupts water supply

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The water supply to the Jalamandali pumping station at Nasarlapalli was disrupted for more than two hours due to technical issues in Nasarlapalli feeder, causing difficulties in the movement of fresh water through Krishna phase I, II and III.

The power outage caused problems in the water supply through the pumps. There will be a partial interruption in the fresh water supply in the Division No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 14, 16, ORR Division No 18, 19 and 20.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 47,180 (10 gm)	
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 74,000 (1kg)	
₹ 1200	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹161
Without Skin	₹183
Broiler at Farm	₹111
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	415
VIJAYAWADA	506
VISAKHAPATNAM	480
RETAIL PRICE (in Hyderabad)	₹4.15

# India exits recession, GDP raises at + 0.4%

Continued from page 1

In its second advance estimates of national accounts, the NSO has projected 8 per cent contraction in 2020-21, showing the pandemic impact. In its first advance estimates released in January, it had projected a contraction of 7.7 per cent for the current fiscal as against a growth of four per cent in 2019-20.

"Real GDP or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Constant (2011-12) Prices in the year 2020-21 is estimated to attain a level of Rs 134.09 lakh crore, as against the First Revised Estimate of GDP for the year 2019-20 of Rs 145.69 lakh crore, released on 29th January 2021. The growth in GDP during 2020-21 is estimated at (-) 8.0 per cent as compared to 4.0 per cent in 2019-

20," it stated.

The economy had shrunk by an unprecedented 24.4 per cent in the first quarter this fiscal following the coronavirus pandemic and resultant lockdowns. In the second quarter, the GDP declined 7.3 per cent amid a perk up in economic activities after the easing of the lockdown.

The first and second-quarter GDP growth figures are revised from (-) 24.9 per cent and (-) 7.5 per cent provisional estimates, respectively, released in November 2020.

The per capita income in real terms (at 2011-12 prices) during 2020-21 is estimated to attain a level of Rs 85,929 as compared to Rs 94,566 in 2019-20 -- showing a contraction of 9.1 per cent in 2019-20 as against 2.5 per cent growth in the previous fiscal, it stated.

The per capita income at current prices during 2020-21 is estimated to be at Rs 1,27,768, a decline of 4.8 per cent as compared to Rs 1,34,186 during 2019-20.

"The measures taken by the Government to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic have had an impact on the economic activities as well as on the data collection mechanisms.

"The data challenges in the case of other underlying macro-economic indicators like IIP (industrial production) and CPI (retail inflation), used in the estimation of National Accounts aggregates and specific measures, if any, taken by the government in the following months with a view to address the pandemic led economic situation will have implications on the subsequent revision of these

estimates," the NSO said.

Estimates are, therefore, likely to undergo sharp revisions for the aforesaid causes in due course, as per the release calendar. Users should take this into consideration when interpreting the figures, it added.

The 0.4 per cent growth in the December quarter shows that the economy has returned to pre-pandemic times and reflects a further strengthening of V-shaped recovery, the finance ministry said on Friday.

"Real GDP growth of 0.4 per cent in Q3 of 2020-21 has returned the economy to the pre-pandemic times of positive growth rates. It is also a reflection of a further strengthening of V-shaped recovery that began in Q2 of 2020-21 after a large GDP contraction in Q1 followed one of the most stringent lockdowns imposed by

Government relative to other countries," the ministry said in a statement.

"With a growth re-emerging in both GDP and GVA in Q3 FY2021, the pandemic-induced technical recession in India has ended, in line with our expectations," Ica Principal Economist Aditi Nayar said.

The NSO has pegged the pace of growth in Q3 FY2021 at 0.4 per cent for GDP, and a higher 1.0 per cent for the GVA, whereas Ica had projected both at 0.7 per cent, she added.

"The YoY (year-on-year) performance of the components of GDP indicates a welcome growth of 2.6 per cent in gross fixed capital formation, juxtaposed with mild de-growth of 1.1 per cent in government consumption expenditure and 2.4 per cent in private consumption expenditure," Nayar said.

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BJP OBC Morcha national president K Laxman addressing a gathering at the Collectorate in Medak on Friday (Right) A massive rally being taken out by BJP workers

# Police resort to lathicharge, arrest BJP leaders in Medak

PNS ■ MEDAK

Tension prevailed at the Collectorate when the police denied entry to the BJP leaders to submit a memorandum to the District Collector on demands of Golla and Kuruma community members. The police had to resort to mild lathi-charge and whisk them to the police station.

Taking part in Chalo Collectorate Ranabheri stir by Golla and Kuruma community here on Friday, BJP OBC Morcha national president K Laxman said that injustice is being meted out to SCs and STs and other downtrodden sections of the state.

■ BJP OBC Morcha national president K Laxman charged with the government collecting demand drafts for Rs 31,250 from each of 28,500 families and rendering them injustice to them by not allotting sheep units

■ He called upon all castes in the state, especially the BCs, to unite and wrest power from the TRS

He charged the government collecting demand drafts for Rs 31,250 from each of 28,500 families and rendering them injustice to them by not allotting sheep units. He called upon all castes in the state, especially the BCs, to unite and wrest power from the TRS.

Dubbaka MLA Raghunandan said that the state is applying the principle

divide and rule while dealing with people of 33 castes and predicted that they would soon spell doom for KCR. He desired that the Bahujans should grow politically and should capture power in the state.

He accused the government of denying educational opportunities to BC students, while the Centre took BC students under its wings by setting up of

Central and Sainik Universities. He blamed the State government for reducing the local bodies from 33 per cent to 18 per cent.

Tension prevailed as part of the BJP protest programme as the police denied entry to the BJP leaders entering the collectorate to submit a memorandum to the District Collector on demands of Golla and Kuruma community members. The police had to resort to mild lathi-charge and whisk them to the police station.

BJP OBC Morcha state president Ale Bhaskar Raju, former MLA Sasidhar Reddy and others took part in the programme.

## Rare snake found in Nallamala forest

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

Rare snake was found in the Nallamala forest on Friday. There are about 53 species of snakes in the forest, of which only 11 are venomous and four are highly venomous. This is a special one and the reptile is said to be a 25-30 cm long that inhabits in burrows and rooms for food during the night. According to forest officials, rare animals such as Honey Badger has been found in the forest. Although it has been established for many years, the climate here is favorable for them, and migratory birds and animals are flocking here, giving the forest area a new lease of life, officials said.



## ADVOCATE COUPLE MURDER

# Cong leaders submit memo to Guv, seek CBI investigation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A delegation of Congress leaders led by TPCC President and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy met Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan at the Raj Bhavan on Friday and requested her to order a court-monitored CBI investigation into the brutal murder of lawyer couple Gattu Vaman Rao and Nagamani.

Uttam Kumar Reddy told the Governor that the brutal and horrific murder of the advocate couple in broad daylight and in full public view proved that there was a total collapse of law and order in Telangana. "We or the general public do not believe that the local police would carry out a fair or neutral investigation into the double murder," he said while urging the Governor to order a court-monitored CBI investigation into the matter.

Later, speaking to the media, Uttam Kumar Reddy alleged that the local police were trying to shield the TRS leaders, who were involved in the brutal murders. He said there was a conspiracy behind the murders, which needed to be exposed. "The lawyer couple murder is directly linked to the Manthani



TPCC President and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy submits a memorandum to Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan at the Raj Bhavan in Hyderabad on Friday

**"We or the general public do not believe that the local police would carry out a fair or neutral investigation into the double murder," said TPCC President**

custodial death, which is again linked to sand mafia backed by top TRS leaders. However, local

police are trying to suppress the facts to protect the TRS leaders, who are involved in the murders," he alleged.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that though the High Court had directed the Telangana Police to submit a report on March 1, yet the local police could not be trusted as they were being pressured by the ruling party to hush up the case. "CM KCR did not issue (even) a single-line statement condemning the brutal murders. This clearly shows that the Chief Minister is giving a free hand to 'sand, land and mines mafia' to establish their control using murder as a tool to instil fear among common people," he said.

## Two LI schemes proposed on Manjira

PNS ■ ZAHEERABAD

Construction of two major lift irrigation schemes on the Manjira River-- Sangameshwara and Basaweswara LI schemes-- will irrigate 2.30 lakh acres in Zaheerabad and Narayanakhed Assembly constituencies.

The LI schemes will irrigate one lakh acres in Zaheerabad and 80,000 in Narayanakhed and the rest of the 50,000 would be irrigated in other backward areas of Andole and Sangareddy Assembly constituencies.

According to reports, irrigation department officials have drawn up plans in this regard.

# Aruna lauds Gudur for his gesture

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP senior leader Gudur Narayana Reddy celebrated his 59th birthday at Bhoodan Pochampally in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district a novel way by distributing weaving machines to the poor weavers in the presence of BJP national vice-president DK Aruna and former minister M Narasimulu.

Speaking on the occasion, DK Aruna appreciated Gudur Narayana Reddy for not being pompous and instead choosing the path of helping the weaker sections i.e; weaving community.

She lauded Gudur for helping the 30 poor families by distributing 'Aasu Yantram' (weaving machines). She also commended the party cadre for



BJP national vice-president DK Aruna hands over the 'Aasu Yantram' gift certificate to a woman weaver at Bhoodan Pochampally in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri on Friday. Former Minister M Narasimulu and Gudur Narayana Reddy look on

attending the programme and making the function a grand success and appealed to the cadre to work for the victory of MLC candidate G Premendar Reddy.

She exuded confidence that Gudur Narayana Reddy would

strengthen the party in Bhuvanagiri Assembly constituency. M Narasimulu said that KCR has no value for the people of Telangana though they have elected him for the top post.

Gudur Narayana Reddy stat-

■ BJP senior leader Gudur Narayana Reddy distributed weaving machines to poor weavers to mark his birthday

ed that he was lucky to take birth in this area, which has given him a chance to serve the poor.

Leaders and workers of RSS, BJP, Yuva Morcha, ABVP, VHP and Hindu Vahini have attended in big numbers and felicitated Gudur Narayana Reddy.

Leaders of the weaving community of Pochampalli and surrounding villages have appreciated Narayana Reddy for his gesture of distributing the 'Aasu Yantrams' to the weavers.

# 'TS govt claims on creating 1.32 lakh jobs 'fake and fabricated'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC spokesperson Sravan Dasoju took a dig at KT Rama Rao, Minister for Industries, IT and Municipal Administration, on Friday for avoiding an invitation to attend the open debate organised by the Congress at the Telangana Martyrs Memorial, Gun Park, to discuss the issues of 'employment' in Telangana. The Congress spokesperson did not spare the CM as well. Sravan Dasoju not only categorically stated that KTR's statement on the recruitment numbers given during a meeting at Telangana Bhavan was wrong, but also pointed out that during the tenure of TRS



AICC spokesperson Sravan Dasoju gestures while addressing the media at Telangana Martyrs' memorial at Gun Park in Hyderabad on Friday

jobs were actually lost than getting created.

While ridiculing KTR's statements on job offers, he explained that while there were 4.19 lakh sanctioned jobs in 2014, 3.12 lakh employees used

to work in the government sector and there were 1.07 lakh vacant jobs at that time.

He asked KTR if he was right, how could the current vacancies had gone up to 1.91 lakh and why the total number of existing government employees reduced to 2.28 lakh? With the formation of new districts and gram panchayats, the number of sanctioned jobs should have been increased to 5.19 lakh. As per the Biswal Commission, the state had only 2.28 lakh employees, while 4.19 lakh sanctioned jobs were available, which meant 47 per cent of sanctioned jobs were currently vacant in Telangana, he said.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA											
REVENUE (LAND ACQUISITION) DEPARTMENT											
FORM VII											
PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION											
(See Sub-rule (1) of rule-25 and Section-19(1) of the Act-30/2013)											
Sub-Collector, Bhadrachalam, Land Acquisition Officer, Sestamma Sagar Multi Purpose Project, R. No. C/1618/2020-1B											
District Collector, Bhadrachal Kathagudem											
R. No. G/927/2020.											
District Gazette No. 83/26/2020.											
Whereas it appears to the District Collector, Bhadrachal Kathagudem that a total extent of Ac.40.30 Gzs. land is required in the MP Palli Village Gram Panchayat of Bhadrachal Kathagudem District for public purpose, namely for the Construction of Sestamma Sagar Multi Purpose Project. Therefore, declaration is made that a piece of land measuring, more or less Ac.40.30 gts of standard measurement under Land Acquisition for the above said project in the MP Palli Village, Chera Mandal of Bhadrachal Kathagudem District whose land detailed description is as following.											
SCHEDULE											
Village: MP Palli Mandal: Chera District: Bhadrachal Kathagudem											
Sl. No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	41/1	41/1	water	part	land	0.04					
4	41/4	41/4	water	part	land	0.32	1/2	Puruchuri Shrinivaasa W/o Prathibha	Puruchuri Shrinivaasa W/o Prathibha		
2	41/2	41/2	water	part	land	1.03	1/2	Kodimkoti Nagayya S/o Babayyasa			
3	41/3	41/3	water	part	land	2.17	1/2	Purnem Satyanarayana S/o Satyanarayana	Ac/08	Ac/08	Ac/08
4	41/6	41/6	water	part	land	0.23		Government land	Puruchuri Shrinivaasa W/o Prathibha		
5	41/6	41/6	water	part	land	0.21	1/2	Government land			
6	41/6	41/6	water	part	land	0.12		Government land	Flood		
8	127/127	127/127	water	part	land	6.11		Godavari Shrinivaasa W/o Prathibha	Godavari Shrinivaasa W/o Prathibha	Ac/34	Ac/34
9	128/128	128/128	water	part	land	9.20		Uppokoturi Shrinivaasa W/o Prathibha	Uppokoturi Shrinivaasa W/o Prathibha	Ac/33	Ac/33
10	129/129	129/129	water	part	land	1.05		Government land	Government land		
9	111/111	111/111	water	part	land	1.02	1/2	Konayyala Appala Choudhary S/o Narayana			
10	129/129	129/129	water	part	land	3.18	1/2	Mangalamma S/o Narayana	Ac/33	Ac/33	Ac/33
11	130/130	130/130	water	part	land	13.21		Godavari land	Godavari land		
Total Extent						40.30					
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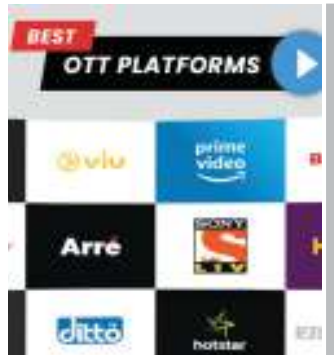




## Censorship?

The Government's guidelines regulating OTT platforms and social media raise a few questions

The first-phase lockdown of last year's pandemic outbreak spawned newfound attention and increased popularity for a number of web series as cinema halls had been ordered shut and people were forced to remain closeted inside their residences. Several big-budget and multi-starrer movies, which had been slated for theatrical release in the last week of March 2020 and beyond, fell to the Government's social distancing order and, to make up for the imminent financial losses in light of the prevailing uncertain conditions, chose the new fad of releasing the films online. As days gave way to weeks and months wore on, the average Indian family — already reeling under fear psychosis and bored to death by now — rediscovered the panacea of entertainment in various web



series streaming on Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms. So far, so good. *Mirzapur* aired, made a splash, but there was no hue and cry. Along came Saif Ali Khan-starrer *Tandav*, focusing on how politics affects collegial environment, and all hell broke loose. Everybody seems to have conveniently forgotten *Haasil* (released in 2003, starring Jimmy Sheirgill, Irrfan Khan and Ashutosh Rana, directed by Tigmanshu Dhulia) which was a gripping narrative based on the same subject. As avid watchers of the series among the OTT viewers point out, the ostensible objection — "hurting religious sentiments" by taking umbrage to the Shiva scene in the first episode — was just a ruse to express

anger against the way the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, and the National Register of Citizens issues had been projected in the series.

The "religious sentiments" angle, coupled with allegations of the earlier series brimming with sexually explicit scenes and foul language, brought the spotlight back on *Mirzapur*, too, though there had been no protests during its run earlier. The tepid response of Twitter officials to the Centre's recent earnest entreaty to suspend the handles of certain "rumour-mongering members" during the ongoing farmers' agitation, especially in the wake of the January 26 violence at Red Fort, seems to have added fuel to the authorities' displeasure and, therefore, today we find both the OTT platforms and social media facing a barrage of directives. The question now arises: Are the Government guidelines regulating the two media correct, or could it lead to pressure or censorship on them? Experts opine that the 29 pages of rules raise concerns over several factors, including the privacy of users and censorship of digital news media, which will ultimately affect citizens' rights. It seems the Government just does not like us to have fun and make personal choices. It had better heed common sense and allow its adult population, those who are eligible to vote and can take learned decisions in all other spheres of life, to decide for itself whether it wants to watch a particular show or series. Of course, cracking down on the creators and propagators of fake news is a different ball game altogether.

### PICTALK



Sam Bennet celebrates after winning the sixth stage of the UAE tour cycling race in Dubai on Friday

AP

## Dark secrets

Who is giving patronage to Mukhtar Ansari?  
Who is gunning for him, and why?

Arguing in the Supreme Court, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi termed him "a small fry". However, anyone who knows even a little about don-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari and his deadly gang war in the badlands of Uttar Pradesh (UP), is aware that the name is enough to send a chill down the spine of many politicians, bureaucrats, police officers and, especially, businessmen. Ansari, an MLA from UP's Mau Sadar, is currently lodged in the Ropar Jail of Punjab in connection with an extortion case. The Punjab and UP Governments are at loggerheads for his custody, with the former trying every trick up its sleeve to keep him from the UP Police's hands on health grounds. A natural question to ask would be as to what makes a dreaded criminal so important that UP's BJP-led Government and Punjab's Congress Government are fighting over his custody in the Supreme Court. Well, there is nothing new in Ansari's name being associated with heinous crimes like murder, extortion and kidnapping, but what actually has pitted him against the

saffron party is the chilling murder of then BJP MLA Krishnanand Rai in 2005, who and six associates were gunned down by assailants armed with AK-47 rifles. The murder was more than sensational as 400 rounds were fired. Ansari, the main accused, was acquitted by the CBI court in 2019.

Recently, the BJP's Mohammadabad MLA Alka Rai, the slain MLA's widow, wrote to Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accusing the party Governments in Punjab and Rajasthan of shielding Ansari. However, the story is not as simple as it appears. The UP Police has of late become "trigger-happy" and several criminals have been gunned down in encounters that the Opposition terms "extra-judicial killings". Last year, wanted criminal Vikas Dubey was shot by the State police after the vehicle carrying him "overturned" on a highway and Dubey "tried to escape after snatching a gun" from a policeman. There is no denying that Ansari must be fearful of meeting the same fate if Punjab jail authorities hand him over to the UP Police. But there is another side to the story: The criminal-politician-bureaucrat-police nexus is nothing new and Ansari must have been part of many such connections at the interstate and intrastate level, and it is only in the interest of such corrupt elements to exterminate the voices that can reveal their dark secrets. Now, who is giving patronage to Ansari and who is out to get him, and why, is the moot question.

# A flight and travel after one year

As an air trip to Goa for an event after a year-long hiatus revealed, being constantly stressed about the virus is clearly not the way to be

It is not good form to write columns in the first person but since this column talks of a personal experience, I will be writing it as such. The experience in question was catching a flight for the first time in 350 days. Part of my work involves evaluating and reviewing motor vehicles and that invariably involves a lot of travel, although the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that the few drives we did in 2020 all occurred in the Delhi-NCR and were fairly well-managed. Car companies don't do events in places like Goa because of the sun and sand or because folks like me enjoy flying, there are hundreds of decent hotel properties in Goa and the State is connected by flight to almost every major city in India. So, to do a media drive in Goa makes immense sense; in fact it is probably cheaper than organising individual drives in different cities and is definitely logistically easier.

I had promised myself that I would not fly in 2020, even after flights resumed and a few isolated automotive events took place. But as the new year rolled around and the first events began to be planned, one could not put off travel much longer. After all, working in a newspaper, I had been reading firsthand how the Government has more or less brought the pandemic in check. Of course, by the time I did eventually fly that had actually changed a bit with the new strain emerging in Maharashtra. However, my tickets were booked and I was taking a flight after 350 days.

A drive that once seemed like a weekly commute to Terminal 3 from my house appeared strange, not least because this was my first time in a taxi after almost a year. Traffic to and from the airport seemed normal and the few jams were more to do with the construction of the new flyover taxiways. Since my flight was in the afternoon, there was less chaos at the drop-off area. Airlines are running at a restricted domestic schedule at about three-quarters capacity and with very few international flights, India's largest airport terminal did not feel crowded.

We have all heard the term, the "new normal", things like people commuting and the need for hygiene. But other than everyone wearing face masks and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) staff wearing shields and attaching a handle to their metal detector "wands", flying in 2021 was not very different from flying in 2019 and before. Though I did sanitise my hands after going through security which I feel is the biggest congregation point of the entire flying process, it felt the same as before. I must state, at no point did I feel unsafe and while I would not go as far as to claim that there was a *laissez faire* attitude, you really would not have guessed that there was a pandemic going on.

Now part of this can be explained by India's caseload, something that was well explained by oncologist and award-winning medical writer Siddhartha Mukherjee in *The New Yorker* recently. It elucidated on the concept that because we live in India and have been exposed to so many pathogens before, maybe we had been exposed to a "relative" of the COVID-19 virus and that gave our bodies the B-cells and the T-cells needed



THAT SAID, WE SHOULD STILL BE CAREFUL, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE IS IN ALL LIKELIHOOD A MORE VIRULENT STRAIN DOING THE ROUNDS. IT MAY (OR MAY NOT) BE MORE DEADLY, BUT IT WOULD BE STUPID TO FIND THAT OUT THE HARD WAY

to deal with the virus. What else could explain the low death toll in India, many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia? One could argue that the "true" death toll has been suppressed but there is no way to hide hundreds of thousands of deaths; people would be talking about it, and that clearly isn't the case.

That said, we should still be careful, particularly since there is in all likelihood a more virulent strain doing the rounds. It may (or may not) be more deadly, but it would be stupid to find that out the hard way. I was flying on Vistara and while mask compliance was followed, the flight was packed with families travelling to Goa to get away from the boredom, one presumes. Some passengers stuck in the middle seats were covered in their woven-fibre protective suits and most people kept their face-shields on during the flight.

But it was not so much the flying experience, but what I saw in Goa which was scary. My hosts had organised dinner at a popular nightspot and it was crowded. There were few precautions being taken and while the bouncers were taking temperatures using an infra-red scanner, it was quite evident that the public at large

had travelled to the party State to leave their Coronavirus worries behind. 'Thalassa' on Vagator beach was packed to the rafters and nobody appeared to care.

With the Goa airport seeing flights from every corner of the country even if some States ask for the returnees to be tested, the crowds at restaurants and bars were back to pre-COVID levels, just that they were almost completely Indian with very few foreigners. That said, there were some expats around; those who had business and diplomatic visas and they were praising the Government and Indians for taking such a "Zen" attitude to the pandemic.

It was really incredible. Either people were not worried or they had reverted to their usual "*dekha jayega*" (we will see) attitude. Or maybe this was another example of Goan "*susegad*", the chilled-out laid-back attitude. I still don't know whether it is the attitude to adopt, but being constantly stressed about the virus is clearly not the way to be. But the "new normal" doesn't really seem very different from the "old normal".

(The author is Managing Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)

### SOUND BITE

One after the other steps have been taken to pull the country out of the non-transparent credit culture. Now NPAs cannot be swept under the carpet, even an NPA for one day needs to be reported.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi



Russia is confronted with a highly aggressive policy aimed at disrupting its development and creating problems along our perimeter.

Russian President — Vladimir Putin

An actor can only choose what is offered to him. There is nothing by intent but I am just fortunate that I get parts which most actors will be envious of.

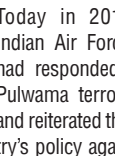


Actor — Avinash Tiwari



I officially announce retirement from all forms of the game. I thank my family, friends, fans, teams, coaches and the whole country wholeheartedly for all the support and love.

Cricketer — Yusuf Pathan



Today in 2019, the Indian Air Force (IAF) had responded to the Pulwama terror attack and reiterated the country's policy against terrorism in "New India".

Union Home Minister — Amit Shah

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Nothing wrong with renaming stadium



An unnecessary controversy is being created for having the Motera stadium named after Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Those making the hue and cry must understand that Modi isn't the first living person to have a stadium named after him. Many stadiums in India have been named after leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and so on. Even airports and railway stations have been named after great leaders and personalities. Narendra Modi, during his tenure as the Chief Minister of Gujarat,

had developed the State quite a lot. After all, it was Modi's dream to create a stadium meeting the global standards with state-of-the-art facilities and he played an instrumental role in the redevelopment of the sports facility.

We must understand that renaming the stadium after Modi in no way belittles or insults other leaders. In the past, Mumbai's Brabourne and Wankhede stadiums were named after individuals who were then alive. Similar is the case with Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium, Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium and Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium. Mohali's PCA Stadium was renamed after former BCCI and Punjab Cricket Association president IS Bindra. However, this outcry reeks of dirty politics and a section of people who have developed a sort of phobia against the name of the Prime Minister. However, we should not lend our ears to such people who criticise him for the sake of criticism only.

M Pradyu | Kannur

not receive a fair trial in India. With this, Nirav lost his nearly two-year-long legal battle against extradition on all grounds.

The 49-year-old fugitive businessman has been repeatedly denied bail due to the seriousness of the allegations against him and remains behind bars in a London prison since his arrest in March 2019. It will also set an example for other criminals who flee the country after committing financial and other crimes and think they can get away with it. Such criminals and fugitives can afford big lawyers, but they must remember that law is above all and it's not easy to hide or escape its long hands. All fugitives should be extradited and punished as per the law of India.

CK Ramani | Chennai

### SHAMEFUL ACT BY POLICE OFFICER

Sir — It is really shocking that Rajesh Das, the Special Director General of Police, Tamil Nadu, has turned out to be a black sheep as he is accused of misbehaving with a female IPS officer on duty and sex-

ually harassing her. This is what happens when officers are promoted to senior positions, particularly in the police department, without taking into account their past records but rather on various other considerations. It is also unwarranted that posts such as Special DGP are created with the intention of accommodating blue-eyed officers.

Suspension would not be sufficient in his case and he should be summarily dismissed from service as the female IPS officer has come forward to lodge a complaint against him.

It is expected that the panel to probe the harassment charge would do a fair job and submit its final report in record time. If women police officers are not safe and are vulnerable to such crimes at the hands of their own colleagues, the plight of common women is not hard to understand.

Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN


ADULT EDUCATION SET TO TURN A PAGE

Free access to adult learning through online mode backed by extensive usage of ICT has been emphasised



VIPIN KUMAR

American industrialist Henry Ford famously said: “Anyone who stops learning is old - whether this happens at 20 or at 80. Anyone who keeps on learning not only remains young but becomes constantly more valuable - regardless of physical capacity.” This is true even today, particularly for illiterate adults. Adult Education (AE) extends schooling options to those who are 15 years of age or above and have missed the opportunity of formal tutoring earlier but now want to pursue education. Though the literacy rate in India has increased from 12 per cent in 1947 to 73 per cent in 2011, however, adult illiteracy is still a challenge for the Government because the absolute number of illiterates in India was 25.76 crore, the largest in the world, as per the 2011 census. Successive Central governments took major initiatives to improve the adult literacy rate in the country. For instance, under the National Education Policy (NEP), 1986, the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) was founded to impart functional literacy to non-literates in the age group of 15-35 years in a time-bound manner. Subsequently, the Saakshar Bharat Programme continued till March 2018.



A major paradigm shift in the programme could help in imparting functional literacy to 7.63 crore non-literates, including 5.38 crore women, with four broader objectives namely: Basic literacy and numeracy, basic education, vocational education and continuing education. In this programme, the Government introduced new components of literacy and under the financial literacy component, one crore bank accounts of adult illiterates or neo-literates were opened under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. With regard to legal literacy, a new curriculum was designed and developed for neo-literates to create awareness of their rights and duties. These components have been included in the critical life section of AE and the lifelong learning chapter of the NEP 2020. The new curriculum will be developed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and includes five components: Foundational literacy and numeracy; critical life skills (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, healthcare and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare); vocational skills development; basic education and continuing education (including holistic adult education courses in arts, science, technology, culture, sports, recreation and more advanced material on critical life skills).

The NEP-2020 recommends a strong and innovative Government initiative for AE to facilitate community involvement and the smooth and beneficial integration of technology to expedite the aim of achieving 100 per cent literacy. These resources are a must to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.6 of the United Nations. Giving impetus to adult literacy, the Union Budget 2021-22, states that “to enable increased access of resources, online modules covering the entire gamut of adult education will be introduced.” Hence, for the improvement of the AE programme, free access to adult learning in States and Union Territories (UTs) through online mode backed by extensive usage of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has been emphasised. An online teaching and learning system will be developed in which a learner may register with essential information like name, date of birth, gender, Aadhaar number (not mandatory), mobile number and so on and attend the class through online mode by using a mobile or any Common Service Centre (CSC) or digital booth or cybercafé. At the national level the NCERT, NIOS, National Informatics Centre and the DAE will facilitate ICT support in designing and developing central modules, portal, apps, while States and UTs may explore partnerships with stakeholders for a vibrant adult education programme. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, “Mass illiteracy is India’s sin and shame and must be liquidated.”

*(The writer is Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Time for an eco-friendly development model



GURINDER KAUR



ARJUN KUMAR

## The people living in hilly regions and the country at large demand that the Govt adopt a pro-people and pro-nature development model instead of a pro-corporate one

The recent havoc in the Chamoli district of Uttarakhand — where a large part of the Nanda Devi glacier fell into the Alaknanda stream near Joshimath and caused severe flooding that resulted in the hydropower projects of Rishi Ganga and NTPC Tapovan Vishnugad plus many buildings being destroyed and scores of people being killed — has raised the pertinent question: Is this development or the destruction of the environment and people? The Chamoli incident has brought back the traumatic memories of the June 2013 tragedy when the Mandakini river was suddenly flooded after a cloudburst and the flow of water killed more than 5,000 people and left millions stranded in floodwater for days. The fact remains that though Uttarakhand is blessed with natural beauty and invaluable resources such as dense forests, rivers and mountains, it has a very fragile ecosystem. Hence, the State is prone to natural disasters. An earthquake of the magnitude 6.8 on the Richter scale hit the district of Uttarkashi in 1991, killing hundreds of people and destroying thousands of houses. Another earthquake in 1999 in Chamoli killed hundreds, too. The entire Malpa village of Pithoragarh was devastated by a massive landslide in 1999 and 250 people lost their lives.

Though earthquakes, cloudbursts, landslides, massive avalanches and other natural disasters have been a part of natural processes in Uttarakhand for centuries, the increase in their frequency and depth of intensity is due to human activities. The natives of Uttarakhand are acutely aware and have widespread knowledge about the fragility and eco-sensitivity of their environment. For centuries they have lived in harmony with the environment, but now, this stability is being threatened by indiscriminate development and flagrant violation of environmental rules. They have been trying to save their State for a long time.

As early as June 1950, Mira Behn, an environmental activist of Garhwal, published an article titled ‘*Something is wrong in the Himalayas*’ documenting that the flash floods in Uttarakhand are bound to wreak havoc as the sensitivity of the environment is being overlooked during the economic development process. Later, she also wrote to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on the issue. It is pertinent to note that the site of the recent mishap is the cradle of the Chipko Movement that was initiated to save trees from commercial lumber firms. The first protest occurred near the village of Mandal in the upper Alaknanda valley in April 1973. Alas, governments past and present have neither listened to the cries of locals and environmental activists nor learnt any lessons from the tragedy of 2013. Still, more than 50 hydroelectric projects are underway on the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi rivers, even though a committee of experts warned that such projects were a threat to the State and its frail ecology.

In fact, Uma Bharti, a senior BJP leader and former Water Resources Minister, in her time had requested the Centre not to build power projects on the Ganga river and its major tributaries since the Himalayas are a fragile area. Following the recent catastrophe in Uttarakhand, the Government needs to seriously reconsider its stance on building hydroelectric dams in the region. It should no longer ignore the advice and warnings



EVEN IF THE GOVERNMENT CUTS GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PARIS CLIMATE AGREEMENT, ONE-THIRD OF THE GLACIERS OF THE HIMALAYAN AND HINDU KUSH MOUNTAIN RANGES WILL MELT BY THE END OF THE 21ST CENTURY. HENCE, URGENT ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN SOONER AS NATURAL DISASTERS ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE WITH TEMPERATURE RISE

Kaur is professor, Department of Geography, Punjab University, Patiala, and Visiting Professor, IMPRI, while Kumar is Director, IMPRI. The views expressed are personal.



of experts. Magsaysay Award winner Chandi Prasad said that he had written a letter to the then Environment Minister in 2010 warning about the adverse effects of hydropower project on Rishi Ganga. His worst fears were realised in 2021. He claimed that if his warning had been heeded in 2010, the catastrophe would have been prevented. Rising temperatures are melting the glaciers rapidly and, according to a report by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), this melting doubled between 1980-2005. Even if the Government cuts greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in accordance with the Paris Climate Agreement, one-third of the glaciers of the Himalayan and Hindu Kush mountain ranges will melt by the end of the 21st century. Hence, urgent action needs to be taken sooner as natural disasters are likely to increase with temperature rise.

An increase in natural disasters in India is a result of climate change, but an increase in their impact is due to overexploitation of natural resources. The Centre and State Governments have been pursuing pro-corporate development by ignoring environmental norms.

Uttarakhand is inviting climatic tragedies and destroying its beauty by regularly flouting the Environmental Impact Assessment Laws to build a 900-km-long stretch of the Char Dham route. Shockingly,

these roads pass through an environmentally-sensitive zone. The construction of this 900 km stretch was done by dividing it into 53 small sections.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Department’s permission has to be sought to construct more than 100 km of a road that is passing through environmentally sensitive areas. This road’s width is being kept at 12 metres, for which land with a width of 24 metres would be required. Significantly, most European countries have kept the width of their roads in the mountains to eight metres.

In the aftermath of the February 7 catastrophe, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said that the country stands by Uttarakhand. He also announced financial assistance to the families of the victims. But such promises and financial aid are of no use for Uttarakhandis as continuous negligence of environmental regulations by successive governments has led to repeated natural disasters. A few lakhs in assistance from the Centre and State won’t help people rebuild their houses or bring back their loved ones. To prevent such emotional and financial losses to the people, the Government should mend its pro-corporate economic development methods.

The massive loss of life and property resulting from natural disasters should serve as a warning signal to the Central Government and make it realise that it must strictly

abide by environmental norms. However, the Government seems to be in no mood to hear the alarm bells as the Central Government is planning to relax environmental standards for Mopa Airport in Goa, sand mining in Uttar Pradesh, Sterlite Copper in Tamil Nadu and construction activities in and around Delhi, which have been blocked by the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal. Meanwhile, the NITI Aayog — the Government’s apex think tank — has commissioned a study that seeks to examine the “unintended economic consequences” of judicial decisions that have hindered and stalled big projects on environmental pretexts.

If mountainous areas of the country, including Uttarakhand and their people, are to be saved, then it is incumbent upon the Central Government not to carry out development work in these areas without seeking the opinions of geologists and the locals.

The Government should immediately ban unsustainable development projects in the hilly regions, be it the Char Dham route or hydropower projects. If this does not happen, the people of these areas will be forced to endure frequent natural disasters in the future. The people living in the hilly regions and the country at large demand that the Central Government adopt a pro-people and pro-nature development model instead of a pro-corporate economic development one.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

NICE OF THE ENGLAND BOYS TO GET THIS TEST MATCH FINISHED JUST BEFORE ENGLAND WOMEN PLAY TONIGHT. —ENGLAND CRICKETER ALEX HARTLEY



VERY DISAPPOINTING ATTITUDE CONSIDERING ALL THE BOYS DO TO SUPPORT THE WOMEN'S GAME. —ENGLAND CRICKETER RORY BURNS



# A bleak future without sustainable water resources

## India has an extremely low rainwater harvesting percentage, varying from three-six per cent of the annual rainfall. Hence, watershed management is imperative

The farmers’ protest reflects their approach towards securing their future, and soon there would be a solution to that. But there still looms a larger crisis for India and its people, including the farmers. One of the most fertile lands on Earth today stands as the most water challenged nations in the world. India has the highest number of people in the world without access to safe water. Over 80 million people — a majority from impoverished communities — living on less than \$4 a day, are forced to collect dirty water from open ponds and rivers or spend most of what they earn buying water from tankers.

A report by the NITI Aayog in 2018 revealed that 75 per cent of households do not have drinking water on the premises; 84 per cent of rural households do not have piped



SASHIDHAR VEMPALA

The writer is a conservationist, wildlife photographer, documentary film-maker and sustainability professional. The views expressed are personal.

water access; 70 per cent of the water is contaminated and wastewater treatment remains stuck at the national average of over 33 per cent, leading to the high burden of waterborne diseases.

More than 600 million people in India face high to extreme water stress and 21 cities, including New Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai, will run out of groundwater soon, affecting 100 million people. Critical groundwater resources, which account for 40 per cent of our water supply, are being exploited at unsustainable rates. India is already plagued with groundwater contaminated with iron, nitrate, chlorine, arsenic and fluoride, both posing human health risks.

A study published by Duke University in 2018 found uranium contamination in aquifer-



per cent of our water supply, are being depleted at unsustainable rates. Droughts are becoming more frequent, creating severe problems for India’s rain-dependent farmers (over 53 per cent of agriculture is rainfed). When water is available, it is likely to be contaminated, resulting in nearly 2,00,000 deaths each year. Interstate disagreements are on the rise, with seven major disputes currently raging, pointing to the fact that limited frameworks and institutions are in place for

national water governance.

By 2030, the country’s water demand is projected to be twice than the available supply, implying severe water scarcity for hundreds of millions of people and an eventual over six per cent loss in the country’s GDP. As per the report of the National Commission for Integrated Water Resource Development of MoWR, water requirement by 2050 in a high use scenario is likely to be a milder 1,180 BCM, whereas the present-day availability is 695 BCM.

The total availability of water possible in country is still lower than this projected demand, at 1,137 BCM. Thus, there is an imminent need to deepen our understanding of water resources and usage and put in place interventions that make water use efficient and sustainable. Israel is the world leader in water governance.

And India has partnered with them to share methods and technology. There is a need for more such partnerships, knowledge transfer but more than that, it is awareness that is needed by common users about the impending water crisis.

With nearly 70 per cent of the water being contaminated, India ranks 120 out of 122 countries on the water quality index. Policymakers face a difficult situation because there is not enough data available on how households and industries use and manage water.

There is an urgent need to deepen understanding of our water resources and usage and put in place interventions that make water use efficient and sustainable. Consumers and industries need to look at the 4Rs with renewed rigour. “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recharge.” India has an

extremely low rainwater harvesting percentage, varying from three-six per cent of annual rainfall. Large-scale watershed management is imperative for holistic management of ecosystems. Coupled with stronger implementation policies and regulations, an ecosystem management approach will bring in adoption of newer conservation technologies.

The agriculture sector will evolve further to improve irrigation and water use efficiency. All this is not possible without investment in education and awareness. Community governance and partnerships, water pricing a strong wastewater recycling ecosystem and increasing rainwater, stormwater harvesting will make people realise the importance of every drop of water and promote sustainable use.



# PM asks banks to come out with innovative products for startups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday stressed on increasing credit to businesses to meet the needs of a fast reflation economy and said financial products will have to be tailor-made for fintech and startups.

He said that although the government's endeavour is to promote the private sector, the public sector still needs to have their presence in banking and insurance to support the poor.

Speaking at a webinar on Budget announcements on Financial Services, Modi said to help medium and small businesses during the COVID pandemic, 90 lakh Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) were given credit worth Rs 2.4 trillion.



of rural and smaller cities and make them the strength of Atmanirbhar Bharat.

"As our economy is growing, and growing fast, credit flow has also become equally important. You have to see how credit reaches new sectors, new entrepreneurs. Now you will have to focus on creation of new and better financial products for Startups and Fintech," Modi said.

Stating that Kisan Credit has helped small farmers and those involved in animal husbandry to come out with the grasp of informal lending, Modi said the private sector now will have to think of innovative financial products for this section of the society.

He said the government has a clear vision for the financial services sector and is taking steps to make it vibrant, proac-

tive and strong.

"The pace at which we have to take the country forward in the 21st century, proactive participation of the private sector is important. The government's vision is clear about the financial sector, no place for ifs and buts. The government's highest priority is that every depositor and investor experience trust and transparency," he said.

The trust is based on safety and security of deposit and economic growth. There is a need to change the old policies relating to the banking and non-banking sector.

"The financial sector was hurt 10-12 years back due to aggressive lending. Steps have been taken to take the country out of non-transparent credit culture. Today instead of brushing NPAs under the carpet, we have made it mandatory to report even NPA of 1 day," he said.

He said the government is aware of the ups and downs faced by businesses and does not foster a thinking that all business decisions are taken in

bad intent.

"The government's responsibility is to stand with all such business decisions taken with good intent and I want to say this to all those in the financial sector that I will stand by you for all decisions taken with honest intent," Modi added.

In the 2021-22 Budget, the government has proposed privatisation of two public sector banks, allowed 74 per cent foreign direct investment in the insurance sector and announced the initial public offering of Life Insurance Corp of India.

Elaborating on the Budget proposal of setting up of an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC), Modi said the ARC will address the bad loans in a "focussed manner" and this will help strengthen PSBs and increase their lending capability.

He said 130 crore people have Aadhaar cards and 41 crore have JanDhan Account holders, of which 55 per cent are women.

PROTEIN DAY 2021

## Teach For India collaborates with Right to Protein

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's largest non-profit education network - Teach For India, which is also a part of the global Teach For All Network is collaborating with the Right To Protein initiative to commemorate the macronutrient protein on India's second annual Protein Day. In association with nutritionist Pooja Makhija, Right To Protein and Teach For India will educate children and their parents about the importance of consuming adequate protein in their daily diets for overall better health and nutrition.

The educational session will be conducted over an online webinar, where children from around the country, especially those that are a part of the Teach For India network in Mumbai, Pune, New Delhi, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Bangalore will participate along with their parents in the online session. Led by Makhija, topics such as protein consumption for the development of the human body, common errors with



protein consumption, identification of easily affordable and accessible plant and animal protein sources, and methods of including all types of protein in daily diets, will be the focus on Protein Day 2021.

Abhik Bhattacharjee, National Director of Marketing & Communications at Teach For India said, "Teach For India has always believed that an excellent education is a balance

of academics, holistic development, strengthening values and mindsets and overall well-being of children. Through this collaboration with Right To Protein, we were presented with the opportunity to educate our students about the importance of nutrition in their development. Children and parents understanding the role of nutrition is a great step towards raising leaders with healthy bodies."

## Rupee tanks 104 paise to close at 73.47 against USD

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee dived 104 paise to settle at 73.47 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, following a heavy selloff in domestic equities and strong American currency in the overseas market. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 72.43 against the greenback, then lost further ground to touch an intra-day low of 73.51. It finally ended at 73.47 against the American currency, registering a massive fall of 104 paise over its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 72.43 against the American currency. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.43 per cent to 90.52. "US bond yields have surged on worries about inflationary pressures due to unprecedented liquidity infusion in the system and a series of economic data, which is indicating that the economy is on the path to normalcy. This has in-turn led to a rebound in the dollar index and prompted a selloff in risk assets.



## US jobless claims at 730K, high but fewest in 3 months

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell sharply last week in a sign that layoffs may have eased, though applications for aid remain at a historically high level. Jobless claims declined by 111,000 from the previous week to a seasonally adjusted 730,000, the Labor Department said Thursday.

It is the lowest figure since late November and the sharpest one-week decline since August. Still, before the virus erupted in the United States last March, weekly applications for unemployment benefits had never topped 700,000.

The latest figures coincide with a weakened job market

that has made scant progress in the past three months. Hiring averaged just 29,000 a month from November through January. Though the unemployment rate was 6.3 per cent in January, a broader measure that includes people who have given up on their job search is closer to 10 per cent.

All told, 19 million people were receiving unemployment aid as of February 6, up from 18.3 million the previous week. About three-quarters of those recipients are receiving checks from federal benefit programs, including programs that provide jobless aid beyond the 26 weeks given by most states.

Last week's drop in applications was concentrated in two states, California and Ohio, where they fell by a combined

96,000. Ohio officials had said earlier this month that a surge in new applications was driven in part by a jump in potentially fraudulent claims. That now appears to have faded.

California's system operates on a biweekly bases, which can make its weekly data choppy.

This month's devastating winter storms and power outages in Texas and some neighbouring states might have also disrupted the filing or processing of some claims. Applications for jobless aid fell by one-sixth in Texas to about 35,000.

Yet last week's decline in applications was broad-based, with 36 states and the District of Columbia reporting fewer people seeking unemployment benefits.

## 'Question on GSP in India is very high on my radar'

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration has indicated that the issue of restoring the GSP status to India is on top of its radar, as several lawmakers have raised the issue of retaliatory tariffs imposed by New Delhi on American agricultural products after the previous Trump regime terminated it.

In 2019, former president Donald Trump terminated India's designation as a beneficiary developing nation under the Generalised System of Preference (GSP) trade programme after determining that New Delhi has not assured the US that it will provide "equitable and reasonable access" to its markets.

The GSP is the largest and oldest US trade preference programme and is designed to promote economic development by allowing duty-free entry for thousands of products from designated beneficiary countries. The issue was raised by several members of the Senate Finance Committee on Thursday during the confirmation hearing of Katherine C Tai or the position of United States Trade Representative.

"On your question on GSP in



India, let me just say that if confirmed, this is very high on my radar," Tai said, responding to a question from Senator Maria Cantwell who raised the issue of high retaliatory tariffs imposed by India on several American products after US terminated GSP privileges of India.

"What can we do to open up the Indian market to US apples and reduce the horrific tariffs that are on those apples, particularly with the Trump administration terminating the GSP programme? When would the Biden administration restore India's GSP status and help us with apple exports?" Senator Cantwell asked.

India was the largest beneficiary of the GSP programme in 2017 when it exported USD 5.7 billion worth of goods to the US under this scheme.

## Institutional investments in Indian real estate to increase by 14.6%

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

In their latest outlook report for 2021, Colliers estimates that institutional investments in Indian real estate will grow by 14.6% to INR 396 billion (USD 5.5 billion) from INR 346 billion (USD 4.8 billion) in 2020. For comparison, 2020 had witnessed a drop of 23% from 2019. Colliers believes that institutional investors continue to be bullish on Indian real estate asset classes such as offices, data centers and warehouses and they are looking to deploy their

"The investment climate in India is very buoyant with global investors' interest in real assets getting stronger"

existing dry powder.

"The investment climate in India is very buoyant with global investors' interest in real assets getting stronger. With global interest rates at historic

lows and positive net yields in India, the country has emerged among the preferred destinations for investments in real estate. Further, the resilience of the Indian market is also evident from continued good housing sales performance across various markets, the large institutional investments in commercial office and industrial parks, and the listing of two REITs in the past six months," says Piyush Gupta, Managing Director, Capital Markets & Investment Services (India) at Colliers.

## German firms find success at CIIE

PNS ■ SHANGHAI

China retained its position as the largest trade partner of Germany for the fifth consecutive year in 2020, according to a report recently released by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany. Statistics show that despite COVID-19, the bilateral trade volume between China and Germany rose by 3 percent year-on-year to about 212.1 billion euros (\$258 billion). China was the second largest export destination of German goods in 2020, with the value of exports from Germany to China hitting around 95.9 billion euros last year. China was also Germany's largest destination



for exports of electric and electrical products, according to a news release by the German Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers' Association (ZVEI) on Feb 22. Industry experts have said that these achievements are partly due to the China International Import Expo.

Clas Neumann, Chairman of the Board of the German Chamber of Commerce in China, said that the CIIE is a good opportunity for German

enterprises to showcase their cutting-edge products in technology, innovation and life style. By participating in the CIIE, German enterprises can expand their brand influence and promote "Made in Germany", Neumann added. Germany, which has a number of large enterprises specialized in equipment manufacturing, automobiles and health care, has been an important participant of the annual expo. It was also the guest-of-honor country for the first CIIE. About 170 German firms attended the third edition of the expo last year, with their combined exhibition area surpassing 18,000 square meters, highest among European countries.

## Home affordability to improve further in 2021: JLL

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Despite the nationwide pandemic and the economic uncertainty and rising stock market volatility that came with it, there has been a sequential growth of 51% in the residential sales during the last quarter of 2020, according to the recent report 'India Real Estate Outlook - A new growth cycle' by JLL. While there is still a long way to go, the worst is behind for the residential sector.

The evolving COVID-19 pandemic has influenced short-term decision making with job security cited as the biggest concern when contemplating the purchase of a

home. "In the second quarter of FY 2020-21 when the GDP showed higher than expected recovery, the housing market showed some initial signs of recovery, with sales increasing by 34% on a sequential basis. In Q4 2020, uncertainties around the economy and jobs started reducing, which led to an increase in the pace of recovery in residential real estate. New launches and sales across the seven key markets under review witnessed a significant jump," Dr. Samantak Das, Chief Economist and Head Research & REIS, JLL.

Expectations from 2021

The challenges faced by residential real estate in 2020



have become the catalyst in providing stimuli to the industry for sustained growth. With people spending an inordinate amount of time at home, the

lockdown re-established the importance of owning a house. Simultaneously, government initiatives to support the recovery by holding policy rates at

historically low levels to initiate a cycle of consumption led growth. This has resulted in extremely low mortgage rates. And, prices have also been stagnant for the past few years. This affordable synergy makes it a great time to purchase a home. Furthermore, the market is also witnessing renewed interest from Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) impacted by economic uncertainties in Europe and the Middle East.

Changing homebuyer preferences and product metrics

A healthy lifestyle has become a key criterion for homebuyers, resultantly, preferences have tilted towards larger homes in self-contained

complexes with facilities like gym, green open spaces, and access to daily necessities. Moreover, with work from home becoming a reality, product metrics are likely to change.

Increased importance of study rooms, good network and broadband speed as well as acoustics. Also, remote working practices are expected to increase the attractiveness of suburban markets. Suburban markets offer lower density environments and more spacious apartments at affordable rates. Since, travel to office may no longer be an everyday activity, the importance of connectivity to office hubs will no longer dictate home purchases.

## Ansysis, TÜV SÜD sign MOU to augment learning experience



South Asia, a leading certification, testing, auditing, inspection and training company and the wholly owned subsidiary of TÜV SÜD Group, Germany, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ansysis Software Pvt. Ltd. (Ansysis) in order to improve the overall learning experience of the participants of Automotive Functional Safety ISO 26262

training programme. The MOU was signed at a virtual event by Mr. Rafiq Somani, Area Vice President - India and South Asia Pacific, Ansysis and Mr. Vishal Nerurkar, Vice President of Business Assurance, TÜV SÜD South Asia. With this MOU signing, TÜV SÜD in India is poised to offer its participants of Automotive Functional Safety ISO 26262 training, access to Ansysis medini analyze, a world class simulation software tool.



For someone who hails from God's own country — Kerala, to fall in love with any other place is next to impossible, but Hyderabad did sweep her off her feet, says actress Nitya Naresh. The Malayali beauty talks to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about what she loves, cherishes and dislikes about the city.



## FROM A VACAY-SPOT TO A PERMANENT HAVEN

Coming from a state known for its palm-lined backwaters, Tollywood actress Nitya Naresh can't stop gushing about this Nizami city she now calls home. "For me now, Hyderabad is my home. I believe in the saying about home not being a place but people who make you feel belonged, and it fits so well in my life too. Wherever my beautiful family is, that's my home. Moreover, some of my best friends in my life today, who are so precious to me, have been living in this very city for more than a decade and have always been there with me through thick and thin," the *Operation Gold Fish* actress tells us.

Nitya, who has made a name for herself in Hyderabad says that she has always lived by the ocean, and not getting to see blue waters as often is a drastic change for her. "Earlier, I had apprehensions about the air being dry and missing water bodies, but eventually, I fell in love with the city because of

its denizens and the experiences that I encountered. One of my favourite things that I always will have to say about Hyderabad is how one, despite the hustle and the bustle, can still find solitude here. Mumbai is so fast-paced and Kochi is so laid back but in this city, you have your own luxuries and choices to make," she adds. With a lot of commitment and hard work, Nitya stepped into the Tollywood industry adorning the craft as if she was born to be in it. She never knew a vacay spot will one day turn out to be a permanent haven for her! The *Soda Goli Soda* girl says, "I learnt driving here, what has always stayed with me are the moments of going for a ride with my friends on my vehicle. I felt so independent! Geographically too, this city always makes you feel at ease. If you're driving from Paradise to Banjara Hills, nobody can ever get lost on their way. Hyderabad made me feel safe, I always knew my routes."

Destiny played a very important

role in this artiste's life! A pre-determined and unchanging event took shape in Nitya's life while looking for a job in the city of dreams, also known as the Bollywood hub, Mumbai — she gets a call from the Telugu film industry! It made her feel something is calling her back to the city and she must go! "I wasn't in the mindset of becoming an actress at first, the auditions were an experiment for me to tell my children someday: "hey, your mother also did a movie in her life!" I chose to pay heed to the calling and who would've known I'd come this far? Of course, my parents did believe in me. Today, I am not just an actor from Tollywood but also an artist, content creator and influencer, who is self-made. Currently, I am making my career in art-therapy too! So, Hyderabad gave me the chance to do more than just a single hat. I am exploring so many things here. I haven't grown up idolising Telugu actors but the industry is getting better at what it does with talent, post-production,

cinematography, and concepts. This city's cinema is evolving with better ideas, passionate actors, and focussed storytellers," narrated the 31-year-old actress.

Describing her immense love for the cuisine here in the city, whenever somebody mentions Hyderabad food, it brightens up her face with glee! Mentioning the kind of food platter that the city has to offer, she also tells us that it took her years to get used to the kind of spice Hyderabadis eat every day. The variety that it offers including the royal cuisine, Telangana *bhojanam* and Andhra delicacies — all this fills her heart and tummy! Add to that, the different cuisines from across the globe that the city has managed to master! Whenever she goes out for a fine-dining, it's always a burst of relishing flavours on her taste buds, shares the actress of *Nandini Nursing Home* fame.

Having talked about all the good things Hyderabad has, the one thing that she dislikes is the traffic. Although, when she visited

Mumbai recently, she says it made her feel that the traffic here in Hyderabad is much better and she's never going to complain again.

"My great grandfather was the advisor to the Nizams in his days and then my grandfather joined the police force here. My dad was very clear that when he had to return to his roots, he's going to choose Telangana and invest here. So whenever I was here in the city for a vacation, we would go to the Nehru Nehru Zoological Park, Ramoji Film City and Snow World. Though the city has transformed tremendously, there are so many things that still take one down the nostalgia trip and that's just beautiful. My grandmother always narrates to me about how Banjara Hills was a deserted place once and today, when I drive through the lanes of Banjara Hills, it's fully commercialised. Nevertheless, Hyderabad is a place where I feel encouraged and accepted by all means," she concludes on a heart-warming note.

## Badass Devika wins hearts in *Dev DD 2*

**D**ev DD Season 1 set the stage but season 2 of its drama shattered the glass ceiling. It brought with it a never-before-seen version of Devika Dharam Dwivedi! Season 2 finds a chink in the armour of Devika Dharam Dwivedi opening up her vulnerable side, making her very relatable to audiences everywhere — a very beautiful, vulnerable, feminine version of Devika that captures hearts. There are switches between her reality and inner self filled with monologues from the protagonist describing her innermost thoughts but externally her agony doesn't let her act on it.

This is part of the charm of *Dev DD 2*! Season 1 shows us how totally badass Devika Dharam Dwivedi is and how she makes a life for herself on her terms, setting herself up for epic love and heartbreak. Season 2 shows us Devika Dharam Dwivedi at a complete loss.

She is a jilted lover and forgotten friend, her hopelessness takes her home back into the arms of her parents. At home, she starts to build herself up once again against all odds and society's cruel taunts. There are, of course, new twists and turns in the story, blasts from the past and new friendships, all adding to the attraction of the story. The best friend Chandni and her lover battling all odds to be together, Anurag and Aditi fighting a scam together and Devika's humorous way of fending off society aunts and evil relatives all make for a very delightful watch.

Actress Asheema Vardaan who plays the role of Devika, spills some more beans about the role, she says, "The show focuses more on the major issues of LGBTQIA+ and female foeticide. The concept revolves around queer marriage which equally needs relevant awareness in our surroundings as queer people don't enjoy marriage rights as much as their straight counterparts do. It's saddening to see that our law doesn't see straight and queer couples as the same, which in turn leads to social stigma and ostracisation. One shouldn't miss watching this show because it is a take on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Devdas* story but with a female perspective! As you progress through the show, you get to know how Devika comes across as a rebel yet is a simple girl at heart who only wants someone to love. My role in the new show challenges stereotypes and touches topics like feminism, sexism and homophobia - ones that are usually brushed under the carpet."

The series is extremely empowering, not just for women but it champions people of every gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. The flawless acting, the clever lines, the screenplay, the dialogues, the story, the comic moments are just a few of the many reasons to watch the show.

The series is filled with magical moments that give you goosebumps and also ones that tickle you till you fall off your chair laughing, making the series both lovely and heartbreaking at the same time.



On World Protein Day today, nutrition expert Dr Jagmeet Madan shares that issues around this important nutrient need to be constantly discussed and propagated

While a number of socio-economic issues bound us today, our right to basic nutrition and health is one that should be demanded across the globe, especially in India. It is, therefore, not surprising that the second goal in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals is 'Zero

Hunger', which aims to reduce malnutrition in infants and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older people.

While India continues towards its commitment to becoming a malnutrition-free country, a number of hurdles, further exacerbated by the pandemic, continue to hinder and slow down the progress. It is estimated that the pandemic will lead to a rise in hunger, with approximately 270 million people facing food insecurity as opposed to the 149 million during pre-COVID times. These findings are not only grave but a serious cause for alarm — India ranks 94 out of 107 countries on the Global Hunger Index 2020.

It is, therefore, important — nay critical — to tackle the pressing issue of malnutrition and protein deficiency in creating head-on by not only creating awareness of protein-rich food sources but also dispelling misconceptions around accessibility, affordability, cultural nuances, and inherent hyperlocal habits. And this Protein Day, celebrated on



## You are what you eat!

February 27, with its theme of Powering With Plant Protein, let's delve into everything protein.

### Why plant protein?

We are perhaps the country with the single largest

vegetarian population in the world with also a sizable population of flexitarians i.e. those who prefer a vegetarian diet while still enjoying meat (animal protein) in moderation. One of the key myths affecting the protein

deficiency debate in India is the perception that not only are protein-rich foods expensive but that there is limited variety for those who don't eat meat — over 76 per cent recently surveyed shared this sentiment.

Moreover, when presented with a number of protein-rich sources, a large segment of Indian mothers could only identify three out of 11 protein-rich foods correctly; thereby eliminating several key protein-rich sources completely.

This lack of knowledge coupled with the misconceptions that plant-protein is nutritionally inferior is myth to dispel as we continue in our quest to educate Indians about the role of proteins, especially plant-based protein rich diets that will help bridge the protein based nutrition and affordability gap.

### Is it for everyone?

The quantity, quality and timing of protein consumed throughout the day across one's life span together play a role in determining the health benefits of dietary protein. While one needs different levels of protein across different phases of life, the underlying key fact remains — protein is a key micronutrient that is essential for one's growth and development throughout life.

It begins with pregnant

women and lactating mothers. A woman's diet during and immediately after pregnancy is pivotal for both, mother, and child, with proteins playing a key role in overall health and the baby's development. The immunoglobulin of the breast milk derived from the colostrums adds to the benefits accrued from exclusive breast feeding of a baby for a minimum of six months which needs to be emphasised to all lactating mothers. The good quality protein based weaning foods with plant protein diversity should be an integral part of an infant's weaning foods.

For growing children, the need for protein intake is even more augmented as it not only helps in muscle and bone growth but also adds significantly to strengthening their immunity. Be it the usual routine at school, extra-curricular activities and cognitive development, protein plays an important role.

For healthy adults, who go about their day-to-day life, it is much required to continue to build immunity, maintain a healthy gut and repair of muscle wear and tear. In

fact, it is believed that we may begin to naturally lose as much as eight per cent of overall muscle mass every decade after we turn 40, making it more important than ever to consume more protein as we age.

And while one may believe that protein's role with age might diminish, it is quite the contrary: With reports suggesting that one in three adults over the age of 50 experiences advanced muscle and strength loss, and thus, adequate protein intake is recommended for aging adults to support muscle and strength requirements.

Even as we recognise and act this Protein Day, it is important to make note that this cannot be a one-time or one-day discourse. Protein-related issues are very much an ongoing concern that need constant discussion, dialogue and education to continue on India's journey in becoming a healthy nation with sustainable well-being at its core.

(The writer is the National President of Indian Dietetic Association and supporter of the Right To Protein initiative.)





Shifa Sadaf



Jawed Habib



Komal



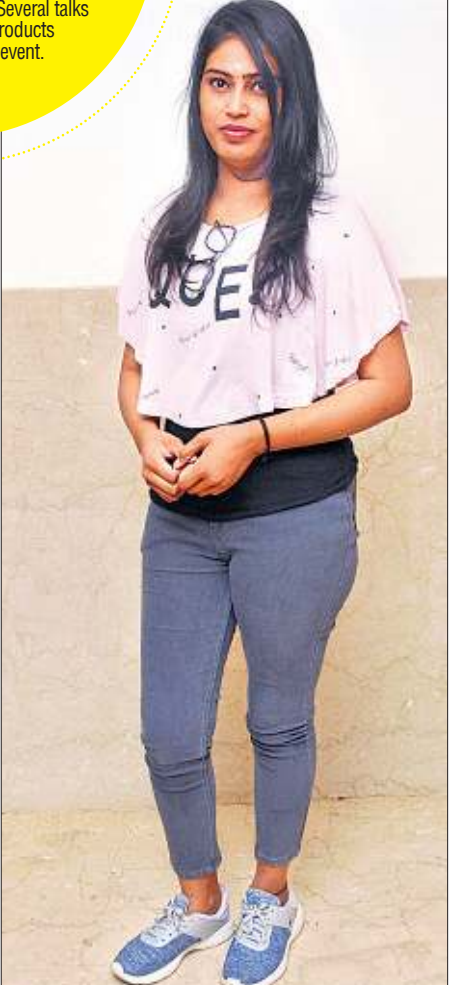
Pallavi



Nanda Priya



Vani Sree



Nandini



Dhruv Sayani



Ranisree

## HAIR CARE FARE

Cigmma Lifestyle announced celebrity hairstylist Jawed Habib as their new spokesperson. Their popular luxury brand KT Professional conducted an informative seminar recently, at Lemon Tree Hotel, Banjara Hills. Several talks were held and new products launched at the event.

Photos by SV Chary

## FUN

### ARCHIE



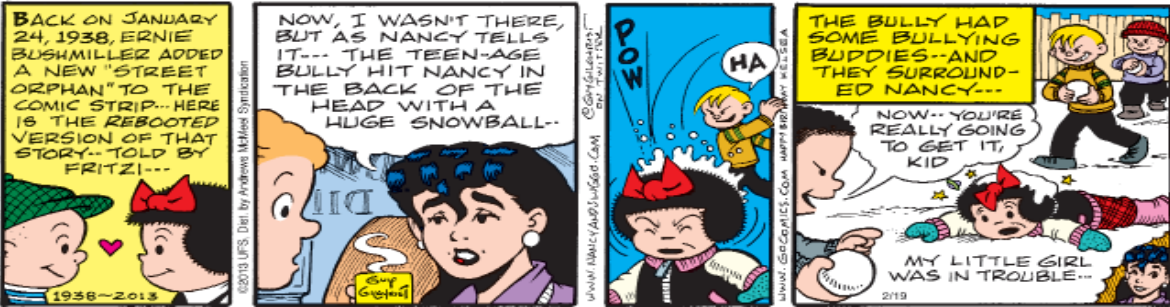
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



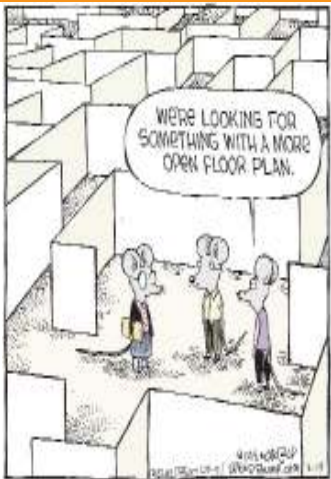
### GINGER MEGGS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



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**ACROSS**

6 San Francisco is in this American state

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10 A kind of play where all the words are sung

13 At once

14 Articles

17 Push roughly

19 Having no paid work

**DOWN**

7 Very tasty to eat

9 Make butter with this

11 A piece of material to cover a hole

12 Baby goat

15 The organs of sight

16 Drinks little by little

17 Black stuff in chimneys

18 Unlock

**SOLUTION**

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O	I	L					A	U	A	
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### SUDOKU

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**Yesterday's solution**

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

**Rules**

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



# Never thought I WOULD DO TELUGU MOVIES: **FARIA**



try Telugu industry before going to Bollywood. I started watching Telugu cinema a couple of years ago. I've been to Mumbai multiple times and gave auditions. To begin with, language barrier was an issue for me to think of Bollywood but I'm past that. The Telugu industry has been very welcoming. Now, I'm open to exploring other south languages as well. In the last two years, I've realised that our cinema is changing rapidly in tune with the audience's taste. I want to be a part of the new wave," she points out, adding that she learnt 80 percent of Telugu on the sets of *Jathi Ratnalu*.

While she is tight-lipped about her part despite some reports stating that she plays a lawyer in the film, she adds that it is integral to the narrative. A light-hearted drama, *Jathi Ratnalu*, directed by Pittagoda fame Anudeep KV, follows three good-for-nothing guys (played by Naveen, Priyadarshi and Rahul) who are trapped in a serious crime. It's set in Jogipet, Telangana. "It's a clean comedy and every role has its own essence and plays out in the story beautifully. It's a sarcastic take on society and is also about love and friendship," Faria informs.

Effusive in her praise for Ashwin, who is debuting as a producer with the film, which will have a theatrical bow on March 11, she says, "Every time I felt nervous or a little unsure, he would say, 'Hey you know what? You should try this' and it worked like magic for me. He is a simple, quiet and happy-go-lucky kind of person. Somehow, all of us — Naveen, Priyadarshi and Rahul — are like each other. So we got along well easily."

She admits to having been a touch nervous on the first day of her shoot. "I wanted to make sure that I got my lines right and didn't want to be a burden on anyone. I was keen on leaving a good

It's exciting to see so many people coming up with their own versions of *Chitti nee navvante*. In fact, people around me started addressing me as Chitti and I love it

**F**aria Abdullah was an alumnus of Loyola College, Hyderabad when Mahanati director Nag Ashwin graced it as a chief guest for a fest in early 2019.

"I wanted to listen to him and maybe if I get a chance, even ask some questions. He overheard me speaking to my juniors about my stint with the theatre. Then he said, 'Oh! You are an actor?' That's how

my association with him began. Sometime later, he spoke to me about the female lead slot opening in *Jathi Ratnalu*. I auditioned for the role and after a look test with Naveen Polishetty, I was picked for the project," the newbie tells us.

Born and bred in Hyderabad, Faria never thought she would start her film career with the Telugu industry. "To be honest, I never thought I would do Telugu movies. In fact, many people advised me to

In a conversation with *The Pioneer*, the debutante, who is a Hyderabad, speaks on how she landed *Jathi Ratnalu*, why she wanted to debut in Hindi and how Nag Ashwin eased her nerves whenever she was a tad nervous on sets

impression on the first day, so I've rehearsed my lines thoroughly to get the accent and pronunciation right. I was a little worried about the language but I gave my first shot in a single take," she chortles, adding that she even dubbed for her role. "Nag Ashwin told me, 'If you don't dub for yourselves, it would only be half of a performance'. So I dubbed for the part."

Faria is ecstatic with the response *Chitti nee navvante* from the film's soundtrack has garnered. It crossed 10 million views of YouTube, and is still counting.

Smiling, she observes, "I didn't expect it to go this viral. It's exciting to see so many people coming up with their own versions of it. In fact, people around me started addressing me as Chitti and I love it. (Singer) Ram got the pulse of the song so well and he took it to the next level with his rendition."

— NG

## Dil Raju: *Shaadi Mubarak* offers non-stop entertainment

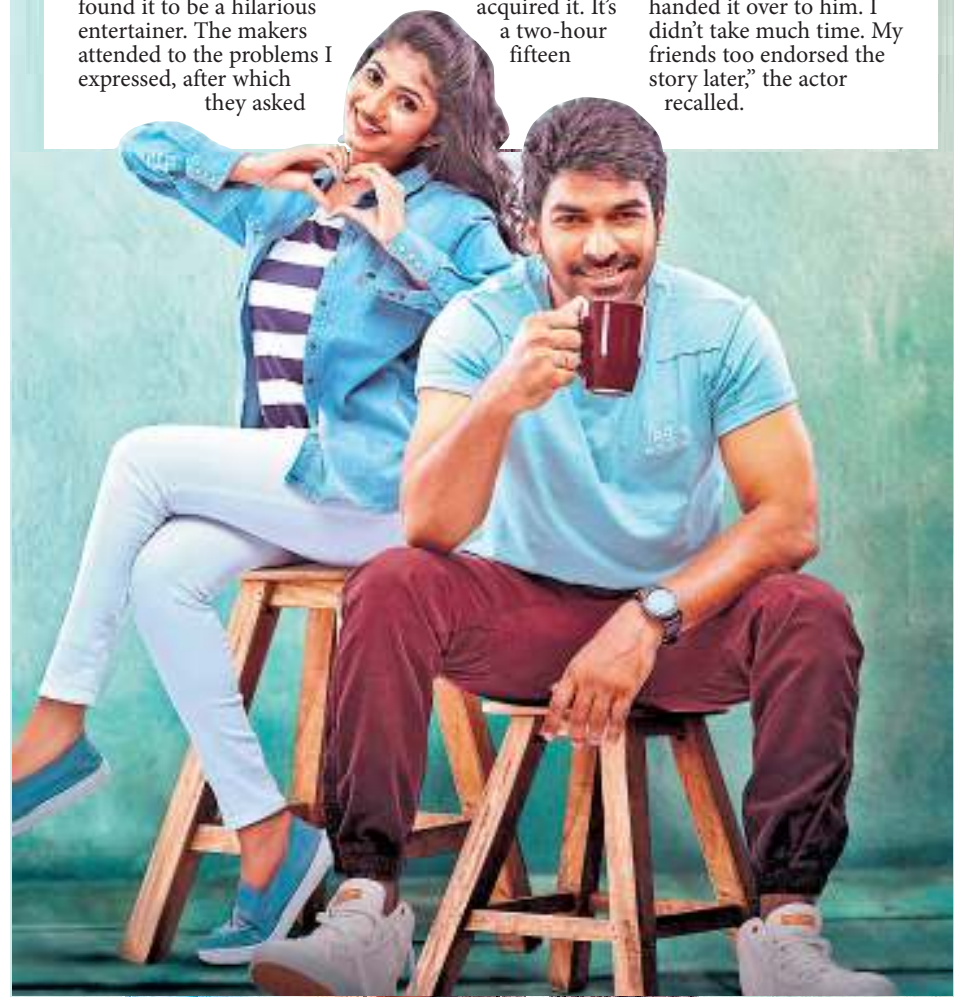
**L**eading producer Dil Raju promises that *Shaadi Mubarak*, featuring Mogalirekulu fame Sagar and newbie Drishya Raghunath in the lead roles, will offer out-and-out entertainment when it graces the big screen on March 5th. "After the makers completed the film's shoot, Sagar showed me the trailer. I found it interesting and told him that I will watch the complete film. Except for some problems at places, I found it to be a hilarious entertainer. The makers attended to the problems I expressed, after which they asked



minutes film with non-stop entertainment," the producer said. He was speaking at the trailer launch of the film in Hyderabad on Thursday evening.

Sagar said it's been his eight-year dream to achieve success in the industry and Dil Raju's step to join the project as a producer was to encourage him. He pointed out that after listening to the first half of the narration from writer Srinivas Reddy, he wrote a cheque. "After the second half, I handed it over to him. I didn't take much time. My friends too endorsed the story later," the actor recalled.

me to release it as well. It's a good film so I wasn't in two minds to accept their proposal. I even acquired it. It's a two-hour fifteen



## VAISSHNAV TO COLLABORATE WITH MANAM ENTERTAINMENTS

**V**aishnav Tej, who is basking in the glory of *Uppena*, is understood to have signed his third film. While his second film, *Kondapolam* (tentative title), with Krish has been wrapped up last year itself, his third, according to reports, will be with Nagarjuna's Manam Entertainments.

Prudhvi, who is an alumnus of Annapurna College of Film and Media, is attached to the project as a director. The project is reportedly a love story laced with action and family emotions. Supriya, who looks after Annapurna Studios, will execute the project, it is being said.

Vaishnav has also agreed to do a film for BVS N Prasad, with whom his brother Sai Tej has already done *Solo Brathuke So Better* and will be collaborating again for a mystical thriller.

## Adah says she has signed 5 Telugu films



**A**ctress Adah Sharma took to Instagram to announce that she has signed five new Telugu films.

In her post, the actress, whose film *Kshanam* completed five years on Friday, thanked the makers for encouraging her to experiment with projects.

The actress posted a clip from the film and wrote: "On 5 yrs of *Kshanam* I want to announce that I have signed 5 Telugu films! Everytime I've done something experimental in any language u guys have always given me sooo much love and support. The films I'm doing now are all stuff that's not done before. Thank you for Shweta @adivisesh @raviperepu @pvp cinemaoffl"

The 2016 thriller film *Kshanam* starred Adivi Sesh, Anasuya Bharadwaj, Vennela Kishore, Satyam Rajesh and Satyadev Kancharana. In fact, the film was also remade in Tamil and titled *Sathya*. Its Hindi version was called *Baaghi 2* and *Aadyaa* in Kannada.

Adah is presently awaiting the release of a mystery thriller titled *Question Mark* with director Vipra.

It features Sanjay, Bhanu Sree Mehra, Abhay, Hari Teja, Akshatha Srinivas and Ajay in other key roles.

## Middle Class Melodies director's next with Matinee Entertainment

**A**fter the enjoyable light-hearted drama *Middle Class Melodies*, which marked his directorial debut last year, Vinod Anantoju is set for his sophomore venture. Premier production house Matinee Entertainment signed him immediately after the release of his

maiden film and he is right now working on the story. Once again, he will be directing it from a script by dear friend Janardhan Pasumarthi.

Vinod tells us, "The project will be an adventure comedy. Portions of it will be shot in a fictional village. The writing will be completed in a month's time after which I

will initiate the casting process. The production house gave a complete free hand; they just want us to come up with a good story."

Vinod joins a long list of directors- Svaroop RSJ, Ravi Kiran Kola, Teja Marni and Uday Gurrala — who are making their second films for Matinee.





# It's all about confidence, Axar on Test outings

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

It was a long wait for Axar Patel and it didn't help that everyone around him had just one question for the past three years — “Why aren't you in the Indian team?”

But Patel was unfazed as he knew, his time would come.

“I think it's all about confidence,” said the 27-year-old from Anand in Gujarat who wanted to be a mechanical engineer growing up but was prodded into trying his hand at cricket by a school friend.

With his record 11 wickets in the Day-Night third Test against England, the left-arm spinner finally found his big moment in International cricket, seven years after he made his India debut in an ODI against Bangladesh.

Since that day, he has been in and out of the team with the spin all-rounder's spot firmly with Ravindra Jadeja.

In this series too, he made it because Jadeja was out injured. He hadn't been in the national team since 2018 and made his Test debut in the second game against England last week in Chennai.

“I have been out of the team for three years and at that time, I used to think about the areas of my game which need to be worked upon. So, I was working on my bowling and batting,” he told Hardik Pandya in a *bcci.Tv* interview, thoroughly enjoying his good time.

“When you are out of the



continue in the same manner in front of his home crowd in the fourth and final Test against England, starting here on March 4.

“(The Day-Night Test) was my second Test and first in Motera. It's a special feeling to play and perform before the home crowd. My efforts would be to do the same,” Patel said.

Towards the end of the light-hearted interview, India skipper Virat Kohli also made an appearance and appreciated Patel's performance in Gujarat.

“*Ae Bapu taari bowling kamaal chhe!* (Bapu, your bowling is wonderful!),” Kohli said.

## EXPECTED WICKET TO HOLD UP LITTLE LONGER

England head coach Chris Silverwood on Friday played down talks of lodging any formal complaint to the ICC regarding the Motera pitch but said he had expected the surface to hold up a little longer after his team lost the third Test against India inside two days.

“First and foremost, just to follow up from what Joe (Root) said yesterday, he got five for 8, but at the same time whatever the pitch did or didn't do, India ultimately played better than us on that surface, probably pushed us to the extremes of which our players haven't experienced before,” he said during a virtual press conference.

“We did expect the wicket to hold up a little longer than it did,” he added.

team, many people, friends keep asking you ‘why aren't you in the team despite doing well?’ These things keep coming in the mind,” said the bowler who has 152 wickets in 41 first-class game at an impressive average of 25.25.

“So, I told myself ‘just wait for the right time and whenever

I get an opportunity I will give my 100 per cent.”

Asked by Pandya if he finds Test cricket easy, Axar replied: “Everybody asked me that question. When it goes your way then you think it's easy but when you miss a full toss, you actually realise how easy it is,”

Patel said he would aim to

# Eng guilty of thinking too far ahead: Bell

PTI ■ LONDON

Former batsman Ian Bell has slammed England's much-debated rotation policy, saying they were guilty of thinking too far ahead and have gone wrong with the constant chopping and changing in a “big” Test series like India.

England fell to an embarrassing 10-wicket defeat in the third Test to go down 1-2 in the four-match series against India, while also getting knocked out of contention from the ICC World Test Championship



(WTC) final in June.

“I think England have been guilty of thinking too far ahead

of having a squad for the Ashes when actually this is bigger than the Ashes, this is probably as big as the Ashes,” Bell told *ESPNcricinfo*.

“Why are we rotating in the biggest Test series you are playing in? For me that's where England have gone a bit wrong,” he added.

The 38-year-old, who featured in 118 Tests for England, feels for the English players for whom the tours to India and Australia can make or break careers.

“These tours, certainly for

Englishmen coming to India or going to Australia are the pinnacle. They make your careers, you look back and if you win in those conditions they are remembered for a long long time,” Bell said.

“For me, India are going to come to England in the summer. If they are 2-0 or 1-0 up will they rotate? I know for a fact that when India come in the summer they won't be rotating their best bowlers or their best players or leave somebody out. They want to win.”

# Padikkal scores another ton in Karnataka's win



PTI ■ BENGALURU

Young opener Devdutt Padikkal continued his sensational form, smashing a second successive century to lead defending champions Karnataka to a nine-wicket win over Kerala in the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Friday.

Chasing Kerala's 278, Karnataka cantered home with 27 balls to spare with the Royal Challengers Bangalore opener hitting 13 fours and two sixes in an unbeaten knock of 126 from 138 balls.

He got a fine support from Krishnamurthy Siddharth (84-ball 86 not out; 5x4, 3x6) as they toyed with the Kerala

## Delhi to host Vijay Hazare knockout

**Mumbai:** The knockout matches of the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy will be held in Delhi from March 7.

The matches will be organised at the Arun Jaitley Stadium and the Palam Ground.

“...Kindly note that the

knock-out stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy 2020-21 will be played at New Delhi from March 7,” stated a mail sent from the BCCI secretary's office to all the affiliated state units on February 25.

As per the BCCI website, the pre-quarter final

(Eliminator) will be played on March 7, while the quarter-finals will be played on March 8 and March 9.

The two semi-finals will be staged on March 11 while the summit clash will be played on March 14.

hundred and Sheth's big-hitting to post 332/6 after a top-order failure, and then restricted the opposition to 319/9 to record their fourth win on the trot. The left-hander smashed 20 fours and three sixes in his whirlwind 100-ball knock while forging a 139-run stand for the fifth wicket with Vishnu Solanki (78 off 99 balls, 8x4).

## JHARKHAND LOSE

In Group B matches in Indore, Tamil Nadu ended Jharkhand's three-match winning streak with a convincing 67-run win.

At Holkar Stadium, Prabhshimran Singh hammered 167 (140 balls, 13 fours, 9 sixes) to power Punjab to a four-wicket win over Vidarbha. While Madhya Pradesh handed Andhra a 98-run defeat.

Jharkhand is on top of the standings with 12 points, followed by Punjab, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh with eight points. Vidarbha lies in last place with 4 points.

## BCCI considers 4-5 IPL venues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI is looking at four to five venues for conducting the next edition of the Indian Premier League with Mumbai as a single host not looking feasible anymore following a surge in Covid-19 cases in and around the city.

Earlier, there were discussions that Mumbai, with four stadiums — Wankhede, Brabourne, DY Patil and Reliance Stadium, will be a good option to create a single bio-secure bubble and hold the eight-week long tournament.

However, the Covid-19 situation in Maharashtra has worsened with a spike in cases.

“There is still a month left for the IPL to start but obviously some decisions need to be



taken. It will be risky to have a single city IPL in Mumbai if there is steady rise in cases that's happening right now,” a senior BCCI official said.

“So cities like Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Kolkata will be ready to host matches. Ahmedabad, in all likelihood, will host the play-off and final match of the IPL,” he said.

The IPL is scheduled to start in the second week of April.



# I became a cricketer accidentally: Ashwin

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

**I am actually a cricket lover who went on to become a cricketer. I am living my dream here, I never imagined that I will wear the Indian jersey one day and I will play**

Called a modern day legend by his captain Virat Kohli, ace Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin says he is actually an accidental cricketer, who is living a dream with over 400 Test wickets under his belt.

Ashwin reached the milestone in the Day-Night third Test against England, which ended here on Thursday with India winning by 10 wickets inside two days. Ashwin picked up seven in the match to take his overall tally to 401.

“I accidentally became a cricketer. I am actually a cricket lover who went on to become a cricketer. I am living my dream here, I never imagined that I will wear the Indian jersey one day and I will play,” Ashwin told *bcci.Tv* in an interview but did not elaborate on the remark.

According to Ashwin, being in the Covid-19 lockdown made him realise just how lucky he was to play for India.

“And every time I finish playing a game and if I give that winning result for the team, I just feel I am being given a blessing, but the Covid times made me feel how lucky I am to actually play for India.

“Even when I came back after the IPL, I never thought I will play in Australia, so that is what I said, everything has been a gift, for the love with which I play the game, the game is giving me back enough and more laurels,” he added.

Ashwin, who also became the second fastest bowler to reach the 400 Test wicket-mark after Sri Lankan spin legend Muttiah Muralitharan, said that he watched a lot of old videos of great individ-

ual performances in the lock-down helped improve his understanding of the game.

“I used to watch a lot of footage even before, but the understanding of the game has gone one notch higher...During the lockdown, I was watching a lot of cricket from the past, especially Sachin's hundred in Chepauk, all sort of stuff on Youtube,” recalled the 34-year-old Chennai-born player.

Jofra Archer became Ashwin's 400th wicket during the second day of the third Test here, which India won by 10 wickets and he said it was only when the batsman had opted for DRS, he realised that he had reached the landmark.

“Initial feeling is quite empty to be honest, because we were under immense pressure...For me I was actually in the moment, only after he (Archer) had taken the DRS, I realised the 400th that happened,” he said.

“...After they flashed 400 Test wickets on the board, the entire stadium was up, everybody was clapping, I don't know, I cannot put a finger and say how I feel about it, the last three months have been a complete fairy-tale,” he added.

# Arsenal, Man Utd, Rangers in last 16

Leicester, Napoli, Germans exit Europa League after shock defeats in R32

AFF ■ BERLIN

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice including a late winner as Arsenal qualified for the last 16 of the Europa League on Thursday with a 3-2 victory over Benfica in Greece, while Manchester United and Rangers cruised through to the next round.

The Gabon striker put Arsenal ahead at the Karaiskakis stadium in Piraeus in their home leg of a tie relocated due to Covid-19 travel restrictions.

Diogo Goncalves levelled the contest with a magnificent free-kick and Rafa Silva gave Benfica a 2-1 lead on the night when he took advantage of an error from Dani Ceballos on the hour.

Kieran Tierney rifled in an equaliser and Aubameyang headed in the decisive goal from Bukayo Saka's cross on 87 minutes, earning the Gunners a 4-3 aggregate victory and saving them from an unusual away goals exit following a 1-1 draw in the first leg in Rome.

“Everyone is happy tonight. This is what gives me power every day, take errors from the past and transform to strength,” Aubameyang told *BT Sport*.

“The team showed a lot of character and we deserved the win. It was a hard game. What we showed tonight will be an example for the future.”

United cemented their place in Friday's draw with a 0-0 draw at home to Real Sociedad, having effectively clinched the tie last week with an emphatic 4-0 win on neutral ground in Italy.

Mikel Oyarzabal's awful penalty miss represented the best chance at Old Trafford for La Real, while Bruno Fernandes rattled the crossbar and Axel Tuanzebe's header was disallowed for a foul.

Leicester City, who are behind second-placed United in the Premier League only on



goal difference, were knocked out after sliding to a 2-0 loss at home to Czech champions Slavia Prague.

Lukas Provod fired Slavia in front just after half-time following a goalless draw in the first leg, and Senegalese teenager Abdallah Sima ensured the visitors extended their run in the competition.

## 'OUTSTANDING' RANGERS

Steven Gerrard's Rangers progressed following their 5-2 win over Belgian side Antwerp at Ibrox, with five different players on target for the Scottish league leaders.

After a dramatic 4-3 win in the first leg last week, goals from Alfredo Morelos, Nathan Patterson and Ryan Kent put Rangers in control before late penalties from Borna Barisic and Cedric Itten wrapped up the tie 9-5 on aggregate.

“I'm very satisfied, the performance was outstanding in a lot of areas,” said Gerrard.

AC Milan squeezed past Red Star Belgrade on away goals after a 1-1 draw in a clash of former European champions at the San Siro.

Franck Kessie's early penalty was enough to book Milan's place in the last 16 despite El Fardou Ben Nabouhane equalising as the tie finished 3-3 over the two legs.

Napoli's dismal run contin-

ued as they were knocked out 3-2 on aggregate by Granada despite winning 2-1 in the return fixture in Italy.

Ajax eliminated French Ligue 1 leaders Lille with a 2-1 victory in Amsterdam to complete a 4-2 overall win,

# Red Devils face AC Milan in last 16

AFF ■ NYON

Manchester United and AC Milan will face off in the last 16 of the Europa League after being paired together in Friday's draw in Nyon.

United, who beat Real Sociedad 4-0 in the previous round, will face the seven-time European champions in a two-legged encounter after they squeezed past Red Star Belgrade on away goals.

The tie will pit Zlatan Ibrahimovic against his former club in United, where he won the 2017 edition of the Europa League.

United will be considered favourites for the tie however as they sit second in the Premier League having lost just once in the English top flight since the start of November.

Milan meanwhile have

while Gerard Moreno netted both goals as Villarreal dumped out Salzburg 4-1 on aggregate.

Egyptian forward Ahmed Hassan's 88th-minute strike in Eindhoven sent Olympiakos through at the expense of PSV 5-4 on aggregate, while Roma and Young Boys brushed aside Braga and Bayer Leverkusen respectively.

Former winners Shakhtar Donetsk completed a 3-0 aggregate victory over Maccabi Tel-Aviv, while Norwegians Molde dumped out Hoffenheim 5-3 on aggregate following a 2-0 win in Germany.

Dinamo Zagreb and Dynamo Kiev complete the line-up for the last 16, with Tottenham Hotspur also in the mix after destroying Wolfsburg of Austria by an aggregate score of 8-1 on Wednesday.

Granada were rewarded for making the last 16 in their first ever European campaign with a tie against Norway's Molde, while Roma coach Paulo Fonseca will be reunited with his old team Shakhtar Donetsk.

United's fellow Premier League teams Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal will face Dinamo Zagreb and Olympiakos respectively.

Rangers take on Slavia Prague after dumping out Royal Antwerp 9-5 on aggregate.

## SINGLES

### WOMEN'S CRICKET SEASON FROM MARCH 11

**NEW DELHI:** The women's domestic cricket season will begin with a 50-over tourney from March 11, the BCCI has informed its affiliated units. The tourney will be held across six venues — Surat, Rajkot, Jaipur, Indore, Chennai and Bengaluru. The teams will have to assemble by March 4 and will need to have three Covid-19 negative before entering the respective bio-bubbles. Each of the five elite groups will have six teams each, while the plate group has seven. The quarter-finals will be held on March 29, and semi-finals on April 1. The final will be played on April 4.

### CAS REDUCE UMAR AKMAL BAN TO 12 MONTHS

**KARACHI:** Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal will be able to resume his cricket career after the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) reduced his suspension to 12 months and imposed a fine of 42.50 lakh Pakistani Rupees on him for breaching the Anti-Corruption Code. The CAS announced its decision in a consolidated order on the appeals filed by Umar and the PCB. Umar was initially suspended from all cricket activities on February 20 last year for not reporting approaches made to him for spot-fixing in the PSL. On Friday, the PCB said that Umar will now be eligible to reintegrate into competitive cricket subject to deposits of fine, which adds up to ₹19.62 lakh in Indian currency, and undergoing the program of rehabilitation under the PCB Anti-Corruption Code.

### YUSUF DATHAN ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

**NEW DELHI:** Out-of-favour India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan, who made a name for himself as a power-hitter, on Friday announced retirement from all forms of cricket, saying time has come “to put a full stop to this innings of my life.” The 38-year-old Pathan was part of the inaugural T20 World Cup-winning Indian team in 2007 and also the one that triumphed in the 2011 ODI World Cup at home.

### PIETERSEN TO CAPTAIN ENGLAND LEGENDS

**MUMBAI:** Former England batsman Kevin Pietersen will lead the England Legends while Khaled Mahmud will captain the Bangladesh Legends in the Unacademy Road Safety World Series, starting in Raipur from March 5. Former cricketers Matthew Hoggard, Owais Shah, Monty Panesar, Nick Crompton are some of the other key members in the England side. The Bangladesh Legends squad comprises players like Nafees Iqbal, Abdur Razaq and Mohammed Rafique.

### HENDERSON SIDELINED AFTER SURGERY

**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson faces a long spell on the sidelines after undergoing an operation on the groin injury he sustained in last weekend's Merseyside derby loss against Everton. Liverpool has not put a timescale on the midfielder's recovery but said he will be out until at least April in another blow to its fading Premier League title defense.

### SWIATEK VS BENCIC IN ADELAIDE FINAL

**ADELAIDE:** Second seed Belinda Bencic battled for almost three hours before seeing off 16-year-old Coco Gauff in three sets on Friday to reach the final of the Adelaide International. Bencic set up a final showdown against French Open champion Iga Swiatek with her 7-6 (7/2), 6-7 (4/7), 6-2 win. Swiatek had a much easier passage to the final, beating Jill Teichmann 6-3, 6-2.

### DISCOVERY BECOMES HOME OF GIRO D'ITALIA

**NEW DELHI:** Discovery has secured the exclusive global rights to show the Giro d'Italia until at least 2025. The long-term deal means Discovery retains its status as the Giro's multi-platform rights holder, providing Live and uninterrupted coverage of every stage from the year's first Grand Tour. For the Indian audience, Giro d'Italia can be viewed on Eurosport as well as on discovery+ app from 8th — 30th May 2021. AGENCIES



## Deepak upstages world champ Zoirov

**New Delhi:** Asian Silver-winner Deepak Kumar (52kg) on Friday stunned Olympic and world champion Shakhobiddin Zoirov of Uzbekistan to storm into the finals of the 72nd Strandja Memorial Boxing Tournament in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Deepak clinched one of the most memorable wins of his career with a 4-1 win over more

fancied Zoirov, who had claimed the 2019 world championship title beating India's Amit Panghal. Zoirov is also a Silver-medallist from the Asian Games and the championships.

However, former youth world champion Jyoti Gulia (51kg) and Bhagyabati Kachari (75kg) bowed out of the women's competition.

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