

AGENDA 8
DEATH IS AN
INTERESTING AFFAIR**MONEY 6**
GADKARI FOR MORE RESEARCH
TO IDENTIFY IMPORT SUBSTITUTES

HYDERABAD, SUNDAY JANUARY 17, 2021; PAGES 10+16 ₹5

NORTH
EAST ON
THE
RADAR

07



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WHATSAPP DELAYS POLICY UPDATE ROLLOUT TO MAY 15

WhatsApp has decided to delay the rollout of its new policy update to May 15 after massive criticism from users globally, including India, over concerns that data was being shared with its parent company Facebook. The move assumes significance for users in India given that the country is among the biggest markets for WhatsApp with over 400 million users. In a blog post, WhatsApp said it is moving back the date on which people will be asked to review and accept the terms. "No one will have their account suspended or deleted on February 8. We're also going to do a lot more to clear up the misinformation around how privacy and security works on WhatsApp."

**PM MODI ANNOUNCES RS 1,000-CRORE 'STARTUP INDIA SEED FUND'**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday announced the launch of Rs 1,000-crore 'Startup India Seed Fund' to support startups and help budding entrepreneurs pursue innovative ideas. Addressing the 'Prarambh: Startup India International Summit', Modi exuded confidence that the growth of startups will help in generating jobs and improving lives of people in the region. "In order to provide initial capital for startups, the nation is launching a Rs 1,000 crore Startup India Seed Fund. This will help in setting up new startups and promote their growth," the Prime Minister said. The summit marked the fifth anniversary of the Startup India initiative launched by Modi on this day in 2016.

**OWNER OF BULL AT ITS BEST IN DODGING, ACE TAMER GET CAR IN TN 'JALLIKATTU'**

The jallikattu sport was flagged off by Chief Minister K Panneerselvam and Deputy chief minister O Panneerselvam, here which saw more than 400 tamers and 800 bulls participating in the annual event held in connection with the Pongal festival. Kannan of Viralipatti, who managed to tame about 12 bulls in the Jallikattu, was adjudged the best among tamers and was rewarded with a car. Breeder Kuruvithurai Santoshi's bull, which displayed impressive strength and agility in evading the tamers, won the first prize - a car for its owner. Karupannan who tamed 9 bulls and Sakthi who tamed 8 bulls emerged as second and third, respectively, and were given 2 cows and a motorcycle, respectively.

**COVID PLAYS 'CENSOR' AS STARS' VIRTUAL PRESENCE TAKES SHEEN OUT OF IFFI**

With Covid-19 necessitating restriction of the number of guests to 250 people at the inaugural ceremony of the 51st edition of the International Film Festival of India at Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Indoor Stadium here on Friday, and with stars making the most of the 'hybrid mode' introduced this year, the usual euphoria over glitz, glamour and star power at Asia's oldest and India's biggest movie gala was replaced by masks, sanitisers and somewhat hyper anxious participants this year. In a first, this year the festival is being conducted in 'hybrid mode', under which delegates can participate and watch films and events virtually.

**'World's largest vaccination drive shows determination of a self-reliant India'**

10

1.91 L get shots on day 1 as India begins largest vaccination drive

PM Modi cautions people on rumours ■ BJP MP, TMC MLA first politicians to get vaccine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched India's Covid-19 vaccination drive while reassuring the country that emergency use authorisation was given to two made in India vaccines only after scientists were convinced of their safety and effectiveness, and urged people to beware of propaganda and rumours.

Addressing the nation ahead of the launch of what he described as the world's largest vaccination programme, Modi said these vaccines will ensure a "decisive victory" for the coun-

try over the coronavirus pandemic, but asked countrymen to continue wearing masks and maintain social distancing even after receiving the jabs.

Emphasising the enormity of the vaccination drive, which he launched through a remote control amid chanting of Sanskrit shloka that meant 'let everybody be happy, let everybody be healthy', Modi said never before in history, has this type of a large-scale vaccination campaign been undertaken.

There are more than 100 countries in the world whose population is less than three crore and India is vaccinating

Manish, first in India

Manish Kumar, a 34-year-old sanitation worker at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), became the first person in India to be vaccinated against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) on Saturday. The Najafgarh resident said he had volunteered to be vaccinated first as his colleagues chosen for the drive were "scared" before getting the shot. "I did not know that I am the first person to receive the vaccine. I had a good sleep last night, came here in the morning and talked to the other staff who were to get the shot," said Kumar. "Many of them were scared. So, I went to my seniors and said I should be given the vaccine first. I wanted to prove to my colleagues that there is no need to be scared," Kumar also said.



three crore people in its first phase of vaccination, he said.

In the second phase, the number of those vaccinated has

2

PM Modi quotes Gurajada in vaccine rollout speech

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday quoted renowned Telugu writer and poet Gurajada Apparao during the launch of nation-wide Covid-19 vaccination programme, to drive home his point of helping others selflessly.

"Sontha labham kontha manuku, porugu vadiki thodu padavoyi. Desamante matti kadoyi, desamante manushulo," Modi recalled the famous quote of Apparao, which is part of the writer's poetry.

The quote translates into English as 'Forego your self-interest to some extent and help neighbours. Nation does not mean just mud and soil,



but people.' Gurajada Apparao, who lived between 1862 and 1915, was born in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh and lived in nearby Vizianagaram. Among his several writings, 'Kanyasulkam',

2

**'RBI policies helped ease severity of economic impact of COVID'**

6

Bharat Biotech to pay compensation for side effects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Biotech, which has received a government purchase order for supply of 55 lakh doses of Covaxin, a Covid-19 vaccine, said the company will pay compensation to recipients in case of any serious adverse effects experienced after receiving the antidote.

In the consent form to be



signed by the vaccine recipients, Bharat Biotech said, "In case of any adverse events or

serious adverse events, you will be provided medically recognised standard of care in the government designated and authorised centres/hospitals."

"The compensation for serious adverse event will be paid by sponsor (BBIL) in case if the SAE is proven to be causally related to the vaccine," the consent form said.

2

Eatala Rajender decides against taking first covid shot in TS after PM warning

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

When it comes to a choice between keeping one's word and following instruction from above, Telangana Health Minister Eatala Rajender apparently would always opt for the latter. The Health Minister, who had declared on Friday that, as the captain of the department,



2

Vaccine rollout begins in Telangana

Amid cheers, a woman sanitation worker received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine at a state-run hospital here as the exercise was launched in Telangana on Saturday. Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy and Telangana Health Minister Eatala Rajender formally launched the vaccination programme at the Gandhi Government Hospital here. S Krishnamma, a woman sanitation worker was administered the first shot amid cheers by those present at the Gandhi Hospital after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the nation on the occasion of the vaccine roll out concluded.

2

TODAY**ALMANAC**

Month & Paksham: Paush & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi: Chaturthi: 08:07 am

Nakshatram: Purna Bhadrade: Full Night

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 04:36 pm - 05:59 pm

Yamagandam: 12:26 pm - 01:49 pm

Varjyam: 12:58 pm - 02:40 pm

Gulika: 03:12 pm - 04:36 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 11:11 pm - 12:54 am

Ahijit Muhurtam: 12:04 pm - 12:48 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly sunny
Temp: 29/17
Humidity: 55%
Sunrise: 06:49 am
Sunset: 06:03 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated January 16, 2021 5:00 PM

OBTUSE ANGLE**HEERA GROUP FRAUD****Centre asks TS again to move for CBI probe**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, acting on a petition from the president of the association of victims of the Heera group fraud, shot off a letter on January 14th to the Telangana Chief Secretary for the second time asking the state to move for a CBI inquiry in the Rs 50,000 crore scam.

Shahbaz Ahmed Khan, president of All India Heera Victims Association, told The Pioneer: "For the first time they have come out and agreed to pay the amount to victims. There are many foreigners involved in the fraud. The role of Pakistan in this also should

Based on Khan's petition, the Central ministry requested action from the state to initiate a CBI enquiry into Heera group of companies' alleged scam involving Rs 50,000

be investigated and sought for CBI enquiry." According to Khan, some Pakistanis are among the foreigners involved in the sensational case.

2

Finally, Govt notifies GHMC winners!

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government on Saturday notified the names of the ward members elected for the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) along with their party affiliation and reservation particulars in the notification, paving way for the Telangana State Election Commission (TSEC) to hold meeting of the newly elected corporation for elections to the post of Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

The TSEC will soon announce a schedule for the conduct of elections to the post of Mayor and Deputy Mayor directing the GHMC Commissioner and Election Authority DS Lokesh Kumar to conduct the polls for the two posts. The term of the newly elected corporation will be five years from the date of the first meeting of the Corporation. Elections to the offices of the ward members of GHMC were held on December 1 and the results were announced on Dec 4 and in Neredmet, it was declared on Dec 9. The names of the elected ward members of 150 wards of GHMC in the elections have been sent to the State Election Commission by the Commissioner, GHMC, Hyderabad and Election Authority on Jan 5.

Tainted Dasgupta in ICU, chats go viral

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Partho Dasgupta, a former CEO of TV ratings agency BARC who was arrested in the Television Rating Points (TRP) rigging case, has been admitted to the ICU of a hospital here after his sugar level shot up, officials said on Saturday.

His daughter took to Twitter to allege that he was tortured in prison, and appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and others to 'save his life'.

Dasgupta, a diabetic, was rushed to the state-run J J Hospital here from the Talaja Central Prison in Navi Mumbai around mid-night after his blood sugar levels shot up, a prison official said.



He was admitted to the ICU and was on oxygen support, the official said. Dasgupta, former CEO of Broadcast Audience Research

Council (BARC) was arrested in the alleged TRP rigging scam by crime branch of the Mumbai Police on December 24 last year.

The Mumbai Police had earlier told the court that Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami had allegedly bribed Dasgupta with "lakhs of rupees" to ramp up the news channel's viewership numbers fraudulently.

On Saturday, Pratyusha Dasgupta, Dasgupta's daughter, demanded that he be shifted to a reputed private hospital. She tweeted a message titled "A helpless daughter's anguished appeal", tagging PM Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah,

2

Ashok Gajapathi's offer of a new Ram idol rejected

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In another humiliation meted out to Vizianagaram royal scion and TDP politburo member, the AP Endowments Department on Saturday rejected the offer of a donation of Rs 1,01,116 by Pusapati Ashok Gajapathi

Raju for a new idol of Lord Ram to be placed in the shrine at Ramatheertham. The idol of Lord Ram was desecrated by miscreants last month, leading to an outcry and protests.

Venting his anger on Twitter, Ashok Gajapathi Raju said "First, they unilaterally dismissed me as

hereditary trustee / chairman without as much as a notice in complete contravention of Section 28. Now, they reject my offerings to the Lord as a representative of the founder family for the vigrahas."

He attached the donation slip to his post.

2

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Kishan Reddy writes to CM for release of MMTS funds

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy here on Saturday requested Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao to release funds for the early completion of the Multi-Modal Transport System (MMTS) project.

In a letter addressed to Chief Minister, Reddy said the Central government has sanctioned the MMTS second phase project six years ago keeping in view the increasing traffic situation. The work was started with the Centre and State partnership at an estimated cost of Rs 816.55 crore.

As per agreement, the State government was supposed to give Rs.544.36 crore as its share to the railways. But the



State government has given only Rs.129 crore. In view of the traffic requirements of the people here, the Centre has spent over Rs.789.28 crore for the project.

However, the works were halted as the State government did not pay its remaining

share of Rs.414.14 crore. The cost of the project has now gone to Rs 951 crore. As per the estimates, the state government was supposed to spend Rs 634 crore while the railways Rs 317 crore. The work would be completed once the state government releases the

remaining amount, Reddy said. He urged the Chief Minister to take necessary steps for taking up the sanctioned MMTS works from Ghatkesar to Raigiri near Bhongir to improve connectivity to Sri Narasimha Swamy Temple in Yadadri from Raigiri.

Job fraud: SCR alerts aspirants

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With certain instances of fraudulent practices coming to the notice where fraudsters were found duping innocent candidates with promises of jobs in different offices of Indian Railways, the authorities have alerted job aspirants to be cautious of such fraudsters.

According to SCR, the jobs in railways are offered only on passing examinations that are conducted by Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) and Railway Recruitment Cell (RRC) after well-publicised notifications.

Minister asks officials to prepare action plan to market Rabi crops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister S Niranjana Reddy has asked the agricultural marketing department to prepare an action plan to market the rabi crops as directed by Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao.

He was addressing a coordination meeting of the agriculture and marketing departments at the market yard in Bowenpally here on Saturday.

He said that new agricultural laws are in vogue, but the Centre did not mention the MSP for various crops in them. Therefore, the state government, in the absence of the



MSP notified by the Centre, would not be able to procure crops from farmers, he pointed out.

Therefore, he asked the officials to explain the inability of the government to procure

the crops.

He asked them to regulate the flow of harvested crops into the agricultural markets by giving farmers coupons at the time of harvesting the crops and provide all amenities to the farmers like hamalis, sheds and other.

He asked them to ensure that farmers flood the market yard with the red chilli crop.

Agriculture secretary Janardhan Reddy, marketing director Lakshmi Bai, horticulture director Venkatram Reddy, Marketing Managing Director Bhaskarachary and others were present on the occasion.

Tainted Dasgupta in ICU...

Continued from Page 1

The PMO as well as Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray. It was apparent that he had been "physically and mentally tortured inside the jail," she alleged. Three days before Balakot strike, Arnab Goswami said 'something big will happen' on WhatsApp chat with Dasgupta "Bigger than a normal strike." That is what Republic TV Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami told Partho Dasgupta, the former Chief Executive Officer of the Broadcast Audience Research Council , which measures television ratings, in a purported WhatsApp chat on February 23, 2019.

Three days later, on February 26, 2019, the Indian Air Force carried out a strike targeting a Jaish-e-Mohammad training camp in the Pakistani town of Balakot. The attack was billed as India's response to an attack on February 14, 2019, in Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir, in which 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel were killed after an explosive-laden car driven by a suicide bomber rammed into their bus.

The purported chat is mentioned in a transcript that is part of a 3,400-page supplementary chargesheet filed by the Mumbai Police in their investi-

gation into the alleged Television Ratings Point scam, according to The Hindu. The chats, alleged advocate Prashant Bhushan on Twitter, "show many conspiracies & unprecedented access to power in this" government. According to the transcript, on February 23, 2019, Goswami texted Dasgupta saying: "On another note something big will happen."

After a few messages on other matters, Dasgupta asked, "Dawood?", referring to the notorious gangster who is wanted in several cases.

The conversation continued: Arnab Goswami: "No sir Pakistan. Something major will be done this time."

Partho Dasgupta: "Good." Partho Dasgupta: "It's good for big man in this season."

Partho Dasgupta: "He will sweep polls then."

Partho Dasgupta: "Strike? Or bigger?"

Arnab Goswami: "Bigger than a normal strike. And also on the same time something major on Kashmir. On Pakistan the government is confident of striking in a way that people will be elated. Exact words used."

The chats also reveal instances of Dasgupta asking Goswami to reach out to the government on his behalf. In one such exchange on April 4, 2019, the former ratings agency

chief asks Goswami if he can stall the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's proposal to make BARC's viewing data public. Dasgupta asks Goswami for some action from a certain "AS". In reply, Goswami says he could do what Dasgupta asked for.

The chat also includes a conversation where Dasgupta asks Goswami to get him a job as "media advisor" in the Prime Minister's Office, while at several instances the Republic TV journalist refers to his proximity to "PMO" and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, The Hindu reported.

An operation to manipulate television ratings was uncovered in October when the Broadcast Audience Research Council filed a complaint through Hansa Research Group, one of BARC's vendors, accusing some channels of rigging their ratings by bribing some households to watch their programmes.

On December 25, Mumbai Joint Commissioner of Police Milind Bharambe had said that a forensic audit report of the rating agency's data had revealed that the numbers had been manipulated at least since 2016. Bharambe said in the manipulations resulted in Republic TV being depicted as the top-ranked channel.

PM Modi quotes Gurajada in...

Continued from Page 1

Written in 1892 is the most popular one.

Modi on Saturday launched the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the country and asserted that the made-in-India vaccines being rolled out will ensure a "decisive victory" for the country over the coronavirus pandemic.

Bharat Biotech...

Continued from Page 1

In phase 1 and phase 2 clinical trials, Covaxin has demonstrated the ability to produce antibodies against Covid-19.

However the clinical efficacy of the vaccine is yet to be established and it is still being studied in phase 3 clinical trials, the vaccine maker said.

"Hence it is important to appreciate that receiving the vaccine does not mean that other precautions related to Covid-19 need not be followed," the consent form said.

According to an industry expert, the company is liable to pay compensation to people in case of serious side

41 sheep killed by street dogs

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Stray dogs attacked sheep pen at Renjal on Saturday killing around 41 sheep.

Nizamabad: In a bizarre incident, street dogs attacked a sheep pen and killed nearly 41 sheep at Renjal mandal headquarters of Nizamabad district provided by the State government under the sheep distribution scheme. Around nine sheep were grievously injured in the incident where the shepherd suffered loss of property worth Rs 3 lakh.

Kurma Gangadhar and Chettukindi Bhoomaiah, who are shepherds, obtained two units comprising 40 sheep and two rams under government sheep's distribution programme. These sheep gave birth to a few lambs in recent times. On Saturday, some street dogs attacked the shelter and killed the sheep. Learning about the incident, mandal veterinary assistant Vittal visited the spot and provided treatment to the injured sheep. Later, Animal Husbandry assistant director Nazimuddin visited the spot and recorded the incident details. The shepherds complained that street dogs were attacking the sheep shelters and killing the sheep.

'Beginning of vaccination is proudest moment for India'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan on Saturday said that beginning of the vaccination is the proudest moment for the country.

"The vaccination to the frontline warriors is not just a mere vaccination, it is indeed a thanks giving injection to them for their selfless services since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic," she added.

The Governor, along with her husband and renowned Nephrologist, Dr P Soundararajan, visited the NIMS Hospital, here, and launched the vaccination programme for the frontline warriors in the State.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan stated that the launch of world's largest vaccination programme has signaled the end of pandemic and the beginning of protection in our country.

The last year was like the year of pandemic, now this New Year is like the year of protection.

The Governor thanked the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the motivation and support to the scientists to



develop the vaccine to protect the people from Covid-19.

"Our Prime Minister has personally visited the Bharat Biotech Laboratory at the Genome Valley in Hyderabad and motivated the scientists to come up with effective vaccine to end the Covid-19," she added.

The Governor stated that due to the relentless efforts of our scientists, we could come up with our own vaccine. We must be proud that we are not dependent upon any other country for the vaccine.

Our own vaccine development is in the true spirit of self-reliant India as per the

vision of our Prime Minister's Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

We must salute our scientists for the vaccine development and making it available. This is the greatest achievement by our scientific community and shows their capability, the country is proud of their research and innovation. She stated that India, especially Hyderabad, is emerging as the pharmaceutical capital of the world. In fact we have been supplying medicines to more than 150 countries. Many countries are looking at India for the supply of our vaccine to protect their people.

Eatala Rajender decides against taking...

Continued from Page 1

He would take the first vaccine shot, did not do so on Saturday, citing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "strict instruction" that health workers should be first in line. "It is important to follow the Prime Minister's instructions. I am a Minister and it is my duty to follow the PM's instructions and prioritise health workers," Rajender reasoned.

On Friday, the minister maintained that should he take the first jab, it would instill confidence among people having apprehensions over the safety of the vaccines. A sanitation worker Krishnamma became the first person in Telangana to get the Covid vaccine. "I appeal to all to go ahead and take the vaccine. I was also a little apprehensive but doctors reassured me and the Health Minister too told me not to worry. I so far have no symptoms," she said, holding flowers given by Gandhi Hospital, where she

received the jab.

On Monday, Modi reportedly told Chief Ministers at a meeting on vaccine preps that politicians should not jump the queue and must await their turn even if they were only trying to inspire confidence.

The Prime Minister's warning came after the Haryana government requested that public representatives like MPs and MLAs be included in the first phase of vaccination. Health ministers of Bihar and Odisha also reportedly demanded that public representatives from panchayats to Parliament be considered frontline workers and be vaccinated.

In the Union government's priority list for the first round, health workers and frontline workers like the police, civil defence personnel and sanitation workers are on top. Other high risk groups, including people above 50 and those who have co-morbidities like diabetes and hypertension, come next.

Vaccine rollout begins in...

Continued from Page 1

Krishnamma told media-persons that though she was a little apprehensive earlier, she was reassured by the hospital superintendent.

The woman said she did not have any health complaints after taking the vaccine and appealed to all to receive the shot with courage in order to protect one's health.

The vaccination campaign also began simultaneously at various other locations in the state where state ministers and other public representatives were present.

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, a medical doctor, visited the state-run Nizam's Institute of Medical

Sciences (NIMS) in the city.

"Nizam institute medical science Hyderabad to greet the Recipients of vaccines on the Historic vaccine launch today.

It is a THANKS giving day to all Drs nurses para medics & sanitary workers who served covid patients. Visionary @PMOIndia who stood with scientists efforts always," she tweeted.

The healthcare workers and others, who received the vaccine at different places in the state, told reporters that they did not experience any health issues.

K Jayamma (42), a health worker, received the first vaccine shot at the Rural Health Centre at Narsingi on the city outskirts.

Centre asks TS again to move for CBI probe

Continued from Page 1

Based on Khan's petition, the Central ministry requested action from the state to initiate a CBI enquiry into Heera group of companies' alleged scam involving Rs 50,000.

Previously the ministry had sought a CBI enquiry in 2019. Nowhera Shaik, managing director of the Heera Group, is presently lodged in prison.

Meanwhile, according to an affidavit filed on behalf of the Heera group in the Supreme Court, there are around 27 First Information Reports registered in Maharashtra,

Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Telangana and other states. Based on an analysis of the complaints, around Rs 25 crore had to be paid to the victims.

Claiming that the Heera group had sufficient amount to compensate all the victims, the plea in the SC sought interim bail for the MD. Further, the petitioner sought six months' time to compensate the investors.

However after further verification of records, the petitioner sought access to records which the authorities had seized from them.

It is pertinent to note that

initially a case was booked against Nowhera Shaik by the Central Crime Station, Hyderabad for allegedly operating a Ponzi scheme illegally and collecting deposits from lakhs of investors on the promise of high returns. Later, the ramifications of the case surfaced.

The next hearing in the case has been postponed to 19th of this month. On 10th January, investors of Heera Group met and discussed their future course of action. The meeting was organised by the All India Heera Victims Association.

Ashok Gajapathi's...

Continued from Page 1

Citing that the senior TDP leader failed to discharge his duties in temple administration, the AP Government had removed him from the post of chairman of three temples in the state.

Even earlier, Ashok Gajapathi Raju was removed as the chairperson of MANSAS Trust and Simhachalam Devasthanam Trust Board and replaced with his niece,

Sanchaita. He was also removed from chairmanship of 104 temples in Godavari districts.

"Ashok Gajapathi Raju has failed to discharge his legitimate duties and address the issues relating to the security aspects of the temple and failed to take steps to prevent the vandalisation of Lord Rama's idol in Sri Rama Swamy Devasthanam in Vizianagaram district," read the GO of AP government.

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28 more FoBs to dot city soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

To address the needs of pedestrians and help them in crossing roads and junctions safely and comfortably, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) is constructing 28 foot over bridges (FoBs) in different parts of the city in the next three months.

On Saturday, Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary (MA&UD), tweeted that a total of 28 new FoBs are under construction in different parts of the city and will be ready in next three months.

"The Foot over Bridge (FoB) @ GVK Mall Banjara Hills work is going on in full swing and it should be ready in coming 6 weeks," he tweeted.

On Saturday, Arvind Kumar directed the municipal officials to complete the work of foot over bridges on top priority.

The decision comes as a major relief for pedestrians as several busy locations in the city will be dotted with foot over bridges. The work has been taken up under the pedes-



trian-friendly initiatives of the municipal department of the state and since the construction of foot over bridges was pending for years, the principal secretary has directed the officials to complete it on top priority.

The 28 foot over bridges which are under construction across five zones in greater Hyderabad including five in LB Nagar zone, three in Charminar zone, four in Khairatabad zone, five in

Secunderabad zone, two in Kukatpally zone and nine in Serilingampally Zone.

Officials are planning junction improvement across all the zones.

The major objective is to improve movement of traffic, reduce journey time, facilitate free left movements, widen roads at U-turns and take up other road safety measures to reduce accidents and wherever it is feasible the bus bay would be installed.



 **Arvind Kumar**
(@arvindkumar_ias)

The Foot over Bridge (FoB) @ GVK Mall Banjara Hills.. work is going on in full swing and it should be ready in coming 6 weeks
A total of 28 new FoBs under construction in different parts of the city & will be ready in next 3 months

Kite flying turns fatal for 2 kids, man on Sankranti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Kite flying on the occasion of Sankranti turned tragic in Hyderabad as two children and a man died in separate incidents since Thursday, the city police said on Friday.

While the two children were electrocuted to death, the man died after falling from a multi-storied building.

K Rakesh, 13, was electrocuted while flying a kite from his home at Nallavelli village on the outskirts of the city on Friday. The kite had got stuck in electricity cables in front of his house.

The police said that the boy tried to remove it with an iron rod from the terrace, suffered an electric shock and died on the spot. On hearing his cries, his elder sister Soni tried to rescue him but she sustained injuries and was admitted to a hospital. The incident occurred in the limits of Yacharam police station under Rachakonda Police Commissionerate.



In another incident, a 12-year-old boy was electrocuted while flying a kite from a building in Jeedimetla area on Thursday. Charith Kumar, who was flying a kite along with his friends, accidentally laid his hands on the iron pipes of an electric motor pump. As the cables were reportedly damaged, he suffered an electric shock and died on the spot. Jeedimetla police, under Cyberabad police commissionerate, registered a case and launched an investigation. In the third incident, a man died

after he fell from a multi-storied building while flying a kite. The incident occurred at Ashok Nagar in Chikkadpally area under Hyderabad police commissionerate limits on Thursday.

Bangaru Krishna, said to be an activist of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), was flying kites along with family and friends on the terrace on the third floor.

He slipped and fell on the iron grills fixed on the compound wall. He died while being shifted to the hospital.

CITY LIGHTS

Singareni Collieries to train youth for army recruitment

Singareni Collieries Company Limited has decided to impart training to as many as 550 youth for over 45 days to prepare them for the army recruitment drive to be conducted from March 5. The training session that will be conducted under the aegis of Singareni Seva Samithi will commence from January 20, said Samithi vice-president K. Ravi Shankar here on Saturday. Last time, 35 youth were selected during the army recruitment drive after undergoing training given by the SCCL. Following instructions from SCCL CMD N Sridhar, the Samithi is organizing the session to youth in 11 places covering half a dozen districts where the Singareni is carrying out mining operations. The children of the Singareni employees including retired staff along with the children from the families affected with the Singareni project and youth from villages near mines can appear for the preliminary examination.



State government's 'T Culture' app bags Skoch national award

TCulture mobile app, an initiative of the Telangana State government to issue identity cards to artists across the State to access various welfare schemes bagged the prestigious Skoch Award. The app, which was launched by the TS Department of Language and Culture in collaboration with Telangana Information Technology Association's (TITA) digital entity Digithon, is a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country. The app aims to create a database of artists in the State to ensure that they get access to the benefits welfare schemes of the State government. The mobile app is linked with MeeSeva and helps artists to obtain ID cards. The app was made available to the artists from August 1st 2020. Director, Department of Language and Culture, Mamidi Harikrishna expressed happiness over the National Award for T Culture app. TITA, headed by Sundeeep Kumar Makthala, apart from making daily events of the Department of Language and Culture online for two years, has also made efforts to issue ID cards for all the artists without the intervention of middlemen, said Mamidi Harikrishna. Mamidi Harikrishna accepted the Skoch Award at 70th Skoch Summit conducted virtually.



SCR to run two more special trains to clear Sankranti rush

The South Central Railway (SCR) will operate two more special one way trains on Sunday from Narasapuram and Anakapalli to Secunderabad to clear the Sankranti rush. "In order to clear extra rush during Sankranti festival, SCR will run two one way special trains from Narsapur to Secunderabad and Anakapalli to Secunderabad," said a railway official on Saturday. Train number 07460 from Narasapuram to Secunderabad will depart Narasapuram in West Godavari district on Sunday at 5.35 pm to arrive at Secunderabad at 4.10 am on Monday. Likewise, Sankranti special train, 07461, from Anakapalli to Secunderabad will depart Anakapalli in Visakhapatnam district at 8.50 pm on Sunday to reach Secunderabad at 8.50 am on Monday. Every January, thousands of people living and working in Hyderabad briefly visit their native places to celebrate Sankranti, the biggest Hindu festival in Telugu culture, with family and friends. Once the harvest festival ends, all of them again rush back to Hyderabad to resume their normal life, choking all modes of transport. The special trains are a major relief for the festival celebrants at a time when all modes of transportation are yet to return to pre-Covid levels.



Police impose traffic curbs in Hyd for Sikh celebrations

To regulate the flow of traffic during a procession to mark the 354th birthday celebrations of Guru Gobind Singh on Monday, the Hyderabad Traffic Police have imposed certain restrictions in and around Sultan Bazaar, Charminar and Goshamahala. The procession will start from the Central Gurudwara Saheb, Gowliguda and move towards Shanker Sher Hotel - Gurudwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha Ashok Bazar - Afzalgunj Island - Afzalgunj 'T' Junction - Siddiambar Bazaar - Moazamjahi Market - Jambagh - Puthlibowli - Ram Mandir and return to Central Guru Dwara Saheb, Gowliguda. Accordingly, when the procession starts from CBS Bazaar Gurudwara, Afzalgunj the traffic coming from Ashok towards Afzalgunj will be diverted towards SJ Bridge Rotary and CBS. Likewise, when the procession starts from the Central Gurudwara in Gowliguda, the traffic coming from Putlibowli towards Shanker Sher Hotel will be diverted towards CBS via Ram Mandir Road. Traffic from Afzalgunj will be diverted towards the State Central Library Afzalgunj - SJ Bridge - CBS - Rangamahala till the procession moves towards to MJ Market.

Promote green energy to reduce pollution: TS Guv

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Saturday called for the promotion of clean and green energy to protect the planet earth and ensure the survival of life on the earth.

She said indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources and the burning of fossil fuels were resulting in the high levels of pollution causing global warming.

"The indiscriminate destruction of nature has resulted in the present Covid pandemic crisis causing disruption of activities in almost all the spheres of life," she added.

The Governor was virtually inaugurating the month-long Samrakshana-Kshamata Mahotsav-(SAKSHAM-2021),

organised by the State Level Coordinator for Oil Industry in Telangana.

Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan stated that it was high time to promote the clean, green, and renewable energy use at all levels so as to reduce the pollution levels in our country in view of the fact that India is the third largest energy consumer in the world.

"We need to emerge as the global power house of green energy in the days to come. As per our Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Atma Nirbhar Bharath vision, we must become self-reliant in energy sector. We cannot afford to continue to import oil and gas from other countries as they are draining our valuable foreign exchange," she added.



Pawnshop burgled at Pot Market

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Thieves broke into a pawn brokering and jewellery shop in Pot Market and decamped with mortgaged gold and silver ornaments worth Rs 21 lakh. The shop owner, Anil Jain had locked the shop late on Thursday because of Sankranti festival and went home.

On Friday, he sent one of his employees Sunil to open the shop and take care of the business as he would be late. According to the police, when Sunil opened the shop, he found it ransacked and informed Jain, who rushed to the shop and found that gold and silver ornaments worth Rs.21 lakh were missing.

"When he checked CCTV cameras at the shop, he found that some unidentified person had broken into the shop and took ornaments," police said, adding that based on a complaint from Jain, the Market police booked a case and was investigating.

Three robbers held, 4 tulas of gold recovered

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Police arrested three robbers and recovered four tulas of gold ornaments from them on Saturday.

The accused persons were identified as Pasham HariKrishna, 25, his wife Pasham Renuka, 22, along with another accomplice Samudrala Renuka, 38, all hailing from Mahabubnagar.

Based on the complainant from G Premalatha, Ghatkesar police booked a case and started investigation.

Going into the details, the complainant received phone calls from unidentified person for work at a function hall in Medipally. On believing his words, the complainant met him and reached Maktha village. Meanwhile, another woman joined him.

The accused persons lured her to consume alcohol. While consuming alcohol, the accused robbed her ear rings, chains and other gold ornaments, all weighing around



RISKY RIDES

Law forbids carrying more than three passengers by auto-rickshaw but finding even 13 people on board is no surprise in this city, even after several people lost their lives due to overloading three-wheelers. Motor vehicles law permits adjusting only four people, including the driver, on board an auto-rickshaw. The auto drivers, however, seem to have no fear of the law. The driver's case is that if a fourth passenger waved at them to stop, how they could refuse to him. No one minds extra income. While police officials say that even if auto drivers are issued a challan for overloading, they will repeat the offence after some time.

— SV Chary

Make elaborate arrangements for Republic Day: CS directs officials

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has directed the officials to make elaborate arrangements for the conduct of Republic Day Celebrations on January 26th in a befitting manner, duly taking preventing measures as per Covid protocol.

The Chief Secretary held a coordination meeting with the officials of various departments at BRKR Bhavan on Saturday. The Chief Secretary said proper arrangements to be made in a coordinated way with more care. He directed the officials to make necessary arrangements for security, traffic management, barricading, medical teams, masks and sanitization.

DGP Mahender Reddy, Principal Secretary to GAD Vikas Raj, Principal Secretary to TR&B Sunil Sharma, Secretary of HM & FW SAM Rizvi, GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar and other officials attended the meeting.



'EXPEDITE THE PROCESS OF PROMOTIONS'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As per directions of the Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar conducted a review meeting with special chief secretaries, principal secretaries and secretaries on the progress of promotions in various departments at BRKR Bhavan on Saturday. The Chief Secretary has directed the officials, to expedite the process of promotions like conducting of DPC's in all the departments from Secretariat to District Level Offices at the earliest.

The Chief Secretary has taken a review each department level and instructed the concerned officials to take this task as it is a top priority of government and to sort out technical issues if any in the process of promotions and conduct DPC's as per the guidelines.

In the meeting, Principal Secretary to MA&UD Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary to Finance Ramakrishna Rao, Principal Secretary to Political Vikas Raj, Principal Secretary to IT&C Jayesh Ranjan and other Secretaries also attended.

Inter-state burglars' gang busted, 6 held

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Abids Police arrested six members of an inter-state burglar gang and recovered stolen property on Saturday.

With this arrest, the police claimed to have solved 26 cases including 20 cases in tri-Commissionerate limits and six cases in Sangareddy district in one year time.

The arrested were identified as Wajeed, 19, Shaik Sonu, 20,

Abdul Sameer, 25, Babu Rao, 25, Md Sameer, 21 and Ismail, 30. Three other accused identified as Shahid, Amer and Iliyas are on the large. The accused take shelter at low-rented lodges and conduct recce to select locked houses in the remote localities to commit offences.

They move out on the roads at nights and commit theft of locked motorcycles from the locked houses.

WE Hub, i-Hub tie up for women entrepreneurs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

WE Hub, a state-run platform for women entrepreneurs has partnered with i-Hub, an incubation set up of the Gujarat Government, to encourage and support startups in raising capital.

An MoU was signed by Jayesh Ranjan, Telangana Principal Secretary, IT and Industries and Anju Sharma, Principal Secretary Higher and Technical Education, Gujarat, on Saturday, an official release said. As part of the MoU, as



many as 240 women entrepreneurs will be selected for the pre-incubation program and a total of 20 will be shortlisted for the co-incubation programme.

"The partnership will initiate pre-incubation program for 240 aspiring women entrepreneurs in the EdTech, MedTech and Fintech sectors in the

states of Telangana and Gujarat. Post three months of pre-incubation program and after rigorous interventions a total of 20 entrepreneurs will be selected for the final virtual/physical co-incubation program," it said.

This co-incubation brings in the startups the opportunity to scale up to viable enterprises and receive solid scale-up rapid growth mentorship from the leaders at i-Hub and WE Hub. The startups will have government supported exposure visits across TS and Gujarat.

CAPSULE



District Youth Congress general secretary Indrasena Reddy

‘Govt leaves jobless in the lurch’

ZAHEERABAD: The unemployed in Telangana were “disappointed” as the government had failed to generate employment, alleged district Youth Congress general secretary Indrasena Reddy at a press conference in Zaheerabad on Saturday.

The government did not issue the Group I and II notification in its six years rule, he pointed out. He flayed Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for taking the youth for a ride though he had promised to provide jobs before coming to power. He should tender an apology to the jobless for leaving them in the lurch. He demanded the immediate release of notification for pending jobs in government departments.

Siddipet Govt Degree gets ISO certificate



SIDDIPET: The faculty met Minister for Finance Harish Rao here on Saturday on the occasion of receiving the ISO certificate for Siddipet Government Degree College and Government Women’s Degree College.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister lauded the faculty for their continuous efforts to safeguard the autonomy of Siddipet Government Degree College and congratulated the faculty of the college on getting ISO certification.

He spoke to Education Commissioner Naveen Mittal over the phone brought the problems of the colleges to his notice. The review meeting was attended by Siddipet Market Committee chairman Pala Sairam, faculty Ayodhya Reddy, Gopala Sudarshanam, Women’s Degree College principal Priyanka and Suvarna Devi.

Jeevan Reddy for NRI policy to benefit Gulf workers

PNS ■ JAGITYAL

Karimnagar graduates’ constituency MLC T Jeevan Reddy urged the government to devise an NRI policy and give a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the bereaved families of Gulf workers from Telangana. He was the chief guest at a meeting of the Gulf job victims and NRIs Association here on Saturday.

Observing that injustice is being meted out to Gulf workers, who had taken part in the movement for Telangana, he sought to know whether Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is moved by their plight or not. In fact, 10 lakh Telangana persons are working in Gulf countries. If each person were to send home at least Rs 10,000 a month, the country would get a foreign exchange of Rs 1,000 crore. In a year, at least Rs 12,000 crore worth foreign



Karimnagar graduates’ constituency MLC T Jeevan Reddy addresses a meeting of Gulf workers in Jagityal on Saturday

exchange would receive, he calculated. If the State were to receive 10 per cent of the amount as its share from the Centre, the State government is not even spending 0.1 per cent for the welfare of the Gulf workers. He demanded that the TRS government allocate Rs 100 crore for Gulf workers’ welfare for their benefit.

The State government is not paying anything except providing an ambulance from the Shamshabad airport to their native place, he said adding that it is shameful on the part of the government.

On an average, ambulances transport at least 200 coffins from the airport to the villages of the dead, he said. He

demand a 5 per cent quota for the Gulf workers’ wards in residential schools of Telangana. He also sought employment for the bereaved family members.

He wanted the Centre to mount pressure on Gulf nations to revise wages of the workers and ensure that the management would not place curbs on the Gulf workers from the State. He wanted the State government to extend the benefits being extended to farmers to Gulf workers too. He sought employment to one member of the bereaved families. The Gulf workers have been working hard as the soldiers did in guarding our frontiers.

The Gulf workers problems should be regarded as an apolitical issue. He assured the gathering to raise the Gulf workers issue and NRI policy in the next session of the Legislative Council.

Jaipal Reddy a role model politician, recalls Eatala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Political leaders from all parties, including the top Congress leaders have paid rich tributes to former Union Minister late S Jaipal Reddy on his 79th birth anniversary at his memorial located near Sanjeevaiah Park here on Saturday.

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy offered floral tributes to the late Jaipal Reddy and recalled his services and statesmanship

Minister for Health Eatala Rajender offered floral tributes. Later, speaking to the media, he said Jaipal Reddy had left an indelible mark on society and he was a role model politician. He has put immense faith in the democratic form of the government and he left good political values and ethics, he said. Following his beliefs, values and ethics are the best tribute one can ever pay to Jaipal Reddy, the minister added.

Jaipal Reddy’s wife S Lakshmi, Jaipal Reddy’s sons Arvind and



TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy, MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy and others pay floral tributes to former Union Minister late S Jaipal Reddy on his 79th birth anniversary at his memorial near Sanjeevaiah Park in Hyderabad on Saturday

Anand Reddy, family members, relatives visited the memorial and offered floral tributes to him. Several party leaders irrespective of party lines also visited and paid their tributes.

Among who visited the memorial and paid tributes include TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy, senior Congress leaders K Jana Reddy, V Hanumantha Rao, CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka,

Congress leader Revanth Reddy, Chinna Reddy, former MPs Manda Jagannadham, Konda Vishweshwar Reddy, Jitender Reddy, former Union Minister Mallipudi Mangapati Pallam Raju, MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, former minister P Sudershan Reddy and leaders of other political parties such as TRS leader Keshava Rao, TDP president L Ramana and BJP leader G Vivekanand paid tributes.

Invitational Volleyball Tourney inaugurated in Choppadandi

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for BC Welfare, Food and Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar on Saturday inaugurated the Invitational Volleyball Tournament in Choppadandi on Saturday. The tournament is organised under the auspices of the Choppadandi Sports Club. The competition will be held for two days. A total of 32 teams are competing. After inaugurating the competition, the minister was honoured with a shawl by the representatives of the Choppadandi Sports Club.

Later, the minister played volleyball for a while in order to create enthusiasm among players. Speaking on the occasion, he said, “He could not find a bicycle when he went to school, therefore, I went to school on foot.” He recalled that volleyball began in America in 1895 and volleyball was introduced in the 1964 Olympics. The TRS government is promoting sports so that it can be used for good and



Minister for BC Welfare, Food and Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar formally inaugurates Invitational Volleyball Tournament in Choppadandi on Saturday

a cricket tournament will be conducted in February, he said.

MLC Nardasu Laxman Rao, MLC Sunke Ravishankar, Satavahana Urban Development Authority (SUDA) chairman Jeevi Ramakrishna Rao, District Library chairman Ravinder Reddy, Choppadandi municipal chairperson Neeraja, MPP Ravinder, ZPTC Soujanya, public representatives, leaders, Choppadandi Sports Club representatives and sportspersons were present on the occasion.

Head nurse in Khammam hospital receives first shot

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar and Lok Sabha MP Nama Nageswara Rao launched the vaccination programme at the district headquarters government hospital here on Saturday. Head nurse Mary was the first to receive the vaccine.

They said that Khammam district received over 153 Covaxin vaccines. The government has been making arrangements to administer vaccines to over 15,970 front line workers in the district. The government has prescribed a dose of 0.5 ml for each individual. The capacity of each vial is 5 ml, which is sufficient to administer the vaccine to 10 persons. On Saturday, six vaccination centres became functional. They said that the number of vaccination centres would be increased to 36 soon.

Nama Nageswara Rao said that the death rate due to the virus was at its low in the



Head nurse Mary being administered the first vaccine in Khammam on Saturday. Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar and others are also seen

country because of the series of measures initiated by the State and Central governments. The low death rate awed global nations. Because of the initiative of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech’s vaccine - Covaxin - hogged the global limelight.

District Collector RV Karnan, Police Commissioner T Iqbal, Mayor Dr Papalal, Government hospital superintendent Venkateswarlu and District Medical and Health Officer Dr Malati and others were present on the occasion.

Medical staffer faints after vaccination

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

People, who are on cloud nine with the launch of Covid-19 vaccination drive in Sangareddy, were worried when the news of a staffer of the medical and health department falling unconscious after administering the vaccine flashed on news channels. However, officials heaved a sigh of relief when she regained consciousness and doctors after examining her found that she had fainted due to blood pressure, but not because of the vaccine. Medak MP K Prabhakar Reddy gave the first vaccine to a medical health staffer Sangeetha. However, authorities expressed concern when she lost consciousness soon after being vaccinated.

Sangareddy District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Mojiram Rathod said Sangeetha, a medical staffer, lost consciousness due to BP and now her condition is stable. He allayed the fears of people over vaccine.

Meanwhile, MP Prabhakar Reddy launched the vaccination drive at UPHC in Indiranagar, Sangareddy. He hoped that the Corona would be completely eradicated with the vaccination. District Collector Hanumantha Rao said 10,842 people would be vaccinated in the district in the next four to five days. Earlier, doctors, health workers, Anganwadi teachers and nurs-



Medak MP K Prabhakar Reddy gives the first vaccine to a medical health staffer Sangeetha in Sangareddy on Saturday

es were vaccinated. Corona vaccine has been launched in six centres in the district and 180 have been successfully vaccinated at the rate of 30 per centre.

The Collector then visited the Andol Area Hospital and inspected the vaccination drive. Municipal chairperson Bongula Vijayalakshmi, vice-chairperson Lata, former MLA Chinta Prabhakar and District Library Association chairman Narahari Reddy were present.

BJP lays siege to Ramagundam Municipal Corporation office

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

The BJP leaders and workers took out a rally from the main centre and laid siege to the municipal office here on Saturday demanding that the Corporation provide basic amenities and redress grievances of people.

Seeking a solution to pending issues under the Ramagundam Municipal Corporation limits, the BJP has demanded that the government provide a 24-hour

water supply to the people through Mission Bhagiratha.

Those who applied for rations cards, old age, widow and physically challenged pension were pending. No ration card has been issued to anyone for the past six years. No one has been given pensions since the formation of the new governing body.

The party leaders demanded immediate repairs to the damaged roads and drainages as they have been overflowing ever for light rains.



BJP leaders and worker take out a rally in Ramagundam on Saturday

COVID VACCINATION DRIVE LAUNCHED

People’s cooperation sought to eradicate Corona

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for BC Welfare and Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar sought the cooperation of the people to eradicate the Corona pandemic, which posed a threat to the health of the people across the world, and paralysed normal life.

The minister formally inaugurated the vaccination drive at the Karimnagar District Government General Hospital and Butti Raja Ram Colony Primary Health Centre on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that in the first phase in all, 12,419 will be vaccinated in the district.

On the first day, 120 people were vaccinated at four centres in the district. No one had any problems during the vaccination.

He said the government was ready to provide immediate medical services to anyone who had any problems during vaccination. As per the directive of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, public representatives are staying at the field level



Minister for BC Welfare and Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar formally inaugurates Covid vaccination drive in Karimnagar on Saturday

in vaccination centres to reassure the people. The minister started the vaccination at the District Government Hospital in Karimnagar town and the Government Urban Health Centre in Butti Rajaram

Colony, while Manakondur MLA Rasamai Balakishan at Thimmappur Primary Health Centre and Zilla Parishad chairperson Kanumalla Vijaya at the Huzarabad Area Hospital. No one had any reaction, or side effects during the vaccination.

The district administration is ready to provide immediate treatment if there are any problems. Health workers were vaccinated in the first phase. Hospital superintendent Ratnamala was first vaccinated

Collector Krishna Bhaskar said that as per the directive of the government, classes for the students of IX, X, inter and degree colleges will be conducted from February 1

ed at the District Urban District Government Hospital, while Dr Satyajit Roy was first vaccinated at the Butti Rajaram Colony Government Hospital, followed by vaccination of ANMs and ICDS Anganwadi workers.

MLA Sunke Ravishankar, Karimnagar Police Commissioner Kamalasan Reddy, District Collector Shashanka, Mayor Sunil Rao, District Library Association chairman Enugu Ravinder Reddy, medical health officer Sujatha, corporators and doctors were present.

Manthani MLA demands compensation for chilli ryots

PNS ■ MAHADEVPUR

Accusing Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao of not paying attention to Chinna Kaleswaram project works in spite of several reminders, he demanded him that it was high time for the Chief Minister to complete Chinna Kaleswaram project to provide irrigation facility to the catchment area.

Manthani MLA Duddilla Sridhar Babu appealed to the government to pay compensation to the farmers, who suffered crop loss due to inundation from Medigadda reservoir backwaters and blamed the officials for not acquiring land for the project properly. Therefore, he wanted the government to order a survey of the lands for the project and pay compensation to the farm-



Manthani MLA Duddilla Sridhar Babu addresses a meeting at Mahadevpur on Saturday

ers. He was taking part in the COVID-19 vaccine administration programme at the government hospital here on Saturday.

Later, he addressed the hospital development committee

meeting, which adopted several resolutions. He resolved that the government should allocate funds for the development of the hospital.

He inspected the chilli crops raised in the catchment area

lands of the Medigadda project. He charged the government with taking away water, land and sand from the area to the detriment of the farmers of the region. He also alleged that the government is not paying

attention to the Chinna Kaleswaram project, conceived in 2008 to irrigate 45,000 acres in five mandals of the region.

Accusing Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao of not paying attention to Chinna Kaleswaram project works despite several reminders, he demanded him that it was high time for the Chief Minister to complete the Chinna Kaleswaram project to provide irrigation facility to the catchment area.

He wanted the government to inspect the submerged chilli crops and pay compensation to the affected farmers.

MPP Ranibahi Rama Rao, block Congress party president Kota Rajababu, Mandal Congress president Akbar Khan and others were present on the occasion.

REOPENING OF SCHOOLS

Ensure sanitisation, implement Covid rules, says Collector

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRICILLA

District Collector Krishna Bhaskar directed the authorities concerned to make arrangements for the reopening of schools and colleges in Rajanna Siricilla district from February 1 and ensure that all classrooms are cleaned, sanitised and Covid rules are followed while conducting the classes.

The District Collector, along with additional collector R Anjaiah, officials of the Education Department and other departments, convened a review meeting on the reopening of schools and colleges at the Collectorate here on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, the

Collector said that as per the directive of the government, classes for the students of IX, X, inter and degree colleges will be conducted from February 1. He suggested that top priority should be given to safety measures especially drinking water and toilet facilities should be provided.

Students are required to submit a written consent form from their parents before coming to school and awareness should be created in that regard. It was suggested that steps should be taken to keep a distance of six feet between each of the two students, and two rooms should be used for the same class if necessary.

Residential hostels are still said to be vigilant. Officials should

allay the fears of students and parents. The Collector said that Covid rules must be followed while conducting classes.

Additional Collector R Anjaiah advised the students to scan their temperature every day and if anyone has a fever, cough or other symptoms, they should be sent home.

He said classes should be conducted in schools and colleges in coordination with health department officials. District education officer Radhakishan, DPO Ravinder, medical officer Dr Suman Mohan Rao, Municipal Commissioners Sammayya, Srinivas, residential schools district officer Jacqueline, and others were present.



BIG FIGHTBACK

SHALINI SAKSENA brings you a story of 40-year-old APARNA RAJAWAT who has overcome several roadblocks in her life to become India’s 16-time national champion in martial arts and to travel the length and breadth of the country teaching 1.5 lakh young girls mental strength, legal rights and self-defence

She was all of seven when a martial arts teacher came to her colony in Agra, Uttar Pradesh to teach children this art. Like all kids, she came home running and told her parents she wanted to join these classes. Her family was extremely conservative and with six siblings — two elder brothers, there was no way that her parents allowed her to learn the art that was considered to be only for boys. The fact that she would be the only girl in the class went against her. Back then, in the late 1980s, it was unthinkable that a girl would learn martial arts. But she never gave up hope and spent the next one year trying to convince her parents. Finally, her mother gave her consent. That day and the next 12 years, she went on to excel in martial arts. So much so that by the time she was 19 years old, she had been 16-time champion. Meet 40-year-old Aparna Rajawat.

Everyone expected great many things from her in the future but a road accident left her with seven fractures in her leg. Her career to compete in martial arts came to an abrupt end. She was in the hospital for several months and the doctors told her that if she tried to compete professionally, she may end up in the wheelchair.

“When the doctors told me to stop competing I didn’t know what to do. I could train by not compete. Martial arts had been my life. I didn’t know anything else even though I started playing other sports like basketball. Back then there was no scope to take up martial arts as a profession. At best, all I would achieve is to become a coach and teach in a school. This avenue didn’t allow any growth. My dream was to join the Army. But after my accident I became unfit for the forces,” Rajawat recalls.

She had joined martial art classes to escape the bullying from her elder brothers. They would really trouble her a lot. She thought that if she learnt this art form, she would be able to defend herself. But after the accident she found herself with nothing to do. That is when she turned to her other passion — dancing. She came to Delhi; joined some classes and worked for the likes of Daler Mehndi. She worked as a choreographer for the next few years. But her leg started giving her problems once again.

The doctor didn’t have good news for

her. He told her that if she continued to pursue her present occupation she would become paralysed neck down. Another blow to her career. But she never allowed herself to be let down by bad news. Back home in Agra, while thinking of what to do she came across a tour manager with 15-20 foreigners. That got her thinking.

“When I saw this man talk to these foreigners, I realised that the work was something that I could do. I found out everything that there was to know about how to be a tour guide and started looking for work. That it was tough, is putting it mildly. Nobody would give me work. Some even told me that this is not a woman’s job but a man’s and the best option for me would be to take up teaching. But I never gave up. For the next four-five months, I visited as many operators as I could only be come back home frustrated. Finally, I went to a tour operator who agreed to give me chance when I told him that even Amitabh Bachchan was rejected for his voice. I told him how do you know that a woman wouldn’t be able to do this job unless you give her a chance. This person agreed to give me work. He told me that he would call if something came up,” Rajawat says.

The next day she landed up at the office with a book and her lunch box. The operator was surprised to see her and asked what she was doing. She told him that her house was an hour away and if he called her, it would take her time to reach and she would lose the opportunity. She did this for the next two months.

And finally, her day came. From being a local tour guide to tour manager with a Canadian company in India to an international tour director with a company in London. She would live six-seven months there and the rest here in India for another company that dealt with tourists in American and Nepal.

In 2012, she was in London when she heard about Nirbhaya. The next few months really disturbed her as she followed the case. However, she continued to work as an international tour director. But the lockdown put traveling on hold and that is when she decided to do what she had thought of doing while she followed the Nirbhaya case — provide self-defence classes to women.

“I knew that travel will be on hold for

I KNEW THAT TRAVEL WILL BE ON HOLD FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. SO, I HAVE DECIDED TO SPEND MY TIME TEACHING SELF-DEFENCE TO GIRLS. DURING THE NIRBHAYA TRIAL, I SPENT YEARS TRYING TO READ AND FIND EVERYTHING THERE WAS TO KNOW ABOUT CRIME AGAINST WOMEN. I WAS OBSESSED. I THOUGHT OF NOTHING BUT HOW TO PREVENT CRIME AGAINST WOMEN



Aparna Rajawat showing moves on how to defend oneself

the next few years. So, I have decided to spend my time teaching self-defence. During the Nirbhaya case, I spent the next few years trying to read and find everything there was to know about crime against women. I was obsessed. I thought of nothing but how to prevent crime against them. My bullying days and things that I faced at the hands of cousin came to mind. I wanted to teach women the difference between good and bad touch and how they could defend themselves,” Rajawat says.

She tells you that even though she was living a good life — traveling the world, earning big bucks and have every comfort one could thing of — her bled every time she heard of a crime that involved a woman. She spoke with her mother, who was alive back then. She told her that despite her success, she was not content and wanted to do something for the women of this country. Her mother, who had always been

a great support to Rajawat and encouraged her to pursue what she wanted, told her that she must follow her heart.

“When I told her that I wanted to come back home, she told me I must do whatever my heart told me to do. She said that I had overcome every obstacle that life had thrown at me and excelled in whatever I chose to do. At death bed, what will go with you is not the money that you have earned but the good deeds, my mother told me,” Rajawat recalls.

That is when she came to India, in 2016. It began with her sponsoring girls who wanted to study more and didn’t have the finance. One day she was approached to give a motivational speech at a coaching centre. She spoke for 45 minutes about her journey and given the response she got, Rajawat realised the power of her words and how it can change people’s lives. That is when she started talking about the importance

of self-defence. That is how Pink Belt Mission came to life a couple of years later.

“Till now I have taught 1.5 lakh women how to defend themselves on five different dimensions — mental, emotional, legal and digital and physical strength. These are core areas where each woman needs to be taught. Without this even if one handed a loaded gun to the woman, it would be of no use. I hold workshops form time to time as I travel the length and breath of the country. Each workshop, meant for college going students, attracts 2,000-2,500 girls. At the workshop, I give a motivational speech, basically my life story, and how I overcame them. Of course, not all the girls come for the defense classes that I teach over a period of three days. These classes are extremely taxing and at the end of the day, the girls are well-equipped to defend against any assault. My aim is to teach 50 lakh women self-defence in the next few year,” Rajawat tells you.

Once these girls are ready, they are sorted in batches of four-five each. There is a reason why Rajawat chooses only college goers. They are the one’s who have the time to go to schools and train the girls there.

However, it is not just the girls who are taught their rights and what is right and wrong. Rajawat holds classes for boys as well to tell them hoe they should behave in front of women. She tells you that not many know that if a boy stares at a girl more more than 15 seconds, it is an offense. That if they look at girl and starting singing, it is an offense.

“It is so unfortunate that we don’t teach basic rights to our children. We must teach boys how to respect the women and that they are not second-rate citizens I tell girls who attend my workshop how they must give their children a good upbringing; this change is what we will see after 20 years,” Rajawat says.

She is now working on a campaign to spread awareness on how to provide immediate help to the survivors.

“The law says that if there is a sexual assault on a woman, no hospital can deny her medical treatment; there is no need for police to finish doing its job first. But nobody is aware of this law. We have been working on this. I will travel across the country to spread this message. We hope that this will prevent the crime from taking place to begin with,” Rajawat says.

‘I cried many times during the filming of Pink Belt Mission’

■Why did you choose to tell this story in a documentary style?

We chose to shoot *Pink Belt Mission* in documentary style because Aparna Rajawat was attempting to break the Guinness World Record for most persons trained in a self-defence lesson. It was to bring worldwide attention to her cause. I wanted to film her day to day struggle in that attempt. It was thrilling because we didn’t know if she would succeed. In the movie you see her, in real life, trying to overcome the obstacles presented to her. It’s quite thrilling because you don’t know if she and her team can pull it off. For me it was like watching a great sporting event. I wanted her to win but the odds were against her.

■What made you tell her story?

I wanted to tell this story because she is a fighter, fighting for an important cause, women’s safety, education and teaching them self-defence. She is such a dynamic person you can’t say no to her. When I met her, her stories were fascinating and movies are only as good as the stories. I hope to give her stories the worldwide attention they deserve.

■What were the challenges faced?

A big challenge was the language barrier. Half of the movie is in English and half is in Hindi. I only know a few words in Hindi, so I had to have someone translate for me and each subject who didn’t speak English. Also,

it is a very tough subject matter and there are stories of violence against women that are heartbreaking. I would go back to the hotel after filming some of the sad stories and I deeply sympathised with these women’s pain. I felt it in my heart. I cried many times while filming. That was the most difficult part. And I felt such a responsibility to tell their stories the best that I could.

■The documentary is being premiered at the Jaipur International Film Festival (JIFF). How do you want people to perceive this?

I hope the film will bring attention to Aparna and the women of Pink Belt. To shine a light on all the wonderful works they are doing. It’s a story that



deserves an audience. I hope the audience will be moved and inspired by it. I hope it will reach young girls and women in the world and they will say: ‘If Aparna can do it, I can do it’.

■Don’t you think a commercial release would have been a better option?

The movie is in the competition portion of JIFF. I am hoping that it will win an award to help promote Aparna’s cause. To shine a light on *Pink Belt Mission*. One of the ways to bring attention to a film is to get laurels from film festivals like JIFF. It is our intention to release this documentary in a wide release in movie theaters when it is safe. This year the festival is online due to COVID-19.

When you met Aparna Rajawat, what was your first impression?

My first impression of Aparna was her hair. She had awesome short hair like no other woman I had seen in India. She told me the story of her family taking her to a psychiatrist because she wanted short hair when she was a young girl. That was my very first impression of her, so we filmed the very first scene of the movie at a barbershop. She is getting a haircut and telling the story of the psychiatrist.

■Do you think watching such documentaries will inspire women to be like her?

I think the Pink Belt Mission documentary will inspire young girls

and women in India, but Aparna is such a powerful person I think she will inspire women and men around the world. She never gives up no matter what obstacles cross her path. She continues to fight and it’s inspiring.

Even though it’s a very serious subject matter, Aparna triumphs and inspires. It’s the perfect time for such an uplifting film. I, as an audience member wanted to cheer for Aparna and I hoped she would win. Ultimately, I didn’t know if she would break the world record or not, but that didn’t matter. What was important is how many young lives she touched and uplifted. Aparna has really inspired me.

‘RBI policies helped ease severity of economic impact of COVID’

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday said the year 2020 could be marked as one of the toughest periods for human society caused by COVID-19 and the policies adopted by the central bank have helped in easing the severity of the economic impact of the pandemic.

"The year bygone could be marked as one of the toughest periods for human society. The unprecedented health and economic catastrophe caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and widened economic and social fault lines across countries", Das said.

The Governor made the comments while delivering the 39th Nani Palkhivala Memorial Lecture on Saturday. "It is essential to evolve a prudent and judicious approach towards managing the financial system not only during the pandemic but also in its aftermath", he noted.



Need to support economic revival, financial stability: RBI Guv

PNS ■ CHENNAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday said the financial stability is a public good, and its resilience and robustness need to be preserved and nurtured by all stakeholders.

Delivering the 39th Nani Palkhivala memorial lecture through a virtual platform, he said the central bank has directed its policy efforts to put in place a state-of-the-art national payments infrastructure, ensuring safe, secure,

efficient and cost-effective robust payments ecosystem.

The Reserve Bank of India is positioning itself to provide an enabling environment where regulated entities are catalysed to exploit these new avenues while maintaining and preserving financial stability, he said.

The regulated entities on their part need to strengthen their internal defences to identify emerging risks early and manage them effectively, Das added.

RBI remains steadfast to take any further measures to support growth: Das

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Saturday said the central bank remains steadfast to take any further measures as may be required to support growth without compromising on financial stability.

Delivering the 39th Palkhivala Memorial Lecture, the governor said the principal objective during the pandemic period was to support economic activity; and looking back, it is evident that policies of the RBI have helped in easing the severity of the economic impact of the pandemic.

"I would like to unambiguously reiterate that the Reserve Bank remains steadfast to take any further measures, as may be necessary, while at the same time remaining fully committed

to maintaining financial stability," he said. In a bid to maintain financial stability, Das emphasised the need for banks to raise resources in advance as a buffer. Going ahead, he said, financial institutions in India have to walk a tightrope in nurturing the economic recovery within the overarching objective of preserving long-term stability of the financial system.

The current COVID-19 pandemic related shock will place greater pressure on the balance sheets of banks in terms of non-performing assets, leading to erosion of capital, he said, adding building buffers and raising capital by banks – both in the public and private sector – will be crucial not only to ensure credit flow but also to build resilience in the financial system.

Gadkari for more research to identify import substitutes

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

Union MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari has pitched for more research to identify products that can be indigenously manufactured as cost-effective import substitutes.

The industries and industrial associations should do more research to identify these substitutes to curb imports, he added.

Instead of importing spare part, the industry should help their vendors to find an indigenous replacement, Gadkari said in a virtual meeting on Friday.

He was speaking at the inauguration ceremony of Atmanirbhar Innovation Challenge organised by Marathwada Accelerator for Growth and Incubation Council (MAGIC).

It is a branch of industrial association Chamber of Marathwada Industries and Agriculture (CMIA).

While identifying crucial products being imported into the country, the focus should be on how they can be manufactured here, he said.

The industry should help and support their vendors to create all types of parts in India, Gadkari added.



Initially, there could be 10-20 per cent rise in prices for the substitute, but when it will start production in large volumes, the industry can get those parts at a reasonable price, he said.

Now, it is the time to make import substitutes that will be indigenous, cost-effective and pollution-free, the minister noted.

While talking about Aurangabad, Gadkari said one of the national projects that have been planned is Damanganga-Pinjar project to collect water and bring it to the Godavari river valley.

From there, it will be supplied to those projects where there is a shortage.

"I have resolved issues related to many projects in various

states of the country. There were problems with this project, to be implemented between Maharashtra and Gujarat, that still remain unsolved," the minister said.

The industry should mount pressure on the Maharashtra government for this, he added.

The association has launched Atmanirbhar Innovation Challenge 20-21 to promote startup ideas and bring them into reality, MAGIC director Ritesh Mishra said.

This year, the challenge has received around 210 idea entries from 17 states.

CMIA president Kamlesh Dhoot, Secretary Shivprasad Jaju, MAGIC director Prasad Kokil, and Ashish Garde were also present on this occasion.



Shoppers Stop net loss widens to Rs 25.11 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shoppers Stop Ltd on Friday reported widening of its consolidated net loss to Rs 25.11 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2020.

The company had posted a net loss of Rs 6.51 crore in the October-December quarter a year ago.

Its total income declined 27.2 per cent to Rs 746.45 crore during the period under review as against Rs 1,025.53 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal, Shoppers Stop said in a regulatory filing.

Shoppers Stop's total expenses stood at Rs 778.78

crore during the quarter as against Rs 963.90 crore a year ago, down 19.2 per cent.

Shoppers Stop MD and CEO Venu Nair said, "Business recovery during the festive period has been encouraging. The festive period helped footfall into stores and also generated higher digital sales."

Its digital initiatives such as white-glove services (video assisted initiative), yellow messenger services (chat enabled) and appointment services (through website and app) have engaged customers to a new level and contributed to our growth in the third quarter, he added.

10 firms bid to redevelop heritage CSMT railway station

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Ten firms, including an Adani Group company, have bid for redeveloping the heritage Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) Railway station as part of an over Rs 1,640-crore project.

The station, a UNESCO-certified World Heritage Site from where the first railway chugged out over 170-years ago, will be redeveloped in multiple phases over a four-year period, officials at the Indian Railways Station Development Corporation (IRSDC) said.

The Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation (IRSDC) on August 20 invited the Request For Qualification (RFQ) for the redevelopment of the station into a worldclass terminus through the public private partnership (PPP) model. The redevelopment of the structure will be done on DBFOT (design, build, finance, operate and transfer) basis.

Over two dozen entities had initially evinced interest for the project, which was cleared by the



Union government's Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee (PPAC) in August last year, of which ten have successfully submitted their bids, the IRSDC said.

The Adani Group, which has bid through Adani Railways Transport Ltd, has been upping investments in the mobility space in the recent past and have successfully bid to potentially become the largest private sector airport operator.

Others who have applied for the project which has a 60-year concession include GMR

Enterprises, ISQ Asia Infrastructure Investments, Kalpataru Power Transmission, Anchorage Infrastructure Investments Holdings, Brookfield Infrastructure Fund, Moribus Holdings, Godrej Properties, Keystone Realtors and Oberoi Realty, as per an official statement.

"We will now scrutinise all the ten bids, shortlist those who comply with requirements and float the request for proposal in four months after finalising the detailed project report," IRSDC's chief executive and managing director S K Lohia told PTI.

Lohia exuded confidence of awarding the project by December and added that it will be completed in four years in multiple phases.

The winning bidder will invest upfront in the construction of the project for which it may appoint sub-contractors, he said, adding that financial strength will be more preferred over technical ability while awarding the project.

The IRSDC has already gone to the heritage panels with the project report and will be going to the committee again with the final plan before construction begins, he said, claiming that the project will both "preserve and enhance" the beauty of the building.

The bidder who is chosen for the project will have the rights for revenues from the station, called as the concession period, of 60 years, he said.

Lohia explained that the winning bidder can get revenue from the realty side by renting out space, user charges which the passengers will be paying and also station revenue through aspects like kiosks, billboards etc.

‘Strong startup ecosystem critically important for business’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A strong startup ecosystem is critically important as it gives fresh ideas and new ways for doing business, said Godrej Consumer Products Ltd Chairperson Nisa Godrej.

Speaking at the 25th Wharton India Economic Forum, Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) Chairperson Nisa Godrej



said companies can get ideas from startups and make changes as the business

cycles are getting much faster.

"Strong startup ecosystem is critically important for the business. You need people to come and disrupt industries," Godrej said.

Though in the older and larger organisation, it is difficult to disrupt (but) it's not impossible "as during the pandemic, we have seen large changes are possible", she added.

APEDA organises buyer-seller meet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agri exports' body APEDA organised a Virtual Buyer Seller Meet (VBSM) in association with the Indian Embassy in Azerbaijan on Friday, bringing together stakeholders for strengthening strategic cooperation between India and Azerbaijan in the export of Basmati rice.

"The meet brought together key stakeholders from the respective governments and trade on a

common platform for strengthening strategic cooperation between India and Azerbaijan in export of Basmati rice," the commerce and industry ministry stated.

During the VBSM, presentations were made by leading Basmati rice exporters. The National Confederation of Entrepreneurs (Employers') Organisations of the Republic of Azerbaijan explained their requirement or standards for Basmati rice imports from India.

‘Exports up 11 pc during Jan 1-14’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Driven by healthy growth in pharmaceuticals and engineering sectors, the country's exports grew about 11 per cent year-on-year to USD 11.81 billion in the first fortnight of January, an official said on Friday. The exports during January 1-14 last year stood at \$10.65 billion. Imports during January 1-14 this year too increased by 6.58 per cent to \$18 billion as against \$16.91 billion in the same period of 2020, the official said.

Pharma industry risen to occasion: Satish

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian pharma industry has risen to the occasion and has made efforts to ensure that medicines and vaccines reach people during the pandemic, Dr Reddy's Laboratories Chairman Satish Reddy said on Friday.

Speaking at the 25th Wharton India Economic Forum, he said the Indian pharma industry ensured the continuity of supplies.

He said the crisis itself presented the industry with several opportunities and allowed us to think differently. It asked us to act with a sense of urgency in the interest of the patients because they are looking at us for affordable and accessible medicines, he added.

Talking about the opportunities provided by COVID-19, Reddy said that when it came to therapeutics, Indian com-



panies have risen to the occasion, they did it by re-purposing the drugs.

They worked in a collaborative manner with the regulator, to ensure the medicines reach the market fast without compromising any safety standards, he said.

"About vaccines, India is in the forefront", even before to the pandemic, around 60 per

cent of the global production of vaccines came from India, he said.

When the pandemic came, it was incumbent upon Indian vaccine manufacturers to develop their own vaccines, which some companies such as Zydus and Bharat Biotech have done, and also there were collaborations, partnering with other companies, he added.

Serum Institute of India partnered with Oxford University, Dr Reddy's partnered with Gamaleya Institute of Russia.

"This augurs well for the industry because they have risen to the occasion, shown a sense of urgency, got therapeutics and vaccines to the market and not only to supply to the Indian market but to the global market," Reddy said.

Currently, the Indian pharma industry is about USD 40

billion, with potential in the next 10 years to go to USD 120 billion to 130 billion. This can be done by building on the existing strengths, and by building on the newer strengths, which can take us there, he added.

Right on the top of this is innovation in terms of value creation, another big opportunity in terms of value creation is in biosimilars. There is also a tremendous opportunity in active pharmaceutical ingredients and in generics also, Reddy said.

He added that Indian companies also have proved their mettle in complex and specialty generics.

Speaking on the occasion, Lupin Managing Director Nilesh Gupta said the Indian pharma industry took proactive actions during the pandemic and ensured that that manufacturing continued unhindered.

IRB InvIT Q3 revenue almost flat at Rs 333 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IRB InvIT, India's first listed infrastructure investment trust, on Saturday said its revenue for the December quarter this fiscal remained almost flat at Rs 333 crore.

It had clocked a revenue of Rs 330 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal, it said in a statement. "India's first listed Infrastructure Investment Trust will distribute Rs 2.50 per unit for Q3 FY21," it added.

With this, the cumulative distribution for the nine months in FY21 is now Rs 6 per unit, which includes Rs 4.80 per unit as an interest component and Rs 1.20 as return on capital.

The cumulative distribution of cash flow for the nine months of FY21 is Rs 348 crore, which includes the cash flow distribu-



tion of Rs 145 crore for the third quarter, the company said.

"It is encouraging to see the traffic rebound across all our projects, resulting in toll collections increasing beyond pre-COVID 19 levels. In the ensuing months, we expect it to improve further corresponding to the recovery in the economy. Additionally, increasing FASTag penetration across the projects helps in managing higher traffic in a more efficient and transparent manner," as per IRB Infrastructure spokesperson.

MONEY MATTERS

L&T Finance Q3 net profit slips 51 pc to Rs 288 crore

L&T Finance Holdings on Friday reported a 51 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 287.75 crore during the third quarter ended December 31, 2020. The company's net profit stood at Rs 591.47 crore during the same period in the previous fiscal. The non-banking financial company's (NBFC's) total income during the quarter under review declined to Rs 3,622.16 crore from Rs 3,735.79 crore in the year-ago quarter. Average assets under management (AUM) declined to Rs 68,976 crore from Rs 71,587 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago, the company said in a statement.



IRFC garners over Rs 1,398 cr from anchor investors ahead of IPO

The Indian Railway Finance Corporation on Friday raised a little over Rs 1,398 crore from anchor investors ahead of its initial share sale that opens for public subscription on Monday. A total of 5,34,563,007 equity shares have been allocated to 31 anchor investors at an upper price band of Rs 26 per equity shares, the company said in a statement. At this price, IRFC has garnered Rs 1,398.63 crore from anchor investors. The anchor investors include HDFC Trustee Company Ltd, Nippon Life India Trustee Ltd, Government of Singapore, Monetary Authority of Singapore, Kuwait Investment Authority Fund, Kotak Mahindra (International) Ltd, Goldman Sachs (Singapore) PTE, Tata AIG General Insurance Co Ltd and Aditya Birla Sun Life Insurance Co Ltd. The issue is of up to 178.20 crore shares, comprising a fresh issue of up to 118.80 crore shares and offer for sale of up to 59.40 crore shares by the government. The company's principal business is to borrow funds from the financial markets to finance acquisition/creation of assets which are then leased out to the Indian Railways. The initial public offer (IPO) would open on on January 18 and close on January 20. The price band of the issue has been fixed at Rs 25 to Rs 26 per equity share. At the upper end of the price band, the IPO is expected to fetch Rs 4,633 crore.



Walmart's e-commerce chief resigns after nearly 5 years

Marc Lore, Walmart's e-commerce chief, is leaving the world's largest retailer, nearly five years after he joined to super charge its online business amid stiffer competition from online leader Amazon. Under Lore's stewardship, Walmart led the redesign of the company's website, expanded its online assortment from 10 million items to more than 80 million and transformed its delivery network to add two-day and same day delivery. Lore, who served as CEO of Walmart's e-commerce division, joined the company in September 2016 when Walmart bought Jet.com, an e-commerce company he founded, for more than USD 3 billion.



Mahindra Group to seek COVID vaccines for employees

Diversified Mahindra Group on Friday said it has registered interest to seek COVID-19 vaccines for its employees, as per priorities and sequence to be specified by the government. The farm equipment-to-aerospace conglomerate said it would take the responsibility for the inoculation of its employees rather than have the government subsidise them. "We have registered our interest to seek vaccines for our employees, in accordance with the priorities and sequence to be specified by the government," a Mahindra Group spokesperson said in a statement. The spokesperson further said, "We believe it is our duty to take responsibility for the inoculation of our employees, rather than have the government subsidise them."



You cannot live your life looking at yourself from someone else's point of view
— Penelope Cruz



A region, that was considered to be shrouded in mystery and inaccessible, is turning into a hot destination for business and leisure, writes SAIMI SATTAR, as she explores the reasons behind it

NORTH EAST ON THE RADAR

In 2013-14 racial attacks on North Easterners were common. We were more often than not referred to as *Chinki* or Chinese. In 2014, a boy, Nido Taniam, was killed for his hairstyle in Delhi. This shook the conscience of the entire community, recalls Shyam Kanu Mahanta

It was this incident that made Mahanta sit up and take notice, egged on by other youngsters from the North Eastern states to do something to bring about a positive change. After careful thought, Mahanta, who after having worked across the country had turned entrepreneur, decided to start a festival that would represent the distinct culture, food and more of the place. Over the years his brainchild, the North East Festival, has become a must-visit event on the capital's social calendar and in many ways representative of the changes that are gradually enveloping the perception about a region which for the longest of time was considered distant, different and inaccessible. Powering this perception are several reasons which lie within the region as well as in the larger ecosystem of the country and the world.

FOCUS OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Mahanta believes that while the new government has undertaken several measures, it was former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vaipayee who kick-started the effort of connecting North East to the rest of the country. "He travelled to the region and then Manmohan Singh carried this integration forward when he became a Member of Parliament from Assam. Though he was not very vocal, this choice registered in the mind space of people," says Mahanta who runs MMS Advisory Pvt Ltd, a consultancy for road construction, besides the festival which he is better known for.

Ranjit Das, President of the Tour Operators Association of Assam (TOAA), while talking about his industry pins the beginning of the rise in tourist numbers to one particular decision. He says, "In 2009-10 the DoNER Minister Mani Shanker Aiyer promoted tourism by persuading government officials to use their Leave Travel Concession to visit the region which led to a huge surge of tourists in the North East."

The changed political thought process, where there was focus on the region, meant that connectivity improved and development accelerated. Mahanta believes that the present government and especially the Prime Minister and the DoNER Minister Jitendra Singh's attention has been important in creating a positive impression among people and has put the region on the highway to development.

Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, Chairman and Managing Director, Pride East Entertainments Pvt Ltd, a regional media house, agrees when she says, "With Modi's emphasis on development, investment has poured in and new avenues have opened up." This naturally meant a positive impression all around.

FALLING INSURGENCY

Earlier the perception within the region of being neglected, and often times exploited, by the Centre gave rise to insurgency. "People felt that in order to get even something as simple

as a bridge or a refinery meant that they had to struggle for it. The distance from Indian mainland and mindset didn't help resulting in insurgency movements in 80s or 90s against the perceived discrimination of the region by the Centre," says Mahanta who believes that the increased attention was instrumental in bringing peace to the area.

Dr Parveen Ubed, CEO & Founder, ERC Eye Care (P) Limited which works towards democratising digital health (eye) care for the people in India & South-East Asia points out that insurgency affected business in different ways. "It meant that the offices were not operational every day which naturally led to erratic work conditions," he says.

Mahanta says that with more peace having prevailed, the conditions in Guwahati are almost similar to Delhi. "In fact, it is much safer for women. It has good restaurants, discotheques, all the major brands and a lot of people are coming to work here. It's very cosmopolitan. During insurgency people were scared of flaunting their wealth. Now they are buying expensive cars and splurging money which naturally helps the economy," says Mahanta.

STATE GOVERNMENT CHIPPING IN

Smitakshi B Goswami, Director, Pratidin Group which owns Asomiya Pratidin (the largest circulated Assamese daily) and Pratidin Time (a 24-hour Assamese news channel) says that the efforts of the state governments shored up the remaining gap. "When Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal conducted Khelo India in January last year, sports tourism got a fillip and people who came here saw the development as well as the future potential of the place. The international level stadiums were important in changing the thought process of the people who came from outside," she says.

ROLE OF TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

So, rather than the news of a flood or insurgency activities, there was positivity emanating from the region which grabbed eyeballs. While the ones who had visited the area saw the change for themselves, there were still others who were prompted to plan a trip because of the positive impression in the media. Das says, "During the TOAA's annual convention, we discussed the changing perception and dynamics due to the print and electronic media coverage. The international audience became more aware of the different kinds of experiences that the region held out thanks to programmes on channels like National Geographic." Road shows and participation in travel fairs by tour operators created awareness among domestic and international tourists about the scenic beauty of the region.

Moreover, the growth of social media



were surprised as they felt I was giving up a great career as a doctor. Start-ups were not a badge of honour. It was very difficult to get mentors to structure the business properly. I had to reach out to some friends in the US on Facebook who helped me. When I started in Jorhat, the local chartered accountants were not sure about how to register a local company as they hadn't done it before. Investors liked me, my idea and the opportunity it held out but did not want to come down to Assam to meet me."

He feels that the transformation in the eco system where there is a change in attitude as well as money and mentorship being easily available are the reasons why start-ups are thriving.

Gadi believes that a lot of youngsters have decided to head back home after getting an education in the metros as they no longer want a government job. "Home delivery for medicines, grocery and more are run by start-ups by youngsters. These developments are at par with what is happening in the country. Earlier, they did not think that this kind of thing can happen here as well."

However, Smitakshi says that it is the companies which are working with unique products like Eri Silk, organic farming and ingredients like Bhut Jolokia, the hottest chilli in the world, have created a unique footprint.

The change in the attitude towards start-ups, says Dr Ubed, is evident in the way he can now have the pick of people he employs. "Earlier they asked a lot of questions and would want to work for two-three days to see if the environment was good and whether I could pay or not. There is an attitudinal shift and the start-ups are now considered cool," he says.

COMMUNICATION, CONNECTIVITY AND AWARENESS

The connectivity has improved dramatically. According to the Ministry for Road Transport & Highways, 4484.9 km of National Highways were built in between 2014-2018 in the region. Guwahati, which was the first airport in the North East, is now the eighth busiest in the country. The Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport, which till three decades ago was handling only two or three flights a day, has over 120 commercial flights — both arrival and departure — in addition to chartered flights and aircrafts of the Indian Air Force. It registered over six million footfalls during 2018-19, which is a whopping 27.46 per cent increase from 2017-18. According to Airports Authority of India the airport handled 55,066 aircraft movements during 2018-19 which is a 20.99 per cent increase of aircraft movement over the previous 12 months.

Gadi's home state does not have an airport but Arunachal Pradesh would be getting one in another three-four years which, he says, would naturally make it more accessible. Sharma says that there is a flurry of activity, "Airports are coming up, there are investment summits taking place as the CMs take initiatives to improve connectivity."

This naturally has had a positive impact. Das says, "The perception has changed because of the development of communications network and also connectivity. Guwahati, for instance, has direct flights to all the metros."

Gadi feels that a lot of festivals like the Ziro in Arunachal Pradesh, Hornbill in Nagaland have also become must-visit events for travellers. "People who have gone to these festivals return with beautiful memories. That has naturally helped create a positive impression about the people and the place," he says. Mahanta offers a different take when he says, "The North East festival has united the states of the region. It is a meeting point where disagreements have been sorted out and barriers been broken. There is a common agenda for infrastructure, tourism, industry and more. The festival in Guwahati this year had just 100 visitors but saw three lakh digital footfalls worldwide."

As Sharma puts it, "Earlier, the odds seemed to be insurmountable but now the dots are being joined and everything is coming together." This is certainly not the last we have heard of the North East success story. ■

impact like no other. The travel industry too tapped into the potential of the new media," says Das.

YOUTH POWERING CHANGE

Designer Jenjum Gadi, who calls Delhi home, believes that the change has been brought about primarily by the youngsters. "We have faced a lot of racism in metros and the youngsters worked on countering it by engaging in discussions, both online and offline, about the people, food and culture. This created awareness and dispelled myths." He has noticed a marked shift in the number of people wanting to travel to the region and being more tolerant of the food habits than they were when he came from a remote village in Arunachal Pradesh to the capital to study 16 years back.

The fashion world was the one of the first industries to integrate people from the North East since they have an inherent sense of style. "There are stylists, designers, graphic designers and more in the industry which, to begin with, was always open," feels Gadi.

Sharma believes that the new crop of youngsters has done their bit in bridging the gap which existed on both sides. "Slowly we are trying to assimilate ourselves in the mainstream. Earlier, people found a million reasons not to return to Guwahati after having studied or worked outside. It could be low salaries, standard of living or opportunities," she says and adds that media, like her channel, bring together all the eight states which, in turn, fuels newer ideas for cooperation and development. "We often hear of stories of a boy from some remote area developing software or something equally amazing. There is no dearth of talent here. With the availability of internet, there is an exchange of ideas and more exposure for the younger generation. The basic education system has been strengthened. The economically independent young minds are applying their knowledge everywhere," she says.

STARTUPS REVV UP

The entry of youngsters in tourism has transformed the way even this industry operates. Das says, "About 20 colleges and universities in Assam offering a course on tourism came up in the last four-five years. There are thousands of students pursuing these courses and, when they graduate, they are getting into different kinds of activities, exploring new destinations and looking at giving an authentic experience to tourist. People are now looking at tourism as an avenue of income and employment"

Dr Ubed, who faced an uphill task while setting up his company in 2013, recalls, "People

THE GROWTH OF SOCIAL MEDIA MEANT THAT POTENTIAL TRAVELLERS OFTEN GOT THE INFORMATION FROM PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN CIRCLE WHO HAD BEEN TO THE REGION. LIVE STREAMING OF A DESTINATION CREATES AN IMPACT LIKE NO OTHER. THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY TOO TAPPED INTO THE POTENTIAL OF THE NEW MEDIA





HOME THEATRE

Plenty of twists and intrigue



TANDAV
Amazon Prime Video
*ing: Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia, Mohd Zeeshan Ayub, Sunil Grover, Gauahar Khan, Kritika Kamra
Rated: 5.5/10

This 38-minute each episode created by Ali Abbas Zafar may not have been able to scratch the surface as far as intrigue and twists are concerned but that doesn't mean that they are missing. The Season 1 that has nine episodes takes you on a behind closed doors journey of politics where playing person against the other, murder and using the common man as a stepping stone to further one's career is fair game — all that matters is the position and the power that comes with it.

While the story appears to have been told many times, *Tandav* manages to keep one engaged. Who doesn't want to know how the game is played and however fictional the characters may be, a reference to a lady politician can't help one try and draw parallel

even if the said people are no more and the mere mention of the names can be construed in bad taste. But then, this is reel life not reality.

The makers have ensured that no one point is dragged for long and the story moves at a pace that is interesting and offers plenty of turns that may leave one stumped only to be thrown a curve ball with another twist — all within a span of minutes.

The performance too keeps one glued to this series. Sunil Grover as Guppal is a welcome change. It is good to see him move totally away from Dr Gulati's role in *The Kapil Sharma show*. Saif Ali Khan plays his role just as brilliantly.

As a wannabe king to a kingmaker, his character keeps the interest alive. Dimple Kapadia may look a tad old but one can't take away the elegance with which she portrays herself here. The others actors, and there are so many, do their bit.

It makes for a good watch since it gas plenty of twists and turns.

— Shalini Saksena

Starts on a good note



OUTSIDE THE WIRE
Netflix
Presenter: Anthony Mackie, Damson Idris, Emily Beecham, Michael Kelly, Pilou Asbæk
Rated: 6/10

There is a thrill that comes with watching an action-thriller and when that is embellished with sci-fi the experience of watching the same is at another level. It goes without saying that one must enjoy this genre otherwise it can be a drag as one tries to grapple with what is unfolding.

The storyline is simple enough to begin with — bring down a madman all set to wage a war against the US by going after the nukes that are in hiding. The curve ball? The setting is 2036 with a Civil War in Europe.

Then there is the whole thing about using machines to fight this unrest and caught in between are the locals who only want peace and go on with their lives. Machines fighting? Sound familiar? Remember the Terminator series? *Outside The Wire* takes that on to a whole new dimension — a humanoid — a prototype — capable of doing things out-the-box; a lean mean fighting machine but capable of emotions. Definitely dangerous because it means it can think independently of its maker.

Outside The Wire directed by Mikael Hafstrom is definitely an ambitious project that starts off on a rather intriguing idea and keeps one engaged for the majority of the film. Anthony Mackie who is also one of the producers here pairs up with Damon Idris, plays the role of an android officer rather well. The downer is that the movie somewhat loses its steam as it progresses to become a film that is all about killing the enemy — the US — in order for to stop its android soldiers' project since the prototype has gone rogue.

The repetitive shoot-out are a drag but those who love bullets flying at the drop of a hat would love this one. After all to watch machines go all out is what action thrillers are all about even if the climax is a bit of a let down given a good start.

— Shalini Saksena

TELLY TALE

ADITYA IS BACK WITH BAWRA DIL

Bringing forth an uncommon tale of Siddhi and Shiva filled with love and hatred will be Colors' upcoming love story *Bawara Dil*. Back on TV after a brief hiatus will be actor Aditya Redij who will essay the character of Shiva Lashkare. Like a force of nature, Shiva holds a powerful personality and usually comes across as an angry young man. Pure at heart but often misunderstood because of his brash nature, he is someone who doesn't follow the rules & conventions laid by society but instead makes his own.

His counterpart Siddhi Gokarna is an educated and intellectual young woman with a strong sense of morals and justice. But in a twist of fate, Shiva and Siddhi start off on a wrong note and their bond is fuelled by hatred

Shiva and Siddhi have strikingly different personalities and their colliding life principles ensure they are never on the same page about anything. But as fate has it they get married and unlike any happily ever after, the two vow to come together only to destroy each other.

Speaking about essaying the role of Shiva, Aditya said: "I am super excited for my new show, specially because I've been waiting to play a character like Shiva who is a 26-year-old rebellious self-made man. One who looks tough from the outside but has a child inside him. My last affiliation with Colors was a great success and I am sure that this one will do wonders too. I hope that my audience will like my performance as they watch me portray Shiva's character in *Bawara Dil*."

Talking about playing Siddhi, Kinjal Dhamecha said: "This is my debut show with Colors, a dream I always hoped would come true. Siddhi's role is very special to me, because of the strong and unique character that she is. She is someone who will always side with what is right no matter the price. She is fierce, determined and honest at the same time. The intensity of the character has impressed me alot. I can't wait for the day my fans will finally get to watch the show on TV."

DHARMESH ONBOARD FOR DD

Life is always better when you dance! With the lockdown behind us and

with everyone stepping into the new year with new vigour, it's time to put on your dancing shoes again and reignite your passion for dance as the biggest dance reality show is back. The stage of Dance Deewane, which is known to fulfil dreams and celebrate the spirit of the dance of all generations is set to return with its new season — *Waqt Ko Nachane, Dance Machane*. This time, the ace choreographer, Dharmesh Yelande, will be joining the charismatic diva Madhuri Dixit and the very talented Tushar Kalia on the judges' panel and mentor the contestants to put their best foot forward.

The upcoming season of *Dance Deewane* will resurrect the power of dreams once again as dancers across different age groups will come together and make the stage a springboard for their talent. The contestants will dance their way into the judges' hearts in duos, trios and groups.

WHO'S YOUR ROOMMATE?

Ever imagined what would you do if you had a ghost for a roommate? This is what four bachelor friends (Nikhil, Kavi, Subbu and Sanki) are about to find out in MX Player's upcoming horror comedy — MX Original Series *Aapkey Kamrey Mein Ko Rehita Hai*.

In dire circumstances, the foursome — Nikhil (Sumeet Vyas), Subbu (Naveen Kasturia), Kavi (Amol Parashar) and Sanki (Ashish Verma) are ecstatic when they find a 4 B.H.K for a measly rent, in a city like Mumbai. But little did they know that they would be sharing their amazing new flat with a newly acquired roommate who is a ghost! Life gets further complicated when the beautiful Mausam (Swara Bhasker) comes for their housewarming party, and then begins the comedy of horrors. The five-episodic series, directed by Gaurav Sinha will stream for free, starting January 22 exclusively on MX Player.

Speaking about the same, Swara Bhasker says: "Picking roles that span across genres and varied character graphs has always been important to me. Whether it was as the sultry Shanoor, the amiable Beanie or now the free spirited Mausam, I've enjoyed portraying all, and I think this horror comedy will hit the right notes of laughter and unexpected drama."

Of history and hope

RAJESH SHRINGARPURE, who plays Malhar Rao Holkar in SET'S Punyashlok Ahilya Bai, tells MUSBA HASHMI what is the character about, the responsibility that comes with such roles and the reason behind the never-ending craze for historical shows

Retelling the tales of history and mythology on TV is a pure delight both for the makers and the audience. No matter how many times one sees such stories, they still look as fresh and entertaining. Take for example Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan*, which even after so many years became one of the most watched series on TV during the lockdown or for that matter BR Chopra's *Mahabharat* which was also topping the list.

One wonders what is it with such shows that they can never go out of trend. "Our souls lie there. We are able to connect with these stories and that's the reason they are always on our watch lists. The other reason is that people get life lessons from them in an entertaining way. If we'll preach them something, the audience immediately lose interest, but instead if we teach them in a fun way they will learn from it," Rajesh Shringarpure, who plays Malhar Rao Holkar in SET's *Punyashlok Ahilya Bai*, says.

The story, he says, is the 17th century period drama and is not about the chronicles or glory of Malhar Rao, but the rapport that he shared with his daughter-in-law, Ahilya Bai Holkar. "Malhar Rao is compassionate, endearing and he understands even the smallest of emotions of every one. He has been given the title of *subedar* by the Peshwas. He came from a humble and subdued family. He supports his daughter-in-law in all walks of her journey. The relationship that is shown here between the father-in-law and daughter-in-law is very unique," he explains.

On what attracted Shringarpure to the show, he says, is of course the story itself. "It is a matter of pride for anyone to be a part of such inspiring stories. Also, the character itself is so strong. Not to mention, the progressive thoughts that the story has to offer, I was instantly attracted towards this role and the show," he says.

There is always a learning lesson when is a part of historical shows, he adds. "People always tell you to forget the past and move on. But when we become a part of such stories, it is then we realise that we shouldn't forget our past, roots, forefathers and what they did for us. It is because of them we are able to live a happy and independent life," he says.

With such roles, he says, comes a lot of responsibility to do justice to the



character. "When one plays a character who is praised like God by a society, there is a lot of things that one has to take care of. This is a huge character and there is a lot of responsibility on my shoulders. As an actor I need to execute it right. Since it is winters, the costume is not an issue. Come April, and then it will be a bit of hassle. Also, the body language and the mannerisms has to be spot-on. If he is with Ahilya, his tone will be different. He will talk to her like a man does to a girl. But, if he is with the other people, he will speak with authority. Fortunately, I have been blessed with a voice that can do justice to it, hence things get simpler," he tells you.

Shringarpure adds that if one has understood the characteristics of the character that he plays, then there is not much to research about. "If you know the characteristics, visualise what you play and then just layer it up," Shringarpure, who debuted with *Param Vir Chakra*, says. However, acting was never on his cards.

"In school and college, I was into dramas but never thought that I will be in this line. I wanted to join the Defence forces and I was selected as a pilot in the Air Force, but during the medical I got rejected due to some reasons. I was worried what to do next and then I got to know that RK banner was presenting a film *Param Vir Chakra*. Initially, I was apprehensive and I didn't feel like going to their studio. My friend insisted that I should give it a try. I went there and spoke formally with the director. The first thing about me that struck them was my voice. I didn't tell them the reason of my visit and they told me that I should visit them more often. I took it very positively and made it a point to go there twice a week. But I couldn't open my mouth in front of them, I thought that they should realise what I was there for. It went on for sometime.

One day, I got to know that they need an instructor to train the shortlisted candidates. A *jawan* came to teach them from Colaba and the director urged me that I should also join him and give commands to people. Then after a few days, a spot boy asked me why am I not playing the role in the film since I was trained enough. Then, the voting happened and everyone on the sets was in the favour of me getting the role. Fortunately, I got that project, he tells you.

'I had never done fantasy thriller'

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with ARJIT TANEJA, who has recently entered Colors' Naagin 5 as Farishta, about the attraction of doing a fantasy thriller, challenges and how did acting happened with him

■ What made you say yes to play Farishta in Naagin 5?

I have never done a supernatural fantasy show earlier and also I was getting a chance to work with Balaji after three-and-a-half years, so that's what attracted me to the role. Not to mention, that it is an interesting character and different from what I have done till date.

■ What all can the audience expect from this new entry?

There is a lot of craze for *Naagin* among the audience. I can't reveal the track but I am sure it will be as interesting as it has been all these years with me joining the show as a cameo.

■ Did the role offer any challenges?

The role is challenging because the technique to shoot a fantasy thriller is different from a daily soap. I have never joined a show midway and believe it will be fun and also a learning experience.

■ In all these years, what has been your biggest takeaway from the industry?

I am growing and evolving with every project that I do, not only as an actor but also as a human being. That's my biggest takeaway. I am fortunate enough to have been able to work with such good people all through. I am grateful for whatever I have achieved and my journey is nothing short of amazing.

■ You have been a part of a few music videos as well. How did that happen?

I got an offer, I had time and so I did it. I didn't give it much thought. And the last music video that I did — *Ek Dafa To Mil*, was shot and directed very well.

■ How did acting happen to you?

It happened after school. I always wanted to act. I told my parents that I want to go to Mumbai. They were supportive and encouraged my decision. They were happy of what I wanted to do. I came to Mumbai and started



I am growing and evolving with every project that I do, not only as an actor but also as a human being. That's my biggest takeaway from the industry

auditioning. Thankfully, within two months of coming to Mumbai, I got work. There was no struggle that I had to go through because of my parents or any other thing. It all went smooth for me.

■ Did you have any apprehensions?

Not at all. I knew what I wanted to do and I just went with my intuitions. A lot of people are worried about the future and they do want to

have a back-up plan if things didn't go their way. But I was dedicated enough to this craft and that is all I cared about. I was sure things will work out on their own and there was nothing that I was worried about.

■ What next?

There are a few things in the pipeline and I will talk about it and share more details soon as things will get confirmed.

HOPE IN HEART, PRAYER ON LIPS, HEALTH WORKERS GET FIRST JABS

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Healthcare workers, doctors and Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla were among the first recipients of the COVID-19 jab on the first day of the drive in Maharashtra, which was marked by enthusiasm and anxiety, with many viewing the vaccine as a kind of panacea that will offer

them immunity, and more importantly some hope. As coronavirus vaccines reached Mumbai's Cooper Hospital in morning, dozens of health workers clapped and cheered the "vaccine carrier" staff. With 'arti' thalis and sweets, the staff of the hospital waited outside the facility to welcome the first beneficiaries of the vaccination drive. Former Maharashtra health minister Dr Deepak Sawant, Dr Ranjit Mankeshwar, Dean, JJ Hospital and Dr Padmaja Saraf received the vaccine shots among others. While Sawant was administered the vaccine at Cooper Hospital, Dr Mankeshwar and Dr Saraf received the shots at JJ Hospital in Mumbai and at Jalna district hospital, respectively. The inoculation drive is taking place at 285 centres in Maharashtra where 100 healthcare workers will be administered the shots in a day, and cover 28,500 workers, an official said. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray launched the inoculation drive at a COVID care centre at Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) in Mumbai. "It is a revolutionary step we are taking today. I salute to the Corona warriors who selflessly treated the COVID-19 patients when there was no remedy available," he told reporters. In Pune, Dr Nitin Abhyankar (57) was among the first beneficiaries who received the vaccine. "I feel extremely proud and happy that I could become the part of the inaugural inoculation drive that has started in the country to fight COVID-19," said Dr Abhyankar,

who looked perfectly fine after receiving the jab. In Pune district, more than 21 per cent of the registered healthcare personnel, including doctors and nurses, received the vaccine shots till 1 PM on Saturday. A total of 3,100 beneficiaries are

care personnel, mostly doctors, were given jabs on the first day. In Pimpri Chinchwad, 92 beneficiaries were administered the vaccine till 1 pm. Dr Murlidhar Tambe, Superintendent of Sassoon General Hospital, which is one of the 31 vaccine centres in Pune, was among the first beneficiaries who received the jab.

Healthcare workers, doctors and Serum Institute of India CEO Poonawalla were among the first recipients of the Covid jab on the first day of the drive, which was marked by anxiety & enthusiasm



"Till 1 pm, a total of 37 beneficiaries including doctors have been given the jabs of Covishield. As doctors, nurses are coming forward to take the vaccine, it will send a positive message among other healthcare workers and frontline workers," he said. Rajesh Karyakarte, head of Department at B J Medical College and Sassoon General Hospital, who too received the jab, said vaccination is the only solution to develop a 'herd immunity'.

supposed to get the vaccine doses on the first day in Pune district. "660 healthcare workers, including doctors and nurses, have been administered the vaccine till 1 PM," said Dr Sachin Edake, immunisation officer, Pune district. A total of 409 beneficiaries have been vaccinated in rural areas. 32 beneficiaries were given the doses of Covaxin at the Aundh district hospital. In Pune corporation, 159 health

'World's largest vaccination drive shows determination of a self-reliant India'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the country began administering two made-in-India vaccines against COVID-19 on Saturday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said it represents the determination of a self-reliant India and is an important milestone in the fight against the pandemic. Complimenting scientists as the world's largest vaccination drive was rolled out, Shah said in a series of tweets that India is one of the few countries which have achieved success to end the biggest crisis facing the humanity. The home minister said the 'New India' led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is an India that transforms disasters into opportunities and challenges into achievements. "This 'Made in India' vaccine represents the determination of the self-reliant India. On this historic day, I bow to all our Corona warriors," he said in tweets in Hindi. Shah said the country is witnessing a historic moment and has crossed an important milestone in the fight against the coronavirus under the

leadership of Modi. "The world's largest vaccination campaign shows the immense potential of India's scientists and the power of our leadership," he said. The home minister said, "India is one of the few countries which has achieved success to end the biggest crisis against humanity." He said every Indian is proud of this unprecedented achievement. "This is the emergence of a new self-sufficient India on the globe. Many congratulations to all the scientists," he said. The prime minister on Saturday launched India's COVID-19 vaccination drive and

asserted that the made-in-India vaccines being rolled out will ensure a "decisive victory" for the country over the coronavirus pandemic.

Mahesh Sharma among first lawmakers to get Covid vaccine

PNS ■ NOIDA

With a Covishield jab on his forearm, BJP leader and Gautam Buddha Nagar MP Mahesh Sharma on Saturday got vaccinated for coronavirus as a 'healthcare worker', becoming among the first parliamentarians in India to get inoculated for the infection. Sharma, who is also a trained MBBS doctor, got vaccinated at 11 am at his Kailash Hospital in Noida Sector 27, hospital spokesperson V B Joshi told PTI. The 61-year-old former Union minister was then kept in observation for 30 minutes at the hospital, Joshi said. "The beginning of the end for COVID-19 has started today with Prime Minister Narendra Modi launching the world's largest vaccination campaign. As a doctor, I have also got vaccinated for coronavirus. I am feeling absolutely fine. The vaccine is completely safe and all of you should get vaccinated," Sharma tweeted in Hindi.



Vaccination drive begins in Uttarakhand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The vaccination against coronavirus began in Uttarakhand on Saturday with healthcare workers getting the first shots of the vaccine at the Doon Hospital here in the presence of Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat. A total of 3,400 healthcare workers will get the first shot of the vaccine at 34 centres, including government and private hospitals across the state on Saturday. Thirty-two out of the 34 healthcare facilities where the vaccination exercise is underway are government hospitals, including AIIMS Rishikesh. Two private hospitals -- Himalayan Medical College and Guru Ram Rai Medical College -- are also among them.

Sanitation worker first to receive Covid shot in Jharkhand

PNS ■ RANCHI

A sanitation worker was the first person to receive the COVID-19 jab in Jharkhand, as the vaccination drive began across the country on Saturday, with Chief Minister Hemant Soren expressing hope that India would soon tide over the crisis. Mariyam Gudiya, an employee at Ranchi sadar hospital, received the shot in the presence of Soren, and other senior officials, one of whom said 48 vaccination centres have been set up in 24 districts of the state. "A complete action plan for the drive has been prepared in Jharkhand, in line with the guidelines issued by the central government," the chief minister said. According to the health department, a total of 6,816 workers have been trained to administer vaccines to the people of the state, and 275 cold chains readied so far for storing the vials. Arrangements have also been made to deal with emergency situations, in case anyone feels unwell after being given the dose, the department said.



Frontline health workers would receive the shot before others, and every vaccination centre would be attending to 100 such people at the 48 centres for the next few days, Principal Secretary of health department Nitin Madan Kulkarni said. The second dose would be administered after 28 days. "As many as 1.40 lakh health workers (private and government) have been registered on the 'Co-Win' portal for the first phase of the drive," Kulkarni said.

Maha has received 10L vaccine doses: Maha health minister

AURANGABAD/MUMBAI: Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Saturday said the state has received 60 per cent of the COVID-19 vaccine stock or 10 lakh doses so far and the remaining doses will be available in the next 10 days. Speaking to reporters after attending the vaccination drive in Jalna, Tope said at least 8 lakh health workers have registered for this programme, and for this, the state needs 7.5 lakh additional doses of the vaccine. "Although the state has received 60 per cent to the vaccine stock it needs, the remaining consignment will be made available in the next 10 days," the minister said. "Maharashtra needs 17.50 lakh doses of the coronavirus vaccine, as 8 lakh health workers have registered for the programme on CoWIN application. We have received 10 lakh doses and we still need 7.5 lakh more," Tope said. Tope said he would be writing to Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan to make the remaining doses available as soon as possible.



Covaxin approval sans due process, alleges Manish Tewari

NEW DELHI: In the backdrop of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in the country, senior Congress leader Manish Tewari on Saturday raised questions over the emergency use approval given to the indigenously developed vaccine Covaxin and alleged that it was "sans due process". India recently granted two vaccines -- Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield, manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin -- approval on restricted emergency use. "As vaccine roll out begins, it is all a bit puzzling India has no policy framework for authorising emergency use. Yet, two vaccines have been approved for restricted use in emergency situation," Tewari said in a tweet just before Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the vaccination drive. "COVAXIN is another story -- Approvals sans Due Process," the former Union minister added, tagging a media report which claimed scientists and doctors are divided on the issue of restricted use approval granted to the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech's Covaxin.



Historic day, says SII CEO as he gets Covishield jab

PUNE: As the COVID-19 inoculation drive rolled out across India on Saturday, Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla joined the healthcare workers in getting the Covishield vaccine shot. Poonawalla shared a small video of him receiving the jab on Twitter. "I wish India & Sri @narendramodi ji great success in launching the world's largest COVID vaccination roll-out. It brings me great pride that #COVISHIELD is part of this historic effort & to endorse its safety & efficacy, I join our health workers in taking the vaccine myself," he tweeted. Covishield is developed by Oxford University and British-Swedish company AstraZeneca and manufactured by the Pune-based SII. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the world's largest vaccination drive against the pandemic.



Virus vaccination commences in Bihar

PATNA: COVID-19 vaccination kicked off in Bihar on Saturday with five staff members of a super specially government hospital here becoming the first ones to receive the shots in presence of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Kumar was at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS), a state-run hospital modelled after AIIMS, where cleaning staff Ram Babu got the first jab, followed by ambulance driver Amit Kumar. Others vaccinated in presence of the chief minister were lab technician Sonu Pandit, junior resident Sanant Kumar and nursing officer Karamveer Singh Rathore. Kumar gave away citation letters to the first five recipients. About 10 kms away, at Patna Medical College Hospital, which is Bihar's largest public health care facility, inoculation began in presence of Sanjay Jaiswal, the state president of the ruling BJP.

Meghalaya CM launches first phase of Covid vaccination drive

SHILLONG: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Saturday launched the COVID-19 vaccination program in the state at a government medical facility, where 100 health workers were administered the shots. Another 732 people, mostly health workers and doctors, will receive the jabs in different districts of Meghalaya, including East Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills, officials said. A total of 16,000 health workers will be vaccinated during the first phase of the drive that will be completed in 3-4 weeks, they said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the nationwide rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination drive via video conferencing earlier in the day. "Today is a historic day, as we have been fighting against COVID-19 for almost a year now."



After first jab, surgeon hails nation's efforts against virus

KOCHI: Receiving the first shot of COVID-19 vaccine in this southern port city, renowned cardio-thoracic surgeon Dr Jose Chacko Periyappuram on Saturday hailed the country's efforts to wipe out the novel coronavirus and said he felt comfortable after the vaccination. Dr Periyappuram, who performed the first successful heart transplant in Kerala, urged people to not fall prey to the false propaganda unleashed on the social media against the global effort to end the pandemic. "Some people have some misconceptions about the vaccination. They are seen carried away by false propaganda unleashed through the social media," he said. "My message to them is that don't fall prey to such wrong information," he told reporters after completing a 30-minute observation following vaccination at the General Hospital, Ernakulam.

Resident doctors in RML Hospital want Covishield

■ Resident Doctors' Association of the Ram Manohar Lohia express 'bit apprehension' about Covaxin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Resident Doctors' Association (RDA) of the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital here on Saturday requested the medical superintendent to vaccinate them with Oxford COVID-19 vaccine Covishield. In a letter to the medical superintendent, the association said the resident doctors were "a bit apprehensive" about Covaxin and might not participate in the immunisation drive in large numbers thus defeating the purpose of the exercise which began in the country on Saturday. "We have come to know

that the COVID-19 vaccination drive is being conducted by the hospital today. Covaxin manufactured by Bharat Biotech is being preferred in our hospital over Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute. "The residents are a bit apprehensive about the lack of complete trial in case of Covaxin and might not participate in huge numbers thus defeating the purpose of vaccination. We request you to vaccinate us with Covishield which has completed all stages of trial before its roll-out," the letter stated. Prime Minister



Narendra Modi on Saturday launched India's COVID-19 vaccination drive and asserted that the made-in-India vaccines being rolled out will ensure

a "decisive victory" for the country over the coronavirus pandemic. In the national capital, the vaccination exercise will be carried out at 81

sites across all its 11 districts. At the RML hospital, a security guard was the first one to receive the shot. Six central government

hospitals -- AIIMS, Safdarjung, RML, Kalawati Saran Children Hospital and two ESI hospitals -- have been chosen as sites for the drive. Besides these, Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, Delhi-government run GTB Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, DDU Hospital, BSA Hospital, Delhi State Cancer Institute, ILBS Hospital are among the vaccination sites. Private facilities -- Max Hospital, Fortis Hospital, Apollo Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital -- have also been chosen as sites for the exercise.