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RNI No. TELENG/2018/76469
Established 1864
Published From
HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW
BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
BHUBANESWAR RANCHI
DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA
*LATE CITY VOL. 3 ISSUE 92
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

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HYDERABAD, THURSDAY JANUARY 21, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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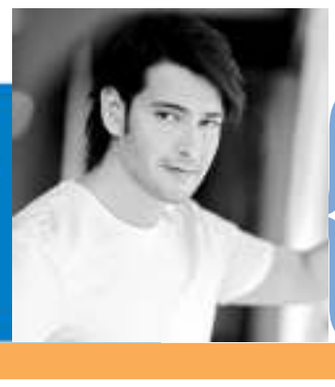

SVP TO ROLL IN DUBAI
Page 11

'Make KTR CM' chorus gains stridency in TRS

All eyes on TRS plenary, with KCR eloquently silent

VENKAT RAM REDDY LAKKADI
■ HYDERABAD

With the Telangana Rashtra Samiti's plenary fast approaching, the long-standing chorus at various levels in the party for making IT Minister K T Rama Rao, TRS working president and son of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, as the Chief Minister seems to have now gained stridency and reached the TRS brass, though KCR himself has been eloquently silent on the crucial matter.

The chorus has now become rather uninhibited after senior TRS leader and Health Minister Etala Rajender expressed his opinion two days ago affirming the view in party circles that it is time for KCR to hand over the baton to KTR.

Striking while the iron is hot, on Wednesday yet another Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav and two TRS MLAs, Bajireddy Goverdhan and Shakeel Aamir Mohammed, overtly supported the view that "KTR has all the qualities to become CM" and that "the state will achieve further progress if KTR is made CM".

The buzz in TRS circles is that KCR may hand over reins to his son KTR anytime on 'health grounds'. Their ballpark estimate is that the coronation may take place during the TRS plenary, which is held on April 27 every year. TRS leaders and cadre speculate that KCR may make an announcement on making KTR as the next CM during the party's plenary in April.

Talasani said, "What's wrong in KTR becoming CM? KTR is already playing a key role both in the party as well as in the TRS government. KTR is the most efficient and capable leader. He can handle any situation and has the capacity to face any challenges."

Bodhan TRS MLA Shakeel went a step further, saying that the upcoming Budget session of the Legislative Assembly should be held under the leadership of KTR. He even requested KCR to give a serious thought on making KTR as CM and hoped that KCR would anoint KTR at the earliest. Shakeel went on to say that Telangana State would achieve further progress with KTR as CM. "KCR should bless KTR to become CM. This is not just my opinion but the opinion of the majority of the young MLAs in TRS," Shakeel said.

Nizamabad Rural TRS MLA Bajireddy Govardhan said that he was among the TRS MLAs who wished KTR should be made CM at the earliest.

"I appeal to KCR to think seriously on this issue. I hope KCR will soon announce KCR as next CM," Bajireddy said.

2

'DEMOCRACY HAS PREVAILED'

"Leaders have an obligation to defend the truth and defeat the lies. Hear me out as we move forward," Biden tell fellow Americans

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Joe Biden took oath as the 46th president of the United States at the Capitol on Wednesday. His deputy, Kamala Harris, the daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India, also took oath as the new Vice President of the United States. She is the first Black person, first woman, and first Asian American to occupy the position.

In his remarks after taking oath, Biden said, "Here we stand days after a riotous mob thought they could silence the will of the people. It will not happen, not today, not tomorrow, not ever - not ever."

Biden also pledged that he would be honest with the country as it continues to confront difficulties, saying that leaders have an obligation to "defend the truth and defeat the lies". "Hear me out as we move forward," Biden said.

"I know forces that divide us are deep & they are real. But I also know they are not new. Our history has been a constant struggle between American ideal that we're all created equal & harsh ugly reality that racism, nativism,fear, demonization have long torn us apart," Biden remarked.

"Today, we mark the swearing-in of the first woman in American history elected to national office, Vice-President Kamala Harris. Don't tell me things can't change," Biden observed.

Earlier, Donald Trump walked out of the White House for one last time on Wednesday and headed to Florida.

In his final remarks before leaving the White House, Trump said, "We love the American people and again it has been something very special. And I just want to say goodbye, but hopefully it's not a long term goodbye. We'll see each other again."

Joe Biden and Kamala Harris took oath under the unprecedented security umbrella of thousands of security personnel, who transformed the Capitol into a fortress to prevent any breach by pro-Trump extremists.

The 78-year-old veteran Democrat leader was administered the oath of office by Chief Justice John Roberts at the West Front of the Capitol - the traditional location for presidential inaugural ceremonies where the deadly violence took place just two weeks ago.

The inauguration was held under the watch of more than 25,000 National Guards, who have transformed the capital into a garrison city, mainly because of the threat of more violent protests by the supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump, who became the first president to skip his successor's inauguration since Andrew Johnson in 1869. Outgoing Vice President Mike Pence attended the ceremony.

Biden, who is the oldest president in American history, took the oath by placing his left hand on his 127-year-old family Bible, which was held by his wife, Jill Biden. He used the same Bible during his swearing in as vice president and seven times as senator from Delaware.

Just before Biden's oath, his deputy 56-year-old Harris was sworn in as 49th Vice President of the United States by Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina member of the Supreme Court, creating history as the first female, first Black and first Indian-American vice president of the world's oldest and most powerful democracy.

The ceremony was attended by former presidents Barack Obama, George W Bush and Bill Clinton.

Nirmal health worker dies after vax

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 42-year-old man, healthcare worker in the Kuntala PHC of Nirmal District, who was vaccinated at about 11.30 am on Tuesday, developed chest pain about 14 hours later and was brought dead to the district hospital. Health officials said, as per preliminary findings, that the death was unrelated to the vaccination. According to an official statement issued by the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare here on Wednesday, the man had developed chest pain around 2.30 am on Wednesday and was taken to the District Hospital, Nirmal around 5.30 am, where he was declared brought dead. "Preliminary findings suggest that the death seems to be unrelated to vaccination. As per the guidelines, postmortem will be conducted by a team of doctors.

2

KCR's Kaleshwaram trip to make KTR CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP state unit president Bandi Sanjay has alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao went to Kaleshwaram project on Tuesday only to immerse, at the confluence of three rivers, hallowed material from the special pujas he had performed at his farmhouse to propitiate planets for ensuring that KTR would become the Chief Minister of Telangana.

The CM rushed to Triveni Sangamam, along with his spouse, to disgorge the puja material, he said. He suggested that they should come clean on what they had immersed at the confluence of three rivers.

Sanjay alleged that KCR had been hoodwinking people on the Kaleshwarm project. He wanted the CM to explain the significance of the project. The CM had drawn up plans to amass Rs 3 lakh crore over the next three years, he alleged.

"While KCR does puja to benefit his family, the puja done by the BJP will benefit society," he observed.

On the chorus to make IT Minister KT Rama Rao the next Chief Minister, Sanjay observed that only those who had sabotaged the Movement for Telangana had been batting for KTR to become the CM, while the 'true supporters of the movement' object to it.

Sanjay expressed his displeasure at Health Minister Eatala Rajender "not getting his due in TRS". "Whenever the government faces a crisis, CM projects the crisis manager Eatala to save his skin," Bandi observed.

Claiming people's 'full support' to BJP, Sanjay said that the pink party would not benefit in anyway if KTR were to become the CM. "If some of the MLAs come forward to join the BJP, only those "who believe in BJP ideology and are not tainted" would be allowed to join the saffron party, he said.

People had been appealing to KCR to make a Dalit as CM, he mentioned. He sought to know the progress in installing 125 feet high Ambedkar statue in the city.

"While KCR does puja to benefit his family, the puja done by the BJP will benefit society," he observed.

TRS corporator assaults MRO

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Banjara Hills corporator Vijayalakshmi, belonging to TRS, asserted her position and allegedly resorted to high-handed behaviour on Wednesday.

Vijayalakshmi, who went to the Mandal Revenue Office at Shaikpet, mentioned that she was the daughter of TRS Rajya Sabha member K Kesava Rao and allegedly assaulted the MRO Srinivas Reddy. Srinivas Reddy lodged a complaint with the police stating that Vijayalakshmi resisted him while he was about to leave his office to attend Telangana High Court and abuse d him. He also alleged her followers tried to detain him.

HC bars coercive steps against LRS, BRS applicants

INKESHAF AHMED
■ HYDERABAD

A division bench of the Telangana High Court on Wednesday directed the state government to not take any coercive steps against the BRS and LRS applicants till the case pertaining to the schemes pending before the Supreme Court of India was adjudicated .

The division bench, comprising the Chief Justice of the state Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy, also directed the advocate-general of the state BS Prasad to submit the copies of the recent SC order on the issue to the High Court and to the petitioners concerned for their perusal.

The High Court passed these orders, while dealing with a batch of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) pleas filed on the issue by various persons, including Congress party MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy.

The HC told the petitioners it would hear the batch of petitions filed on the LRS and BRS issue only after the completion of case hearing by the Supreme Court. During the course of arguments, the advocate-general of the state brought the issue of the hearing by the SC on the issue and told the HC that the apex court of the country had asked the state government to file its response on the issue within 8 weeks of time.

In his petition MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy urged the HC to declare the Rule 10 of the Telangana Regularization of Unapproved and illegal Layout Rules 2020 issued vide G O Ms 131 of 2020 on August 31,2020 as "illegal arbitrary unconstitutional and violative of provisions of The Telangana Urban Areas Development Act 1975, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Act 1955, Telangana Town Planning Act 1920, Telangana Municipalities Act 2019, Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority Act 2008, Telangana Panchayat Raj Act 2018 as well as Article 14, 21 and 300A of the Constitution of India.

2

KTR seeks Vaccine Testing and Certification Lab in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao has urged the Centre to establish a Vaccine Testing and Certification Laboratory at the Genome Valley in Hyderabad on the lines of the Central Drug Laboratory at Kasauli in Himachal Pradesh. Besides, a Government Medical Store Depot (GMSD) could be set up in the Genome Valley on the outskirts of the city in order to strengthen the vaccine manufacturing industry in Hyderabad, benefiting the entire nation.

In his letter to Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Harsh Vardhan, KTR said Hyderabad had come to be known as the 'vaccine capital of the world', with more than six billion doses being manufactured every year, accounting for about one-third of the global vaccine output. He stated that the recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and those of the delegation of 80 foreign ambassadors to the Genome Valley to assess the status of COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing, served as a testimony to Hyderabad's leadership position in vaccine development and manufacturing.

2

12 hurt, 50 sheep perish as bus, van collide

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

In all, 12 persons sustained serious injuries and 50 sheep worth Rs 3 lakh perished when a Wanaparthy-bound RTC bus, belonging to Nagarkurnool depot, collided head on with a van transporting sheep on Wednesday. The bus driver, seriously injured, was rushed to a hospital. Under the impact of the collision, the DCM van was crushed.

The injured persons have been rushed to a hospital for treatment. The Bijinepalli Police are investigating the case.

TSWC MD, GM caught by ACB, Rs 75,000 seized

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU
■ HYDERABAD

Sleuths of the Anti corruption Bureau (ACB) nabbed Telangana State Warehousing Corporation chairman and General Manager red-handed on Wednesday when they were accepting bribe for releasing the retirement benefits of a retired employee.

The accsued, V. Bhaskara Chary, MD of State Warehousing Corporation, and M. Sudhakar Reddy, General Manager of the corporation, were booked for graft. Based on a complaint from Banoth Sundar Lal (61), retired warehouse manager, the ACB laid a trap on Wednesday.

2

TS, AP top India Innovation rankings

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana and Andhra Pradesh figured in the list of top-10 states in the country in Niti Aayog's India Innovation Index ranking released on Wednesday.

While Telangana retained its fourth place, neighbouring Andhra Pradesh climbed three spots to reach seventh place, up from the tenth spot it achieved last year. Karnataka has maintained its top position, while Maharashtra has leapfrogged over Tamil Nadu to occupy the second place followed by Telangana, Kerala, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

Among Union Territories, and North-Eastern and hill states, Delhi and Himachal Pradesh occupy the top spots respectively.

"As the world grapples with the Covid-19 pandemic this year, the significance of innovation is even more greatly felt," Niti Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar said.

He added that while innovation has always been pivotal for higher productivity and economic growth, it is also crucial for bolstering a post-crisis economy. In this light, the foresight of the Central government in fostering a culture of innovation through initiatives like the Atal Innovation Mission, Startup India, etc. is laudable.

"The second edition of the index will allow states to continue to evaluate their innovation environment and assess their progress. The division of innovation into two dimensions, namely innovation capabilities (Enablers) and innovation outcomes (Performance) will give the states a better perspective for identifying the critical focus areas," Rajiv Kumar added.

2

ED arrests realtor in Rs 1,030-cr e-tender scam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The ED on Wednesday arrested Srinivas Raju Mantena, founder and chairman of the Hyderabad based Mantena Constructions, and his associate in connection with the Rs 1,030 crore e-tender scam in MP state. The agency has filed prosecution complaint against Srinivas Raju Mantena, founder and chairman of M/s Mantena Constructions, and his associate Aditya Tripathi of M/s Arni Infra, resident of Bhopal, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) based on a case booked by the Economic Offences Wing, Bhopal, and started investigation.

2

Indian farmer at crossroads: Market, state or collective action?

Farmers are protesting against laws that deregulate the sale of crops, allowing private buyers free rein in a marketplace that has long been dominated by government subsidies. Farmers say the reforms that have long protected small landholders' place in the market will put them at risk of losing their businesses and land to big corporations.

However, what is missing in this narrative is the culpability of the market in the mess that the agricultural profession is in today, as well as evidence on whether, and how, the state and market have responded to the agrarian crisis that germinated over six decades.

The results after decades of agriculture development suggests that farmers continue to be vulnerable to frequent episodes of losses in their economic activity that neither the state nor the markets have been able to mitigate.

Market Economy and State

In his book, Wealth of Nations (published in 1776), Adam Smith explains that in a market economy, guided by the motive of self-interest, individual decisions collectively determine the economy's allocation of scarce resources through free markets for the social good. In other words, operation of demand-and-supply forces, through a perfectly competitive market, results in optimal allocation of resources and a perfect market leads to social efficiency and maximum social welfare.

But, in the real world, perfect competition is not so 'perfect' as it appears at first. That means unless demand and supply reflect, respectively, all the benefits and all the costs of producing and consuming a product, the prices determined in perfect competition may not necessarily be 'perfect' or 'right' ones.

If so, perfect competition cannot ensure maximum social welfare or markets fail to achieve social efficiency.

Economists call this 'market failure'. In ordinary sense, market failure means that prices fail to provide the proper signals to economic agents— consumers and producers— so that the market does not operate in the traditional way. This is also precisely reflected in agriculture markets in India, where neither the producing farmers nor the consuming citizenry is satisfied with the prices.

The collective action or cooperative approach demonstrated by Elinor Ostrom and others challenges the current economic orthodoxy that there are indeed alternatives to state, privatisation and markets in generating wealth and human wellbeing

However, government policy interventions, such as taxes, subsidies, wage and price controls, and regulations, may also lead to an inefficient allocation of resources, or government failure. Given the tension between the economic costs caused by market failure and costs caused by "government failure", policymakers attempting to maximise economic value are sometimes faced with a choice between two inefficient outcomes, i.e., inefficient market outcomes with or without government interventions.

Government should play an important role in banking and securities regulation, channel investment support through direct transfers to enforce contracts and property rights. The real challenge today is about finding the right balance between the market and government and to explore farmers' own institutions beyond the market and the state.

DR RAMESH CHENNAMANENI, MLA
HUMBOLDT EXPERT IN AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND COOPERATION

Collective Action and Cooperative Economics

The collective action or cooperative approach demonstrated by Elinor Ostrom and others challenges the current economic orthodoxy that there are indeed alternatives to state, privatisation and markets in generating wealth and human wellbeing.

As is known, between the individual/market/government a range of voluntary, collective associations, producer organisations, cooperatives, and producer companies can evolve efficient and equitable rules to get the most out of common resources. We know that today there is an alternative secure, stable and sustainable model of business owned and controlled by 800 million people worldwide. Cooperatives with over 400-million-member farmers are responsible for over 50% of agricultural production and marketing in the world. It is no coincidence that the world's most successful and stable economies generally also happen to have the world's most co-operative economies.

Farmer collectives are therefore viewed as an important element in linking smallholders with modern markets (input and output) as they provide many benefits for this interface. Further, primary producers' organisations or collectives are being correctly argued to be the only institutions that can protect small farmers from ill-effects of globalisation or make them participate successfully in modern competitive markets. Producers' organisations not only help farmers buy or sell better due to scale benefits but also lower transaction costs for sellers and buyers, besides providing technical help in production and creating social capital.

A striking example is The Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation with 28 lakh milk producers whose Amul brand is a household name. It transfers 82% of its retail price to farmers in the supply chain. A number of equally successful cooperatives are running today in India and the need to promote them in the interest of small and marginal farmers is immense.

A unique initiative of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), which are member-based farmers' institutions with the objective of integration of smallholders into agricultural value chain, was taken by Government of India, NABARD over the last 10 years. About 5,000 FPOs were formed, of which around 3,200 are registered as Producer Companies which require not only technical handholding support but also adequate capital and infrastructure facilities including fair market linkages for sustaining their business operations. Such basic model of "beyond markets and states", is possible in communities with high levels of autonomy and internal trust when people have a reasonable expectation of influence over the things that affect their lives.

This is because unlike the market or state it is only collective action and cooperation where efficiency and equity can be combined and the profits arising out of their business are returned to those who trade with the business, thus keeping the wealth generated by local businesses in the local community for the good of the local environment and families.

Man held for cheating elderly at ATM in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A young mechanical engineering graduate who turned into a thief targeting elderly customers at ATM centres was arrested by the Nacharam police here on Wednesday. Police recovered Rs 90,000 and 11 ATM cards from him.

The arrested suspect was identified as S Shiva Kumar (25), who graduated in B Tech (Mechanical) from a reputed private engineering college in 2019, and was a resident of Devakadra in Mahabubnagar.

According to the police, Shiva Kumar targeted elderly persons with little or no knowledge of withdrawing money from ATM centres. He approached them in the guise of helping them and then collected their PIN and exchanged their debit card with a duplicate one. Once they left, he withdrew money from their accounts, police said.

He was involved in six similar cases including in Nacharam, Ghatkesar, Malkajgiri and Neredmet. He was also arrested by the Ghatkesar police. Recently, he cheated a 57-year-old employee of the Food Corporation of India and withdrew Rs 20,000 from his account at an ATM in Mallapur. Based on his complaint, a case was booked and Shiva Kumar was arrested from an ATM centre in Mallapur. He was produced before the court and remanded in judicial custody.

Shiva targeted elderly people with little or no knowledge of withdrawing money from ATM centres. He approached them in the guise of helping them and then collected their PIN and exchanged their debit card with a duplicate one

Telangana becomes second state to administer highest jabs of vax

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has become the second state in the country to administer highest number of Covid vaccines to healthcare workers.

Around 69,625 healthcare workers have been vaccinated in the state since January 16. Only Karnataka is ahead of Telangana in vaccinating 80,686 healthcare workers. The Central government has praised Telangana Medical Health Department for effectively managing the vaccination programme.

On January 19, around 894 sessions were conducted in the state in which 51,997 people were vaccinated. Around 71 per cent of the beneficiaries have been vaccinated in the state in the first four days.

Telangana reported 51 cases of adverse effects following immunization (AEFI) on January 19. Of whom three required hospitalisation and are stable. On the first day, 3962 (92%) people were vaccinated in 140 centers and 11 were found with AEFI. On January 18, 13665 (80%) people were vaccinated in 335 centers and 15 people were developed AEFI symptoms.

To start with, only 30 beneficiaries were given the vaccine per session. It was increased to 100 beneficiaries per session on January 19.The state has also announced that on January 20, no Covid vaccination will be conducted in the state. It will resume on Thursday. Around 1,77,368 beneficiaries were vaccinated till January 19.

The cumulative number of healthcare workers vaccinated against Covid has touched 6,31,417 on Tuesday night through 11,660 sessions, as per the provisional report.

Around 3,800 sessions were held since the start of Covid vaccination drive in the country on January 16. A total of nine beneficiaries, who developed AEFI, required hospitalisation. In Andhra Pradesh, a total of 58,495 healthcare workers have been vaccinated till January 19.

IPS CADRE ALLOTMENT

TS gets four officers, AP three

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Government has issued orders allotting state cadres to candidates who got into the Indian Police Service (IPS). According to these orders, Telangana was allotted four new IPS officers, while Andhra Pradesh was given three officers. The cadre allotment order was issued on Tuesday evening.

Following are the officers who are allotted to Telangana cadre: Paritosh Pankaj (hailing from Bihar and with rank 142), Sirisetti Sankeerth (Telangana, 330), Patil Kantilal Subash (Maharashtra, 418) and Ankith Kumar Sankhwar (Uttar Pradesh, 563).

Three others hailing from Telangana who got into IPS were given other State cadres. MV Satyasai Karthik (rank 103) got allotted to Maharashtra, while Renkntla Sheetal Kumar (417) was allotted to Assam Meghalaya and Rajanala Smruthik (466) to Chhattisgarh.

The other Telugu State - Andhra Pradesh was allotted three IPS officers Viz,: Jagadish Adahalli (Karnataka, 440), Pankaj Kumar Meena (Rajasthan, 666) and Dheeraj Kunubilli (Andhra Pradesh, 320).

Similarly five IPS officers hailing from Andhra Pradesh were allotted to other States. They are: Y. Megha Swaroop (rank 98) allotted to Maharashtra, Tirumalaraju SD Varma (478) to Himachal Pradesh, Neethipudi Rashmita Rao (534) to Maharashtra, Korukonda Siddharth (566) to Gujarat and Juvvanapudi Mahesh (612) to Kerala.

In all 150 IPS officers were given cadre allotments all over the country by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

HC bars coercive steps against LRS, BRS applicants

Continued from Page 1

He also urged the HC to declare the Rule number 13 of The Telangana Regularization of Unapproved and Illegal Layout Rules 2020 as "illegal, arbitrary, unconstitutional and violative of provisions of various earlier enactments of the state, besides directing the state government to regularize the plots under the Telangana Regularization of Unapproved and Illegal Layout Rules 2020 without imposing any penalties.

TS, AP top India Innovation...

Continued from Page 1

The last edition of the India Innovation Index, released in October 2019, was a first-of-its-kind metric for assessing the innovation capabilities of Indian states and Union Territories.

"Since then, India, and the world, have undergone a tectonic shift due to the Covid-19 pandemic. With the pandemic triggering an economic shutdown, the role of innovation to revitalise the economy has never been more important," the report said.

The 2020 edition builds on the previous year's methodology by introducing more metrics to provide a more holistic outlook of the Indian economy.

The framework is updated to include globally considered parameters for measuring innovation, such as the percentage of GDP spent on research and development, while keeping them specific to the Indian economy, it noted.

Nirmal health...

Continued from Page 1

The district Adverse Event Following Immunisation committee is examining the matter and will submit its report to the state AEFI committee. The state AEFI committee will in turn furnish its report to the central AEFI committee for taking a view," the statement said.

ED arrests realtor in Rs 1,030-cr...

Continued from Page 1

During preliminary investigations, it came to fore that top officials of many infrastructure companies, mostly based in Hyderabad, conspired with a few senior Government officials and IT service providers of MPSEDC to tamper with the e-tenders for illegally obtaining large value contracts.

Search operations were conducted in Hyderabad, Bhopal & Bangalore at more than 20 locations, including the residence and office premises connected with M/s Mantena Constructions, M/s Max Infra, M/s GVPR Engineers, M/s Arni Infra, M/s Osmo IT Solutions, M/s Antares etc, and a large amount of incriminating documents and digital devices were seized for examination.

"Fund trial investigation has also yielded direct unexplained financial transactions between M/s Mantena and its front entity M/s Arni Infra, with the accused directors of M/s Osmo IT Solutions who are already in the custody of EOW, "said ED.

'Make KTR CM' chorus gains stridency in TRS

Continued from Page 1

It may be recalled that Tourism Minister V Srinivas Goud too had previously stated that KTR was capable enough to lead Telangana State as CM and that he should be made the CM at the earliest.

TRS leaders and cadre expect KCR to hand over reins to KTR only in April during the plenary. This is because by that time all the elections, namely Warangal, Khammam municipal corporation polls, MLC polls for two seats and Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll would be completed and there will be no more elections left in Telangana until 2023 December Assembly bypolls. This, party circles feel, would pave the way for KCR to make KTR the Chief Minister and give him time to settle down and strengthen party and prepare it to face the Assembly polls and retain power for third time in a row.

KTR seeks Vaccine Testing and Certification Lab in Hyderabad

Continued from Page 1

Citing his earlier request, the Minister said vaccines manufactured in Hyderabad were presently being sent to the Central Drug Laboratory in Kasauli for testing and certification. He asserted that the logistics and the time involved were constraining the industry in being a more effective and competitive destination. He pointed out that the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) was establishing the country's largest National Animal Resource facility for biomedical research in the Genome Valley, for which the State Government had provided land required for the project free of cost, besides facilitating its establishment.

"I am happy to note that this facility already has a mandate of testing and certifying the drug including vaccines, medical devices and to certify them on behalf of the Union government. I would like to request that the establishment of this facility be expedited, and this institution is strengthened further to conduct testing and pre-release certification of Immuno biologicals meant for human use in India," he added.

Rama Rao also stated that establishing a Government Medical Store Depot of the Central government in Hyderabad with state-of-the-art data monitoring and tracking system, would go a long way in supporting the vaccine manufacturing efforts in the country. Currently, such facilities are only available in Karnal, Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata.

TSWHC MD, GM caught by ACB, Rs 75,000 seized

Continued from Page 1

"At around 11:30 in the morning M. Sudhakar Reddy was caught red-handed in his office chamber when he demanded and accepted an amount of Rs.75,000 from the complainant. Chemical test conducted on M. Sudhakar Reddy yielded positive results and the tainted currency was recovered from his possession," said ACB.

Further investigations revealed that M. Sudhakar Reddy was acting at the behest of V. Bhaskara Chary, MD of State Warehousing Corporation who is holding full additional charge (FAC) in the Hyderabad Agriculture Co-operative Association as the Managing Director of Telangana State Markfed.

Subsequently, the ACB arrested both the accused for performing their duty "dishonestly and improperly to obtain undue advantage".

The tainted officials were produced before the Principal Special Judge for SPE and ACB cases, Hyderabad and who sent them to judicial custody.

VISAKHAPATNAM BULLION RATES

GOLD	₹ Rs.45,700 (10 gm)
	₹ 100 ▼
SILVER	₹ Rs.71, 200(1kg)
	₹ 800 ▲

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹135
Without Skin	₹153
Broiler at Farm	₹93

EGG RATES ₹/100

VISAKHAPATNAM	430
HYDERABAD	410
VIJAYAWADA	410
RETAIL PRICE (IN VISAKHAPATNAM)	₹4.41

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
FOREST DEPARTMENT
e-procurement Tender Notification
Letter No. 2321/2020/S18 Date: 16-01-2021
Separate sealed tenders are invited from registered contractors/experienced organisations to erect a chain-link mesh fencing around Mavala reserve forest (Compt. Nos 243 & 244) in Adilabad division and district before the deadline. Particulars: Length of the area to be fenced 9.54 km. Estimated cost of the project: Rs 1,62,60,415/-
• Bid forms can be downloaded from 10.30 am on 20-01-2021 to 4 pm on 02-02-2021.
• Date of opening of technical bids: 4.30 pm on 02-02-2021
• Date of opening commercial bids: 4 pm on 04-02-2021
For further details visit www.eprocurement.gov.in or Contact Ph. No.: 7337552461.
DIPR RO No. 923-DPICL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2020-21 Sd/- District Forest Officer, Adilabad District, Adilabad

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION GHMC
EE/CIRCLE - 30, Begumpet, Sec-bad Zone
'E' procurement NIT No: 50/EE-30/SDZ/GHMC/2020-21 dt: 20-01-2021
Name of the Work: Making arrangements in the parade ground (painting to Compound wall & garden walls, tiles and railing) on the eve of Republic Day 26/01/2021 at parade ground under Begumpet Circle-30, GHMC. (Estimate Amount Rs.4.00 lakhs) Bid document download Start Date: 21/01/2021 From 12:00 PM Last Date & Time of Bid: 22/01/2021 at 12:00PM. Address of the Concerned Sri R. Shivanand, E.E, Circle-30, Sec'bad, GHMC. Cell: 9989930376. Further details can be seen at E-Procurement @ https://tender.telangana.gov.in
R.O. No.: 8854-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2020-21 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, CIRCLE-30, BEGUMPET

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
TELLAPUR, SANGAREDDY DISTRICT
MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, TELLAPUR :: SANGAREDDY DISTRICT
E-Procurement Tender Notice
Tender Notice No. MCT/E1/004/2020-21, Dt. 21-01-2021 Email: mctellapur@gmail.com
Tenders are invited on e-procurement platform for "various developmental works in Tellapur Municipality in the state of Telangana". Estimate cost Rs. 39.50.00 in lakhs. Commencement Date for Downloading Tender Document: 21/01/2021 from 10:30 AM. Last date & Time of submission of Tender: 25/01/2021 upto 10:30 AM Date & Time of Opening of Technical Bid: 25/01/2021 at 11:00 AM. Date & Time of opening Financial Bid: 25/01/2021 at 11:00 AM. Description: (1) Construction of Culvert at Komarambheem colony in Tellapur Municipality (Amount Rs.4.50 lakh) (2) Development of graveyard in Kollur in Tellapur Municipality (second call) (Amount Rs.20.00 lakh), (3) Pipe line connection bore well to sump at Velimala thanda in Tellapur Municipality (Amount Rs.5.00 lakh) (4) Pipe line connection bore well to sump at Sandugudem in Tellapur Municipality (Amount Rs.5.00 lakh), (5) Water supply Pumps sets and pumping main at ward No.12 in Tellapur Municipality (Amount Rs.5.00 lakh). Any Amendments, updates regarding this Bid Notice will be published in the e-procurement platform only.
R.O. No.: 8833-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2020-21 COMMISSIONER, TELLAPUR MUNICIPALITY.

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CITY LIGHTS

SBI, Kompally branch rolls out new facility for MSMEs

The State Bank of India (SBI) Chairman Dinesh Khara inaugurated the Retail Assets Credit Processing Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises, Kompally. During his visit to the city, Khara attended the meeting of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Urban Development (2020-21) and conducted the local board meeting at LHO Hyderabad. Khara said that bank's area of focus in CSR activities include healthcare, education, livelihood, skill development, environment protection, empowerment of women and youth. On this occasion, SBI donated tractor and medical equipments to Kalpavruksha Kamadhenu Trust and Ashray Akruti. "CSR activities in project mode are done through SBI Foundation established in 2015 with a vision of becoming a premier CSR institution in line with the bank's tradition of service beyond banking," he added. Prakash Mishra, Chief General Manager, said the bank has spent an amount of Rs 300 lakh during the current financial year till date on various CSR activities in Telangana. The bank also undertook sustainability initiative for protection of wildlife and animals by adopting tigers and providing support for the welfare and maintenance of cows, he said.

IICT, Cipla donate 3,000 face masks to Rachakonda Police

IICT Principle scientist Shailaja has donated 3,000 masks to Rachakonda Police and Sanghmitra of Rachakonda Security Council (RKSC) on Wednesday. Rachakonda CP Mahesh Bhagwat IPS, and Additionall CP Sudheer Babu received the four layered cloth face masks designed by IICT, manufactured by Khar Energy and sponsored by Cipla foundation. CP Mahesh Bhagwat said that 3,000 masks will be distributed to the Sanghmitra volunteers of RKSC and another 10,000 on receiving will be distributed to Rachakonda police personal. The CP appreciated and thanked the gesture of IICT represented by Shailaja, Principal scientist Dr Nivedita Salu, senior scientist S Chandrashekhar, Research scholar Vani, Cipla foundation and Khar energy represented by CEO KLN Raju and AS Vani who were also present on the occasion.

CS Somesh Kumar, DGP inspect arrangements for Republic Day

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar along with DGP Mahender Reddy visited Public Gardens on Wednesday and inspected the arrangements being made for Republic Day. The Chief Secretary instructed the officials to make arrangements including security, traffic management, barricading and others in a coordinated way duly taking preventing measures as per Covid protocol. Vikas Raj, Principal Secretary, GAD, Sunil Sharma, Principal Secretary, TR&B, SAM Rizvi, Secretary, HM & FW, Lokesh Kumar, Commissioner, GHMC, Jitender, Additional DG (L&O), Anjani Kumar, Commissioner of Police, Swetha Mohanty, Collector, Hyderabad and other officials were present.

CIE at IIITH announces start of next cohort of Deep Tech

CIE at IIIT Hyderabad announced the onboarding of two startups Machstatz and eSkindoctor under Avishkar DeepTech accelerator cohort No. 11 & OJAS MedTech Accelerator cohort No. 5. Avishkar deeptech is a 6-month cohort-based accelerator for emerging tech startups and OJAS MedTech is an accelerator for startups in life sciences, biotechnology, diagnostics, point of care devices for healthcare along with cutting edge emerging technologies facilitated by CIE at IIITH. The accelerator brings together the deeptech expertise of IIITH's research labs and technology mentoring opportunities that help startups build quality product/features within shorter timelines. The startups also go through a structured strategic business mentoring from Co-Creation Consulting, customer introductions and investor connect for follow-on round of investments. Medtech startups also get access to medtech consortium which includes clinicians, hospitals, pharma, biotech & manufacturing companies.

GHMC, Cyberabad cops hold meet on traffic management

To discuss various road safety and traffic management issues in the Serilingampalli zone, officials of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Serilingampalli, Cyberabad Traffic Police and other related agencies held a zonal level convergence meeting at Cyberabad Police Commissionerate here on Wednesday. During the meeting, issues of illumination, road markings, junction developments, footpath, foot overbridges, waterlogging, drainage, water leakage issues and others were discussed in detail and specific decisions were taken to address them in a time-bound manner. GHMC Serilingampalli zonal commissioner, Ravi Kiran, DCP Traffic Cyberabad, SM Vijay Kumar, Madhapur Traffic ACP, Chandrashekar, and others participated in the convergence meeting.

Active corona cases drop below 4K in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana reported 267 new Covid cases on Tuesday taking the overall tally to 2,92,395 in the state. Two new deaths are reported on January 19, taking the total tally to 1,583. The fatality rate is 0.54 per cent which is less than the national average of 1.4 per cent.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area reported 55 new cases while Rangareddy reported 16 new cases. Districts of Telangana is seeing the increase in cases. Medchal Malkajgiri reported 18 new cases while Karimnagar reported 20 new cases.

Around 351 citizens recovered from the infection on Tuesday taking the tally of total recoveries to 2,86,893. The recovery rate, as per the government now stands at 98.11 per cent, which approximately one per cent higher than the national average of 96.7 per cent. The government tested 27,471 citizens for the virus on Tuesday.

So far 75,42,537 samples have been tested in the state. Samples tested per million population stand at 2,02,647. Still, 1006 reports are awaited.

The state currently has 3,919 active cases. Of the total active cases, 2,270 are under home isolation. Of total positive cases, 70 per cent are asymptomatic with no severe signs of distress while 30 per cent are symptomatic.

According to the state bulletin, men aged between 31 and 40 years contribute to 14.72 per cent of the total cases. Women aged between 21 and 30 years contribute to 9.02 per cent of the total cases. The deaths due to comorbidities have risen to 55.04 per cent. 44.96 per cent of victims had no comorbidities.

Some schools don't give a damn for parents' consent

ANUSHA PUPPALA
■ HYDERABAD

While the Education Department of Telangana mandates that students of Class IX and above, who wish to attend the classes physically must bring in the consent letter duly signed by their parents, some schools in Hyderabad are making parents' consent form with no option of unwillingness to send the child to the school.

According to the parents only 'agree' or 'willing' option is mentioned in the consent form. Reportedly, parents are being forced to sign even if they are not willing to send their child to the schools, once the school re-opens in Telangana.

Schools have also asked parents to not send their kids to school if the student has cold and cough. Surprisingly, this has happened a day after Telangana Education Minister Sabitha Indira Reddy assured Hyderabad School Parents Association (HSPA) members that physical classes will not be mandatory after reopening of educational institutions.

The Minister also assured the parents that they can send their children to schools only if they are willing to send them, otherwise they can attend online classes.

A consent form by St Gorge's Grammer School in Abids, Hyderabad reads, "Willing/Agreeing to send my son to attend offline classes at school. Mr/Mrs ___ hereby agree to send my son of Class & Sec ___ to attend classes at school for exams, tests, project work, and clearing of doubts. I agree to abide by all the regulations prescribed by the school. I will make the necessary arrangements for my son's pic up and drop from school. I will see that he will follow the safety measures for Covid like wearing masks, personal sanitizer and water bottles etc. If at all my son gets cold, cough or I will not send him to school."

One of the parent on condition of anonymity said, "As said by the government, it's the choice of parents but schools are making it compulsory, while GO 46 is grossly violated yet no action taken by the government, the schools reopening shall be violated by private schools and the government shall be silent. As the government and educational officials see education as holy cow."

Another parent said, "It's surprising that the parents are made to sign these consent forms despite it was made clear by the state government that parents will not be forced to send their kids to schools. How can schools force parents to sign such forms despite their unwillingness to send their wards to school. State government should make sure that these schools don't force parents to send their kids to schools."

A parent said, "Some schools have started doing this not all in written word of mouth in parents and teachers meeting. They are keeping it such phrased way that they are not forcing but like what would you say. This is a forcible declaration or self suicide note for parents I would say as schools want to throw responsibility on parents but they want entire fee with no restriction."

"The school in which my ward is studying asked if we are ready to take risk and make a commitment. My answer always is how much risk can the school take and assure parents. I am not ready to risk a life for a year of studies," the parent added.

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao on January 11 announced to reopen high schools and colleges from February 1, 2020. The Chief Minister instructed all the concerned officials to make necessary arrangements for the re-opening of both government and private schools for students of Class IX, X and Intermediate.

Jilted lover gets life for killing a 17-year-old girl

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A jilted lover who killed a 17-year old teenager near Osmania University in 2018 has been sentenced to life imprisonment on Wednesday.

The accused A Venkat, 25, befriended the victim Anusha, 17, when they both attended same tution. Due to some misunderstanding the victim started avoiding Venkat.

Aggrieved Venkat under the pretext of sorting out the issue called her to a secluded spot near the OU staff quarters and slit her throat. Due to which she died on the spot. The accused was nabbed by the Osmania University police and further filed a charge-sheet.

During the trail on Wednesday, local court in Nampally pronounced him as guilty and awarded him life imprisonment and fined him Rs 1,000.

WALK UNDER FLYOVER NOW!

The green space under the one-km flyover, inaugurated in April, connecting the JNTU and Malaysian Township, has become a soothing sight for the city. The Kukatpally zonal officials of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation have transformed the space under the bridge into a beautiful park. The first-of-its-kind park under the flyover with walking tracks was inaugurated under the JNTU flyover on Wednesday.

Imposters held in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The father-son duo, who were moving around in a car that had stickers declaring them as the Intelligence Bureau (IB), was caught by the Nallakunta Traffic Police during a regular check.

The car also had an emblem that resembled that of a government department stuck on it. Apart from this, there was a very high frequency wireless set akin to those used by the patrol vehicles that was placed inside the car so that those outside would think that they were from the police or security force.

The police arrested the duo, Murali Chand, 66, and his son Durga Bhavan Sundar, both residents of Bagh Amberpet. Enquiries revealed that that they had the 'Intelligence Investigation Bureau' as an organisation in 2018. Posing as special investigation officials, they roamed in the modified car with stickers, police said. There was no confirmation yet on whether they cheated anyone.

AHTU rescues 26 child labourers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As part of operation smile, the Rachakonda anti-human trafficking unit (AHTU), conducted raids and rescued 26 minor children, in four separate cases, who were employed for work against the labour laws in liquor bottle cleaning companies, furniture manufacturing workshops and samosa-making firms in Yadadri Bhongir district on Wednesday.

The police have also arrested four persons for exploiting the children for labour.

The accused persons were identified as Challa Bapu Reddy, Beeram Venkat Reddy, Panjala Veeranna Goud and Vikas Kumar. Manhunt is launched to nab the other accused involved in the case.

Out of total rescued children, 18 are boys and eight are girls between the age group of 15 and 17. These children belong to states of Jharkhand (9), Chattisgarh (7), Bihar (3) Madhya Pradesh (3), Telangana (3) and West Bengal (1). These minors are counseled and handed over to their parents.

The accused used to pay 25 paisa for washing one empty liquor bottle and Rs 300 for a day to each child working in furniture and cooler manufacturing firm. The accused used to pay an amount of Rs 50 for making 100 samosas.

"All the children were trafficked by the owners of the two companies, detained in sheds located within the premises of the companies and exploiting them for labour work inhumanly in contravention to the labour laws," said police.

The team of AHTU, Bhongir Division police team along with the members of District Child Probation Unit, Bhongir District and Labour Department Bhongir District members conducted the raids and rescued the children.

Technical snag disrupts Metro train services

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Metro rail services in the city have once again come to a standstill on Wednesday due to glitch. On the way from Ameerpet to Jubilee Hills bus station, the metro rail stopped for 15 minutes en route.

The alert crew immediately unloaded passengers on the train from Hi-Tec City to Jubilee Hills. The authorities had sent another train to pick up the stranded passengers. However, in the past, there have been several technical problems with metro trains.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

COLLECTOR OFFICE :: WANAPARTHY

FORM-VI

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

Under the Right Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation And Resettlement Act (Telangana Amendment), 2016 (Act 21 of 2017) amended from the Fair Compensation and transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 and Following an exemption as per the Section - II (1) and 10 (A), See Rule 6/12)

Lr. No. G/196/2019

Where it appears to the Telangana Government / District Govardhanagiri Village of Weepanagandla Mandal in Wanaparthy District for public purpose, namely for Formation of Kollapur - Yaparla and Pebbair - Yaparla B.T. Road.

Therefore, it is notified that for the above said project in Kollapur - Yaparla and Pebbair - Yaparla B.T. Road Goverdhanagiri Village of Weepanagandla Mandal in Wanaparthy District measuring Ac. 1.29 gts of land, whose detailed description is following is under acquisition.

SCHEDULE

Sl. No.	Survey No.	Classification of this	Classification of Land	Area under acquisition	Name of the Pattadar	Name of the Enjoyer	Boundaries				Trees type/ Structure type
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	196	Pattis	Dry	0.10	Thanda Vijay Mohan Rao	Thanda Vijay Mohan Rao	House	House	Road	Road	
2	197	Pattis	Dry	0.34	Thanda Vijay Mohan Rao	Thanda Vijay Mohan Rao	House	House	Road	Road	
3	200	Pattis	Dry	0.25	Thanda Vijay Mohan Rao	Thanda Vijay Mohan Rao	House	House	Road	Road	
Total Extent:-				1.29							

This notification is made, to inform all whom it may concern, under the provisions of Section-11(1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 (Central Act No. 30/2013) amended by Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Telangana Amendment) Act, 2016 (Act 21/2017)

A plan of the land may be inspected, by all the concerned, in the office of the District Collector, Wanaparthy and in the office of the Revenue Divisional Officer, L.A. Wanaparthy on any working day during the office hours. The Government of Telangana / Collector - Appropriate Government is pleased to Revenue Divisional Officer and his staff to enter upon and survey land, take levels of any land, dig or bore into the sub-soil, do all other acts required for the proper execution of their work as provided and specified in Section -12 of the said Act.

Under Section 11(4) of the Act, no person shall make any transaction or cause any transaction of land i.e., sale/purchase etc., or create any encumbrances on such land from the date of publication of such notification without prior approval of the Collector. Claims / objections to the acquisition, if any, may be filed by the person interested/affected within (60) (Sixty Days) from the date of publication of this notification as provided under section 15 of the Act before District Collector / Authorized Officers.

Sd/- Land Acquisition Officer/ Revenue Divisional Officer, Wanaparthy.

Sd/- Additional Wanaparthy.

Sd/- District Collector, Wanaparthy.

DIPR R.O. No: 1144/LA-PM/Advt/Pub/2020-21

MMTS phase-II holds key to provide cheap transport to airport

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Taking a cue from Bangaluru, operating an Multi-Modal Transport System (MMTS) from railway station in the city to Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) at Shamshabad appears to a feasible solution as the L and T building a Metro rail corridor from Rayadurgam to the airport spending Rs 9,000 crore in the present situation was ruled out.

Since the Metro Rail has been running under the losses, development of the 32-km-long Metro Rail corridor to the airport is unlikely.

Completion of the MMTS project with just Rs 250 crore would provide the vital rail link to the airport from the city.

In fact, the residents of Garden City in Bengaluru have been commuting to the airport in local train, which is just 2 km away from the Kempegowda railway station.

The Kempegowda railway station in Bengaluru is abuzz with airport-bound passengers. Moreover, the flight schedules are being advertised in the railway station. There are many shuttle services running to the airport terminal.

The South Central Railway in the past expressed its willingness to run MMTS to the airport directly provided it gets permission to build a railway station in the premises of the airport. Earlier, the SCR decided to run airport services at a lowest fare of

Rs 25. The proposal has been shelved as the GMR did not give it permission. The GMR refused to give site for building railway station. If the Rayadurgam-airport corridor is to be executed, the GMR offered to give site for building underground railway station.

The Metro Rail which sustains Rs 1 crore loss per day is not able to execute the Rayadurgam-airport corridor.

In Bangaluru, the commuters pay just Rs 20 to reach airport. An SCR official, who wished to remain anonymous, said that the same can be done here to provide MMTS is allowed to run up to airport.

In the second phase of the MMTS project, there was a proposal to double the track from Falaknuma to Unda Nagar. New railway track should be laid up to the airport from there, which is just six km away.

In 2013, the project cost was estimated to be Rs 250 crore. The project was proposed to be executed in the MMTS phase-II, but the GMR refused to give land. The MMTS phase-II conceived at a cost of Rs 550 crore to provide transportation service to city outskirts remained non-starter as the state government did not release funds.

In case the second phase is through, MMTS trains will run between Secunderabad-Ghatkesar, Secunderabad-Bollarum, Moulali-Sanat Nagar, Tellapur-BHEL, Falaknuma-Un-da Nagar, Airport-Unda Nagar.

The Rs 330-crore Yadadri MMTS project also did not take off due to the shortage of funds.

BJP plans 90 'shakti kendras' in Sagar to continue winning streak

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
HYDERABAD

To continue the winning streak in Nagarjuna Sagar by-poll too, the BJP has drawn strategy.

As part of the strategy, the party is planning to set up its own survey wing and establish 90 shakti kendras, one for every three polling booths, in the constituency.

To campaign for the party, the BJP will draw party workers from seven mandals and two municipalities.

The survey wing will assess strengths and weaknesses of the candidates of the rival parties. For every 70 voters, a panna pramukh will be appointed, besides a 25-member booth committee.

The party's vigilante teams will estimate the impact of various castes in voting and report back to the party. The report deals impact of castes in wards and identifies the most influential person in the wards?

They also study local factors, including caste, and submit a report to the party to enable it to formulate poll strategies.

State unit vice-president and former MLA Sankineni Venkateswara Rao, who has been appointed in-charge for the by-poll, started holding consultations with party workers. According to party sources, Lambadas have a strong presence in the constituency with a population of 39,000 followed by Yadavs, 32,000. The Reddy population is put at 26,000.

Out of the 22,000 SCs, 13,000 belong to the Mala community. The Mudiraj community population is put at 8,500. The strength of fisherman population, Munnuru Kapus and the Gowdas is put at 5,000 each.

Kammas figured at the bottom of the spectrum with a population of over 3,000.

Leaders of these communities will be deployed to woo voters depending on the caste equation.

The constituency in-charge said that the BJP would fire on all cylinders to snatch a victory deploying Union ministers and state leaders for the campaign.

"Nagarjunasagar by-poll will set the agenda for the fall of TRS government. We will work from the grassroots level to prove the BJP's critics's predictions about the saffron party wrong," he said.

The BJP has not been yet finalised the candidate, but aspirants Anjaiah Yadav and Sridhar Reddy are in the race for party ticket. However, party activists recommend party ticket to the latter.

The party activists incline towards Sridhar Reddy's candidature as they feel that he would be able to match Congress strongman Jana Reddy in all respects.

New entrant to politics Indrasena Reddy is also aspiring for the ticket.

In fact, it is not a cakewalk for the BJP to defeat the Congress veteran Jana Reddy in the absence of a strong BJP leader in the constituency.

The BJP is optimistic that a repeat of Dubbak by-poll would take place in Nagarjunasagar too. The BJP does not rule out giving ticket to Anjaiah Yadav in the event of the TRS fielding a family member of the deceased MLA Nomula Narsimhaiah.

Congress nominee Jana Reddy has already transformed into poll mode and has begun meeting leaders of various caste groups and has been holding meetings with local leaders.

Doctor signs attendance register in advance, abstains from duties

PNS ■ MULUG

In a bizarre incident, a doctor and health assistant working here at Ranigudem primary health centre abstained from duties after having signed the attendance register for a month in advance thinking that it would save him.

The incident came to light when Zilla Parishad Chairman Kusuma Jagadeeshwar made a surprise visit to PHC on Wednesday. He visited the Agency area to inaugurate a few developmental works at Panchothkulapally, Kothuru, and Rainigudem villages.

Jagadeeshwer visited the PHC centre and verified the attendance register. He found that the doctor concerned had signed the attendance register in advance for a month, but was absent.

Jagadeeshwar rang up the DM& HO Dr Allem Appaiah immediately and inquired about the laxity of the officials.

The DM&HO apprised the ZP chairman that action would be initiated against the erring officials. Jagadeeshawar warned that he would take the issue to the notice of higher officials. He also warned the official of dire consequences if such incidents repeat in future.

Eatala takes part in MPP meeting

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Minister for Health Eatala Rajender highlighted the role of leaders of local bodies working with dedication to fulfil Mahatma Gandhi's dream of Gram Swaraj.

Addressing the MPP general body meeting held at Illanthakunta on Wednesday, he linked the development of the villages in leaps and bounds to having great leaders running the village local bodies.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
Revenue (LA) Department
FORM-VII
(See Sub-rule (1) of rule-25 and section -19(1) of the Act., 30/2013)

File No.G1/1560/2019 Dated: 5-01-2021
Gazette RR. No.2 Dated: 8-01-2021
No. D/3157/2019 Dated: 17-12-2020

Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana/Collector that a total of **Ac.70.03 Gts** land is required in the Meerkhanpet Villages in Kandukur Mandal, Ranga Reddy District for establishment of Hyderabad Green Pharma City.

Therefore declaraion is made that a piece of land measuring, more or less **Ac. 70.03 gts** acres viz., **28.34** hectare of standard measurement under acquisition for the above said project in Meerkhanpet Village of Kandukur Mandal, Ranga Reddy District whose detail description is as following.

SCHEDULE

Dist: Ranga Reddy Mandal: Kandukur Village:Meerkhanpet

Sl.No.	Sy.No.	Type of title	Type of Land	Area under acquisition in acres	Name and Address of the person interested	Boundaries N	S	E	W	Trees Variety	No.	Structures Type	Plinth Area
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				8	9	10	11
1	112/1, 112/1/13/4, 112/1/13/3, 112/1/13/1, 112/1/13/2	Pattadar	Dry	70.03	Buchireddy Challamma w/o Bhoopal Reddy, Pattedar as per Revenue Records (Ac.5.00 gts) Buchireddy Jageeevan Reddy s/o Raghupathi Reddy Pattedar as per Revenue Records (Ac.15.20 gts) Buchireddy Narayan Reddy s/o Raghupathi Reddy Pattedar as per Revenue Records (Ac.15.20 gts) Buchireddy Jagan Mohan Reddy s/o Raghupathi Reddy Pattedar as per Revenue Records (Ac.15.20 gts) Gundlapally Bharathamma w/o Yadagiri Reddy Pattedar as per Revenue Records(Ac.15.20 gts) Balkani Lingaiaiah s/o Jangaiah (Occupant)-(0.04) Dubbaki Pochamma w/o Late Jangaiah (Occupant)-(2.20) Dubbaki Maisaiah s/o Narsaiah (Occupant)-(1.21) Chima Narsimha s/o Late Laxmaiah (Occupant)-(2.14) Banda Balamma w/o Late Banda Ramulu(Occupant)-(2.08) Banda Sathaiah s/o Chandraiah (Occupant)-(0.04) Korni @ Byagari Anjamma w/o Sathaiah (Occupant)-(0.20) Korni @ Byagari Sathamma w/o Jangaiah (Occupant)-(0.20) Korni @ Byagari Laxmamma w/o Late Ramachandri (Occupant)-(0.20) Korni @ Byagari Narsimha s/o Ramaiah (Occupant)-(0.19) Baindla @ Nandigama Vidyamma w/o Late Kistaiah (Occupant)-(0.07) Baindla @ Nandigama Jangamma w/o Late Narsimha (Occupant)-(1.05) Dubaki Mysaiah s/o Ramaiah (Occupant)-(0.36) Nandigama @ Baindla Pochaiah s/o Tirupathaiah (Occupant)-(0.15) Nandigama @ Baindla Lingamma w/o Jangaiah (Occupant) -(0.14) Nandigama @ Baindla Kistaiah s/o Tirupathaiah (Occupant) -(0.14) Nandigama @ Baindla Yadaiah s/o Tirupathaiah (Occupant) -(0.14) Maddi Chinnaiah s/o Narsaiah (Occupant) -(1.06) Pandi Suvarna w/o Ramulu (Occupant) -(1.06) Korra @ Macherla Kotamma w/o Hanya (Occupant) -(1.00) Abdul Rasheed s/o Razak Ali (Occupant) -(0.37) Kommagoni Sathaiah s/o Shankaraiah (Occupant) -(1.10) Banda Balamma w/o Late Banda Ramulu (Occupant)-(1.20) Kommagoni Muthyalu @ Muthamma w/o Ramchandri (Occupant) -(1.06) Jakkula Narsamma w/o Late Balaiah -(1.21) Jakkula Yadaiah s/o Jangaiah (Occupant)-(0.09) Pantham Sathaiah s/o Chennaiah (Occupant)-(0.12) Pantham Mallesh s/o Chennaiah (Occupant)-(0.12) Derangula Vishnu s/o Ramchandri (Occupant)-(1.02) Boda Balraj s/o Late Rajaiah (Occupant)-(4.05) Derangula Bharathamma w/o Anjaiah (Occupant)-(0.08) Nomula Jangaiah s/o Chinnaiah (Occupant)-(1.27) Peddamoni Shankaraiah s/o Yellaiah (Occupant)-(1.23) Palsa Yadaiah s/o Late Kistaiah (Occupant)-(0.05) Palsa Rajaiah s/o Late Kistaiah (Occupant)-(0.05) Satu Chinna Anjaiah s/o Mallaiah (Occupant)-(0.20) Pantham Ramma w/o Mallaiah (Occupant)-(0.20) Maramoni Pullaiah s/o Pochaiah (Occupant)-(0.20) Maramoni Jangaiah s/o Jangaiah (Occupant)-(0.20) Arla Anitha w/o Kishnaiah s/o (Occupant)-(0.20) Vadlakonda Yellaiah s/o Narsimha (Occupant)-(0.20) Vadlakonda Mallaiah s/o Narsimha (Occupant)-(0.19) Md. Laal Mohammed s/o Galeb Sab (Occupant)-(0.01) Khaja Bani w/o Late Jahangeer Sab (Occupant)-(0.01) Sukra Begum w/o Late Yousuf Sab (Occupant)-(0.01) Md.Begum w/o Late Babu John (Occupant)-(0.01) Pantham Sathaiah s/o Chennaiah (Occupant)-(1.06) Pantham Mallesh s/o Chennaiah (Occupant)-(1.06) Derangula Balakistamma w/o Niranjan (Occupant)-(3.10) Vankuppala Shankaraiah s/o Venkataiah (Occupant)-(1.06) Vankuppala Yadaiah s/o Venkataiah (Occupant)-(1.06) Vankuppala Jangaiah s/o Venkataiah (Occupant)-(1.07) Vankuppala Anjaiah s/o Ramulu (Occupant)-(1.15) Vankuppala Shankaraiah s/o Papaiah (Occupant)-(0.23) Derangula Anthamma w/o Late Anjaiah (Occupant)-(2.27) Vanguri Laxmamma w/o Sathaiah (Occupant)-(0.10) Derangula Edaiah s/o Chinnaiah (Occupant)-(2.32) Derangula Niranjan s/o Edaiah (Occupant)-(2.32) Derangula Eshwaraiah s/o Edaiah (Occupant)-(2.33) Derangula Sathyam s/o Anjaiah (Occupant)-(0.33) Derangula Sathyam s/o Anjaiah (Occupant)-(0.33) Vanguri Kalamma w/o Swamy (Occupant)-(0.17) Vanguri Swamulu s/o Ramaiah (Occupant)-(0.18) Vanguri Rajaiah s/o Late Jangaiah (Occupant)-(1.30) Vanguri Rajaiah s/o Late Jangaiah (Occupant)-(1.37) Vankuppala Laxmaiah s/o Buchaiah (Occupant)-(2.00) Andekar Gangamma w/o Ramchander (Occupant)-(1.20) Andekar Jagadish s/o Narsimha (Occupant)-(1.20)	112	112	112	112	-	-	-	-
Total	70.03												

This declaration is made after hearing of objections of persons interested and due enquiry as provided U/s 15 of the Act No.30/2013. The number of families likely to be resettled due to Land Acquisition under Sec 16(1) of the Act, due to Land Acquisition is Nil.

A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the Land Aquisition Officer on any working day.

Sd/- Tahsildar Kandukur Mandal | Sd/- Land Acquisition Officer & Revenue Divisional Officer, Kandukur Division | Sd/- Addl. Collector Rangareddy District | Sd/- District Collector Rangareddy District

DIPR Ro.No.1138/LA-PP/Agency/2020-21

'Mission Bhagiratha' is reason for joining TRS, says Errabelli

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Rural Water and Sanitation Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao went candid on Wednesday, admitting that it was Mission Bhagiratha, the flagship programme of the TRS government that attracted him to the ruling party.

"Though I was heading the opposition party then, I decided not to criticise Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao after seeing how efficiently Mission Bhagiratha was being implemented in the State. I then decided to resign from the TDP and join TRS," the Minister said, addressing a State level meeting on Mission Bhagiratha implementation at Komatibanda near Gajwel in the district.

Pointing out that the water grid programme was first implemented in Siddipet by Chandrashekhar Rao, he said the TRS, after coming to power, subsequently replicated it across the State. He thanked the engineering staff who worked relentlessly for the successful completion of Mission Bhagiratha.

"During my political career spanning four decades, I have seen people toiling hard to fetch a pot of drinking water from far away places," he said.

Though successive governments in erstwhile Andhra Pradesh had spent lot of money on drinking water supply, they could not resolve the problem permanently, he said, adding that people used to drill borewells spending thousands to meet drinking water needs. "And now, the Chief Minister has implemented a project that ensures supply of filtered surface water to each and every household in the State at their doorstep," Dayakar Rao said.

Thanking those who played a role in successful completion of the works, the Minister called upon them to continue the work with the same commitment since new houses are being built everyday across the State.

Secretary to Chief Minister Smitha Sabharwal said the Union government has certified that the Telangana government had completed Mission Bhagiratha since they were successfully supplying drinking water to 56 lakh households.

"We achieved this feat within a short time because every engineering official from Engineer-in-Chief to Assistant Engineer worked with commitment," she said. Engineer-in-Chief Krupakar Reddy, CEs, SEs, EEs, DEs and AEs from all the districts have attended the meeting.

BJP has sights set on Mulug

SAMPATH SUNKARI
MULUG

The unprecedented victory of BJP in Dubbak bypoll and GHMC elections has certainly boosted the morale of party leaders and cadre in the entire state.

Cashing in on the opportunity provided by the recent victories, BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Garikapati Mohan Rao, is taking all measures to strengthen the party in the Mulug district.

Ever since, Mohan Rao took over as the party incharge of the Mulug district, he is actively participating in the party activities.

He has organised a couple of meetings at NSR Hotel and party training session at Jangalapally in the district in December last year. He has also constituted booth-level and district-level committees.

Mohan Rao, on Monday, successfully organised meeting with over 2,000 cadres which is said to have created tremors among TRS and Congress party circles in the segment.

It may be recalled that Garikapati Mohan Rao worked as publicity in-charge for former TDP chief and former Chief Minister of the united Andhra Pradesh Chandrababu Naidu when he organised Bus Yatra during 2014 General Elections.

Subsequently, Mohan Rao joined the BJP in 2019 and grabbed the attention of party national leaders.

Mohan Rao has been associated with Mulug constituency since 1978. He worked as a pulp contractor in BILT Kamalapur unit and was later elected from the segment. He was a trusted lieutenant of former minister Chandulal and played a crucial role in the victory of MLA Seethakka from Mulug in 2009 polls.

Going by the political developments in the segment, Mulug is likely to witness a triangular fight in the next assembly elections in 2023.

Speculation is rife that dissident leaders and cadres of TRS and Congress party are likely to join BJP. Moreover, philanthropic activities of Mohan Rao may gain give an added advantage to the saffron party in the days to come. Even, people from Kamma community may also come into BJP fold as he belongs to Kamma community. Dissidence in Congress and TRS

It is learnt that there is dissidence in brewing within the Congress against Mulug MLA Seethakka alias Dhanasari Anasuya. The followers of two time MLA Podem Veeraiah of Mulug was denied

In 2018 Assembly elections, the Congress denied ticket to two-time MLA Podem Veeraiah from Mulug and was shifted to Bhadrachalam. When Veeraiah was shifted Bhadrachalam, his followers shifted loyalties to Seethakka. However, she is reportedly ignoring the followers of Veeraiah.

DCC President Nallella Kumaraswamy is allegedly playing a key role is keeping aside the followers of Veeraiah. In TRS party too, followers of former minister Chandulal are distancing themselves from him ever since he lost seat in 2018 to Seethakka.

Several MPPs and ZPTCs of TRS party are said to be unhappy over the step-motherly treatment of Mulug party in-charge Kusuma Jagadeeshwar. As Mulug seat is reserved for STs, segment in-charge is being given to ZP Chairman about which aspirants from Tribal community is in pathetic. Row over AMC chairman post Govind Naik who took VRS from government service and joined TRS in 2001 is being ignored by the party high command. During 2018 Assembly polls he was denied MLA ticket and was promised a nominated post.

Special camp to solve Aadhaar-related problems

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRICILLA

Collector Krishna Bhaskar on Wednesday advised the people to make best use of the camp being organised to solve problems related to Aadhaar details.

"We are organising a special camp to solve Aadhaar related problems which could not be solve locally for the convenience of the people of the district," the collector said.

The Collector, along with UIDAI Additional Director General Satyanarayana, lighted the lamp and inaugurated the camp at Sinare Art Gallery in Siricilla. Krishna Bhaskar said that the people of the district need not go to Hyderabad for getting their Aadhaar issues solved. The camp would be held for two days, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, UIDAI Additional Director General Satyanarayana said that people from different districts come to Hyderabad Regional Office to get their Aadhaar problems solved.

Grant timely permits for new units, Collector tells officials

District Collector Krishna Bhaskar on Wednesday directed the authorities concerned to grant timely permits to those who have applied for setting up of new industries in the district. The Collector presided over a meeting of the District Industries Promotion Committee held at his camp office and discussed with the committee members on the issue of granting permits to industries. Speaking on the occasion, Krishna Bhaskar said that timely permission should be granted for new rice mills, stone crushers, welding shops, cement bricks, etc. to be set up in the district. Also, Rs 148.50 lakh has been sanctioned to 57 SC / ST candidates who have purchased vehicles through the industrial subsidy scheme, the district collector said.

TSPSC to hold departmental test from January 27

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Public Service Commission will conduct Departmental Tests, November- 2020 session, from January 27 to February 3. The tests which are OMR based will held in the offline mode in nine district headquarters of the State including Hyderabad clubbed with Ranga Reddy and HMDA limits.

Candidates who applied for the examinations can download their hall ticket from the Commission's website www.tspsc.gov.in from 5 pm on January 21, the TSPSC said in a press release on Wednesday.

Hall tickets should be preserved carefully for future needs as duplicate hall tickets will not be issued under any circumstances, it said. In case of any difficulty in downloading the hall tickets, the candidates can contact help-desk contact number 040-22445566, it added.

'Isolation rooms, PPE kits mandatory in all schools'

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

Medchal-Malkajgiri District Collector Swetha Mohanty on Wednesday said that necessary arrangements should be made in government and private schools across district in the wake of the state government's decision to start classes for students of Classes IX and X from February 1.

Addressing a review meeting at her office, the Collector directed the officials to ensure that only 20 students attend the classes in a classroom and only one student must be allowed to sit on each bench. Medical and hygiene teams must be set up on the premises of each school, she said.

She advised the officials to set up two isolation rooms in every school and two Personal protective equipment (PPE) kits should be made available. Every student should necessarily take permission from their parents to attend the classes, she added.

District Education Officer, officials of all the Welfare Departments andothers attended the meeting.

Collector clears 100 pending mutations

District collector Swetha Mohanty cleared 100 pending mutations on Dharani portal till Wednesday. A review meeting was held with Tahsildars on Dharani portal at Collectorate.

She asked the officials to complete the pending mutations immediately so that the applicants could receive a copy of the documentation, land order copy and e-pass book within the stipulated time.

She explained that the registrations of agricultural lands made by the farmers in Dharani were hundred per cent cleared and that no applications were pending. The Collector also directed the authorities to complete the registrations and mutations from time to time immediately.

Another 15 mw Singareni solar power synchronised with Transco

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Another 15 megawatts from Singareni Solar Power plant has been synchronised with Transco at Ramagundam-3 area power plant on Wednesday to fulfill 30 per cent power needs of Ramagundam region.

Out of the 50 megawatts, Singareni solar power plant at Ramagundam-3 area, another 15 megawatts solar division was synchronised with TS Transco on Wednesday and with this, a total of 30 megawatts solar power has synchronised with Transco, Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) Chairman and Managing Director N. Sridhar said in a release here.

Earlier, 15 megawatts was synchronised with the grid.

With this out of the 129 megawatts capacity in the first phase 85 megawatts Singareni solar power has been synchronised with Transco and the balance 20 megawatts division will be synchronised by the end of next month, he said.

He congratulated the officials concerned and staff on the synchronisation of 15 megawatts solar power. 300 megawatts Singareni solar power to be ready by December this year, however in the first phase of the setting up of solar power plants throughout Singareni area is almost completed. 30 megawatts from Manuguru, 30 megawatts from Ramag-undam-3, 15 megawatts from Yellandu and 10 megawatts from Singareni thermal power plant have already been synchronised with Transco.

Sridhar instructed the solar division officials that the balance 44 megawatts in the first phase is to be completed by the end of next month and erection of 90 megawatts plants in the second phase have to be completed by May,2021. 30 per cent of usage through solar power plants only in Ramagundam region, he said.

Since the balance of 44 megawatts installation will be completed from the first phase of 129 megawatts, 18.55 million units' solar power would be generated from the first phase plants by March.

Director (E & M) D. Satyanarayana Rao synchronized the 15 megawatts division of Ramagundam-3 power plant.

Ministers start 10th round of talks with protesting farmer unions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The tenth round of talks between protesting farmer unions and three central ministers got underway here on Wednesday to break the over-a-month-long deadlock on the three new agri laws.

Ministers Narendra Singh Tomar, Piyush Goyal and Som Parkash, who is an MP from Punjab, are holding the talks with the representatives of around 40 farmer unions at the Vigyan Bhawan here.

The tenth round of talks was initially scheduled on January 19, but later got postponed to Wednesday.

In the last round of talks, the government had asked protesting farmers to prepare a concrete proposal about their objections and suggestions on the three farm laws for further discussion at their next meeting to end the long-running protest.

But, unions stuck to their main demand of a complete repeal of the three Acts.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, are protesting at various border points of Delhi for over a month now against the three laws.

SC irked over aspersions cast on members of committee

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday expressed strong displeasure over the aspersions cast by some farmers' unions on members of the court-appointed committee to resolve the impasse over new farm laws and said it has not given any adjudicating authority to the panel. The Centre, meanwhile, withdrew its petition seeking injunction against the proposed tractor rally by farmers on the Republic Day after the apex court said it was police matter. On the issue pertaining to the committee, a bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said it had appointed experts in the panel as the judges are not experts on the subject. Controversy had erupted after the apex court appointed the four-member committee as some of the members had earlier reportedly expressed their views and favoured the contentious farm laws, following which one of the members had recused himself.

Union leaders reject suggestion of alternative route for rally

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Farmer unions opposing the Centre's new agri laws on Wednesday rejected a suggestion by police officers to hold their proposed January 26 tractor rally on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway instead of Delhi's busy Outer Ring Road, sources said. Union leaders and officers of the Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana police forces had met at the Vigyan Bhawan here to discuss the route and arrangements of the proposed rally on Republic Day.The sources said that the farmer leaders were suggested by the police officers to take out their rally on the KMP Expressway, but they did not agree.The Outer Ring Road passes through several areas of Delhi such as Vikaspuri, Janakpuri, Uttam Nagar, Burari Peeragarhi and Pitampura. There might be another round of talks with the police officers on Thursday, a farmer leader, who attended the meeting, said. Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting at several Delhi border points against the laws for the last 56 days and unions representing them have begun holding tractor rallies at villages in Punjab to mobilise people for the demonstration on Republic Day.During the meeting, "we discussed several points with police officers on our tractor rally on January 26", a senior farmer leader said. Joint Commissioner of Police, S S Yadav coordinated the meeting from the Delhi Police, according to the sources.Police officials from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh were also present at the meeting, they said.The meeting comes on a day the Centre withdrew its plea seeking an injunction against the proposed tractor rally on January 26 after the Supreme Court said "it is a police matter". The police have the "authority" to deal with the issue pertaining to the proposed tractor march in Delhi on Republic Day, said a bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and Ramasubramanian.

Centre withdraws plea in SC against farmers' tractor rally

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre Wednesday withdrew its plea seeking an injunction against the proposed tractor rally on January 26 by farmers protesting against the new farms laws after the Supreme Court said "it is a police matter".
The police has the "authority" to deal with the issue pertaining to the proposed tractor march in Delhi on the Republic Day, said a bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasub ramanian. "We have told you that we will not issue any direction. It is a police matter. We will allow you to withdraw. You are the authority and you have to deal with it. You have the powers to pass orders, you do it. It is not for the court to pass orders..," the bench said in the hearing conducted via video conferencing. After the observation of the apex court, the Centre withdrew the plea filed through Delhi Police seeking an injunction against the proposed tractor or trolley march or any other kind of protest which seeks to disrupt the gathering and celebrations of the Republic Day.
The hearing in the matter is still continuing.

Farmer dies after consuming poisonous substance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A farmer who allegedly onsumed a poisonous substance at the Tikri border died during treatment at a hospital here on Wednesday, police said. The deceased has been identified as Jai Bhagwan Rana (42), a resident of Pakasma village in Rohtak district of Haryana. He had consumed Sulphas tablets at the farmers' protest site at Tikri on Tuesday, they said.In a purported suicide note, Rana said he was a small farmer and many peasants have taken to the streets to protest against the Centre's new farm laws. "The government says it is a matter of only two to three states, but farmers from all over the country are protesting against the

laws. Sadly, it is not a movement now, but a fight of issues. The talks between the farmers and the Centre also remain deadlocked," he wrote in the letter. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) A Koan said the man was taken to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital by CAT ambulance where he passed away during the course of treatment. He added that legal proceedings under CrPC have been initiated in the matter.
Last month, a lawyer from Punjab had allegedly committed suicide by consuming poison a few kilometres away from the protest site at the Tikri border. A Sikh preacher, Sant Ram Singh, had also allegedly ended his life near the Singhu border protest site claiming that he was "unable to bear the pain of the farmers". Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, have been protesting at various border points of Delhi for over two months demanding repeal of the three laws -- the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, and the Farmers Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act.

Delhi BJP demands 13,000 cr 'dues' from Kejriwal govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP leaders and workers demanded Rs 13,000 crore "dues" from the Kejriwal government for the party-ruled municipal corporations, displaying banners and posters at flyovers and foot overbridges in a protest across the city on Wednesday.

Delhi BJP vice president Virender Sachdeva claimed the campaign aims to make people aware about how the Kejriwal government is "depriving " the party-ruled MCDs of their "dues" of Rs 13,000 crore because of political reasons.

Delhi BJP media cell head Navin Kumar said they were displaying large banners and posters demanding that the city government pay the "dues".

The AAP leadership has been attacking the BJP alleging "corruption and mismanagement" in the three municipal corporations ruled by the party. Recently, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia announced that Delhi the government will provide Rs 938 crore to the municipal corporations to pay salaries to its employees.

"Doctors, nurses, sanitation workers and other employees of municipal corporations have not been paid salaries due to the funds held back by the Kejriwal government. No money has been released so far despite Sisodia's announcement," said party spokesperson Virender Babbar.

TMC seeks release of defence ministry book on Azad Hind Fauj

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Days before India celebrates the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the TMC on Wednesday demanded that a book chronicling the history of Azad Hind Fauj (INA) - compiled by the history division of the defence ministry decades ago -- be made public.

TMC MP Sukhendu Sekhar Roy, during a press meet here, said the book, edited by historian P C Gupta, is still awaiting release, as both the UPA and the NDA governments at the Centre did not take any initiative to get it published.

He claimed that the Prime Minister's Office and the defence ministry have several files on Netaji and his exploits lying with them, all under wraps. "I have raised the issue many times in the Rajya Sabha," he said. Roy also pointed out that Bengal Chief Minister "Mamata Banerjee, however, released all Netaji-related files available with the state government".

Talking about the defence ministry manuscript on INA, he said Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) of India, responding to an RTI filed by some Chandrachur Ghosh of Haryana in 2009, had ordered its release. "...but the then UPA government said more details will be added to the book before its release, a proposal turned down by a single bench of the High Court. The court ordered the book cannot be edited further and had to be released in its original form. "Subsequently, the government moved the division bench and the case is still pending," the Rajya Sabha MP explained.

He claimed that pages from 186 to 191 of the book had said Netaji did not die in a plane crash, a conclusion also arrived at by the Mukherjee Commission -- which was formed by the then Congress government.

Active caseload slips below 2 lakh after nearly 7 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 active caseload has fallen below the 2-lakh mark after nearly 7 months and comprises just 1.86 per cent of the total infections, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

It said that 72 per cent of the active cases are concentrated in Kerala, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal.

Thirty-four states and UTs have less than 10,000 active cases.

"The active cases have fallen to 1,97,201.This is the lowest after 207 days. The total active cases were 1,97,387 on June 27, 2020," the ministry underlined.

A total of 16,988 people have recovered in a span of 24 hours. This has led to a net decline of 3,327 from the total active caseload, it said.

India's daily new cases are on a steady decline which has also contributed to the shrinkage in active caseload, it underscored.

"Globally, India has one of the lowest daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million population in the last 7 days," the ministry said.

As on January 20, 2021, a total of 6,74,835 beneficiaries have received the vaccination. In a span of 24 hours, 2,20,786 people were vaccinated across 3,860 sessions. A total of 11,720 sessions has been conducted so far. The total recovered cases stand at 1.02 crore.

"The total recovered cases have crossed the active caseload by one crore a few days ago. The gap presently stands at 10,048,540," the ministry highlighted.

Loss of smell may be best sign of Covid, research confirms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Loss of smell may be the best predictor of COVID-19 among patients with symptoms of respiratory diseases, according to new research. The findings of two new international studies, published in the journal Chemical Senses, show that there is frequent loss of smell in COVID-19 patients which often lasts for a long time. Over 4,500 COVID-19 patients from a total of 23 nationalities responded to the researchers' questionnaire.
The studies found that the average loss of the sense of smell was 79.7 on a scale from 0-100, indicating a large to complete sensory loss.
"This emphasises how important it is to be aware of this symptom, as it may be the only symptom of the disease," said Alexander Wieck Fjaeldstad from Aarhus University in Denmark.
The research found that only around half of patients with a loss of smell got their sense of smell back after forty days.
"This differs from the picture we see with other viral infections and causes long-term discomfort for patients, both in relation to food and social contact, while at the same time causing them worry," Fjaeldstad said.The researchers also found that the sense of taste was also significantly reduced, to 69.0 on a scale from 0-100, adding the remaining sense of feeling in the mouth was also reduced to 37.3 on a scale from 0-100. "While the loss of smell in itself removes the ability to sense the aroma of food, the simultaneous loss of the other senses make it difficult to register what you're eating. Putting food in your mouth can therefore become a decidedly unpleasant experience," Fjaeldstad added.
The study is of interest both to patients suffering sensory loss as well as clinicians and researchers who work with diagnostics and following-up on COVID-19, the researchers said.

NCP takes dig at BJP over Guj's bid to rename dragon fruit

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The NCP targeted the BJP over the Guja-rat government's decision to rename dragon fruit as 'Kamalam', saying the time may not be far when the saffron party would start calling the country as "Kamalastan".

The BJP has now started "branding itself on fruits also," NCP chief spokesperson Mahesh Tapase said in a statement. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani on Tuesday said his government has decided to rename dragon fruit as 'Kamalam'. Reacting to it, Tapase said, "The BJP has now started branding itself on fruits also. We fear that the time may be not far when they would start addressing Hindustan as Kamalastan." The BJP's election symbol is lotus, which is called 'kamal' in Hindi. Rupani said the government has applied for a patent to change the nomenclature of dragon fruit, which is largely grown in Kutch, Navsari and different parts of Saurashtra, to 'Kamalam'.

INDIA CORNER

Must decide on tie-up for Goa Assembly polls in advance: NCP

The NCP's Goa unit chief Jose Philip D'Souza on Wednesday said like-minded parties in the coastal state should decide on an alliance in advance for the upcoming state Assembly polls, instead of waiting till the last minute.
D'Souza was speaking to reporters in light of party supremo Sharad Pawar's visit to the state."The decision on having a pre-poll alliance with like-minded parties should be taken in advance, without waiting till the last minute," he said.Pawar is on a private visit to the coastal state, during which he will also meet the NCP's local leadership. A last-minute decision will steal the time to prepare from candidates, D'Souza said, adding that he will be discussing the same with Pawar during his visit. Many leaders from other political outfits have been approaching the NCP, but the final decision on their request will be taken by the party high command, he said. The state legislative Assembly elections in Goa are slated to be held in March, 2022.

Drug peddler held with mephedrone worth Rs 1.10 cr

Police have arrested a drug peddler in Mumbai and seized mephedrone, a banned drug, worth Rs 1.10 crore from him, an official said on Wednesday. Acting on an information, the Mumbai police's anti-narcotics cell laid a trap on Tuesday and apprehended the 44- year-old man in Tardeo area, he said. He was carrying a bag from which the police recovered 1.10 kg of mephedrone, a banned synthetic stimulant, valued around Rs 1.10 crore, the official said he said.The accused, a resident of J J Marg here, has been allegedly involved in selling drugs since last few years, the official said.The police are trying to find out where the accused got mephedrone and have also launched a search for his associates, he said.A case has been registered against him under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, he added.

2021 Assam polls to be held keeping in mind Rongoli Bihu, CBSE exams

Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora on Wednesday said the 2021 Assam assembly polls will be held taking into consideration the Rongali Bihu festival in April and the CBSE board examinations for students of class 10 and 12. The assembly elections will be completed before the CBSE board exams which are scheduled between May 4 and June 10, he said. "We have already taken the festival into consideration before coming here for the review meetings," he told reporters here. The commission is aware of the festivals held in the states, the CEC said. He said the commission has also held discussions with CBSE officials to decide on the poll schedule."We have decided that the election process will be completed before the board exams which will start from May 4," he said.The elections will be held in strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols, Arora said, adding that the number of auxiliary polling booths would be increased. "The number of electors at each polling station has been restricted to 1,000 as against the existing 1,500," he said.He also urged the state election authorities and the people to ensure "fair, peaceful and COVID safe polls". The full bench of the commission, on a three-day visit to the state since Monday, had held discussions with the representatives of political parties and officials of the government to review poll preparedness.

Biden to sign 15 executive orders on day one as president

■ WASHINGTON

Hours after being sworn in as the 46th US president, Joe Biden would sign 15 executive orders -- including rejoining the Paris climate agreement, a 100-day mask mandate and reversing the Muslim ban -- undoing some of the major policies of his predecessor Donald Trump.

Biden's first presidential actions would also include sending a comprehensive bill on immigration to the Congress, incoming White House officials said.

The immigration bill proposes a eight-year pathway to illegal immigrants and removing the per country cap for employment-based green

cards, a move that would benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals in the US, whose current wait period for legal permanent residency runs into several decades.

"President-elect Biden is taking historic action on day one to advance his agenda — including signing 15 executive actions and asking agencies to take steps in an additional two areas. This compares to two day one executive actions from Biden's four predecessors in the White House combined," incoming White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

Biden will continue to take action over the next 10 days — and over his entire time in office — to address the four crises that he's laid out, she said. Biden will sign executive orders, memoranda, directives and letters to take initial steps to address COVID-19 pandemic, providing economic relief, tackling climate change and advancing racial equity, officials said.

Joe Biden nominates transgender woman as assistant health secy

■ WASHINGTON

President-elect Joe Biden has nominated Rachel Levine, currently Pennsylvania's top health official, as the next Assistant Health Secretary of the US, a move that could make her the first openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the Senate. Describing the nomination of Levine for the post as historic, Biden said she would lead his administration's health efforts amidst the pandemic.
The announcement makes Levine, a 64-year-old pediatrician, to be the first openly transgender federal official to be confirmed by the US Senate, The Washington Post reported on Tuesday.
"Dr Rachel Levine will bring the steady leadership and essential expertise we need to get people through this pandemic — no matter their zip code, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability — and meet the public health needs of our country in this critical moment and beyond," Biden said in a statement.Levine, who currently is Pennsylvania's secretary of health, has risen to national prominence for leading the state's public health response to the coronavirus pandemic, despite repeated and ugly attacks on her gender identity, the report said.

Biden's immigration bill proposes to eliminate per country cap

■ WASHINGTON

Joe Biden, hours after being sworn in as the 46th President, will send a comprehensive immigration bill to Congress which among other things proposes to eliminate the per country cap for employment-based green cards, a move that would benefit hundreds and thousands of Indian IT professionals in the US, whose current wait period for legal permanent residency runs into several decades.Called the US Citizenship Act of 2021, the legislation modernises the immigration system, according to an incoming White House official.It prioritises keeping families together, grows the country's economy, responsibly manages the border with smart investments, addresses the root causes of migration from Central America, and also ensures that the US remains a refuge for those fleeing persecution, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Describing this as a common-sense approach to solving immigration challenges, focusing on what works, the US Citizenship Act 2021 creates a roadmap to citizenship for a population that lives and works in the United States.
January 1, 2021 is the cut-off date for those undocumented workers. Two-thirds of undocumented immigrants have been in the US for 10 years or longer. It provides an immediate pathway to green cards for individuals who meet certain criteria as they were dreamers or have been recipients of the Temporary Protected Status (TPS), or are farm workers and meet certain criteria.They can apply for citizenship three years later. For those who don't meet those qualifications, there will be another path to citizenship, where they would be in an interim status for five years. Afterwards they would be eligible to apply for citizenship within three years after becoming green card holders.

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | JANUARY 21, 2021

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Let the leaders lead

Like elsewhere, prominent personalities of India should get the shots so that the common citizen feels reassured

When the virologists in different countries developed vaccines for Coronavirus, there was a sense of relief and jubilation globally and people could not wait for the inoculation drives to begin. However, that euphoria turned into fear, distrust and vaccine hesitancy when side-effects and deaths began to be reported in nations like Norway, the UK, the US, and so on. In India, too, two people died after getting vaccinated on January 16 but, after the post-mortem reports came in, the Government declared that the deaths were in no way related to the COVID-19 jab, but to cardiopulmonary disease. Of course, the sceptics will take this statement with a pinch of salt. However, even if we were to attribute these deaths in India to the vaccines, we must not let such incidents cloud our vision. If one were to look at the larger picture, the number of infections and deaths globally due to the pandemic till now is 96,700,231 and 2,067,913, respectively. In India, the number of infections has been 10,596,442 and the casualties have touched the 152,754-mark. As compared to this, of the 6,31,417 healthcare workers who have been vaccinated so far across 11,660 sessions in India, only nine adverse events requiring hospitalisation were reported. So, just 0.18 per cent minor adverse events have been reported and only 0.002 per cent of them needed to be hospitalised. According to the Health Ministry, this figure is in fact the lowest, so far as we know, in the world. So, it does not take a genius to understand that the advantages of getting the jab far outweigh the disadvantages. Plus, in such huge vaccination drives as the world is undertaking right now, adverse effects and some casualties are to be expected, particularly among the old, infirm and people with allergies. But the fact remains that globally, scientists and Governments are responding very quickly and, apart from the strong adverse event surveillance, they are being flexible and vigilant to finding out the causes and issuing directives on who can safely take the vaccine and who cannot. For instance, Norway has adjusted its advice on who should be administered the vaccine by giving individual doctors the discretion to make this decision.

In India too, Bharat Biotech, the company that developed Covaxin, is warning people with weak immunity and other medical conditions to consult a doctor before getting inoculated and, if possible, to avoid it altogether. However, till now the other vaccine that is also being used, AstraZeneca's Covishield, has seen a good response. Though India is battling vaccine hesitancy even among healthcare workers, the Centre plans to press on with the inoculation drive. This is because the Government realises that pandemics can be contained only when people become resistant to the disease-causing pathogen. There are two ways to acquire herd immunity: One, on exposure to the pathogen, people develop antibodies and immune response in the body and; second, the body develops antibodies when the vaccine is administered. Allowing the natural spread of a disease to generate herd immunity is not desirable as it comes at the cost of avoidable morbidity and mortality. With mass vaccination against COVID-19, the Government is determined to protect the people. We must help it in every way possible. We are a big country, and rolling out vaccines to 1.3 billion people is not an easy task. But we are a very determined country that successfully eradicated smallpox and polio. We have the resources and the experience. With the hard work of those leading and implementing the campaign and with the support of people, we are bound to succeed in our gigantic vaccination drive. However, if the Government truly wants the people to embrace the immunisation drive, prominent leaders of the country should get the shots like they did in other nations, so that the common citizen can feel reassured. The leaders of the country need to lead from the front and not let the common man feel like the proverbial guinea pig.

What's in a name?

Rather than quibbling over Neta*ji*'s birth anniversary, the Governments should have celebrated the event together

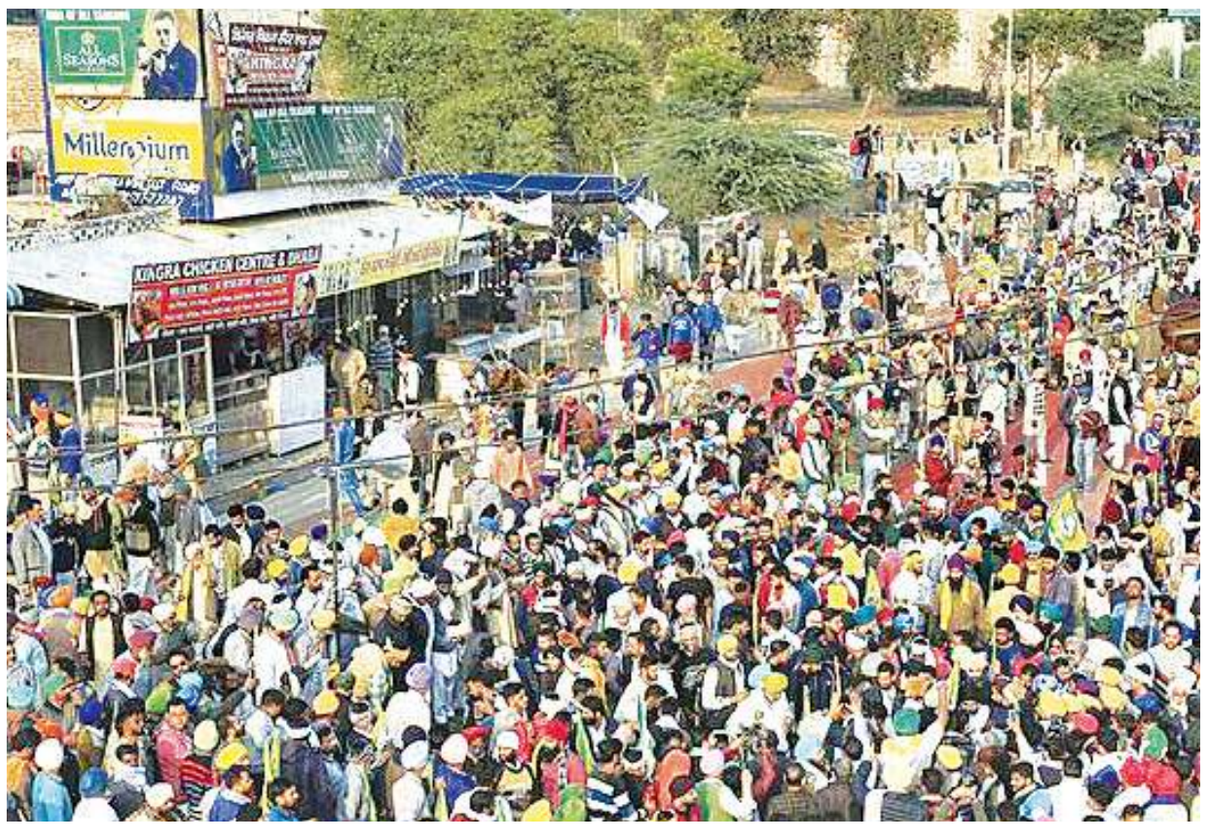
On the face of it, one would consider it a matter of great national pride and patriotism, though a little belated, that the Union Government has decided to celebrate the birth anniversary of one of India's greatest nationalist icons who worked hard in the quest for the nation's Independence, Neta*ji* Subhas Chandra Bose, on January 23 as 'Parakram Diwas'. However, the political controversy the announcement has kicked off is quite unnecessary and unsavoury, to put it mildly. There are allegations and counter-charges that the decision has been taken to usurp the legacy of the revolutionary leader, who was actually born in Cuttack, Bengal Presidency, British India. While the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) Government in West Bengal and the NDA Government at the Centre are in tandem on the issue of celebrating Neta*ji*'s birth anniversary, the bone of contention is the nomenclature the event should have: The Centre wants to call it 'Parakram Diwas' while the TMC and the All India Forward Bloc — which was founded by Neta*ji* and emerged as a faction within the Indian National Congress in 1939 — demand that the day be celebrated as 'Desh Prem Diwas'. Both the parties are also angry that they were not consulted when the decision was being taken. The Culture Ministry recently issued a notification stating that in order to "honour and remember Neta*ji*'s indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation", the Government has decided to celebrate his birthday every year as 'Parakram Diwas'. But the TMC leaders are sticking to their guns that it should continue to be called 'Desh Prem Diwas' (the State-level celebrations have been held at Darjeeling since 2014) and that January 23 should be declared a national holiday as Neta*ji* was a national leader and the head of the Azad Hind Fauj, and "these two aspects are not clearly reflected" in the name 'Parakram Diwas'.

With West Bengal Assembly elections on the cards, and especially when it comes to Neta*ji*'s birth anniversary, no party wants to let the opportunity to lure the voters slip from its hands. The State is expected to go to the polls in the first half of this year with the BJP hoping to wrest power from the TMC after emerging as the second-biggest party in Bengal in the 2019 general elections. The regional party's leaders have gone so far as to claim that it was a "stunt" by the NDA Government keeping in mind the upcoming Assembly poll in West Bengal, and "not a mark of respect" to Neta*ji*. The family members of Neta*ji* also put their weight behind 'Desh Prem Diwas', saying that the name would have been more appropriate "but we're happy with the announcement". Hectic preparations have already commenced for the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji in Kolkata, both by the State Government and the Centre. While the TMC Government has planned a massive procession in Kolkata, the Centre is also making preparations for a grand event at the Victoria Memorial Hall, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to be present. Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan will participate in a programme in Cuttack, Odisha, where Bose was born. Another programme will be held in Haripura village in Gujarat's Surat district where Bose was elected the president of the Indian National Congress in 1938. But the bottom line remains that the true respect and honest tributes to Neta*ji* had been if both the Governments had joined hands to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary of one of India's greatest sons who strove to free India from the iron clutches of the British Empire.

The usual suspects

The SC-appointed panel to talk to farmers comprises a neo-con economist, a seed terrorist and a policy *sahib*, which has given rise to mistrust

INDRA SHEKHAR **SINGH**



As 2021 began, the Supreme Court (SC) appears to have got a taste for drama as it pitched a "biased committee" against the revolutionary, but peaceful, farmers camping on Delhi's borders. Why biased? Because all the four original members had unequivocally supported the farm "reforms". But the apex court believes that they will remain neutral; and Chief Justice of India SA Bobde orally observing that if a person on a panel has expressed views on the matter, it should not become ground for his disqualification from a committee and that "committee members are not judges; they can change their views". Meanwhile, Bhupinder Singh Mann rejected the SC's offer to be part of the committee and said he stands with Punjab. The three remaining members, who pledge to be "non-partisan", have only added to the mistrust of farmers because the media may see them as honourable but, to farmers, they are simply a neo-con economist, a known seed terrorist and a policy *sahib*.

Let us go back to the start of this mess. After repeated failure of talks between the NDA Government and the farmers, petitions were filed in the SC which gave them a patient ear and even admonished the Centre for its "handling of the issue". There was some jubilation when farmers were teased by names such as "P Sainath" to be included in the committee. But the celebration was short-lived; it was as if the SC was testing the waters before delivering the masterstroke: Four pro-Big Ag names were invited to the committee. They being men of the law, we can't expect the judges to understand much about agriculture but whosoever advised them, has put the integrity of India's top court in quagmire. Mann's polite refusal provides grist for this fact. Recently, committee member Anil Ghanwat has expressed fears that the farmers may not even participate in the proceedings.

How unbiased are the three remaining members — Ashok Gulati, Anil Ghanwat and Pramod Kumar Joshi? With a demonstrated history of promoting and advocating for Big Ag and US-style liberalisation, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Ashok Gulati, our neo-con economist, despite having worked in the Government for decades, is notorious as the poster child for Big Ag in India. His policy recommendations are hailed by the industry and vehemently opposed by farmers, whether on GM crops or farm-gate liberalisation. His economic models, to many farmers, are allied to the US industry interests and not to the welfare of Indian farmers and consumers. Gulati's models are a disservice to Gandhi's bread labour. Some would go so far as to say that his economic schizophrenia is so advanced for what he called the "1991 moment" for Indian agriculture, has turned out to be the biggest farmers' revolution in the history of our world.

Next we move to 'policy *sahib*' — Pramod K Joshi, who is the director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute. Without going too much into details about his personal views, the organisation he represents is heavily funded by the Big Ag corporations and allies. The Syngenta Foundation (Switzerland), The Rockefeller Foundation (United States), CropLife International (Belgium), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (United States), Cornell University (United States), the US Department of Agriculture (United States), KPMG East Africa and Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) are some of the biggies to generously donate to his kitty and push a global agenda through this organisation in countries like India. Farmers are curious as to why did the SC's advisors think of this international body? Does India have a dearth of *swadeshi* agriculturists or agrarian policy experts? Why the swerve from Aatmanirbhar Bharat on policy matters? This name in the committee exposes the invisible hand behind the farm "reforms".

Finally, we move to alleged 'seed terrorist' Anil Ghanwat, who is the president of Shetkari Sangathana (SS). It didn't take illegal seeds from China to reach the US or India in May 2020 for any member of the cotton seed industry to understand the term "seed terrorism". India has been an area of operation for many such illegal seed schemes which want to destroy India's native seeds, public health and seed industry by using criminal means. 'Seed terrorists' smuggle and peddle unapproved foreign seeds on India's soils and fields. They claim that it's good for the farmers but actually, as the past year has shown, sound the death-knell for Indian biodiversity and public health as these seeds can be a gateway for getting new pests or plant diseases into the country. In a bid to protect our biodiversity, the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh's (RSS) own Bharatiya Kisan Sangh has led a campaign in Maharashtra against this hazardous contamination and to curb the illegal spread of HT Bt Cotton. Keep in mind that COVID entered the country using humans as a gateway; similarly, the American pink bollworm and fall armyworm have mysteriously entered India. We don't know what new disease could be in store next?

A note on the history of the organisation: SS founder Sharad Joshi, a farmer leader for few, was a pariah in the national farmers' resistance movement. His stance on the World Trade Organisation (WTO), inclusion of agriculture into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the Dunkel Draft alienated him from the farmers who resisted this takeover in the late 90s. His obsession for "technology" and "progress" was only meretricious. His Frankenstein still lives eating into the profits and health of maize to oilseed farmers.

Following the same tradition, the SS has openly violated the Environment Protection Act, National Biodiversity Act and various other criminally punishable legislations by illegally planting and peddling an unapproved genetically modified organism (GMO) HT Bt Cotton in Maharashtra. This HT Bt cotton is a herbicide tolerant (HT) cotton variety that is unapproved by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC). The SC's technical committee on GM crops had also a few years ago put a moratorium on HT crops due to bio-safety issues. Despite this, Ghanwat's organisation has been unabashedly part of a criminal conspiracy to contaminate our native cotton seeds and biodiversity. Last year alone, he caused a damage of over ₹400 crore to the legal seed businesses, from Maharashtra to Telangana. Due to such fly-by-night operators, the legal cotton businesses are finding their seed lots contaminated by this unapproved variety and, in fact, many seed companies have been taken to court and their licenses suspended, yet Ghanwat's SS proliferates. They continue to do irreversible damage to our environment and health. The seed officials have booked various members for some of these offences, yet the ring leader — instead of being reprimanded — has been elevated to a power position.

The judiciary is an independent pillar of Indian democracy, and in no way should it be under pressure to echo the will of the Government of the day. For, if they acquiesce, Indian democracy will be dented. By appointing a committee without consultation, the SC may also have committed the same mistake as the Government. The CJI, if he wants the farmers and people to restore their faith in the judiciary, should disband the committee for now and evaluate the members' profile. People like Ghanwat and his organisation who openly defy the rule of law, should be punished, not honoured.

(The writer is the Director – Policy and Outreach, National Seed Association of India. The views expressed are personal.)

SOUNDBITE

Like millions of Indians, I am jubilant and proud at your heroic and historic victory at Brisbane. Your performance, against incredible odds, has brought glory to India.

Congress interim president
Sonia Gandhi

The high-speed rail is a successful demonstration of China's independent innovation. China is now a world leader in high-speed rail technology.

Chinese President
Xi Jinping

Nachave is a vivacious number that will definitely make you tap your feet. I always try to deliver a different and unique experience to music lovers.

Singer
Daler Mehndi

No adversity could stop them, frontline players injured, & won after a remarkable turnaround from the depths of 36 all out, inspiring for others. Kudos, India!

Former Pakistani cricketer
Wasim Akram

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kudos, Team India!

Sir — What Team India pulled off in Oz — a Test series win — is no mean feat. It was a glorious victory in the game of uncertainties, the memory of which will be long cherished. Watching a bunch of plucky Indian youngsters playing so well against the world's best team in a match that otherwise looked like being a David and Goliath contest was an uplifting experience.

The absolutely stunning victory at Gabba is sweeter because it was achieved in a Test cricket that showcases skills, subtleties and sophistication more than any other format and it was clinched by exceptionally talented boys hailing from disparate and diverse backgrounds from across the country. For the legions of Indian cricket fans, India lifting the coveted Border-Gavaskar Trophy was a fairytale ending.

For most Indians, cricket is an absolute religion. The bouncers and racial slurs and other tricks tried by the host could not make up for what it lacked to snatch a victory from a resurgent and exuberant Indian team.

G David Milton
Tamil Nadu

Shun politics, stand united against China

This refers to the editorial '*Remove Chinese hamlet*' (January 20). With China changing the *status quo* by constructing a village five km inside the disputed territory in Arunachal Pradesh, the ongoing tension between the two superpowers is going to escalate.

It appears that the Communist regime is hell-bent on strengthening and extending its territorial claims in violation of the international agreements and multiple treaties. The Chinese side doesn't respect the McMahon line, the demarcation between Tibet and India's Northeast, and constructs structures in the areas claimed by it. The development came as the Chinese and Indian troops are locked in a bitter standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5 last year and multiple rounds of military and diplomatic-level talks failed to achieve any breakthrough.

The recent development has given yet another opportunity to the Opposition to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the NDA Government. It is disheartening that at a time when President Xi Jinping-led China is undertaking such misadventures, we as a nation are not even united over the issue. It sends a very wrong message to the world and is a setback to India's global image. The leaders, belonging both to the Opposition and the ruling dispensation, should talk and build consensus to deal with the matter in an effective and efficient manner. India's territorial integrity is not a political matter and it cannot be compromised for the sake of politics.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

India's jabs gain repute

Sir — We should feel proud that the vaccines developed in India have been tagged as the least risky across the world. This is indeed a great achievement and a testimony to the expertise we possess in the sector.

With all these titles, our vaccines are gaining a huge demand and the MEA is receiving requests for the export of these vaccines. It is a welcome move by India to supply the life-saving vials to six countries. India is supplying it to the nations who need it the most like Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Seychelles. It is also considering the applications by three other nations and these too are in the final stages of approval. This step will help develop international cooperation and take India's diplomatic relations to a new high and, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, we are indeed honoured to have this opportunity to serve the world during the COVID pandemic.

Kavya Shah
Ujjain

Public holiday policy

Sir — It is a welcome move by the Supreme Court to seek the response of the Union Government on policy framework for declaring public holidays. A PIL complained that the Centre and State Governments arbitrarily notify public holidays.

It is true that the Governments declare public holidays on their whims and fancies to appease a section of population or vote bank. This is because in the absence of any guidelines or policy regarding the declaration of public holidays, the Governments use the opportunity to consolidate their vote banks.

At a time when we need to work diligently and incessantly with full devotion, increasing the number of holidays will decrease our productivity and output. It will make the Government employees lethargic and would give rise to a dilly-dally approach towards work. The need of the hour is that the Union Government should frame a national policy for declaring public holidays.

Amit Singh Kushwaha
Satna

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A risky business

Share redemption is like a double-edged sword. The very advantage associated with it can backfire and become a major disadvantage

HIMA BINDU **KOTA**

The recent announcement by the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL), pertaining to its share buyback worth over ₹1,046 crore as it looked to return surplus cash to bondholders — the biggest being the Centre — is perfectly in tune with the Government's efforts to raise funds for containing the rising fiscal deficit. The company's Board approved repurchase of the ₹6.97 crore dividend, which is about 1.55 per cent of the total paid-up capital, at a price of ₹150 per share. The Indian markets may see similar announcements by other Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) like Coal India Limited, National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd and National Mineral Development Corporation in days to come. GAIL has also declared an interim dividend of ₹2.50 per share for the coming year. This share buyback forms a part of the target set by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for raising ₹2.1 lakh crore from the disinvestment of PSUs in 2020-21. Share redemption is the process by which companies buy their own dividends which are traded on the bourses at the market value, and in addition to its stock, is a preferred way to repay cash to the shareholders. Paying dividends to bondholders is an expensive affair as it increases the cost of equity. Therefore, paying off shareowners through buybacks is less expensive and reduces the overall cost of the capital. Since 2016 through 2018, it was one of the most favoured ways of returning excess cash to bondholders. In 2018, Indian stock markets witnessed bond repurchases worth ₹54,600 crore. This run was somewhat stalled in 2019 by the Government's decision to tax these transactions. As many as 70 companies announced share buybacks to the tune of ₹35,460 crore in the first half of 2019. In the 2020 Budget, however, the new tax regime made share buybacks lucrative once again.

There are several reasons why firms buy back shares. First, to consolidate their stake as diverse and numerous policyholders or owners make it difficult for the company to take an undisputed decision, as numerous stakeholders with voting rights indulge in a power tussle. By redeeming shares, companies increase their voting rights and exercise more control over governance. For instance, OYO's share buyback from Sequoia and Lightspeed in 2019 increased the stake of Chief Executive Officer Ritesh Agarwal from a meagre 10 per cent to 30 per cent, increasing his say in decision-making. Second, by redeeming its shares, a firm sends positive signals about its future prospects and growth potential. A company may also believe that the current stock price is undervalued and takes it as a good opportunity to increase its bondholding keeping in mind future prospects This is known as the signaling effect. Third, share repurchase is one of the best uses for any idle cash reserve companies might have, especially when there are not enough chances to invest the excess money.

However, share redemption is like a double-edged sword. The very advantage associated with it can backfire and become its disadvantage. While competing in a high growth industry, buyback may not be considered a positive step as it may give an impression that the firm does not have enough avenues to invest its idle cash reserve. Long-term investors respond to such share buybacks by selling their stakes. For instance, IBM's buyback announcements between 1995 and 2000 made investors apprehensive about the company's ability to bring out new products and services. Further, share repurchase is not an isolated event and has to be always viewed in conjunction with other performance parameters. For instance, it will not send a positive signal about the future growth potential to the investors if profitability is declining or the financial outcomes are showing otherwise.

Basically, there are three ways in which companies buy back their shares. Open market repurchase is the most common buyback mechanism in which firms announce redemption of a certain number of bonds through a Press release but do not give details of price, timing and execution of the deal. In fixed-price tender offers, companies invite shareholders to sell their dividends to the firm at a fixed price, generally at a premium rate to the prevailing market price, within a given time frame. While in auction-based tender offers, firms disclose their willingness to pay a premium and seek tenders from owners for certain portion of shares. It is the responsibility of the shareholders to respond to the company about the quantity of shares to be sold within a specified time period. Studies on the impact of share buyback have found that share redemption boosts operating performance due to an increase in earnings per share, return on equity and return on assets, rise in stock prices and shareholders' value. But negative effects of share repurchase on the stock prices of the firms have been reported, too. Although buybacks bring a positive sentiment to the bourses, their attraction for firms and shareholders depend on factors that are unique to each case. The management has to decide the proper use of its funds — either to reinvest in its business or return cash to the shareholders — creating a balance between future growth and stockholder's value creation.

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

POINT**COUNTER**POINT

FARMERS WANT TO TAKE OUT A TRACTOR RALLY ON THE OUTER RING ROAD IN THE CAPITAL, AS THEY INTEND TO CELEBRATE REPUBLIC DAY.
—ADVOCATE
PRASHANT BHUSHAN

OVER 5,000 TRACTORS IN THE CITY CANNOT BE ALLOWED, AS THEY CAN GO ALL OVER DELHI. IT'S LIKELY TO CREATE PROBLEMS.
—ATTORNEY-GENERAL
KK VENUGOPAL

Don't be an anti-vaxxer

There have been minor adverse events across India since the vaccination drive began on Jan 16. However, surveillance has been strong and will remain so in future, too

VM **KATOCH**

Vaccines go a long way in managing, controlling, eliminating deadly, sometimes debilitating infectious diseases. Smallpox was the first example of a dreaded disease, with a mortality rate as high as 30 per cent, being eradicated by a vaccine. But it was a long journey from the development of the vaccine to the elimination of the disease. Edward Jenner, an English physician, was the first to demonstrate the effect of a vaccine in 1796.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) initiated a campaign to eradicate smallpox in 1959, but despite their best efforts, smallpox was still widespread in 1966, causing regular outbreaks in multiple countries. Then in 1967 efforts were intensified and scientists came up with a higher quality freeze-dried vaccine, bifurcated needle and a stringent surveillance system. India achieved the target of eradication of smallpox in 1975 after a very intense vaccination and containment campaign. So, it took almost 200 years, when on May 8, 1980, the 33rd World Health Assembly officially declared the world free of the disease.

Smallpox is not the only example. Over the years, vaccines emerged as a powerful tool to protect populations against various disease-causing organisms. Our scientists have developed vaccines that provide complete or partial protection against diseases such as plague, cholera, rabies, polio, measles, rotavirus and influenza among others.

When COVID-19 hit the world last year, scientists across the globe came together to develop an effective vaccine against it. Interestingly, within 10 months of decoding the virus' genome sequence, many vaccines were not only developed but tested for their safety and efficacy. With vaccines we have achieved an important milestone in our fight against COVID. It is a matter of pride that two vaccines have become available in India. One has been fully made in India and the other has been developed in partnership and manufactured in the country. Till now, India had been trying to slow the spread of the infection and control the number of Coronavirus cases without a vaccine through conventional and known approaches like using masks, social distancing, hand hygiene, detection of cases, isolation, contact tracing and testing. Progress in medical management through modern as well as traditional medicine systems has also contributed to prevention and improved treatment outcomes in the country.

While all these methods will remain relevant till the virus is defeated, building the immune capacity of individuals and the population through vaccination can prove to be another highly effective shield against COVID. We are at an important juncture in our fight against the Coronavirus. On January 16, the Government rolled out the vaccines across the country. Its plan to inoculate 30 crore people in the first phase of the vaccination drive is an ambitious one, especially when the vaccine has to be given in two doses, at an interval of four-six weeks.

To execute this drive effectively, the Government has recruited an army of vaccinators, on-ground staff, experts to keep a watch on the adverse events that have been reported from many places, specialists to address these adverse events in the shortest possible time and data specialists to analyse the large amount of data the nationwide vaccine drive would generate. It has also created the physical infrastructure for the storage and transportation of the vaccine.

> "ALLOWING THE NATURAL SPREAD OF DISEASE TO GENERATE HERD IMMUNITY IS NOT DESIRABLE AS THIS COMES AT THE COST OF AVOIDABLE MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY. WITH MASS VACCINATION AGAINST COVID-19, THE GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE. WE MUST HELP IT IN EVERY WAY BY GETTING RID OF OUR VACCINE HESITANCY"

This sounds like the Government had to do too much in too short a time. But times have changed and viruses are becoming smarter. With humans travelling across the world, viruses too are travelling to all nooks and corners of the globe. As a result, an endemic turns into an epidemic and an epidemic turns into a pandemic in a blink of an eye. As we all know, this is what happened with the Coronavirus too. So, the fight in these times is not only against viruses, but also against time. Especially where the COVID-19 is concerned.

A new strain with the potential to spread faster has appeared in the UK, and several other countries, including India. There are many pockets in the country which are still not exposed to the virus. We don't know how the virus is going to behave in the coming months. It can come back in small waves, then spread to newer areas and we may also see another severe wave. Hence, we need to put in practice all the lessons we have learnt during past vaccination drives. From redesigning a vaccine campaign, to recalibrating it to address various issues that arise after its launch, to the redevelopment of a vaccine itself to address the mutation in the virus, the vaccination process may need to be changed according to the demands of time. For example, the first polio vaccine the Salk, which was developed in the early 1950s, was an injectable one. It brought a significant drop in the number of polio cases. Later, in the 1960s the oral poliovirus vaccine was developed. It had a live attenuated virus.

Apart from aspects related to science, for a vaccine campaign to achieve its target, it may have to overcome various social and political challenges as well. Every time, we introduce a new vaccine there is vaccine hesitancy. People have a lot of concerns — some of them are genuine while some arise out of rumours and misconceptions about how the vaccine can affect their health. There are many historical examples of such lack of communication or miscommunication becoming barriers in India which could be overcome by establishing good connection with people and their leaders. Hence, peoples' concerns should be identified, addressed as fast as possible by sharing scientific facts with them and in the language, they can understand. Providing complete information in an effective way, maintaining the confidence of people in information from authorised Government sources as well as the mainstream media is as important as the logistics of providing vaccines with highest standards of quality. This was done effectively in the past and hopefully it will be done so now too, especially as there is already a lot of reluctance across the country to take the shots after a few adverse incidents. However, the fact remains that only nine adverse events following immunisation that required hospitalisation have been recorded so far in India.

Second, adverse event surveillance after the vaccination has been strong so far. It will continue to remain so as the drive goes forward. Besides, real-time analysis of the reports as well as data generated from the various vaccine sites across the country will be important to further ensure the safety and efficacy of the vaccine as we go into the mass vaccination phase.

Whether it is smallpox or polio, we were able to eradicate the disease with a targeted approach. First, implement it at a wider scale. Slowly, identify the problematic areas. There could be places where the disease prevalence could be higher than the rest of the country, target that area. Then there could be pockets where people would be more hesitant to vaccines, target that area with clear communication strategies. Communicate with the community, the local leaders, address their concern. After some time, the country could face yet another wave of COVID, or issues of mutant variant(s) may emerge. We need a robust disease surveillance mechanism to handle any such situation and contain the outbreak before it spreads.

Pandemics can be contained only when people become resistant to the disease-causing pathogen. There are two ways to acquire herd immunity-one, on exposure to the pathogen people develop antibodies and immune response in the body and second, the body develops antibodies when we give the vaccine. Allowing the natural spread of disease to generate herd immunity is not desirable as this comes at the cost of avoidable morbidity and mortality. With mass vaccination against COVID-19, the Government is determined to protect the people. We must help it in every way by getting rid of our vaccine hesitancy.

(The writer is former Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research and Secretary, Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The views expressed are personal.)

A legendary feat by incredible Indians

Our netas, scientists, technocrats and babus must learn from the tremendous performance of the cricket team and herald a new era of excellence in all walks of life

VK **BAHUGUNA**

On Tuesday the Indian cricket team scripted an incredible Test victory which will be remembered for a long time in the annals of the cricketing world's history. The Australians were proud of the mighty, world-class fast bowling attacks of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood. All their former players and commentators overrated their overall capabilities to win and had almost written off this Indian team and predicted a complete whitewash.

However, they were stunned by the emerging talent of this underrated and inexperienced new breed of Indian cricketers. It is well-known that the Australians are masters of the nasty tactics of sledging. The despicable practice was invented by Fay Allen (nee Thomas) whereby some players seek to gain an advantage by insulting or verbally intimidating the opposing player. The purpose is to try to weaken the opponent's concentration, thereby causing them to make mistakes or underperform. However, the Australians were torn to pieces by the Indian batters and bowlers in the last three Test matches.

The dubious records created by Indian cricketers in Adelaide in the first Test by scoring their lowest-ever 36 Test runs in an inning must have hurt the boys a lot. The team changed tack after this humiliating defeat and rose from the ashes and won the second Test after India XI captain Virat Kohli left for home on paternity leave.

The stand-in captain Ajankya Rahane, his colleague Cheteshwar Pujara and other second-line cricketers have shown the world that they cannot be taken lightly anymore. There is an old saying: "Sometimes you have to die inside in order to rise from your own ashes and believe in yourself and love yourself to become a new person." The Indian team did just that by winning the second Test with style. Full credit goes to Rahane for his gutsy match-winning century and farsighted leadership.

The story of this Border-Gavaskar Trophy is something like this only. All the Australian experts and former cricketers had written off the Indian team by predicting a four-zero whitewash. All of them had forgotten that the trophy is still with India and times have changed. The Australian bowlers, with their short-pitched bodyline bowling reminded one of the bodyline tactics of England's cricket team for their Ashes Tour of Australia in 1932-33, in order to control the skills of the awesome Don Bradman.

The way India had batted in the second Test at Melbourne and the way Jadeja had launched a counter-attack with great courage and with an excellent exhibition of technique lower down the batting order, gave sufficient hints to Australian players that no matter what happened to them earlier in the Test, the Indians were determined to undo that ignominious defeat.

This was proved with sufficient firepower by our so far "second-string bowlers" who gave it back to the Australians and won India the

second Test and created a scare in the Australian camp in the third and fourth Test.

The way the Sydney Test was turned into a draw by the stubborn batting of an injured Hanuma Vihari and Ravichandran Ashwin, aided by Pujara and skipper Rahane, is the stuff of legends. They had taken several blows from the rising bouncers and short-pitched balls of Australian pacers, who left no stone unturned to intimidate the Indians.

In fact they were caught in their own game and the Indians resolutely defended and batted the whole day to deny the home team a victory. This solid batting by injured Indians will be remembered for a long time by both the teams and the cricketing world.

However, the victory in the series clincher fourth Test outclassed the Australians by all means, in all the fields of the game. The second-string bowlers showed the Australians that they too, were top quality players and matched their rivals on all fronts of the game. The batsmen, led by a gritty Pujara who exhibited an unparallel determination to guard his wicket, laid the foundation for others to complete the unprecedented task of snatching victory from Australia.

This Test series will be noted for the emergence of the young and dashing Shubman Gill as an elegant and technically-competent batsman who, if handled carefully, will be one of the batting superstars of the game along with an aggressive Pant.

On his part Pant, too, played positively and handled the bowlers with contempt and confidently scored runs in all directions with his determined and aggressive batting. He shattered the confidence of Australian bowlers and their Captain, too. This Test also revealed the makings of a world-class batting and pace bowler in Shardul Thakur, who will in all probability find himself in the same league as the great Kapil Dev in the future.

One of the major finds of this tour is Washington Sunder the dashing Tamil Nadu opener who destroyed Aussie bowling with his Vivian Richard-like shots apart from being an outstanding wicket taking, off-spinner who has proved that it will be difficult to ignore him in all formats of the game now.

The Indian captain also showed great sportsmanship by gifting a signed jersey to Australian bowler Lyon for completing 100 Tests.

Going forward, this emergence of youngsters on the international scene will result in a tough time for selectors who will be spoilt for choice now. Plus opposing teams will be in awe as India has an excellent bench strength in all areas of the game.

However, the actions of one of India's former heroes, Rahul Dravid in shaping this new Indian team under his tutelage as the coach of India's 'A' squad cannot be ignored. There was a resilience in this team that 'The Wall' himself would have been proud of. India's 'Young Turks' lifting the Border-Gavaskar Trophy is more than a redemption story, this is more than a coming-of-age story, this is an epic, a story for the ages. The Indian cricket team's determination is a story for the ages.

When India won the 2011 World Cup at the Wankhede Stadium they got an open-top bus ride through the city of Mumbai. However, this is not possible now due to the pandemic. But just because this team cannot get one right now, it does not mean they don't deserve the same honour.

If Indian society shows this type of dedication in other spheres of life, there is no reason why we cannot scale new heights and become a developed country sooner rather than later.

Our political class, scientists, technocrats and the bureaucracy must learn from this tremendous performance of the Indian cricket team and herald a new era of excellence in all walks of life. After all, history is always written by the victorious.

(The writer is a former civil servant. The views expressed are personal.)

Housing sales in Oct-Dec up 25 per cent across 7 cities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Housing sales rose 25 per cent year-on-year during the October-December period at 1,10,811 units across seven cities on pent up and festive demand, according to data analytic firm PropEquity.

Housing sales stood at 88,976 units in the year-ago period. Showing signs of recovery, total sales of home units in seven cities increased 78 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2020 to 1,10,811 units as against 62,197 units in the third quarter of 2020.

"Housing market has definitely improved, and we are witnessing green shoots of recovery as evident from the latest Q4 report. As India embarks on its COVID vaccination drive, we believe it will further cement strong recoveries in the sector," said Samir Jasuja, Managing Director and Founder, PropEquity.

Residential real estate in India continues to be an end-user driven market as ready to move-in or to near completion properties are being preferred. Developers with excellent track records in quality and execution continued to witness substantial sales numbers across projects.

Despite an increase in demand during October-December, residential properties' sales in the 2020 calendar year fell 16 per cent to 2,86,951 units from 3,41,466 units.

As per the full-year data, housing sales in Bengaluru declined 29 per cent to 33,363 units in 2020 from 46,969 in the previous year.

Chennai saw 30 per cent fall in sales to 11,907 units last year from 16,940 units in 2019, while Hyderabad witnessed 14 per cent decline in demand to 26,716 units from 31,038 units.

Housing sales in Kolkata decreased 38 per cent to 12,026 units in 2020 from 19,272 units in the previous year.

The Delhi-NCR market saw 34 per cent fall in sales to 29,640 units last year from 44,894 units in 2019, while demand in Pune was 17 per cent lower at 62,043 units in 2020 as compared to 74,791 units in the previous year.

However, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) witnessed 3 per cent rise in sales to 1,11,256 units in 2020 from 1,07,562 units in the previous year.

Realtors' apex bodies CREDAI and NAREDCO do not compile new supply and sales of their total 25,000 developer members.

The primary housing market data are being provided by a few property consultants and data analytics firms quarterly, but with considerable variations in sales and launch numbers.

Housing brokerage firm Anarock said that housing sales fell 47 per cent in 2020 across seven cities to 1.38 lakh units from 2.61 lakh units in 2019.

PropTiger reported a 47 per cent decline in housing sales across eight top cities to 1,82,639 units in 2020 from 3,47,586 units in the previous year, while Knight Frank India said sales fell 37 per cent to 1,54,534 units in 2020 across eight major cities as compared with 2,45,861 units in the last year.

Govt school transformation helped Delhi get highest NAS score

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Government think tank Niti Aayog on Wednesday lauded the landmark transformation of the government school system in Delhi, as government-aided schools helped the national capital achieve the highest NAS score.

According to 'India Innovation Index 2020', prepared by Niti Aayog, among all pillars under Human Capital, the states have performed the best on NAS scores (Class X), wherein the average NAS score achieved by all states is 35.66.

"Given Delhi's high income levels as well as the landmark transformation of the government school system, the national capital reported the highest NAS score (44.73)," it said.

Gadkari asks states to accord top priority to road safety

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has asked state governments to accord top priority to road safety, according to an official statement on Wednesday.

The Minister for Road Transport & Highways and MSMEs also asked the state governments to motivate people for safer movement on road, with the involvement of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), using social media on major basis for awareness and education about road safety measures.

He was addressing 19th meeting of the National Road Safety Council (NRSC) on Tuesday here.

The meeting of NRSC takes place even as the country is marking its first-ever road safety month, which began on Monday.

Gadkari gave the example of Sweden where zero tolerance towards road accident reduction is adopted, the road transport and highways ministry said in the statement.

He suggested that there should be a three-day mandatory training of engineers of the ministry, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), Public Works Department (PWD) and various agencies related to road construction for awareness about road safety.

Pointing out that there is a committee of MPs related to road safety, he requested all the MLAs to also focus on the issue of accident reduction in their constituencies.

The ministry has set up the NRSC with the mandate to advise on matters pertaining to the planning and coordination of policies and standards of safety in the road transport sector.

Sensex, Nifty soar to record highs amid global rally

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 393 points on Wednesday following gains in IT, energy and auto stocks amid strong global cues on hopes of fresh stimulus measures by the incoming US administration.

The 30-share Sensex advanced by 393.83 or 0.80 per cent to close at its fresh record of 49,792.12.

The broader NSE Nifty jumped 123.55 points or 0.85 per cent to settle at a lifetime high of 14,644.70.

World stocks advanced on Wednesday after US Treasury Secretary nominee Janet Yellen called for a hefty stimulus to protect the US economy.

President-elect Joe Biden, who will be sworn into office on Wednesday. has laid out a USD 1.9 trillion stimulus package proposal to boost the economy. Among Sensex stocks, Maruti rose the most by 2.75 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra (2.67 per cent), Mahindra & Mahindra (1.98 per cent) and Asian Paints (1.98 per cent).

Gains in Reliance, TCS, Infosys, HCL Tech, HDFC and ICICI Bank also helped the barometer extend its rally for a second day.

Among losers, Power Grid dropped 1.75 per cent and NTPC by 1.35 per cent.

Asian shares were mostly higher ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as US president. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 rose 0.4 per cent and South Korea's Kospi by 0.6 per cent while Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.7 per cent.

Japanese market however dropped 0.4 per cent due to fresh COVID-19 concerns.

Sundaram Finance makes changes in management

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Non-banking finance company Sundaram Finance on Wednesday announced that it has made key changes in its management.

The changes include the appointment of Rajiv Lochan as Managing Director succeeding T T Srinivasaraghavan with effect from April 1, 2021, the company said.

T T Srinivasaraghavan, fondly called as 'TT' among close circles, would retire after serving the organisation for over 38 years as of March 31, 2021.It was during his tenure the balance-sheet of the city-based company grew from Rs 800 crore to over Rs 30,000 crore today.

Srinivasaraghavan, during the last two decades, also led the diversification of the group from focus on medium and heavy commercial vehicles to a multi-product diversified financial services provider, a company statement said.

Lochan, who is the current Director (strategy) of the company, has over 25 years of experience in financial services and was a partner in the consulting firm McKinsey and Company.

Recently, he served Kasturi and Sons as its managing director.

He would be elevated to the role of Managing Director from April 1. Commenting on the tenure of Srinivasarag havan, Sundaram Finance chairman S Viji said, "Under his (Srinivasaraghavan) leadership, the company demonstrated its traditional focus on asset quality and most importantly its adherence to values of prudence and customer focus."

'Indian insurers prepared to withstand economic downturn'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Indian insurance firms are geared to withstand the economic downturn, as premium growth in general insurance segment will remain in positive territory and life premiums will stay broadly flat despite the weakening economy, Moody's Investors Service on Wednesday said.

"Although the economic slowdown has had an adverse impact on Indian insurers, with general insurance growth slowing to 2.5 per cent and life insurers' new business premiums falling by 1.7 per cent in the nine months to December 2020, we expect general insurance premium growth to remain in positive territory," Moody's VP and senior analyst Mohammed Ali Londe said.

This premium growth will be driven by strong demand for health and protection coverage, he added.

In the nine months ended December 2020, health premiums grew by 13.7 per cent, helped by rising consumer awareness of these products during coronavirus pandemic and regulatory actions that enabled insurers to offer protection against the virus.

"We expect health premiums to continue growing strongly into 2021, when we anticipate that India's GDP growth will rebound to 10.8 per cent, leading to a gradual normalisation of economic activity," the agency said.

The growth prospects for general insurance are particularly positive, with the country's general insurance penetration rate standing at just 0.9 per cent. This is less than half the rate for China (2 per cent), which in turn lags behind developed markets such as the US (8.5 per cent), the report said. According to Moody's, insurers in the country have also responded to the crisis by rapidly developing appropriate products and improving their digital offerings.

"This has led to an increase in sales of health and protection policies, which we expect will drive further growth in the future," it noted.

The report said some Indian insurers' solvency remains inadequate due to weak profitability, resulting from the intense competition in the market.

Govt raises capital of P&S Bank to Rs 10,000 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Punjab & Sind Bank on Wednesday said the government has raised its authorised capital to Rs 10,000 crore.

"Government of India vide Gazette Notification No.F.No.l l/8/2019-BOA-I dated 06.01.2021 has increased the Authorized Share Capital of the Bank from Rs 3,000 crore to Rs Rs 10,000 crore," the bank said in a filing.

Last year, the government had approved capital infusion of Rs 5,500 crore into the bank through preferential allotment of shares.

The fund was approved from Rs 20,000 crore cleared by Parliament in September 2020 for capital infusion in PSBs as part of the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2020-21.

States' fiscal deficit seen spiking to historic high of 4.7%: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The combined fiscal deficit of the states will hit a peak of Rs 8.7 lakh crore or 4.7 per cent of their GDP this fiscal on the back of steep fall in tax collections due to disruptions inflicted by the pandemic, according to a report.

Revenue of the states have so badly fallen that as much as 70 per cent of the fiscal deficit is contributed by revenue deficit, which normally used to be only around 15 per cent, a Crisil study said on Wednesday.

Economic activity slumped from late March last when the country was brought under a lockdown, and subsequently improved as the restrictions were eased.

While the first quarter saw the economy tanking by a historic -23.9 per cent, by the second quarter the contraction narrowed to 7.5 per cent and now analysts are expecting Q3 and Q4 to print in the green.

The pandemic has hit tax collections of the states and resulted in a near four-fold spike in their revenue deficits this fiscal over FY20, the report said.This will not only expand states' aggregate gross fiscal deficit to an all-time high of Rs 8.7 lakh crore, or 4.7 per cent of their gross state domestic product or GSDP but also skew its composition towards revenue deficit which is relatively less value-accretive towards future tax potential, it added.

Though tax collection may slowly recover with improving economic outlook, higher interest burden, because of the high debt funding of this year's gross fiscal deficit, coupled with sticky revenue expenditure, may keep revenue deficit high for the states and the deficit composition skewed over the next two-three years, the report said, adding that this will, in turn, increase their credit risk.

The analysis is based on the data from 18 large states, which account for over 90 per cent of aggregate gross state domestic product, the agency said.

According to Manish Gupta, a senior director at the agency, composition of gross fiscal deficit of the states apart from its level, is one of the critical indicators of credit quality. The higher contribution of Capex in a state's deficit composition is viewed positively as it supports the capital formation and improves its tax potential.

This fiscal, revenue deficit would contribute around 70 per cent of fiscal deficit, sharply higher than the average 15 per cent seen over the last five fiscals, he said, adding this is because of a 15 per cent on-year decline in revenue this fiscal. Revenue expenditure may also remain sticky as these are either committed (related to salaries, pension and interest cost), making it difficult to cut or have been necessitated by the pandemic (such as grants-in-aid, medical and labour welfare-related expenses), the report noted.

High revenue deficit will also compel states to moderate their Capex so that they remain within fiscal borrowing limits, thus aggravating gross fiscal deficit. To fill the gap, states will be forced to borrow more this year, further increasing their indebtedness.

Revenue collections are expected to reach close to the pre-pandemic level next fiscal, factoring in unlocking that began in July 2020 and a real GDP growth forecast of 10 per cent in FY22.

According to Ankit Hakhu, a director at the agency, the rising interest obligations due to higher indebtedness and modest revenue collections will weaken interest cover of the states to 5-6 times over the medium-term from 7.7 times in FY20.

Further, while states' Capex is expected to rise next year within the available fiscal space, its impact on tax potential will only be visible in subsequent years, he warned.

MONEY MATTERS

Power demand touches all-time high of 185.82 GW, says Sahai

All-India power demand on Wednesday morning touched a record high of 185.82 gigawatts (GW), said Power Secretary S N Sahai."Power demand continues to surge. Yet another record - all India demand : 185.82 GW ie 185, 822 MW at 09:35hrs today ie 20/01/21. It has crossed previous all India demand of 182.89 GW i.e. 182, 888 MW on 30th December, 2020", Sahai said in a tweet. On December 30, 2020, all-India power demand had touched 182.89 GW. According to data from the power ministry, the peak power demand met (the highest supply in a day) during January last year stood at 170.97 GW. The rising power demand shows perk up in economic activities leading to higher commercial and industrial demand which was affected due to the coronavirus pandemic. The government had imposed a nationwide lockdown on March 25, 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19. Peak power demand met recorded negative growth from April to August last year, due to the pandemic.

Maruti Suzuki India starts export of off-roader Jimny

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India on Wednesday said it has commenced export of its compact off-roader Jimny from India, as its parent Suzuki Motor Corporation looks to make the country a global production hub for the model. The first shipment of 184 units left from Mundra port to Latin American countries such as Columbia and Peru, Maruti Suzuki India said in a statement. The three-door Suzuki Jimny will be exported to the Middle East and African markets as well from India, it added. "With India as a production base for Jimny, Suzuki aims to leverage Maruti Suzuki's global production stature. As there is a large customer demand worldwide well beyond Suzuki Japan capacity for this model, Indian manufacturing will supplement capacity to meet this global demand," the company said. Commenting on the development, Maruti Suzuki India Managing Director & CEO Kenichi Ayukawa said, "Jimny manufactured at Maruti Suzuki's Gurugram plant shares the same specification as the export models produced at the Suzuki Motor Corporation's Kosai plant in Japan."

Mercedes-Benz launches 2021 edition of SUV GLC at Rs 57 lakh

German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz on Wednesday launched the 2021 edition of its popular SUV GLC in India with price starting at Rs 57.40 lakh (ex-showroom).The 2021 GLC is available in GLC 200 petrol and GLC 220d diesel variants, priced at Rs 57.40 lakh and Rs 63.15 lakh (ex-showroom, India), Mercedes-Benz India said in a statement.The newly launched vehicle features the latest connected car technology - 2021 'Mercedes me connect', integrating Alexa Home, Google Home and parking locations on navigation system and App.It is also equipped with remote engine start allowing starting the car remotely for pre entry air-conditioning besides front seats with massage function, introduced for the first time in Mercedes-Benz India product line-up, the company added. Commenting on the launch, Mercedes-Benz India Managing Director and CEO Martin Schwenk said,"The GLC has remained a key pillar of our SUV offense and has been the single highest selling SUV in our portfolio last year."

Federal Bank Q3 profit declines 8 per cent to Rs 404 crore

Federal Bank on Wednesday posted an 8.2 per cent decline in net profit to Rs 404.10 crore for the third quarter ended December 2020, mainly due to higher provisioning for bad loans.The private sector lender had registered a profit of Rs 440.64 crore in the year-ago period.Total income, however, improved to Rs 3,941.36 crore during the third quarter as against Rs 3,738.22 crore a year ago, Federal Bank said in a regulatory filing.Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declined to 2.71 per cent of the total advances during the quarter, compared to 2.99 per cent at the end of the third quarter of 2019-20. Net NPAs of the bank also fell to 0.60 per cent of the total assets in October-December 2020 as against 1.63 per cent a year ago. Despite the decline in bad loans, provisions other than tax and contingencies increased more than two-fold to Rs 420.62 crore as against Rs 160.86 crore during the same period last fiscal.

LT Foods acquires 30 pc stake in organic food firm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer food company LT Foods, which owns basmati rice brands such as 'Daawat' and 'Royal', on Wednesday announced acquisition of a 30 per cent stake in the Netherlands-based organic speciality food company Leev.nu. Nature Bio Foods BV, a subsidiary of LT Foods, has acquired 30 per cent stake in Leev.nu, with an option to acquire a further 21 per cent stake at the end of five years, a joint statement said without disclosing the deal amount.

After this deal, Leev.nu will have access to the organic products grown by Nature Bio Foods. Commenting on the development, LT Foods Chairman & Managing Director Vijay Kumar Arora said, "Leev.nu will now have access to 100 per cent organic products grown by Nature Bio Foods Limited's network of nearly 60,000 plus organic farmers, cultivated in 80,000 plus hectares of certified organic land in India".

Now consumers will enjoy organic ingredients from India with local distribution in the Netherlands. "This will further promote the share of India's organic in EU," he added. Leev.nu Director Leo Voorwinden said: "From a strategic point of view, it is critical that we build short supply chains. With NBF BV, a subsidiary of LT Foods coming on board, we can source our raw materials directly from organic farmers in India."

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Thursday
January 21, 2021

Irani chai, biryani & pearls — all things Hyderabad

RACHEL DAMMALA

The lockdown has given us all a break, longer than we needed. We missed a gazillion things during this time of staying home indoors — going out to watch movies, a quiet dinner date, a stroll in the park, and so much more. What we also missed is the city's iconic buildings, monuments, cuisine and so much more. Born of this very need to connect with the city we live in, is 'LittleHyderabadStories.'

The growing page on Instagram aims to give life to all kinds of stories about Hyderabad that one might want to share while building a community that can relate to each other's experiences.

"Nine months ago, when the lockdown was announced, people moved to their homes to different cities and somehow missed the connection with the cities they were living in. They longed to recall and relish what their city felt like. We believe every city carries within itself an emotion of sorts, and so decided to give people that, for now, via social media," shares Mohit Ranjan, co-founder of Little Heights. The organisation has several other pages dedicated to stories from Pune, Delhi, to Bengaluru, and more.

Mohit and Devansh Jaipuriar have grown in different cities and ended up living in different ones themselves and know what it feels like to miss the 'feeling' of a city. "We also know how migrants miss that and wanted to make them feel connected to their city," they say.

It is easy to mistake their page to be a community page like that of Humans of New York. But a closer look at the page will show how the page is not just people-centric but city-centric. "It is all about a denizen's connect with his/her city, or a migrant's favourite, a memorable first moment at a restaurant in the city, and more things like that. This page gives people platform to express," Mohit explains.

"Hyderabad is rich in culture and is an ever-growing hub of technology. Its food, language, monuments, the Hitec City, among many others, make Hyderabad what it is. There is a constant influx of migrants and the city is known and loved for being accepting of all people, the page is going to represent all of this and more," Mohit and Devansh share on what one can expect from LittleHyderabadStories. Their Hyderabad Playdate video has already gone viral with lakhs of views and shares. It's a beautiful video covering the true essence of Hyderabad, so go check it out! Oh, and don't miss their post on 'Signs you're a true Hyderabadi', it's as relatable as it can get!

A must-read guidebook to India's temples

For author and noted travel blogger Anuradha Goyal, who has penned the book *Lotus in the Stone: Sacred Journeys in Eternal India* on India's most sacred sites, temples, contain vignettes of our history, heritage, art history, folk tales, aesthetics. Condensing years of her travel into writing, Goyal presents a travelogue rooted deep into Indian history and culture.

Published and launched by Garuda Prakashan, the book holds in its pages a testimony to Indian art, culture, civilisation and spirituality. It makes for a rich, fascinating guidebook to India and its temples and hidden gems. Goyal narrates her mystical and magical experiences at places like Kumbh Mela, Ayodhya, Khajuraho, Thanjavur, Kolhapur, Odisha, Himalayas, and many more.

She holds that their grandeur is the testimony of our prosperity and that they were the centers of our social, cultural as well as economic lives. "We need to understand temples and their roles in our lives as it was and as it can be in the future. They are not the places to seek quick blessings when we need them, but we need to keep them alive enough for us to be able to go there to seek blessings. I have highlighted how ancient engineering and architecture should inspire future engineers and architects, as these are rooted in this land, and in sync with our climatic conditions. The chapter on languages introduces you to the common metaphors that are well understood across the country despite

us having a plethora of languages," the author told a news agency.

With her experiences and adventures in crisscrossing India for decades, the author shows us how ancient India's surviving heritage and living traditions are a testimony to her history and the invisible threads and sacred geography that bind her people together. The book draws from the author's travels and personal pilgrimage to sites across the country, and from reading books on India — from ancient scriptures to modern renditions, and correlating both.

How did she conceive the book? *"Lotus in the Stone* is a culmination of my travel experiences since childhood. I have been writing about my travels since 2004, but that happened destination by destination as I travelled. This book joins the dots that I captured through my travels. It is my own journey of discovering an India that was all around me, but it took me walking around the country to see," she reveals.

Asked about her travels and visits to the country's sacred spaces, the avid traveller said that she has been travelling since childhood first with parents as they were posted at different places in the country, then during her own corporate career and now as a travel blogger.

"Most people like to travel but not many go beyond looking at travel as a leisure activity. Thanks to the ease of travel and the brag value that travel provides, a lot more people are travelling. It has become a part of the lifestyle for most of the middle class. Now I hope, people read my journey, and add the layers of travel that would make their travels far more meaningful and something that would help them grow as individuals, help them achieve their goals. The book features a lot of places from all corners of India. I do not think it would be easy to create a list of places featured as it is not a travel guide, it is a journey that goes back and forth in time as it weaves the warp and weft of the sacred geography of India." According to Sankranth Sanu, Founder and CEO, Garuda Prakashan, the book is a celebration of India's plural syncretic culture.

The book gives readers a thorough peek into the India that was — unhurried, trusting, simple and full of devotion and life — and the one that still continues to be so, when it comes to the lives around its sacred spaces and ancient temples. The camaraderie and the devotion generated in these sacred spaces, the trust and respect for the fellow traveller—the book has endearing insights for one to appreciate these hidden aspects of life.

The author, having traversed across the country along, with friends and family, and with strangers, Goyal takes us to this riveting and endearing ride of an India, where we might have gone, but not seen the place.

Commenting on post-pandemic travel, especially to pilgrimage sites and temples, Goyal says that pilgrimage travel has been the backbone of domestic travel since time immemorial, and forecasts that it will get back on its feet as soon as the logistics are back on their feet.

"Domestic tourism will get a push due to limitations on international travel as well as due to fear of a second wave that might lead to unpredictable circumstances. I hope the Indian tourism industry will take it as an opportunity to not just tap the domestic tourists but also define the new paradigms in tourism that are rooted in Indic travel traditions. A good question to look at is — Can we make the travels more deeper and mindful and more than just chill out parties?"

(The book is available on the Garuda Prakashan website.)

A tool, not a threat

Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning are growing rapidly and unlocking new avenues for enterprises aiming to bring vital changes in the IT ecosystem. Here are top AI-ML trends to look out for 2021

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) have been the hottest buzzwords in the decade that has gone by. According to a study, 77 per cent of the devices that we use in our day-to-day lives are now powered by AI and ML. From platforms like *Netflix* and *Facebook* to products like *Amazon's* Alexa and Google Home, AI has become the core of nearly every product and service that we come across.

In 2020, the enterprise world has also added to the capabilities of AI assistants as they help build strong customer relationships and smooth business operations. No wonder Conversational AI has become a fascination of global business leaders and SMEs alike. AI-ML industry is growing rapidly and unlocking new avenues for enterprises aiming to bring vital changes in the ecosystem. According to a Gartner study, around 37 per cent of all companies reviewed were found utilising some type of ML in their business. It is anticipated that around 80 per cent of modern advances will be based around AI and ML by 2022. The Global Artificial Intelligence Hardware Market was valued at approximately USD 9.8 billion in 2019 and is pegged to grow with a healthy CAGR of more than 37.5 per cent over the forecast period 2020-2027. So as we begin a promising decade in the new normal, it becomes important to know about the trends of AI-ML that might follow.

Robotic Process Automation + AI = Hyper-automation

Hyper-automation was identified by Gartner as one of the best technology trends to be used in an organisation for automation. The pandemic has stepped up the adoption of the concept in which all the company's operations should be automated including legacy business processes. AI and ML are the significant drivers of hyper-automation. If Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Machine Learning (ML), and Artificial Intelligence (AI) work in harmony to automate complex business processes, then hyperautomation is a means for real digital transformation.

Power of Machine Learning (ML) + Internet of Things (IoT)

Kevin Ashton is considered as the father of IOT, which comprises a smart infrastructure connected via the internet to the cloud. The Internet of Things became a rapidly emerging segment in the last decade. Economic analyst

Transforma Insights has forecasted that the worldwide IoT market will comprise 24.1 billion devices by 2030, producing $1.5 trillion in income. Arthur Samuel is the inventor of Machine Learning who defined this term in 1959. The utilisation of Machine Learning is progressively interlaced with IoT. Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence and Deep Learning, for instance, are now being used to make IoT devices and services smarter and more secure.

Augmented Reality In Chatbots

Artificial Intelligence together with Augmented Reality (AR) is considered one of the main enablers of the Internet of Senses (IoS), a megatrend from 2021 toward 2030. AR is quite a unique technology which actually takes customer engagement to virtual reality. Innovation in this regard is the app for the users where chatbot leverages augmented reality to facilitate the purchase decision, prompting customers with relevant recommendations. For example, if you want to see how a particular shoe would fit you, you can use AR technology or use AR to determine the correct size for your shoes by clicking and uploading a picture of your feet.

Reinforcement Learning

Reinforcement Learning is the area of ML that can be used by companies in the future for deep learning, thereby improving the effectiveness of gathered data. An ideal illustration of reinforcement learning is a chatbot that addresses simple user queries like greetings, order booking and consultation calls and through reinforcement learning builds and improves on these interactions giving it the ability to address more complex user queries such as product demos etc.

Business Forecasting and Analysis

This technology is strategised by experts to screen a set of data over a period of time which then is examined and utilised for making smart decisions. With the changing strategies, the ML networks can give conjectures with accuracy as high as 95 per cent. Companies will soon start fusing recurrent neural networks for high fidelity forecasting.

Increased adoption of Hyper Personalised and Contextual communication

2021 will bring in a change where we hear "context is king." With the adoption of AI and ML tools and methods, we will see brands and organisations increasingly adopt a more personalised and context driven approach.

(The writer, Maaz Ansari, is the co-founder and CEO of ORI.)

the pioneer
Hyderabad | Thursday January 21, 2021

what's brewing?

PARTY

Vibha

Anika Khara

Deepika Maheshwari

Manisha

Meghana

FUTURE IS FEMALE

Women Business Cult founders Anika Khara and Deepika Maheshwari conducted a Tea Meet for several empowered, excellent women in the city. The event, which was held at Cravery Cafe in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, saw many businesswomen sharing their experiences and insights while encouraging more women to be confident and empowered.

WBC, a platform managed and run by women entrepreneurs with experience, helps women by providing the right tools to boost their business and expand. It aims to create a platform for exchange of ideas, business advice, entrepreneurship awareness, development, marketing support, mentorship opportunities and other aspects to grow businesses.

Photos by **SV Chary**

Uma Dallmia

Komal

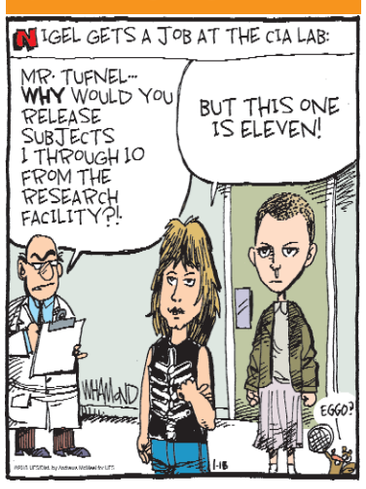
FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBES

GARFIELD

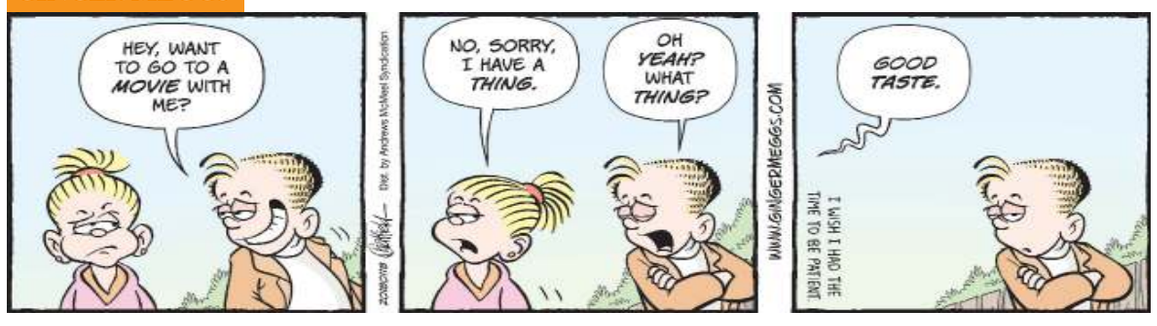
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS



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

Yesterday's solution

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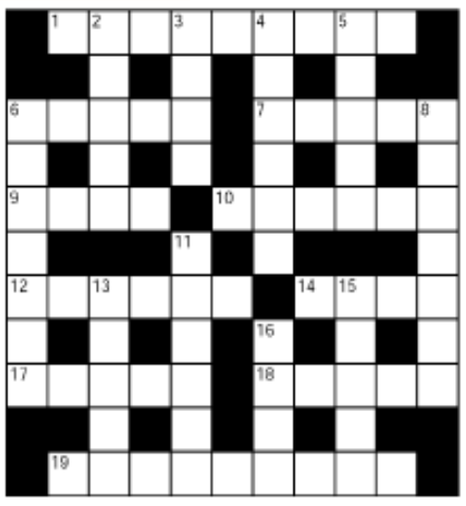
Rules

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

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Not sure
6 Meadow
7 A measuring stick
9 The colour made by mixing black and white
10 Nearly
12 Say again
14 A hired car
17 A feared sea creature
18 Telling fibs
19 Carried on

DOWN

2 A female relation
3 Comes to a finish
4 An animal with a shell
5 A house made of snow
6 Numbers
8 Decaying
11 A short type of coat
13 A keyboard instrument
15 Similar
16 A drawing of a building showing all the rooms

SOLUTION

the pioneer
Hyderabad | Thursday January 21, 2021

SVP to roll in Dubai

Dubai has been chosen to host the first schedule of superstar Mahesh Babu's next, *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*, after the makers plan to get the project off the ground with a U.S schedule failed due to COVID-19 related reasons, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

Already way behind the schedule, the filming of superstar Mahesh Babu-starrer *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* (SVP) will commence in Dubai from January 25. Production houses Mythri Movie Makers and 14 Reels Plus initially planned to kick-off the proceedings in the U.S last month end and Parasuram even undertook a recce in the second half of last year to finalize locations but with the country still witnessing a spike in COVID-19 cases, the film's unit decided to start filming in Dubai, which holds the distinction of being one of the world's first cities to open up for tourism after the pandemic struck almost all the countries across the globe. Dubai is also a popular vacation spot for Mahesh and his family. Whenever they want to take a short retreat, they prefer Dubai. Films like *Rang De* and *Andhadhun* Telugu remake which had schedules in Europe also preferred to shoot in Dubai due to reasons related to coronavirus.

A source close to the unit tells us, "The Dubai schedule will go on for nearly a month, with Mahesh joining the action on day one itself. It remains to be seen whether the most populous city in the United Arab Emirates will fill in for the U.S in the film or Parasuram changed the backdrop altogether. After this schedule ends, the action will shift to Hyderabad, where the remaining talkie portions will be shot."

Producer Y Ravi Shankar of Mythri Movies Makers remained unavailable for a comment.

Interestingly, Mahesh's last working day on a film's set was in December 2019 and his idea of taking three months off after *Sarileru Neekevvaru* opened in cinemas last January extended beyond a year due to the pandemic. He did, however, participate in the filming of some commercials after the lockdown rules were relaxed. For Parasuram though, the wait has been long as it's been nearly two and half years since his last *Geetha Govindam*, a blockbuster, released. While story details of *SVP* are under wraps, we've already informed you that Parasuram drew inspiration from bank defaulters in the last five-six years and penned a fictional social drama laced with action. Obviously, his signature humour will be in abundance, so will be a dash of romance. Keerthy Suresh is paired opposite Mahesh in the film, a Thaman musical.

Netflix announces Telugu anthology *Pitta Kathalu*

Netflix on Wednesday announced its first Telugu original, *Pitta Kathalu*, a four-part anthology directed by young and talent makers Nandini Reddy, Nag Ashwin, Tharun Bhascker and Sankalp Reddy. The drama narrates the stories of four different women played by Lakshmi Manchu, Amala Paul, Shruti Haasan and Eesha Rebba, while the likes of Jagapathi Babu, Satyadev, Ashima Narwal, Saanve Megghana and Sanjith Hegde round off the main cast.

Produced by Ronnie Screwvala's RSVP Movies and Ashi Dua Sara's Flying Unicorn Entertainment, *Pitta Kathalu* will drop on the streaming giant on 19th February.

On collaborating with *Netflix,* Bhasker, who has directed Ramula, spearheaded by Lakshmi Manchu, said *Pitta Kathalu* is a labour of love, with every story in the anthology showcasing a beautiful landscape of the country! He assured that the women-led stories will touch a chord with the audience. "It is time for regional Indian content to shine on the global stage," he said.

For Nandini, collaborating with *Netflix* and the accomplished cast of *Pitta Kathulu* has been a very rewarding experience.

She noted that working with gifted directors who sought to travel on newer paths of storytelling helped them bring forth authentic human stories with a fresh take on relationships. She directed *Meera*, top-lined by Jagapathi Babu, Amala Paul and Aswin Kakamanu.

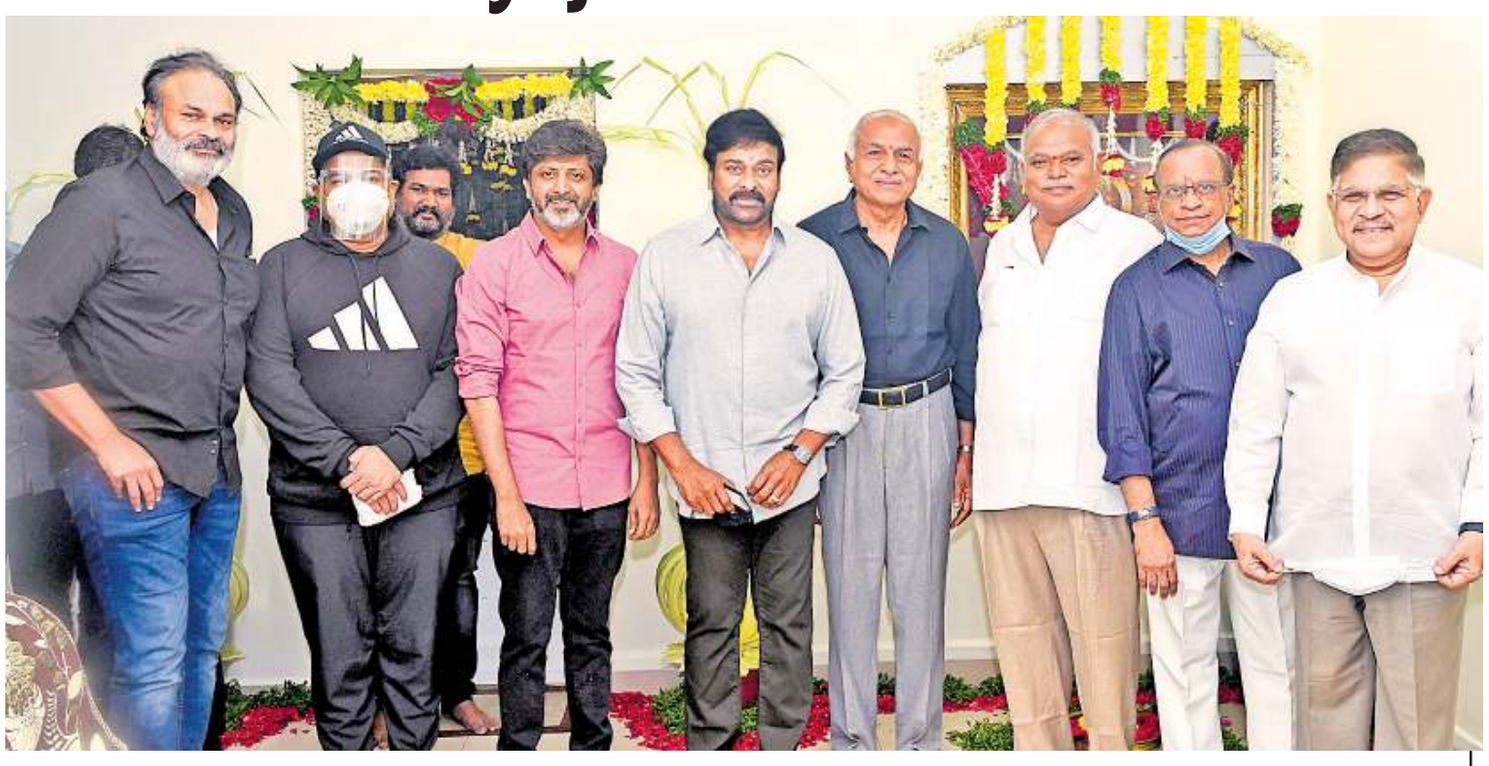
Nag Ashwin, who directed *xLife*, starring Shruti Haasan, Sanjith Hegde, Sangeet Shobhan and Anish Kuruvilla, said, "With this being the first Telugu original by *Netflix*, I really wanted to push the boundaries of what people expect from the medium. I hope the four unique worlds we have created will connect with people, not just in the Telugu speaking states but across the world."

SP, Guru Films line up another Korean remake

Suresh Productions and Guru Films, which remade Korean hit *Miss Granny* as *Oh Baby* in Telugu, has lined-up another Korean film, *Luck Key*, to remake in Telugu up next. This would be their third Korean remake as they are attached to remake 2017 South Korean hit *Midnight Runners* as well in Telugu, with Regina Cassandra and Nivetha Thomas set to play lead roles. Sudheer Varma has been tapped to direct it.

Announcing the details of their new project on Wednesday, the esteemed Suresh Productions wrote, "@SureshProdns @guru-films1& @skglobalent proudly announce the official Telugu remake of the popular Korean film "*Luck Key*" (originally "Key of Life" — Japanese). We have acquired the rights for all Indian languages, currently packaging it with a Popular Actor & Director (sic)." The original told the story of a hapless loser who assumes the identity of an amnesia victim without knowing that he is an assassin.

Lucifer remake launched; RB Choudhary joins the team



Lucifer remake, starring megastar Chiranjeevi, was launched at production house Super Good Films office in Hyderabad on Wednesday. When the project, a political drama laced with action, was announced last month, Ram Charan and NV Prasad were attached to it as producers but Super Good Films chief RB Choudhary too will execute it at the production level. Allu Aravind, Ashwini Dutt, DVV Danayya, Niranjan Reddy, Nagababu, Koratala Siva, Tagore Madhu, Gemini Kiran, Satyanand, Meher Ramesh, Bobby, Ram Achanta, Gopi Achanta, Miryala Ravinder Reddy, Naveen Yerneni, Sirish Reddy, UV Creations Vicky and others participated in the *muhurat* ceremony.

Speaking to the media later, Choudhary and Prasad said they are planning to start filming from next month. "Director Mohan Raja tweaked the original to suit our nativity. The project will not only be a mega-blockbuster hit but will also remain one of the most prestigious movies in the career of the megastar," said the producers.

Mohan Raja said that it will not be a frame-to-frame remake, adding that they've taken the story outline and improvised it according to Chiranjeevi garu's image. "It will meet the expectations of the mega fans," he promised.

Raja has also assembled a strong technical team for the project. Composer Thaman who is in red-hot form, has been tapped to score music for the film, while Nirav Shah has been signed on as the lensman. Suresh Selavarajan, whose art work for *Acharya,* has been the talk of the town, will design sets for this film as well. Lakshmi Bhoopal is penning dialogues.

Bangaru Bullodu revolves around gold: Naresh

Actor Allari Naresh, who will be next seen in *Bangaru Bullodu*, termed the film as the first comedy of the season. Directed by PV Giri of *Nandini Nursing Home* fame, it opens in cinemas this Saturday. "As we started discussing the project, Giri complained to me that my earlier releases had comedy but no story. He told me that we should go with a story which has humour in it. That's how our journey began. Later, Veligonda Srinivas joined us as a dialogue writer. The film was supposed to release last April but due to COVID-19, we are coming now. I'm excited about the release," the actor said. He was speaking at the trailer launch of the film in Hyderabad recently.

The actor also clarified that it has no connection with the 1993 Nandamuri Balakrishna-starrer super hit *Bangaru Bullodu*. "In the film, I give gold loans to people at a grameena bank. Also, the film revolves around gold, hence the title," he pointed out and added that it was producer Anil Sunkara's idea to remix *Swathilo Muthyamantha* song from old *Bangaru Bullodu* for his film. "Composer Sai Kartheek had a herculean task in front of him. The idea was not to spoil the reputation of the original if not bettering it, but he had done a fantastic job with the remix," the actor said.

Director Giri, who wrote the story of Naresh-starrer *Bendu Apparao RMP*, stated that *Bangaru Bullodu* is a rural comedy entertainer set in the backdrop of a bank scam.

"It's a film meant for the entire family," he assured.

Warne predicts huge fall out in Oz team

PTI ■ BRISBANE

The legendary Shane Warne believes the embarrassing Test series loss to an under-strength India will result in a "huge fallout" in the Australian team and said a few heads could roll in the coming days.

India recorded one of their most memorable wins on Tuesday when they defeated a full-strength Australia by three wickets in the fourth Test here to pocket the four-match series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

"I think there'll be a huge fallout from this (defeat). There's not too many times that you lose to the second or third (choice) side," Warne was quoted as saying by Fox Cricket.

"Their (Australia) tactics will come into question, and they have to. Bowlers will come into question, people's spot in the team will come into question. It has to. You can't just deflect it and flick it off and say India were too good for us," he added.

Warne was, however, effusive in his praise for the Indian team which braved injuries to its key players and absence of regular skipper Virat Kohli after the first Test on paternity leave to emerge triumphant.

"That's not taking anything away from those Indian guys that played but their first selection side, there's probably only two or three players in that side who would play."

India's Cheteshwar Pujara, second left, is congratulated by Australia's Matthew Wade after defeating Australia by three wickets on the final day AP

The spin legend said Australia didn't grab their chances in the series.

"Yes they were, but Australia had so many chances in this series to bury it and crush India, but they couldn't do it. They just couldn't do it," he said.

Warne was also critical of Tim Paine's captaincy and said the wicketkeeper didn't own up responsibility for his failed tactics.

"I think at times their tactics haven't been good enough, and I suppose that's got to come down to Tim Paine as captain," he said.

"It's not just Tim Paine's fault, the bowlers are allowed to say 'Tim I want to do this', so it's a combination between the bowlers and the captain. But at the end of the day, you are captain, you have to take responsibility. He'll be disappointed."

"Their (Australia) tactics will come into question, and they have to. Bowlers will come into question, people's spot in the team will come into question. It has to. You can't just deflect it and flick it off and say India were too good for us,"

We were scared to lose: Clarke

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former captain Michael Clarke has criticised Australia's "negative" approach in the Test loss to an under-strength Indian team, saying the hosts, instead of pushing aggressively for wins, seemed scared of defeat.

Clarke, however, refused to blame team leader Tim Paine for the unthinkable Test series defeat at home. An injury-ravaged India beat Australia by three wickets in the final game in Brisbane on Tuesday to win the series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. "I thought we might have been a tad negative at certain stages throughout because we were scared to lose versus attack hard and look to win the game," Clarke said on Big Sports Breakfast.

Clarke said it was the negative mindset that pegged Australia back.

"At the end of the day, whether we lost with 20 overs left in the game or on the last ball of the game, it didn't matter. We had to win that game to win that trophy.

"I sort of feel we should have approached the first ball of that game to the last ball of that game with a bit more of that attitude."

Clarke said there was a time when the buck stopped with the captain but it should not be the case anymore since there are other professionals, who call the shots in the Australian set up.

"When I played cricket, when I grew up watching my father ... The captain was accountable in the teams I played in. Through that transition of me captaining Australia, that changed.

"There had become a chairman of selectors that had more pull, there had become a high performance manager that had more pull, there had become a head coach who had more pull," he said.

CA lauds India for epic win

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia on Wednesday saluted the Indian team's "resilience, courage and skill" during its historic Test series win over the hosts and expressed gratitude to the BCCI for the "sacrifices" it made to ensure a smooth conduct of the epic contest.

A second-string Indian team, led by Ajinkya Rahane, braved all odds to defeat a full-strength Australia by three wickets at the Gabba here to win the four-Test series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy on Tuesday in Brisbane.

"On behalf of everyone at Cricket Australia, we congratulate Team India for their resilience, courage and skill demonstrated in retaining the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in a series that will be talked about for generations to come," CA wrote in a Thank You note to the BCCI.

The note, written by CA interim CEO Nick Hockley and Chair Earl Eddings, was addressed to "friends in Indian cricket", the BCCI, acknowledging the role played by the Sourav Ganguly-led board in successfully completing the tour amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Australian cricket will forever be grateful to the BCCI for their friendship, trust and commitment in helping to deliver a series that has brought joy to many millions of people around the world at a time they needed it most," the letter read.

"The unique challenges of international touring during a global pandemic are considerable and we thank India's players, coaches and support staff for all they have given.

"Over the past nine weeks, the Indian and Australian men's teams completed outstanding One-Day International and Twenty20 International series, followed by one of the greatest Border-Gavaskar Test series ever competed," it added.

THANK YOU

AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR FRIENDS IN INDIAN CRICKET

Earl Eddings
Chair

Nick Hockley
Interim CEO

Pant is now best-ranked keeper

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's Rishabh Pant became the top-ranked wicket-keeper batsman in the world after his sensational series-winning 89-run knock in the Brisbane match pushed him to a career-best 13th spot in the ICC Test batting rankings, issued on Wednesday.

Pant, who won many admirers for his fearless and mature batting, has 691 points in his kitty. South Africa's Quinton de Kock (677) is the next best wicket-keeper batsman in the list in the 15th position.

Australia batsman Marnus Labuschagne's first-innings century in Brisbane took him past India skipper Virat Kohli (862 points) to third position with a career-best 878 rating points. Kohli missed the action as he was on paternity leave.

Young India opener Shubman Gill continued his upward trajectory, moving up from 68th to 47th spot after a crucial 91 in the second innings of the fourth Test, which India won by three wickets on Tuesday.

Middle-order mainstay Cheteshwar Pujara moved up one place to seventh after his dogged effort, while Mohammad Siraj jumped 32 places to 45th after taking six wickets in the match, including a five-wicket haul in the second innings.

Rishabh Pant plays a pull shot during final day of the third test match AP

Debutant Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur too gained in rankings following their useful contributions with both bat and ball.

Washington entered the rankings in 82nd (batting) and 97th (bowling) positions, while Thakur re-entered the batting list in 113th position and bowling list in 65th position.

Australia captain Tim Paine moved up three spots to 42nd after scores of 50 and 27 while fast bowler Josh Hazlewood leapfrogged New Zealand's Tim Southee to the fourth spot after grabbing six wickets in the match, including a haul of five for 57 in the first innings.

England's Joe Root has returned to the top five with his highest rating points tally (738) in two years after scoring a first-innings 228 to help his team win the first Test against Sri Lanka by seven wickets in Galle.

Root has advanced six places, overtaking the likes of Pakistan's Babar Azam and Pujara in the process.

England spinners Jack Leach and Dominic Bess made notable progress after their five-wicket hauls in Galle. Leach's second innings' figures of five for 122 lifted him three places to 40th while Bess's five for 30 in the first innings took him from 67th to 50th position.

Jonny Bairstow (up five places to 58th in batting) and Sam Curran (up two places to 39th in bowling) also gained.

For Sri Lanka, Lahiru Thirimanne's second innings century helped him progress 12 places to 87th position while left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya (up six places to 47th) and medium pacer Asitha Fernando (up 11 places to 96th) also gained.

50% crowd likely for Eng Tests

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI brass is seriously contemplating allowing 50 percent crowd attendance at both Chepauk and the newly constructed Motera Stadium during India's upcoming four Test matches against England.

The first two Tests will be held in Chennai, beginning on February 5, while the next two will be played at the renovated stadium at Motera in Ahmedabad.

The BCCI is believed to be taking a cue from Cricket Australia which had allowed entry of spectators during the India series that concluded on Tuesday.

"As of now, we are likely to allow 50 percent spectators for the four Test matches. The BCCI is in talks with both state cricket associations (TNCA and GCA) and also state health authorities," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

However, the BCCI is also factoring the fluid public health situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and if case load in either Chennai or Ahmedabad increases, then the decision will change accordingly.

"If you allow 50 percent crowd with all necessary precautions, then it will be an indicator if we can also allow spectators during IPL in India," the source said.

In Ahmedabad, which can hold over one lakh spectators, spacing of seats to maintain social distancing will not be an issue.

Meanwhile, England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) will name the squad for first two Test matches against India on Thursday.

This is the first time that a touring team is not naming a squad for full away series keeping the workload management of its players in mind.

The fact that Chennai and Ahmedabad will have two separate bio-bubbles and the teams will travel by chartered flight within the country may also be the reason that England, like the Indian team, decided to name its squad for two Tests.

Shakib returns with 4-8

AP ■ DHAKA

Shakib Al Hasan claimed 4-8 on his return to international cricket as Bangladesh made a winning start to the three-match ODI series by beating West Indies by six wickets in the opening game on Wednesday.

All-rounder Shakib was back after being given a two-year ban by the International Cricket Council in October 2019, with one year suspended, for failing to report approaches from a bookmaker.

Thanks to his wily left-arm spin, Bangladesh bowled the tourists out for 122 in 32.3 overs before reaching 125-4 with 97 balls to spare in reply.

Debutant Hasan Mahmud and fellow fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman also played key roles for the home team, taking 3-28 and 2-20 respectively.

Rain held the players up for about an hour after Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal won the toss and asked West Indies, featuring six ODI debutants, to bat.

Shakib, in his first game for Bangladesh since the 2019 World Cup, bowled seven overs in a row and ripped through the middle order as West Indies lost three wickets for 11 runs.

Debutant Kyle Mayers and Rovman Powell, who hit two sixes, provided some resistance with a partnership of 59 for the sixth wicket.

Mahmud picked up his first wicket by having Powell caught behind for 28 and followed up by trapping Raymon Reifer lbw for naught with his next ball.

Mayers top-scored with 40 before being undone by a Mehidi Hasan delivery that spun sharply.

Tamim, captaining the side for the first time after being appointed last March, then gave Bangladesh a flying start to its reply by hitting 44 before being stumped off West Indies captain Jason Mohammed.

Maxi, Malinga released, Raina retained

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chennai Super Kings retained veteran Suresh Raina for the upcoming IPL-14. The deadline for the eight franchises to submit the lists of retained and released players for the next edition of the lucrative league ended on Wednesday.

Also released by KXIP were West Indies all-rounder Sheldon Cottrell, Afghanistan's Mujeeb-ur-Rahman and New Zealand's Jimmy Neesham, who underwent a surgery recently to treat an injured finger.

CSK's Harbhajan Singh and Mumbai Indians' Lasith Malinga were among the other big names to be released by their respective sides ahead of next month's auction.

Harbhajan was joined by the likes of Kedar Jadhav, Piyush Chawla and Murali Vijay who were also let go by the franchise.

Also released by MI was Sherfane Rutherford, while Delhi Capitals decided to enter the next edition without English batsman Jason Roy, wicketkeeper Alex Carey, leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane and seamer Mohit Sharma.

Malinga had been a prominent part of MI's title-winning campaigns in the past though he was not there last time due to personal reasons.

The seasoned Raina was retained by the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led CSK notwithstanding his sudden departure from the last IPL in the UAE.

It is believed the three-time winners decided to continue with Raina in order to bolster the batting order that struggled during a forgettable last season, which culminated in a seventh-place finish and a league-stage elimination for the first time since the tournament's inception in 2008.

The left-handed Raina has been an integral part of the Super Kings from the beginning, emerging as their highest scorer while guiding them to two IPL titles.

Glenn Maxwell bats during practice session KXIP/Twitter

Stoinis made useful contributions in the 2020 edition and helped the Capitals reach their first-ever IPL final.

Batting mostly in the middle order, he amassed 352 runs at an average of 25.14 and a strike rate of 148.52.

With the ball, he took 13 wickets at an economy of 9.53.

The Delhi-based franchise retained a total of 19 players including six overseas players.

KKR will be go into next month's auction with a 17-member squad after having released only five players from the team.

The two-time champions have released Tom Banton and Chris Green among the foreign players and Siddhesh Lad, Nikhil Naik and M Siddharth among the Indians.

After Wednesday, RCB's total purse increased from Rs 6.4 crore to Rs 35.7 crore, Delhi Capitals' swelled to Rs 12.8 crore from 9 crore, Rajasthan Royals' purse jumped to 34.85 crore from Rs 14.75 crore, Kings XI Punjab saw an exponential rise from Rs 16.5 crore to Rs 53.2 crore, and Sunrisers Hyderabad went from Rs 10.1 crore to Rs 10.75 crore.

Two-time winners KKR's purse went up from Rs 8.5 crore to Rs 10.85 crore and from Rs 15 crore, three-time champions CSK's amount in the kitty increased to Rs 22.9 crore.

Mumbai Indians were left with a purse of Rs 15.35 crore.

Sanju to lead RR now, Smith released

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sanju Samson replaced Steve Smith as Rajasthan Royals captain after the Australian batsman and some other under-performing stars were released by their respective IPL franchises

Samson was appointed to the top job after RR decided against renewing former skipper Steve Smith's contract.

"As the IPL has grown, the captaincy has become a year-round task, and as such strong local Indian leadership has become increasingly important," said RR owner Manoj Badale in a statement.

"Sanju made his debut as a Royal, and it has been a joy to watch his development over the last 8 years. He is the ideal person to lead the Royals into the 2021 season," he added.

Smith's contract ended in October 2020.

The Australians, smarting from a Test series loss to an injury-plagued India, took a hit as the likes of the explosive Glenn Maxwell and opener Aaron Finch too were released by Kings XI Punjab and Royal Challengers Bangalore respectively.

Under Smith's captaincy, inaugural edition champions RR finished last in the 2020 IPL when the star Australian batsman played all the 14 league matches, scoring 311 runs at a strike rate of 131, including three half-centuries.

Ahead of the 2018 IPL, Smith was the only player retained by the Royals for Rs 12.5 crore. The same year, he was appointed as the captain.

However, his impact came under the scanner after the team's disastrous outing in the UAE last year.

"I am excited about the challenge that lies ahead of me as the leader of the team," said new captain Samson.