

**ANALYSIS 7**

INDIA MUST STAND  
ITS GROUND

**MONEY 8**

OPPO INDIA IN PROCESS TO FILE 80  
PATENTS, ENHANCE FOCUS ON 5G

**SPORTS 11**

CRACKING SERIES  
FINALE IN STORE

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY JANUARY 19, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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BEING IN FRONT OF  
THE CAMERA IS MY  
MEDITATION:  
KAJAL  
Page 12

**RAFALE TO FEATURE IN REPUBLIC DAY PARADE FOR FIRST TIME**

The newly inducted Rafale fighter aircraft will feature in India's Republic Day parade on January 26 and culminate the flypast by carrying out the 'Vertical Charlie' formation, the Indian Air Force (IAF) said on Monday. In the 'Vertical Charlie' formation, the aircraft flies at low altitude, pulls up vertically and conducts rolls before stabilising at higher altitude. "The flypast will culminate with a single Rafale aircraft carrying out a 'Vertical Charlie' formation," said Wing Commander Indranil Nandi. A total of 38 IAF aircraft and four planes of the Indian Army will participate in the flypast on January 26, he said.



**ICE CREAM SAMPLES TEST POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS IN CHINA: REPORTS**

Vaccines for the novel coronavirus may have given a boost in the fight against the pandemic. New discoveries linked to the deadly virus, however, continue to surprise the experts more than a year after China reported the world's first case. In north China's Tianjin city, ice cream samples have tested positive, say reports. Contact tracing is on after the samples - produced by Tianjin Daqiaodao Food Company - sent to the disease control last week tested positive for COVID-19, UK-based Sky news reported. Anti-epidemic authorities have ensured all the products by the firm are sealed. A virologist told the news network it may be a 'one-off case'.



**NO BEATING RETREAT AT ATTARI BORDER ON REPUBLIC DAY DUE TO CORONAVIRUS**

This year, there will be no joint or coordinated parade at the Attari border on Republic Day. Earlier, Pakistan and India used to do a joint parade, which spectators used to watch from both the side. This year, no public will be allowed due to COVID-19 restrictions at the Attari border. No joint or coordinated parade this year at Attari border on Republic Day. No public will be allowed due to COVID-19 restrictions. India will conduct flag-lowering as per daily schedule, a Border Security Force (BSF) senior official said. Since March 7 public was not allowed at the Attari border due to COVID-19 restrictions.



**MAN ACCIDENTALLY THROWS AWAY HARD DRIVE WITH BITCOIN WORTH \$280 MN**

Wales A British man who threw away a hard drive with bitcoin worth 230 million pounds in it is once again trying to convince local authorities to let him search for the device in a landfill site. James Howells, a 35-year-old IT engineer from Newport, Wales, began mining the cryptocurrency in 2009, according to Metro News. He was cleaning his office in 2013 when he accidentally threw away the hard drive with bitcoin that is now worth a small fortune. The price of bitcoin has soared in recent years, though it was practically worthless when Mr Howells began mining it.



**PM: Work underway on 1000 km metro network**

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## Sitting judge's kin involved in benami deals, Justice Eswaraiah informs SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Andhra Pradesh High Court judge Justice (retd) V Eswaraiah has alleged in the Supreme Court that relatives of a senior sitting apex court judge were involved in benami transactions in the Amaravati land scam and he was trying to collect more evidence in this regard.

In an affidavit filed in the top court, Justice (retd) Eswaraiah said he had sought information from a suspended judicial officer regarding the benami transactions in a phone conversation, which purportedly pertained to corruption allegations related to land deals in the state's new capital region.

The former High Court judge has filed a plea in the top

court challenging the August 13 last year order of AP High Court, which directed investigation into the alleged phone conversation between him and the suspended judicial officer saying that the recorded conversation placed before it contained information that purportedly disclosed a serious conspiracy against the judiciary.

"I state that asking for material (if available) regarding the conduct of a sitting judge and which to my knowledge was the subject matter of investigation, cannot by any stretch of imagination be said to be a conspiracy. I state that I did seek information and material from Mr Ramakrishna (suspended district munsif) in that phone conversation with



regard to benami transactions involving the CRDA in Andhra Pradesh and the involvement of the relatives of the said Supreme Court judge." Justice (retd) Eswaraiah has said in his affidavit filed through advocate Prashant Bhushan.

"That the relatives of a senior sitting Supreme Court judge



were involved in these transactions was information that I had received and was trying to collect more evidence with regard to," he said.

The affidavit was filed in pursuance to the apex court's January 11 direction asking Justice (retd) Eswaraiah to clarify his stand with regard to

his conversation with the suspended district munsif.

The matter came up for hearing on Monday before a bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan. The bench posted the matter for hearing in the first week of February.

Justice (retd) Eswaraiah said his admission or denial of the private conversation with Ramakrishna is immaterial in deciding the plea as the High Court order has been challenged on the ground that the same is untenable in law apart from being violative of his right to privacy which is held to be a Fundamental Right protected under Article 21 and under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.



File photo

## Jagan to meet Shah, politics on the menu

SNV SUDHIR ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy will be travelling to Delhi on Tuesday where he will meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah. While the official word is that Jagan will press for resolution of several long pending issues related to Andhra Pradesh, sources say that the visit has got more to do with political reasons. Notably, it will be Jagan's second meeting with Amit Shah in less than two months. He had last met Amit Shah on December 15.

The Home Minister has also been quite liberal in giving appointments to Jagan. It

may be recalled here that there were reports that Karnataka Chief Minister and senior BJP leader BS Yediyurappa had to wait long to get an audience with Amit Shah in the last few months and his requests for an appointment were turned down a few times in the recent past.

As per the schedule, Jagan will be leaving Gannavaram airport on Tuesday afternoon and will reach Delhi in the evening.

The meeting with Amit Shah comes at a time when the BJP has been aggressively trying to seize political opportunities arising out of attacks on Hindu temples.

**Modi, the unifying factor in the fight against Covid**

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## Sanchaita holds uncle Ashok responsible for NTR's death

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Vizianagaram royal fight took an ugly turn on Monday when MANSAS Trust chairperson Sanchaita Gajapati Raju held her uncle and former Union minister Ashok Gajapati Raju responsible for the death of Telugu Desam Party founder late NT Rama Rao.

Sanchaita was responding to a tweet posted by Ashok Gajapati Raju, wherein he shared a throwback picture of him with the late leader and heaped praises on NTR while



exhorting people to follow in the footsteps of the great leader. Hitting out at her uncle and party supremo N

Chandrababu Naidu, Sanchaita attached a letter written by NTR to the Speaker in 1995 (August 25), informing him about the expulsion of five leaders, including Naidu and her uncle, claiming that this was proof of those involved the conspiracy to topple the government and remove the late leader. "A man who had established the party and came to power by his own strength was sidelined by Chandrababu Naidu and Ashok," she tweeted.

## AP gets Rs 1,684 cr GST compensation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Centre on Monday released Rs 1,206 crore to TS and Rs 1,684 crore to AP towards GST compensation.

The Ministry of Finance released the 12th weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore to all the States on Monday to meet the GST compensation shortfall.

Of this, Rs 5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 States and Rs 483.40 crore to the three UTs with Legislative Assembly (Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry) that

are members of the GST Council.

The remaining five States - Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim do not have a gap in revenue on account of GST implementation.

Till now, 65 percent of the total estimated GST compensation shortfall has been released to the States and UTs with Legislative Assembly. Of this, Rs 65,582.96 crore was released to the States and Rs 6,417.04 crore to the three UTs with Legislative Assembly.

**Sugar output up 31pc in 2020-21 till Jan 15**

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## BJP MPs object to 'unilateral' leaders

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

BJP AP unit co-in-charge Sunil Deodhar and chief Somu Veerraju have come under the fire from party MPs Satyanarayana Chowdary and CM Ramesh, who accuse them of adopting 'unilateral' style of functioning.

At the recent committee meeting held via videoconference, the two MPs are understood to have confronted Deodhar and Veerraju and also 'threatened' that they would take the matter to 'next level'.

The MPs sought to know from the BJP AP leadership why the process of selection of candidate for the Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election has been put under wraps.

The MPs reportedly came down like a tonne of bricks on Deodhar and Veerraju. At one stage, heated words were exchanged between Veerraju and the MPs, sources in the BJP said.

The MPs questioned the two leaders on their unilateral approach and complained of not having been kept abreast about party activities.

The MPs demanded to know why they were not invited to the mini-core committee meetings. Deodhar is believed to have remained



silent on the issue. The MPs 'blamed' the party leadership for rushing to the press with their "mindless statements", which they said lacked congruence and expressed ire at not being given due importance. "The party does not mean just three persons. If the trend continues, they said that they would take the issue to the appropriate forum," the sources said.

## Akhila Priya's bail plea rejected

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Citing lack of jurisdiction, the Secunderabad court on Monday refused bail to former AP minister Akhila Priya the prime accused in Bowenpally kidnap case.

Meanwhile, the police filed a case against her under Section 395 of the IPC (dacoity) in addition to the existing charges.

The court cited ultra vires in its jurisdiction the cases that attract life imprisonment and refused bail to her.

Akhila Priya now plans to



move her bail plea before Nampalli court.

It may be recalled that she was remanded to judicial custody in Chanchalguda prison.

The police have been looking for the other accused in the case that are at large.

In a related development, her husband Bhargav Ram, who is at large, moved a plea in the Nampally court seeking anticipatory bail. He has been named A3 in the case.

The court will take up the hearing on the plea on Thursday.

The police on Monday sought custody of Bala Chennai, Akhila Priya's driver, Mallikarjun Reddy, her PA and Sampath for a week to question them.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

**Month & Paksham:** Paush & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

**Tithi :** Panchami: 10:58 am

**Nakshatram:** Purna Bhadrapada: 09:54 am

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

**Rahukalam:** 03:13 pm - 04:37 pm

**Yamagandam:** 09:40 am - 11:03 am

**Gulika:** 11:15 pm - 01:02 am

**Varjyam:** 12:26 pm - 01:50 pm

**Good Time:** (to start any important work)

**Amritkalam:** NIL

**Abhijit Muhurtam:** 12:04 pm - 12:49 pm

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**

**Forecast:** Sunny

**Temp:** 28/17

**Humidity:** 61/17

**Sunrise:** 06:49 am

**Sunset:** 06:04 pm

**Current Weather Conditions**

Updated January 18, 2021 5:00 PM

## BJP's Rath Yatra stokes the political cauldron

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The proposed Rath Yatra by the Andhra Pradesh unit of the BJP has added fuel to the prevailing political heat over the new-found "Hindutva politics" in the State.

A meeting of the BJP AP's core group on Sunday chalked out a three-month-long roadmap of the party activities. As part of this roadmap, it has been decided that the party would take out a 'Rath Yatra' from February 4 onwards against the attacks on Hindu temples.

Actor Pawan Kalyan's Jana Sena will also take part in the Rath Yatra.

As expected, this has



sparked a heated reaction from leaders of the ruling YSRCP and counters by the BJP.

The Rath Yatra will start on February 4 at Kapilatheertham in Tirupati in Rayalaseema

region and will culminate at Ramatheertham in Vizianagaram district of north Andhra region.

Along the way, BJP leaders will visit temples that were des-

ecrated in Peethapuram, Antarvedi, Vijayawada, Nellore, Srisailem, etc.

Elaborate arrangements are being made for the Rath Yatra. Route map, number of meetings, issues to be highlighted during the Rath Yatra which the BJP is looking at as 'defining' activity and also a major turning point for its expansion in the State, are being discussed. The Rath Yatra is also expected to help BJP amp synergy with its ally, the Jana Sena.

Even as the party is finalising the nitty-gritty of the Rath Yatra, Somu Veerraju, its state unit president, said they have decided to go ahead with the rally even if the govern-

ment denies permission.

Veerraju also said that any attempt to stop it would be akin to stopping Hindus. His assertion is that the BJP alone is the champion of the cause of the Hindus and Hindutva and the TDP is only a pretender.

Meanwhile, it's not clear whether the Jaganmohan Reddy government allows the Rath Yatra. Two earlier attempts by BJP leaders to visit the Kodandarama temple at Ramatheertham where the presiding deity's idol was desecrated by unidentified miscreants were cut short by the police who clamped restrictions.

# Modi, the unifying factor in the fight against Covid

Good days are on the horizon in the New Year with the country on the verge of gaining an upper hand in its fight against Covid-19.

India, which experienced shortage of masks, ventilators, oxygen cylinders, PPE kits and hospital beds initially, overcame these hiccups in a short span of time and became self-reliant.

The Centre, which shouldered total responsibility, gave proper guidance to the state governments and the people.

Two weeks before the first Covid case was confirmed on January 30, 2020, the Centre had constituted a high-level committee.

It issued the first advisory on January 17, becoming one of the first countries to thermally screen air travellers. With the help of Janata Curfew, the Government prepared the people psychologically. It brought back people

stranded overseas.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided the necessary moral support to the Central and State Governments, local bodies, officials, social institutions etc to work in unison. He achieved greater coordination among the Biotechnology, Medical and Health departments, Niti Aayog and other organisations and gave clear directions to various sections of society.

Medical experts, scientists and industrialists united to face the pandemic. All through last year, Modi spent most of his time among the people as and when opportunity presented.

In 2021, the pushback against the pandemic began around Sankranti, the festival of harvests. Hearts of the people turned glad as the vaccine is being administered to crores. The people of India have proved that together, they are able to encounter any

**In 2015, when Modi first became the PM, he released Rotavirus vaccine in the market and now the Centre permitted the Covaxin vaccine made by Bharat Biotech, keeping in mind the vast experience it had, for emergency use.**

calamity.

As per the latest statistics, over one crore people have recovered from Coronavirus. In fact, 96.59 per cent fought the virus and defeated it. The number of positive cases has been dwindling rapidly. The death rate due to the pandemic is also coming down.

While Maharashtra, West Bengal, Kerala reported the most deaths due to the virus, at least 15 states did not register even one death. This is in sharp contrast to large scale deaths reported from the most advanced countries.

The drop in death rate is

attributed to the precautions being observed by sensitised people and success of our medical professionals. The way the country defeated the virus can be written in the annals of history in golden words.

It's not necessary to specifically say that the success was possible due to the spirited leadership of Modi and solidarity extended by almost all CMs.

It generally takes several years to develop vaccines for an infection like Covid-19. But the Government of India did not delay in this regard.



**Y SATYA KUMAR**  
BJP National Secretary

Two vaccines out of three manufactured in the world were developed in India with the complete support of the Centre.

Biotechnology department secretary Vijaya Raghavan, who has vast experience in developing vaccines, gave the necessary and crucial support.

Earlier, under his leadership, Rotavirus vaccine was developed to prevent death of

children due to diarrhoea. The Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech which produced the Rotavirus vaccine has now produced Covaxin.

In 2015, when Modi first became the PM, he released Rotavirus vaccine in the market. Therefore, the Centre permitted the Covaxin made by Bharat Biotech, keeping in mind the vast experience it had, for emergency use. The Centre also gave permission for use of the Covishield made by SII of Pune.

If the people receive the two vaccines in two doses, there is no doubt that their immunity would improve.

It is pertinent to note that the vaccines produced in India are cheaper compared to those overseas. A single dose of the overseas vaccine costs Rs 5,000, while the indige-

nously produced ones cost only Rs 200 per dose.

The vaccination programme launched by Modi on January 16 was the biggest such drive in the country and a historic event.

He launched the programme without much fanfare in 306 vaccination centres across the States and UTs through virtual mode to inoculate over 3 crore people. On the first day, of the 2 crore population that received the vaccine, only three persons showed some side effects, but recovered very soon. It proved that there was no truth in the malicious campaign launched by the Opposition against the Centre.

The Congress compared people of the country to guinea pigs in laboratories and accused the Centre of conducting experiments on them.

In the country's fight against Covid-19 during the past one year, Modi did not rest. He directly took part in the fight at every level. He visited various laboratories and interacted with scientists.

The entire country honoured Modi's suggestion to give priority to the vaccine to frontline warriors who fought against Coronavirus. It's a laudable development. The Opposition tried to politicise the issue. A Congress leader asked why Modi did not receive the first shot. Had the PM received the first shot, the Opposition would have claimed that he did so only to save his life.

While launching the golden moment of the vaccination programme, Modi read out a few lines of Gurajada's poetry "Desamunu Preminchu manna," making the people of Telugu states proud and the whole world know the greatness of Gurajada.

## Prioritise hygiene, orders CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy directed officials to consider maintenance of toilets as the top priority and ensure clean toilets in all schools from February 1.

Chairing a review meeting on Monday, the Chief Minister said maintenance should be considered top priority as many students are unwilling to go to schools due to lack of, or poor maintenance of toilets. He said clean toilets should be made available for students.

Jagan told officials to take measures to take up repairs and ensure plumbing and sanitary issues are resolved as soon as possible. He also directed officials to prepare an SOP on maintenance of toilets in



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

to maintain clean toilets to provide hygienic conditions in schools.

Jagan added that awareness should be created among caretakers on the usage of chemicals in toilet cleaning. He directed officials to consider the experience and expertise of companies like Sulabh in maintenance of toilets.

Officials said a special mobile app has been designed to monitor maintenance. Committees were set up on Toilet Maintenance Fund at state, district and school/college level, they said.

A special mobile app has been designed to monitor attendance of students in schools. Attendance of students will be uploaded in the app every day to facilitate

teachers and parents to keep updated on their wards.

The Chief Minister said an SMS should be sent to parents if their children don't attend schools and volunteers should enquire about children's health.

Welfare assistants in Village/Ward Secretariats should monitor the situation, he said. The Chief Minister directed officials to finalise design and take a decision about reopening of schools to all classes in first half of February and running classes on a daily basis.

Jagan also directed officials to finalise tenders related to Vidya Kanuka and ensure the kits are delivered on time. He asked them to focus on teaching in English for Class 7 students from the next academic year.

## Sitting judge's kin involved in benami...

Continued from Page 1

"I have not committed any crime and there is no complaint by anybody with reference to the said private conversation," he said.

He said that English transcription of the audio conversation, as contained in the pen drive filed by Ramakrishna before the High Court, was incorrect and deliberately distorted to give a false and misleading impression with regard to the conversation.

"I state that the conversation as I recall with the suspended district munsif, Mr Ramakrishna, was threefold. Firstly, I have sought information about his suspension. Secondly, I have consoled and cajoled him due to the harassment he had faced," he said.

"Lastly, I sought information from him about the benami transactions regarding the new

**The YSRCP govt had constituted the 10-member SIT, headed by a Deputy IG rank officer to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the alleged irregularities**

Grievances to transfer this investigation to the CBI since it involved interstate investigation and several high ranking influential persons," the affidavit said.

The former judge said in his affidavit that he has come public in various press conferences to expose the misconduct of the Supreme Court judge especially his proximity with the erstwhile government of Andhra Pradesh.

"I state that the allegations of conspiracy and a plot are totally false and far from the truth. I have always endeavoured and continue to endeavour to protect and preserve the independence of judiciary. The allegations of a conspiracy and plot have been loosely attributed to me which apart from being white lies are derogatory and defamatory," he said, while seeking quashing of the High Court order.

The High Court, in its order, had requested former Supreme Court judge Justice RV Raveendran to inquire into the matter.

The phone conversation, according to the plea, purportedly pertained to the corruption allegations in the Amaravati land scam.

The former judge has said the High Court's order was made on the basis of an application for reopening and intervention filed by the suspended District Munsif Magistrate (S Ramakrishna) in an unrelated PIL seeking implementation of Covid-19 guidelines in court building and premises.

The plea has said that the former High Court judge, in the alleged phone conversation, had merely mentioned his knowledge about allegations of misconduct and terming such a conversation to be a kind of conspiracy, was unwarranted.

## AP reports 81 Covid cases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A seven-month low of 81 Covid-19 cases was reported in Andhra Pradesh, while 263 patients recovered from the infection and one succumbed in the state during the 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday.

The latest bulletin said 27,861 samples were tested during the period.

The state Covid-19 chart showed the caseload at 8,86,066 with 8,77,212 recoveries and 7,141 deaths. The active caseload is now 1,713, according to the bulletin.

Kadapa, which reported zero cases on Sunday, added the highest 19 on Monday. Chittoor reported 15 and Guntur 13 new cases, while the remaining 10 districts added below seven cases each. Anantapur saw zero addition in cases in 24 hours.

Visakhapatnam district saw one fresh coronavirus fatality. In all, 1.26 crore sample tests were completed so far with an overall positivity rate of 7.03 per cent.

## BJP MPs object to 'unilateral' leaders

Continued from Page 1

Ramesh said that the public perception was that the party's progress was slow and wanted it to forge ahead rapidly, removing such an impression from the people's minds.

The MPs expressed displeasure over the leadership keeping them in the dark on the progress in the Tirupati LS seat by-election and claim to have no information at all about the candidate selection process.

To this, Deodhar said that only applications have been

received from aspirants and selection process was yet to begin. The MPs responded by saying that they were aware that even interviews with the aspirants were conducted.

Intervening, Veerraju objected to MPs criticising the in-charges and told them that the party has a system to follow. He tried to pacify the MPs by stating that the party's decision would be announced after taking all leaders into confidence. The MPs retorted to Veerraju by asking him on which issues were they consulted. The MPs felt unhappy as senior leaders, they were not allowed to speak to the media and only Veerraju, Deodhar and Vishnuvardhan Reddy could do so.

They felt the need to remove the impression among party activists that the party would mean only the trio.

While GVL Narasimha Rao found a place on the mini-core committee, Chowdary, Ramesh and TG Venkatesh were on the core committee. "Why this difference," they asked.

## AP gets Rs 1,684 cr GST compensation

Continued from Page 1

The Government of India had set up a special borrowing window in October, 2020 to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.10 lakh-crore in revenue arising on account of implementation of GST. The borrowings are being done through this window by the Government of India on behalf of the States and UTs. The 12 rounds of borrowings have been completed so far starting from October 23, 2020. The amount released this week was the 12th instalment of such funds provided to the States. The amount has been borrowed this week at an interest rate of 4.43 percent. So far, an amount of Rs 72,000 crore has been borrowed by the Central Government

through the special borrowing window at an average interest rate of 4.70 percent.

In addition to providing funds through the special borrowing window to meet the shortfall in revenue on account of GST implementation, the Government of India has also granted additional borrowing permission equivalent to 0.50 percent of Gross States Domestic Product (GSDP) to the states choosing Option-I to meet GST compensation shortfall to help them in mobilising additional financial resources.

All States have given their preference for Option-I. Permission for borrowing the entire additional amount of Rs 1,06,830 crore (0.50 percent of GSDP) has been granted to 28 States under this provision.

## Sanchaita holds uncle...

Continued from Page 1

Sanchaita's tweet thread also read: "Now the same people in complete disregard of political principles, moral values and disregard of the people's verdict, hail NTR as God, whereas earlier they were the cause of his death. Now Chandrababu and Ashok Gajapathi Raju shed tears on the occasion of his death anniversary".

The Vizianagaram royal feud intensified after the YSRCP government appointed Sanchaita as the chairperson of MANSAS Trust and the Simhachalam Varahalakshmi Narasimha Swamy Devasthanam Trust Board, replacing her uncle Ashok Gajapathi Raju. He was also removed from chairmanship of 104 temples in Godavari districts.

## BJP's Rath Yatra stokes...

Continued from Page 1

Stopping the party leaders from visiting Ramatheertham also attracted an angry reaction from the BJP national leadership. Meanwhile, tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivas Rao lambasted the BJP for its Rath Yatra plans. He said such yatras will only spoil

the peaceful atmosphere prevailing in the state and also expressed doubts if it has been planned only to destabilise a democratically-elected government.

Srinivas Rao also advised Veerraju not to fall into the trap of TDP leaders who had joined the BJP but are work-

ing for the interests of TD supreme N Chandrababu Naidu. He claimed that the AP BJP has two groups - one of those having long standing BJP and RSS background like Veerraju himself, and the other of those who migrated from TDP and are working for

## Jagan to meet Shah, politics on the menu

Continued from Page 1

The BJP central leadership on its part has been maintaining friendly ties as per the federal spirit with YSRCP however, had given a clear roadmap to its state leaders to take on the YSRCP government.

BJP will have to fight it out with both YSRCP and TDP to stay relevant in AP politics. Funding for Polavaram project has also become a bone of contention between the two parties. Jagan has also put forth a list of his submissions with political reasons.

Action against the hostile judiciary topped the list and Jagan appears to have succeeded partially in that endeavour with the abrupt transfer of AP High Court Chief Justice JK Maheswari. Also, the Chief

Funding for Polavaram project has also become a bone of contention between the ruling YSRCP and the BJP in AP.

Justice of India has reportedly sought a response from the sitting Supreme Court senior judge Justice NV Ramana on the allegations levelled against him by the Chief Minister. This issue is also expected to come up during Jagan's meeting with Amit Shah.

During his last meeting Jagan had also requested Shah to initiate the process to relocate AP High Court from Amaravati to Kurnool by releasing a notification.

## Media trial hinders justice, says HC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday asked media houses to exercise restraint when reporting on suicide cases, saying "media trial leads to interference and obstruction to administration of justice" and amounts to contempt of court.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G S Kulkarni said the press must avoid discussions and debates relating to criminal investigations, and it should confine only to informative reportage that is in public interest.

The bench also held that prima facie some reportage by Republic TV and Times Now in the aftermath of the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput were "contemptuous".

The court said it had, however, decided against initiating any action against

the two TV channels under the Contempt of Courts Act.

The bench said media trials ran counter to the programme code framed under the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act. It also passed a slew of guidelines for the press to follow while reporting on sensitive cases.

The HC said such reportage by any media organisation, that obstructs an ongoing investigation or administration of justice in a case, will amount to contempt of court.

"Media trial leads to interference and obstruction to administration of justice and violates programme code under the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act," it observed.

"Any reportage has to be in accordance with the norms of journalistic standards and ethics, else media

houses stand to face contempt action," it said.

The directions are a part of the verdict pronounced by the bench on a bunch of public interest litigations (PIL) seeking that the press, particularly TV news channels, be restrained in their reportage on Rajput's death.

The HC said it had tried in its verdict to answer questions on striking a balance among one's freedom of speech and expression, a fair investigation, one's right to a fair trial and to what extent, if at all, should the press and media reporting be regulated, if it interfered with or tended to obstruct the administration of justice.

It also said until there came a mechanism to regulate the electronic media, TV channels should follow the Press Council of India's guidelines on reporting on suicides, and sensitive cases. "Media should observe

restraint in discussions about an ongoing investigation so as not to prejudice the rights of the accused and witness," the High Court said.

"Publishing a confession alleged to have been made by an accused as if it is an admissible evidence without letting the public know about its inadmissibility should be avoided," it said.

The HC said while reporting a suicide, "to suggest that the person was of weak character should be avoided". It also restrained media houses from reconstructing crime scenes, interviews with potential witnesses, and leaking sensitive and confidential information.

"Investigative agencies are entitled to maintain secrecy about an ongoing investigation and they are under no obligation to divulge information," the High Court said.

# Armed robberies a concern in Agency

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The recent two incidents of miscreants robbing the tourists of their valuables at gunpoint using country-made guns in the Eastern Ghat of Vizag Agency emerges as a major safety concern when there is an unexpected rise in the tourist inflow following the Covid-19 lockdown and cancellation of foreign tour trips.

After being confined to their homes for months due to Covid-induced lockdown, not only are the tourists from other districts and states but locals also making a beeline to the Vizag Agency. Fall in temperature and scenic hilly locations are drawing huge numbers of tourists.

Last Tuesday night, on the ghat road near Dharalamma temple under Sileru police station limits in Vizag Agency, unidentified robbers intercepted a tourist car and robbed them of 40 gm of gold ornaments. Again, at the same place, the robbers robbed



tourists of cash and gold at gunpoint. Miscreants used country-made guns to threaten the tourists.

When contacted, Sileru CI N Ranith said: "Police personnel are being deployed at key locations prone to crime. The incidents happened late at night. So, we request the tourists and devotees not to travel on the

ghat roads during late night. We have formed a team to nab the culprits," he added.

Spurt in tourist inflow is leading to traffic snarls in the Agency. The police and tourism authorities are also apparently least prepared to handle the flow of visitors.

Mushrooming of unregistered tents has made it difficult

for the administration to gauge the actual number of visitors and keep a tab on them. Many tourists are bringing their own tents for night stay in the Agency area.

Some residents of Vizag city who visited Lamasingi recently complained that ITDA and APTDC have failed to create necessary infrastructure

**In two separate incidents, miscreants intercepted vehicles and robbed the tourists of gold and cash on the ghat road near Dharalamma temple on Tuesday night.**

# Drunkard caught breaking tridents of Goddess on CCTV, arrested

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

At a time when the ongoing attacks of temples took the centre stage of Andhra Pradesh politics triggering unrest, a drunken butcher was arrested for damaging the tridents (trishul) of a goddess at Sri Nookalamma temple of Kondayypalem in Kakinada, East Godavari district.

The miscreant was identified as V Lakshmana Rao, 39, a butcher by profession and addicted to bad vices. He was caught on the basis of footage of CCTVs installed on the temple premises. The police shared the footage of an inebriated Rao dancing and talking in front of the goddess' idol holding the tridents. He even touched the idols. In another footage, Rao raised his hand and pushed the idol's trident due to which the top portion of the trident was broken. He committed the crime in



just 10 minutes between 10.20 pm and 10.30 pm on the night of January 9 at Sri Nookalamma Temple.

The priest of the temple, on January 10, 2021, observed that the two tridents held by the goddess at the entrance of the temple were broken. Based on the complaint lodged by the priest, the Town-II police in Kakinada had formed a special team to nab the accused persons.

The recently installed CCTV cameras at the temple helped the police to identify the accused as the CCTV footage

clearly showed that a person broke the tridents at the temple.

The police booked the accused, Lakshmana Rao, a resident of Kakinada, under Sections 447, 295, 295-A and 153-A of IPC. The police seized one bicycle, one mobile phone, a sharp-edged knife and few others from him. The investigation has revealed that Rao was addicted to bad vices and his wife, along with their two sons, has been living separately for the past eight years. He used to sleep at temples during night time.

## IN BRIEF

### HC defers hearing on SEC petition on polls to local bodies

**VIJAYAWADA:** The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday deferred the hearing of single judge's verdict to Tuesday in the case related to the suspension of schedule announced by the State Election Commission (SEC) for panchayat polls. On behalf of the SEC and State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, Supreme Court lawyer Adinarayana Rao and former Advocate General DV Sitarama Murthy, respectively, have argued in the High Court. While both the attorneys stressed the need to conduct panchayat polls amid continuing Covid vaccination drive, Advocate General Subramanyam Sriram argued that the health of the people was more important than elections. The hearing on SEC's petition was adjourned and would continue on Tuesday. The SEC Ramesh Kumar had announced the schedule for panchayat elections on January 8 late night stating that the elections would be held in four phases. Challenging SEC's move, the state government had moved the High Court and filed a house-motion petition. The High Court has said that it would hear the petition after Sankranti festival on January 18.

### Youngsters tear shirt, beat S-I in public, taken into custody

**VIJAYAWADA:** Two youngsters in Vizianagaram tore the shirt of a sub-inspector and beat him in the public on Monday when they were asked not to ride their bike recklessly. The Pachipenta S-I, Ramana, was returning from his mother-in-law's house in civil dress when the incident occurred. A heated argument broke out when the S-I stopped the youngsters finding them speeding. Onlookers were standing as mute spectators when the youngsters were beating the S-I. However, the two youngsters, Sudhakar and Chandrasekhar have been taken into custody. "We will open a rowdy sheet if the culprits were involved in any past crimes," a police officer said.

### Mend your ways, Kovuru MLA warns Nellore SP

**VIJAYAWADA:** YSRCP MLA Nallapureddy Prasanna Kumar Reddy made harsh comments on the Nellore district SP Bhaskar Bhushan during a public meeting on Monday. Expressing his ire at the SP, the MLA alleged that the SP had directed the police officials not to register a case under provisions of SC/ST Atrocities Act against those who had posted vulgar comments on social media against DCMS Chairman Chalapati Rao. Alleging that he was acting as per the directions of a TDP leader, he said that he would take the issue to the notice of CM YS Jaganmohan Reddy. Addressing a meeting, the MLA criticised that Nellore SP was acting like a TDP agent. "SP directed DSP, inspector and sub-inspector concerned not to register cases after a former TDP minister made a phone call to him," he said. Prasanna Kumar Reddy accused the SP of threatening the police officials to send them to jails if they registered cases. He said that SP had violated law by directing officials not to file cases and advised him to discharge duties properly.

### TDP chief condoles death of former MLA Doraswamy Raju

**VIJAYAWADA:** TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday expressed deep shock over the death of film producer and former MLA Doraswamy Raju. Naidu said that the departed leader had rendered good services for the development of Nagari assembly constituency as its former MLA. Doraswamy Raju had also rendered his services as the Film Chamber Chairman and TTD Board member. In a statement, the TDP chief conveyed his condolences to the family members of Doraswamy Raju. The former MLA would be remembered for his selfless services to the people, he added.

### Tourist bus carrying 40 persons overturns in EG, no casualties

**VIJAYAWADA:** A tourist bus carrying 40 persons overturned on ghat road between Mareduvilli and Chinturu in East Godavari district on Monday. Miraculously, no passenger was injured in the accident, except the driver of the bus who sustained minor injury on the wrist. Mothugudem S-I Subba Rao said that 40 people were going from Rajahmundry to Chinturu to attend a Christian gospel meeting. When the bus reached Mothugudem limits, he said that the brakes of the bus failed and the bus hit the hill and overturned.

### 18 arrested for betting on cockfights, gambling

**VIJAYAWADA:** As many as 10 persons were arrested after Vizag Rural police busted cockfights and betting operations at Venkatapuram under Munagapaka mandal and Kaligotla village under Devarapalle mandal in the district. The police have seized ten fighting roosters and seized over Rs 4,000 cash from the punters. The organisers of the cockfights were charged under AP Gaming Act of 1974. The police also nabbed eight persons for playing the game of cards at Annavaram village under Kotavurata in the district and seized over Rs17,000 cash from the gamblers.

# Naidu condemns torching of dargah, demands strict action

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday condemned the burning of the Jilani Baba dargah at Nagireddypalli village in Chittoor district and demanded that the culprits should be brought to book. All stringent measures should be taken to prevent occurrence of such incidents, he asked.

Terming it an 'atrocious act', Naidu said the devotees have been celebrating Urs festival at the dargah for the last 30 years.

In a statement here, the TDP chief said that the miscreants and criminal gangs were rearing their ugly heads with support of Chief Minister and the Ministers.

Stating that the government had failed to take action in the two incidents related to torching of temple chariots, he said that the situation could have been controlled if the government had taken action in the first incident itself. The government should give up its lackadaisical approach and respect the religious sentiments of people.

Recalling that immediate

### Chittoor top cop warns stern action on rumour mongers

**VIJAYAWADA:** Chittoor district SP S Senthil Kumar on Monday warned that stern action would be taken against people spreading false propaganda on social media regarding the incident in which the Jilani Baba dargah at Nagireddypalli village in Chittoor district was burnt on January 16th night. A case has been registered on January 17 and three special teams were formed to investigate the case, he said. Senthil Kumar said that the case would be investigated in all possible angles. Stern action will be taken as per law against persons spreading rumours on the social media platform and persons trying to hamper peace by creating religious hatred in the society, he warned. Appealing to people not to believe rumours as the facts were yet to be ascertained, he asked people to visit

factcheck.ap.gov.in to know the facts in any case. The SP said that a special drive 'Operation Samakya' was also being conducted in the district to prevent any untoward incidents at temples, churches and mosques. In all, 3,774 temples, mosques and prayer halls have been identified and about 4,526 CCTV cameras have been installed at 1,782 religious places. About 1,541 Peace Committees, 1,060 Village Defence Squads have been set up, he divulged. As a precautionary measure, as many as 1,113 persons have been bound over, the SP said. If people notice any untoward incident, they can dial 100 or inform the police through police WhatsApp number 9440900005 and cooperate with the police to serve the society, said the SP.

action was taken when a place of worship was attacked at Tadepalligudem during TDP regime, he lamented that the law

and order had totally deteriorated in the state. Strong action was taken to prevent repetition of such incidents, he added.

# Kannababu denies links with pastor Praveen

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Agriculture Kurasala Kannababu on Monday denied having any link with pastor Praveen Chakravarthy's issue and criticised TDP leaders for levelling false allegations against him with political motives.

Speaking to media here at party central office, the Minister said that YSRCP Government had identified the posts of Praveen's speech on social media platforms and arrested him immediately.

TDP leaders Kala Venkat Rao and Nimmakayala Chinrajappa were making false allegations that he has links with pastor Praveen, only to gain political mileage, he added.

Stating that charges were

filed against pastor Praveen in six cases during TDP regime and reminded that it was the previous TDP government which has withdrawn three cases against pastor Praveen. Kannababu questioned how they can link pastor Praveen to him just because he belongs to Kakinada Rural constituency and posted a photo on social media.

sssHe said Naidu shared a picture with Euro lottery fraudster Kola Krishna Mohan and questioned Naidu over his links with the scam.

"Why TDP didn't investigate on foreign funding to pastor Praveen in the previous government and why no action was taken against him even after a complaint was filed by a Dalit girl that she was cheated by him," he asked.

### Srilakshmi gets promotion

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Senior IAS officer Y Srilakshmi, who was shifted from Telangana to Andhra Pradesh cadre and was posted as Secretary, MA&UD Department, has been promoted to Above Supertime Scale (HAG Scale). However a GO issued on Monday said that the promotion is subject to the outcome of all the court cases pending against her.

She has been accused in Jagan's quid pro quo case and had also been lodged in jail. After Jagan became the Chief Minister, she had expressed interest to shift to AP cadre. The Centre obliged and Srilakshmi was given posting as the MA&UD Principal Secretary on December 22.

She has been promoted to the Level 15 in the Pay Matrix.

# MP starts Saksham-2021

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP Lavu Sri Krishna Deverayulu on Monday inaugurated Saksham (Sanrakshan Kshamata Mahotsav) 2021 a month-long campaign which lays emphasis on Clean and Green Energy Campaign at the HPCL Tadepalli office. The inaugural session was held virtually through the webinar.

Speaking on the occasion, the MP said that India was the third largest energy consumer in the world and the demand for energy has been growing faster than other major economies of the world.

The MP said that the Petroleum Ministry, therefore, has been accorded high priority for increasing production and exploration of oil and natural gas in the domestic

front and acquiring oil and gas equities abroad, enhancing refining, adopting bio-fuels and promoting petroleum conservation and efficiency measures, among others, for energy sustainability and energy security of our country. He complimented PCRA, OMCs and all stakeholders for conducting Saksham -2021. He appealed to people to inculcate an eco-friendly and energy efficient lifestyle, and contribute towards sustainability of our ecosystem.

JMNaik, State level co-ordinator, Narendra Mourya, Divisional Manager, IOCL, GHV Rao, DGM Retail, HPCL, B Prakash, Territory Manager (Retail), BPLCL, B Ramulu, DGM Marketing, GAIL (India) Limited and others participated in the programme.

# Minister distributes 3,648 house sites in Gollapudi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Peddireddy Ramchandra Reddy said that YS Jaganmohan Reddy was the only CM in the country who fulfilled more than 90 per cent of the promises made to the people. Participating as the chief guest at the free house site distribution programme held at Gollapudi village on Monday, the minister distributed 3,648 house site pattas to beneficiaries in Mylavaram constituency along with sarees, bangles, turmeric and vermilion.

Addressing the gathering, he

said that the government has fulfilled 90 per cent of the promises and the state was at the forefront in implementing both welfare and development programmes. He alleged that TDP made more than 6,000 promises but not even a single promise was fulfilled.

Reassuring that Polavaram project would be completed, he said that efforts were being made to complete projects in North Andhra and Rayalaseema region as per schedule.

Within a short span of just 18 months, the government has created four lakh jobs for the unemployed youth in the

state, he added. TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu is trying to gain political mileage by creating unrest in the name of religion, he lambasted.

Home Minister Mekatothi Sucharitha, Ministers Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao, Perni Venkatarajam, Velampalli Srinivas, CM programme coordinator T Raghuram, Government Whip Samineni Udayabhanu, MLAs Vasantha Krishna Prasad, Jogi Ramesh, Vallabhaneni Vamsi, Dr M Jaganmohan Rao, Kolu Padhasarathi, MP Nandigam Suresh and others were present on the occasion.

# 28 days after vaccination crucial

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Medical and Health Department of AP has advised those who received the first dose of the Covid vaccine against smoking and consuming alcohol as several changes will occur in the human body in the next 28 days soon after receiving the vaccine shot.

As antibodies will develop in the body, the health authorities directed those who received the first shot to have nutritious food and adopt proper food habits. They have been advised against eating contaminated food or consuming contaminated water. Besides these, consumption of alcohol would affect the formation of antibodies. In this period, wearing masks, cleaning hands, observing physical distance and following other precautions is necessary.

In fact, 30 to 40 per cent of



the total antibodies will be formed in 12 days of receiving the first shot. By the 28th day, their formation would reach up to 70 per cent. After two weeks of receiving the second shot, the formation of the antibodies would be total.

After receiving the first shot, there would not be complete immunity against the incidence of Covid. As a result, the person is likely to get infected

danger of it is spreading to others. Therefore, those who received the vaccine and others should adopt certain precautions.

Herd immunity is possible only after 70 per cent of the population of the state have been vaccinated against the Covid. Therefore, till such time, observing precautions is vital.

The antibodies will be formed fully after 42 days of receiving the first shot. Therefore, the people should have nutritious food like dry fruits, fruits, fresh vegetables and eggs.

In case the person who received the vaccine first shot complains of fatigue, fever, head-ache and other drug side effects, the person should consult doctor.

Upon receiving the first shot, indulging in parties, taking outside food and getting tipsy is not advisable.

# Uma lambasts Nani for flaying Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao on Monday asserted that the YSRCP Ministers and leaders had no moral right to make comments on former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu considering his 40 years of political career and public service.

Devineni Uma accused Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy of using his foul-mouthed Minister Kodali Nani to make derogatory comments against Chandrababu Naidu.

Instead, the CM and his Minister should disclose to the people who killed CM's own uncle and former MP YS Vivekananda Reddy, he questioned. Addressing a press conference, the TDP leader

said that Kodali Nani was clearly crossing limits in using needless language only to save his minister post and seek blessings of the Chief Minister.

He said: "Everybody knew that Jaganmohan Reddy was going to Delhi once again to fall at the feet of the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister. But, the Chief Minister was not using these gimmicks to get the Special Category Status for AP."

"The TDP leader demanded that the Civil Supplies Minister stop resorting to cheap politics and start resolving the farmers' problems. There were over Rs 2,000 crore dues to be paid to the farmers under the civil supplies ministry, but the Minister was not taking any steps to address the issue, he added.

AKHILA PRIYA CASE

# More than what meets the eye, alleges TPCC president

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and Nalgonda MP Capt N Uttam Kumar Reddy alleged that land grabbing has become the hallmark of TRS leaders across the State.

He said that the Bowenpally kidnap case, in which former minister of Andhra Pradesh Akhila Priya has been named as the main accused, was more complicated than it was presented by the Hyderabad police. Stating that there was something else behind the land dispute, he added that the land grabbing activity of TRS leaders has also led to a series of other criminal activities in Hyderabad and other parts of Telangana State.

Speaking to the media after attending the Huzurnagar Municipal Council meeting on Monday, Uttam Kumar Reddy said that TRS leaders were involved in land grabbing from Hyderabad to Huzurnagar and other parts of the State. He said that the situation has turned so worse



Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and Nalgonda MP Capt N Uttam Kumar Reddy addresses the media in Huzurnagar on Monday

that even TRS councillors were complaining of land grabbing by their own party leaders in Huzurnagar.

Uttam Kumar Reddy pointed out several high profile cases of land grabbing, involving top TRS leaders, which have been hitting the headlines ever since K Chandrasekhar Rao became the Chief Minister. He said that Keesara MRO Nagaraju was caught red-handed by the officials of

the Anti-Corruption Bureau while accepting a bribe of Rs 1.10 crore. However, the involvement of TRS leaders in the case could not get exposed as two main accused, including the MRO, committed suicide.

He said Hyderabad witnessed the worst ever floods last year primarily due to the encroachment of lakes and other water bodies by TRS leaders since 2014. He said no

Hyderabad witnessed the worst ever floods last year primarily due to the encroachment of lakes and other water bodies by TRS leaders since 2014, said TPCC President and Nalgonda MP Capt N Uttam Kumar Reddy

He said that the huge amounts seized by the ACB in different cases clearly shows that officials have no fear of law as they are enjoying the backing of ministers, MLAs and other leaders

area of Telangana has been left where TRS leaders did not grab, or attempted to encroach upon private and government lands.

He said that the huge amounts seized by the ACB in different cases clearly shows that officials have no fear of law as they are enjoying the backing of TRS ministers, MLAs and other leaders. He said the rising cases of land grabbing and corruption were an indication that CM has lost grip over administration.

## 'Schools deprived of amenities'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government continues to fail to make appropriate arrangements for the implementation of hasty decisions it has taken, alleged BJP leader Vijayashanthi. Although it has decided to reopen schools for certain classes from February 1, there are no conditions to comply with the Covid rules, she pointed out.

"Hundreds of schools in Telangana are plagued by toilet and water problems. This condition becomes more and more problematic for girls than for boys. The government had never focused on these issues before the Corona spread. As a result, girls had to deal with the problem of dropouts. In addition, there is a shortage of sanitation staff," she lamented. There is no hope that this incompetent, corrupt government, which has done nothing then, will improve the situation, she said.



# BJP gears up for Khammam, Warangal civic body polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP is gearing up to replicate the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) poll victory in the ensuing Khammam and Warangal Municipal Corporation elections.

The party will take up several programmes from January 24 to February 15 as part of the strategy; party State unit president Bandi Sanjay, along with party Sangathan general secretary Mantri Srinivasji, finalised the schedule for the Khammam and Warangal Municipal Corporation elections and MLC polls. The party State Committee meeting has evolved a concrete plan for these elections.

According to sources in the BJP, the Saffron party has decided to finalise the election manifesto for the municipal polls based on the complaints received from the people. To encourage the people to lodge their complaints, it has decided to arrange a complaints box in each street in Khammam and Warangal.

Besides, the party activists will undertake door-to-door visits and study the conditions that prevailed there. The party leadership is gearing up to establish machinery for the purpose.



Municipal polls manifesto to be shaped on the basis of people's complaints

The party to install complaint boxes in streets Marthi

Depending on the feedback, the party receives it is going to finalise its plan.

Teacher and graduates constituency elections for the Legislative Council, an in-charge would be appointed for every 25 voters. He is likely to maintain cordial ties till the elections are over.

Furthermore, the party is going to utilise services of doctors, lawyers, teachers belonging to the party and

Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the BJP Yuva Morcha extensively.

To campaign for the Municipal Corporation elections in Khammam, the leadership has plans to use the services of the locals at various levels. It has plans to appoint State-level leaders as in-charges for the municipal divisions.

To ensure electoral victory of the BJP in Khammam and Warangal Municipal Corporation elections, it wants to apply the same formula is applied for success in the GHMC polls.

It has plans to divide Khammam Municipal Corporation into four divisions and appoint in-charges.

To supervise the activities of booth committees, constituted by February 15, a large number of party activists would be appointed. The party machinery has been put in place to ensure that the party pamphlets and manifesto reach every house.

Assurances given by KCR to Khammam and Warangal, failures of the TRS government, increased taxation in Municipal Corporations in the KCR regime and pending problems would be used as main weapons to target the TRS in the elections. Bandi Sanjay has embarked on an exercise in this regard.



## HANUMA VIHARI CALLS ON KTR

International cricketer Hanuma Vihari, who hogged limelight after a brilliant knock in the third test in the ongoing India-Australia series, calls on Minister for Municipal Administration and IT K Taraka Rama Rao at Pragathi Bhavan in Hyderabad on Monday

# Rise in fine variety rice price in market

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prices of fine variety of rice have been increased between Rs 300 and 500 per quintal during the past one month on account of the fall in production due to heavy rains and diverting the rice to the markets in other States. The traders say that the prices of the fine variety of rice are likely to increase further.

In kharif, a fine variety of rice was cultivated in 39.66 lakh acres out of the total area under the crop, 53 lakh acres. Against the government's target to procure 50 lakh tonnes of this variety of rice, the government could procure only 19.55 lakh tonnes.

This is attributed to heavy rains damaging the crop prospects leading to the drop in yield. Against the normal yield of 25 to 30 quintals per acre, the farmers could harvest only 10-15 quintals. As a result, the market arrival of the fine variety has dropped. Moreover, empty grains, due to improper



This is attributed to heavy rains damaging the crop prospects leading to the drop in yield. Against the normal yield of 25 to 30 quintals per acre, the farmers could harvest only 10 to 15 quintals

As a result, the market arrival of the fine variety has dropped. Moreover, empty grains, due to improper procurement have forced farmers to dispose of rice with them at Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,600 a quintal, far below the MSP.

For want of MSP at some places, the farmers got the rice stocks with them milled and sold rice between Rs 3,200 and Rs 4,000 a quintal. The price of BPT, which hovered at Rs 3,150 a quintal increased to Rs 3,500 after the farmers sold out the stocks with them. The HMT rice is being sold between Rs 3,300 and Rs 3,700. Similarly, the Jai Sriram variety was sold between Rs 3,850 and Rs 4,100 per quintal. Telangana Sona's price increased to Rs

3,450 and Rs 3,800 depending on the variety. Old rice was bought at Rs 400 more than the market price per quintal.

The traders from other States have evinced interest to lift stocks of fine variety from Telangana. This has also jacked up the prices of fine variety of rice, according to traders. The failure of the crop in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra lifted stocks of fine variety of rice from Telangana.

According to unofficial sources, the fine variety of rice diverted to other States was put at 20 lakh tonnes, which is

more than one lakh tonnes, more than the rice procured by the State government.

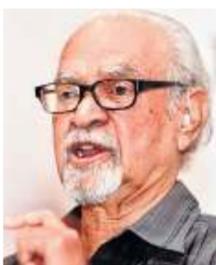
As a result, there was a shortage of fine varieties of rice. The prices will increase up to September. The prices will drop only when the fine variety of rice harvested in rabi enters the market. Moreover, the increase in the prices of petrol and diesel has been contributing to increasing costs of fine variety of rice.

# Senior CPI leader Burgula Narsing Rao passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former leader of CPI Burgula Narsing Rao passed away at a private hospital while undergoing treatment for Covid-19, here on Monday. He was 89.

Rao, the leader of the Telangana Armed Struggle, was tested positive for Coronavirus a few days ago and was undergoing treatment at Care Hospital in Banjara Hills where he breathed his last this morning. His last rites were performed at Jubilee Hills crematorium in the afternoon. Hailing from a village in the Mahbubnagar district,



Narsing Rao was born in a political family. His uncle Burgula Ramakrishna Rao was the first Chief Minister of erstwhile Hyderabad State. Rao was the President

of Nizam College Students Union when Hyderabad State was merged into the Indian Union.

He participated in the anti-Razakars' movement in the murky period that followed the merger. Meanwhile, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has expressed his deep condolence over the demise of Telangana Movement warrior Burgula Narsing Rao.

In a message, the Chief Minister said the role played by Narsing Rao during the Telangana Armed struggle and in the next phase of Telangana movement.

# Quarters for Singareni employees by June

PNS ■ BHUPALAPALLI

Singareni Chairman and Managing Director N Sridhar said that as per the assurance given by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to employees earlier, new quarters are being constructed and a part of this in the first phase 1,478 quarters at a cost of Rs 333 crore will be constructed. Out of these, 352 houses will be completed by June, the balance and allotment will be completed by the year-end.

Earlier, Singareni workers' quarters were congested. But now, in line with the government's policies, Singareni will be providing a double bed-



room, hall, kitchen and common area totalling 963 sq ft. Wide roads in between quarters, drainage and plantation on either side of the roads are being developed. Apart from these parks and play area for children is also being developed.

# TRS creating hurdles for Modi's welfare schemes, says Chugh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh called upon the party workers to take Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message of development and progress to every house in the State and expose the inefficient and corrupt practices of the TRS government.

Addressing the party leaders, Chugh said the TRS government was deliberately defeating the Central schemes, which had been launched by the Prime Minister for the benefit of the poor. In fact, he said, the TRS government was creating hurdles in the implementation of a number of schemes that are meant for people in villages. He said KCR



BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh

had promoted nepotism in the State by projecting his family members as leaders of the party and has broken all records of corruption by forming the government on emotional grounds.

Chugh said the message of the Modi government's governance, all that it has delivered to the peo-

ple of the country in the last seven years, needed to be taken to every house and family in the State. He exhorted the party workers to expose the failures of the KCR government because people in the State are agitated and disappointed. "People are looking for a new hope and a new era to set in and it is the duty of the BJP workers to fulfil their aspirations," Chugh said.

Lauding the Modi government for historic decisions like the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A and initiating the construction of Ram temple, Chugh said the BJP must intensify its campaign in the State by promising the people good governance and honest administration.

# Revuri exhorts workers to strengthen party

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Former MLA and BJP leader Revuri Prakash Reddy reiterated that the BJP has emerged as a viable alternative in Telangana.

Addressing the first party executive of the Karimnagar district unit here on Monday, he observed that the people were vexed with the despotic rule of the TRS. The TRS has been charting a unilateral course throwing the welfare of the people to the winds. Therefore, the people are ready to raise a banner of revolt against the government, he said.

All development works in the State are being implemented with Central funds, he said adding that the State government has been doing precious little.

Furthermore, he said that the Telangana government has been using the Central funds for its various schemes, but failed to



Former MLA and BJP leader Revuri Prakash Reddy addressing the first party executive of Karimnagar district unit on Monday

publish a photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It stands as a testimony to the despotic rule of the government.

The people are looking towards the BJP, he said adding that the BJP emerged as an alternative force in Telangana

with its people's movements. The TRS defeat in Dubbak bypoll is a slap on the face of the TRS government, he said. The BJP workers are working like soldiers with a missionary zeal and disciplined workers are the strength of the BJP. He appealed to the party lead-

ers and activists to strengthen the party from the booth level keeping in mind the forthcoming elections. He wanted them to explain the anti-people policies of the TRS government to the people.

District president of the party Gangadi Krishna Reddy, who presided, said that the party is forging ahead with a plan to strengthen the party in the district. The BJP launches agitations on people's problems continuously. He said that the party would launch many more movements in the future to expose the failures of the TRS government.

The meeting discussed the activities to be taken up in the future. District secretary of the party K Vasudeva Reddy moved several political resolutions for the approval of the executive. The executive body approved them.

# e-EPIC to be launched on Jan 25

PNS ■ MEDAK

Chief Electoral Officer Dr Shashank Goel said that the electors' photo identity card (e-EPIC) programme will be formally launched on January 25 to mark the National Voters' Day.

Addressing the media here on Monday after a meeting with revenue zonal councillors and tahsildars at the mini-conference hall of the Collectorate, the RDOs, who had worked to register voters as per the provisions of the electoral code, received objections, made changes, additions and announced the final list of voters on January 15.

# Special Tribunal Court inaugurated in Sangareddy

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

District Collector Hanumantha Rao sought the cooperation of advocates in resolving land dispute cases. He opened a Special Tribunal at the Collectorate here on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the government has directed to resolve all cases related to land disputes within a month. He said the Special Tribunal has been set up in the district with the Collector and additional collector (revenue) as members.

The Tribunal was directed to resolve all cases in the district within the stipulated time frame as the term was one month. He said all pend-



Collector Hanumantha Rao inaugurating the Tribunal Court in Sangareddy on Monday

ing cases from the tahsildar to the Joint Collector need to be resolved. In all, 700 cases are pending in the district. This Special Tribunal operates every day except on

public holidays. Additional Collector Vira Reddy, DRO Radhika Ramani, government advocate Narsingh Rao, lawyers and others were present.

# PM: Work underway on 1000 km metro network

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Work is in progress on over 1,000 km long metro rail network in 27 cities in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

He was speaking after performing the ground breaking ceremony of the Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project Phase-II and Surat Metro Rail Project via video conferencing.

"There was a time when there was no modern thinking and policy on metro in our country. The result was that there was a different (type of) metro in each city," Modi said.

There was no uniformity then on the metro trains which started in different cities. There was no integration of metro with other modes of transport back then," he said.

Now, an integrated approach has been brought in so that various modes of transport, such as bus and trains, complement each other rather than running independently, he added.

Both the metro projects in Gujarat would come up at an estimated cost of around Rs 17,000 crore, Modi said.

The metro network in Ahmedabad and Surat will



further strengthen the connectivity in the two major business centres of the country, Modi said, adding the government is developing an integrated urban transport system.

The difference between the approach of his government and the previous governments is the (pace of) expansion of the metro rail network across the country, he said.

"Before 2014, only 225 km of metro line became operational in 10-12 yrs. In the last six years, over 450 km of metro network became operational," Modi said.

The Ahmedabad and Surat

metro projects are expected to provide an environment friendly Mass Rapid Transit System to these cities.

Modi said the metro projects are designed keeping in mind both present as well as future needs.

The Ahmedabad Metro Rail Project Phase-II is 28.25 km long with two corridors. While corridor-1 is 22.8 km long and is from Motera Stadium to Mahatma Mandir, corridor-2 is 5.4 km long and is from GNLU to GIFT-City. The total completion cost of the Phase-II project is Rs 5,384 crore, an official said.

# Proposed rally on Jan 26: It's law and order matter, says SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court told the Centre on Monday that the proposed tractor rally on the Republic Day by farmers protesting against the new farm laws is a "law and order" matter and Delhi Police is the first authority to decide who should be allowed to enter the national capital.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde, while hearing the Centre's application seeking an injunction against the proposed tractor or trolley march or any other kind of protest which seeks to disrupt the gathering and celebrations on January 26, said that police has all the authority to deal with the matter.

"Does the Supreme Court say as to what are the powers of police and how they will exercise them? We are not going to tell you what to do," said the bench, also comprising Justices L N Rao and Vineet Saran.

The apex court told Attorney General K K Venugopal that it will take up the matter for hearing on Wednesday, January 20. "The question of entering



into Delhi is a law and order matter and will be determined by the police," the bench said, adding, "Mr Attorney General, we are adjourning the matter and you have all the authority to deal with this matter."

The Centre, in an application filed through Delhi Police, has said that any proposed march or protest which seeks to disrupt and disturb the Republic Day celebrations will cause an "embarrassment to the nation".

During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, the bench said who should be allowed to enter Delhi and who should not be allowed has to be dealt with by the police as the court is not the

"first authority".

The bench told Venugopal that the apex court is seized of the issue of farm laws and "we have not said anything on police powers". The apex court then asked, "Are farmers unions appearing today?"

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave said he was representing some farmer unions in the matter. Advocate A P Singh, representing one of the farmers' body, told the bench about the affidavit filed by them requesting the top court to remove the remaining three members of the court-appointed committee to resolve the issue of farm laws and select people who can do the job "on the basis of mutual harmony".

## Farmers have right to take out tractor rally: Unions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Protesting union leaders on Monday said that farmers have a constitutional right to take out their tractor rally peacefully and asserted that thousands of people will participate in the proposed event on January 26.

The Supreme Court said on Monday that the Delhi Police is the first authority to decide the entry of protesting farmers into the national capital.

Bhartiya Kisan Union (Lakhnowal) Punjab general secretary Paramjit Singh said that farmers are not going to hold their rally on Rajpath and in other high-security areas, adding that they would only take it out on the Outer Ring Road in Delhi and that there will be no disruption in the official Republic Day parade.

"We are stuck at the Delhi borders. We have not decided to sit at these borders our-

selves, we have been stopped from entering Delhi. We will take out the rally peacefully without disrupting any law and order. We will exercise our constitutional right and we will definitely enter Delhi," Singh told PTI.

Another farmer leader Lakhbir Singh, who is vice president (Punjab) of All India Kisan Sabha, said that farmers will return to protest sites after taking out the tractor rally on the Outer Ring Road on January 26.

"We will not go to any place where there might be a government gathering, and all our tractors will have a national flag and the flags of our farmer unions," Lakhbir said. Asked about their stand in case the Delhi Police does not give them permission for the tractor parade, BKU (Ekta Ugrahan) president Joginder Singh Ugrahan said that farmers have constitutional rights to hold the tractor rally peacefully.

## INDIA CORNER

### CRPF gets 21 DRDO-developed bike ambulances for remote area

Twenty-one 'bike ambulances' developed by the DRDO were on Monday inducted into the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) for casualty evacuation tasks in remote



Naxal violence and insurgency-affected areas. The customised 'Rakshita' ambulances have been created on 350cc Royal Enfield Classic bikes by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a scientific research body under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). CRPF chief A P Maheshwari said the bikes will be used in operational areas like the Left Wing Extremism-affected states and insurgency-hit areas for evacuating sick or injured troops of the paramilitary force.

### Police say ex-BJP leader held on charges of child sex abuse

Expelled BJP functionary Ram Bihari Rathore, arrested last week on charges of child sex abuse, had been involved in various criminal and anti-social activities for the past six-seven years, a senior police official said on Monday.



According to the police, Rathore also operated a betting racket from his house in Konch police area of Jalaun district in Uttar Pradesh. Investigators are collecting evidence against him and may summon police personnel who had been posted in the area in the past few years to gather more information. Konch police station SHO Imran Khan said all aspects are being looked into and necessary evidence are being collected so as to invoke the stringent National Security Act (NSA) against Rathore.

### Union minister Gehlot visits Shripad Naik in Goa hospital

Union minister Thawar Chand Gehlot on Monday met his cabinet colleague Shripad Naik, who is undergoing treatment at a Goa hospital following an accident last week, and enquired about his health. The minister for social justice and empowerment, who is on a visit to Goa to participate in various programmes



scheduled by his department, visited Naik at the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) located near here. "Naik's condition is good. He spoke to me. I wished him a speedy recovery," Gehlot said. The minister also said that during his short visit, Naik and he shared memories of their private visit to the US some years back. GMCH's Dean Dr Shivanand Bandekar in a medical bulletin issued on Sunday said Naik is doing well and his general condition is much better. "All his vital parameters, including blood pressure, pulse rate and oxygen levels are within normal limits," he said.

### Two bogies of passenger train derail in Lucknow

Two bogies of a passenger train on its way from Amritsar to Jaynagar in Bihar derailed in Lucknow on Monday morning, a railway official said. No casualties were reported. The 4674 Shahid Express left for its onward journey shortly after the incident, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Jagtosh Shukla said. The incident took place around 8 am when the train left platform no. 1 at the Charbagh railway station and two of its bogies derailed, DRM Northern Railway, Sanjay Tripathi said. Among the derailed bogies, one was an AC three tier and another sleeper, and a total of 130 passengers were travelling in them, the DRM said. The passengers of the derailed bogies were shifted to other compartments and the train left for onwards journey around 10.25 am, DRM said.



## Health worker dies day after receiving vax shot

PNS ■ MORADABAD/LUCKNOW

A 46-year-old health worker died a day after receiving the coronavirus vaccination, with the autopsy report attributing the death to "cardio-pulmonary disease", officials said on Monday.

Mahipal's family said he was not suffering from any ailment other than fever and cough, and blamed the death on vaccination.

A high-level inquiry was being ordered, Moradabad District Magistrate Rakesh Singh said.

Mahipal, working as ward boy in the surgical ward of the state-run Deendayal Upadhyay hospital in Moradabad, died on Sunday night.

Chief Medical Officer Dr Milind Chandra Garg, however, said that the cause of death was a cardiac problem.



"Deceased Mahipal's heart was found enlarged and it had blood clots according to postmortem report," he said.

"It appears that Mahipal was suffering from a cardiac disease," he said.

The report of the post-mortem, conducted by three doctors, said the death was caused by "cardio-pulmonary disease" and there is "no relation with corona vaccine".

The CMO trashed suggestions of any type of side effect of the vaccination, though he admitted that some employees were suffering from fever after taking the shots.

## 5 tourists drown as boat capsizes in Navsari lake

PNS ■ NAVSARI

Three children and two adults have drowned after their boat capsized in a lake in Gujarat's Navsari district when a large number of tourists tried to get on to the vessel while some others were disembarking, police said on Monday.

Nearly 15 others were injured in the melee caused by tourists getting in and out of the boat in a rush on Sunday evening, and official from Chikhli police station said. The incident took place in a lake at Soldhara Eco Point, a tourist spot in Chikhli taluka of Navsari, he said. "Due to the rush of tourists, the boat capsized when people tried to get on to it at the same time when others were disembarking," he said.

## RMM says its members are free to join any political party

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Rajini Makkal Mandram (RMM) on Monday said members, if they so desire, may join any political party after resigning from the Mandram.

The statement comes in the wake of three district secretaries of RMM joining the DMK on Sunday.

The resignation of the Mandram office-bearers comes following actor Rajinikanth's recent abandonment of his plan to enter politics and face the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, due during April-May this year.

Members, if they desire to join and work with any political party, may do so after resigning from the Mandram, RMM said in a statement.

Though they join other parties, members of Rajini Makkal Mandram should not 'forget



that they are fans of the actor, the statement added.

District secretaries of Tuticorin, Ramanathapuram and Theni joined the DMK on Sunday. Apart from them, three other functionaries also joined the DMK. The Rajini Makkal Mandram, (Rajini People's Forum) was previously

considered the political launch vehicle of the top actor.

On December 29 last year, Rajinikanth, citing his health condition vis-a-vis the coronavirus pandemic announced that he would not join politics.

He had undergone renal transplant in 2016 and is on immuno-suppressants.

## Eight Naxals surrender, cops credit Lon Varratu campaign

PNS ■ DANTEWADA

Eight Naxals surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada on Monday, with district police officials claiming that its 'Lon Varratu' campaign asking the Maoist ultras to return to the mainstream was showing results.

With this, 248 Naxals, including 67 with bounties on their heads, have so far laid down arms in the district since the campaign, which means "return to your home/village" in the local Gondi dialect, started in June last year, an official said.



The eight ultras, including a woman, have said they surrendered due to their disappointment with the hollow Maoist ideology, and because they were encouraged by their former colleagues who laid down arms as part of the Lon Varratu

appeal, informed Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava said.

"Of the eight, Suresh Oyami (20) was active as a member of platoon number 13 under Bhairamgarh area committee of the Maoist and was carrying a reward of Rs 2 lakh on his head.

"Three others, Jogi Madvi (19), member of Pedaras LOS (local organisation squad), Pradip alias Pandru Kovasi (20), Mirtoor LOS member and Sule Kawasi (35), militia platoon deputy commander, were carrying rewards of Rs 1 lakh each," he said.

## 16-year-old girl found dead, rape suspected

PNS ■ BARMER(RAJASTHAN)

A 16-year-old girl was found dead with her throat slit in Rajasthan's Barmer district on Monday with police suspecting that she was raped before being murdered.

The body was recovered from a field behind her house in Suwala village.

Her throat was slit and it, prima facie, seems the girl was murdered after rape, Barmer SP Anand Sharma said, adding that sexual assault can be confirmed only after the post-mortem report is received.

## Don't join WhatsApp if not accepting new policy: HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday said accepting the new privacy policy of social messaging app WhatsApp was a "voluntary" thing and one can choose not to use or join that platform if one did not agree with its terms and conditions.

"It is a private app. Don't join it. It is a voluntary thing, don't accept it. Use some other app," Justice Sanjeev Sachdeva said to the petitioner, a lawyer, who has challenged WhatsApp's new privacy policy which was slated to come into effect in February but has

been deferred till May.

The court also said that if the terms and conditions of most mobile apps are read, "you would be surprised as to what all you are consenting to." "Even Google maps captures all your data and stores it," the court said.

The court further said it could not understand what data would be leaked according to the petitioner and since the issue requires consideration, it will be listed on January 25 due to paucity of time on Monday. The central government also agreed with the court that the issue needs to be analysed.

## Smiles, sanitizers welcome students as schools reopen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Balloons, flowers, sanitisers and smiling faces welcomed class 10 and 12 students in schools in the national capital on Monday as they returned to campuses after over 10 months.

The students who were elated to be able to attend the first offline class of the academic session wore masks and queued up outside schools maintaining social distance.

Schools reopened on Monday after over 10 months of being closed in view of coronavirus pandemic. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said it was an emotional moment to see children back in school.

"Seeing kids back in school after a long time, is an emotional moment for me. Schools have reopened today after leaving behind a very difficult time. We are hopeful that soon, everything will be normal and all students will be able to come to schools and meet their teachers and friends," he tweeted.



Pragati Diwan, an excited class 12 student said, "it was optional to come but I was sure I have to. It is the last year of my school life and I haven't come to school even one day," said Pragati Diwan, an excited class 12 student.

For another student at Geeta Bal Bharti School, the feeling was similar to that of attending first day at school.

"It does not feel like I am coming to school after ten months, it feels like I have come to school for the first time. I am looking forward to

the preparations for board exams here," she said.

Prince, a student at Delhi government school, said, "The online classes were a great help for theoretical subjects but the practical subjects were a challenge. I am glad to be back at school so the practical concepts will be easily brushed up before the board exams".

The school put up posters of "welcome back" in corridors where teachers stood with sanitisers and checked the temperature of each student before letting them in.

Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Mandawali decorated the premises with balloons and the teachers showered flower petals on students, welcoming them.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also visited a school in Chirag Enclave on Monday to assess the readiness of schools to welcome class 10 and 12 students.

"Felt really good to meet children in schools after a long time. They are still adjusting to being back in school with safety norms but are extremely happy to meet their friends. The teachers are also overjoyed to meet students, saying it has filled an empty space in their life," Sisodia said.

Calling students in different slots, shorter school hours, frequent sanitisation and staggered entry and exit are among the plans of various schools in the national capital as they gear to welcome class 10 and 12 students on Monday for the first time in the academic session.

The schools are reopening in Delhi after 10 months, after being shut last year to prevent

the spread of the novel coronavirus, and they have been instructed by the Directorate of Education (DoE) to follow all COVID-19 guidelines when classroom studies resume.

The Delhi government has allowed all schools outside COVID-19 containment zones here to reopen for classes 10 and 12 from January 18 in view of board exams. However, it made clear that physical attendance is not compulsory and students will attend schools only with the consent of parents.

Allowing 15 students at a time in a classroom, placing handwashing consoles and sanitisers in corridors, volunteers to ensure social distancing is maintained, temperature checks and medical facilities on standby if any student is not feeling well, are among various other initiatives planned by schools.

Schools are also working out plans to ensure that students who choose not to come to campus, do not miss out anything.

## Diaspora power

First the United Kingdom, now in the United States. Members of the Indian diaspora are rising to power



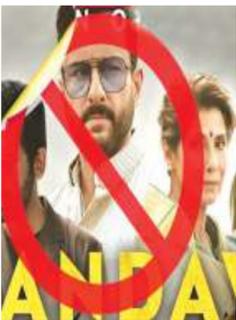
It is said about the Indian diaspora in the Western world, whether they are first-generation immigrants or third or even fourth-generation immigrants, that they have a humongous amount of influence compared to the size of the 'Indian' community in those countries. In Kamala Harris, a half-Jamaican, half-Tamilian woman, a person of partial Indian ethnicity (Harris identifies as 'Black' despite being raised by her Tamilian mother) is rising to one of the most powerful offices in the United States (US) and many openly predict that this role is an audition for a potential run as President very soon. Harris also speaks fluent Sanskrit and Tamil and is believed to be a distant cousin of India's Foreign Minister S Jaishankar.

Along with Harris, we are now informed that over 20 Indian-origin members of the Biden-Harris Administration will start their jobs on January 20, and in doing so this administration has come a long way from the lily-white Trump Administration and even the Obama Administration where actor Kalpen Modi (stage name 'Kal Penn') was the most notable American of Indian origin. Harris however, is not the first Indian in a major office of state in a western nation, that would be the Indian-origin ministers in Boris Johnson's Cabinet, Chancellor Rishi Sunak and Home Secretary Priti Patel. While we in India should feel proud of the achievements of our brethren on foreign shores, many of whom have overcome institutional racism to rise to the top, we must not forget a couple of things. While many of these people might be proud of their Indian heritage, none of them owe anything to the country of their origin. Indeed, if any of them come from lower down the social ladder in India, they might even have an antithetical view and might be hostile towards India.

In fact, it is very likely that Indian-origin politicians and bureaucrats in power in the West, might use that power to put a squeeze on Indian policymaking, indeed some like US Representative Pramila Jayapal have tried doing just that. That said, global realpolitik and the western world's need to position India as a bulwark against China might make all this posturing a moot point. The Quad alliance between Australia, Japan, the US and India is a reality that will not go away. But, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's miscalculation in supporting US President Donald Trump during his 2019 visit to Houston and Trump's visit to India last year, might have potential after-effects for Indian policymakers going forward. And while celebrating the success of Indians in the US we must not forget a few realities that we tend to ignore. Many Indians tend to "ghettoise" when they go to the West, something clearly visible in cities like San Jose, California and Edison, New Jersey, it would be remiss of us in India to ignore this fact. It is also true that a vast majority of Indians in the western world are not just upper caste immigrants but also extremely insular. Indeed social caste mobility in India is easier than in communities who have immigrated to the West as their social outlook is stuck in the past while India has progressed.

## OTT Tandav

Though the saffron brigade might be trying to derive mileage, but OTT content does need to be cleaned up



The ongoing controversy over Amazon Prime's new web series 'Tandav' is not something new to the country and similar contentious debates took place at the time of the release of movies like the Deepika Padukone-starrer *Padmaavat* and Amir Khan's *PK*. The political drama, in which Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub have played lead roles was released on the Over-the-Top (OTT) media platform on January 15. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders have taken umbrage at a scene in which Ayyub performs a play as Lord Shiva. With Maharashtra BJP MLA Ram Kadam filing a police complaint at Mumbai's Ghatkopar Police Station and seeking the boycott of the series, it becomes amply clear that the row is politically-motivated and the saffron brigade will leave no stone unturned to derive maximum mileage out of the issue. Particularly in view of the forthcoming West Bengal elections, as the saffron party portray's itself as the "protector" of the faith. That Kadam is refusing to budge from his demand of a boycott of the series despite the cast and crew issuing an "unconditional" apology on Monday evening, clarifying that they did not intend to offend religious beliefs or sentiments, is a clear indication of this. They also referred to parts of a disclaimer that is an industry standard and said 'Tandav' was a "work of fiction" and that "any resemblance to acts and persons and events is purely coincidental." Kadam has now gone one step ahead and asked all Hindus to shun Amazon's shopping site and content platform. So obviously he is spoiling for a fight. Fortunately, an online series rules out the possibility of aggressive Hindu fringe elements threatening the audience and burning movie theatres.

Another BJP leader Manoj Kotak, the MP from Mumbai North-East, wrote to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) expressing strong objections to the web series. He too, demanded an immediate ban on the streaming of the show. With the BJP being in power at the Centre, the I&B Ministry has reportedly sought a response from Amazon Prime officials. The Government recently brought OTT platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ Hotstar, besides other online news and current affairs content, under the ambit of the I&B Ministry, giving it powers to regulate policies and rules for the digital space. The advocates of free speech have always underscored that the right to freedom of speech and expression cannot be curtailed and the Indian Constitution guarantees it. Though one agrees with this sentiment, and the fact that the right to expression is sacrosanct, it doesn't give anyone a licence to hurt the religious sentiments of any community by insulting their gods and goddess or by portraying them in a bad light. But that said, one cannot but help wonder how is it that "Hindu sentiments" were never as fragile as they are today. Has not India always been a country that has been proud of its tolerant nature and the fact that we follow the Gandhians principles of "ahimsa." Are we now a nation that is deeply divided and intolerance towards even an imagined slight is the new normal? How then, are we any different from those who waged a war against *Charlie Hebdo*? Needless to say, the controversy surrounding 'Tandav' and the slight, real or imagined, has provided more fodder to fringe elements who thrive on disturbing communal harmony and targeting minorities. As a result of this, two FIRs have been registered against the makers of the show, one in Mumbai and the other in Lucknow. Reportedly, the charges include promoting enmity between different religious groups, race, destruction, damage or defilement of a place of worship or an object held sacred. Things are definitely going to be tough for the makers of 'Tandav'. But one wonders why the upholders of Indian culture and values don't raise a hue and cry over the kind of content that we see on the OTT platform, which is saturated with violence, nudity, abuses, derogatory gestures and remarks. It would be wonderful to clean up the content overall, instead of just focusing on religion.

# Good to focus on skill

The NEP is more in tune with national priorities and contemporary realities. It pays attention to areas that had been neglected for long



A SURYA PRAKASH

After decades of intransigence, the Union Government and policymakers in the education sector have come up with a National Education Policy (NEP) which is more in tune with national priorities and contemporary realities. This is so because the new policy pays special attention to three very important areas that have been neglected for long — holistic and multidisciplinary education, vocational education and impartation of skills and equalisation of opportunity for digital education.

The Centre has drafted education policies in the past. However, like many things which were thought of earlier, these plans have fallen by the wayside for the lack of foresight, funds and commitment. Eventually they just ended up as a string of shibboleths — high sounding but vacuous prose — just meant for the printer contracted by the Government to make a killing!

But, this time it is different because it seeks to diagnose and confront the real problems that we face in the field of education, be it early childhood care and learning, curriculum and pedagogy in schools, language education, holistic and integrated learning, vocational education and promotion of Indian languages, art and culture. It is difficult in a single column to cover all aspects of this policy, so better limit the attention to just a few aspects like holistic, multidisciplinary and vocational education.

The NEP talks about the multidisciplinary approach of universities like Takshashila and Nalanda where good education meant good knowledge of 64 "kalaas" or arts which included singing, painting, chemistry, mathematics, medicine, engineering and vocational subjects such as carpentry, cloth-making and soft skills such as communication and debating. In other words, it was holistic knowledge — complete, comprehensive education that gave an individual more than rudimentary understanding of various disciplines of learning and equipped him/her for life's challenges. The NEP says: "The very idea that all branches of creative human endeavour, including mathematics, science, vocational subjects, professional subjects and soft skills should be considered arts has distinctly Indian origins." Therefore, this ancient understanding of education "must be brought back to Indian education, as it is exactly the kind of education that will be required for the 21st century."



This statement of intent in the NEP, if implemented with utmost commitment, will revolutionise higher education in the country, which fell into the rut of clearly separating the arts and the sciences for decades as if these disciplines were enemies of one another. This policy was pursued with such ferocity that even students who acquired Masters and Ph.D degrees felt a sense of incompleteness to their education and understanding of the world, and consequently lost out to their peers in the western world who were blessed with holistic education.

It is indeed sad that our politicians, bureaucrats and educationists persisted with such a policy that segmented knowledge, put students into a strait jacket and virtually prohibited them from venturing into areas outside their syllabus. All those responsible for this short-sighted policy must be identified and asked why they subjected millions of Indian students to such mindless compartmentalisation.

The second issue is vocational training. Since Independence, Indians were told that blue-collar jobs like running a lathe machine or being a fitter or turner in a factory; operating a bulldozer or heavy earth-moving equipment; carpentry, plumbing, basic electrical work and so on were meant for the less educated or those who passed out of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). Good middle

“THE CENTRE HAS DRAFTED EDUCATION POLICIES IN THE PAST. HOWEVER, LIKE MANY THINGS WHICH WERE THOUGHT OF EARLIER, THESE PLANS HAVE FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE FOR THE LACK OF FORESIGHT, FUNDS AND COMMITMENT”

class boys would go to college, acquire their degrees (with very little skills) and become "boxwallahs" or private sector executives or teachers. The less fortunate among them would become Government clerks, whereas the smarter ones would take civil service exams and become babus. Further, "safe" Government jobs became the ultimate dream for the youth. The system did not ignite the entrepreneurial instincts of students or challenge

them to explore new avenues. Thus, persons with passable language skills and a smattering of English were the smart guys with good incomes, whereas the ones with real skills — the lathe operators, the electricians and so on, who ran our industries and the manufacturing sector, who kept the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rising — belonged to a lower grade, the working class.

This anomaly persisted for decades because the Indian middle class declared that a degree certificate was a must to enter its precincts and to be in its marriage market. This could have been easily set right by awarding degrees after three-year training at an ITI to those passing out. Finally, the new NEP recognises this lacuna and seeks to remedy it.

It is indeed a shame that this convoluted middle class habit of honouring skill-less education was allowed to persist for over 70 years after Independence.

This has cost us dearly, because the 12th Five-Year Plan estimated that only five per cent of the Indian workforce in the age group of 19-24 years received formal vocational education, whereas it was 52 per cent in the US, 75 per cent in Germany and 96 per cent in South Korea. That means the most advanced nations have a high percentage of youth with vocational education, something that the Indian middle class and policymakers scoffed

at. This happened because vocational education was focused largely on grade eighth dropouts or students in class 11 and 12 who opted for vocational training.

As a result "vocational education is perceived to be inferior to mainstream education and is meant largely for students who are unable to cope with the latter", says the NEP. It also seeks to overcome the social status hierarchy associated with vocational education.

So, now, the plan is that 50 per cent of students through school and higher education should have vocational education by 2025. It will also be possible for students with vocational skills to get Bachelor's degrees. Alternately, students in undergraduate courses can join four-year multidisciplinary programmes and walk out with worthwhile skills apart from their degrees. In short, the apartheid created by the education system separating the skilled and qualified certificate holders from the unskilled but "packaged degreewallahs" will come to an end. The day we see the skilled workers getting their due, India will take a big leap forward.

We must now keep the pressure on the Government and policymakers to see that the NEP is implemented with utmost honesty and diligence.

(The writer is an author specialising in democracy studies. The views expressed are personal).

## SOUNDBITE

Today, India is taking major decisions with confidence. It is not only doing things bigger but also better.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

To protect the lives and health of the people I will get the situation back to normal as soon as possible. What is important is to provide necessary medical services.



Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga

Apart from nepotism and the movie mafia, the most awful thing about being an actor is night shifts. When the Sun rises you go to sleep.



Actor Kangana Ranaut

The boy has become a man on this tour. Siraj, leader of the attack in his first Test series and he has led from the front.



Former cricketer Virender Sehwag

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SC leaves Govt in a tizzy

Sir — It is sad that the Supreme Court on Monday refused to pass any order on the farmers' proposed tractor rally which seeks to disrupt Republic Day (R-Day) celebrations on January 26 in the Capital. The apex court Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) said that the proposed tractor rally by the farmers protesting on the borders comes under the category of "law and order" and Delhi Police is the first authority to decide who should be allowed to enter the Capital and it was not the job of the Supreme Court. CJI Bobde's order came as a great setback to the Centre. Now, the chances of violence on R-Day have increased manifold as the police might deal with the farmers in a high-handed manner which will in turn instigate the cultivators to retaliate with force.

Further, if any rally or protest by the farmers disrupts the R-Day parade, it will be an embarrassment to the country as it is associated with the nation's pride. With this the Centre and the Delhi Police are in fix as they have no clue what to do now.

**Bhagwan Thadani**  
Mumbai

### Inoculation is a turning point in the COVID war

The nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive launched on January 16 has put the country in immunisation mode and marked a turning point in the fight against the pandemic. It was, literally and figuratively, a shot in the arm. In this pandemic time the vaccines are the best thing to happen to us. Vaccines are lifesavers and constitute an effective pharmacological intervention for providing immunity against the Coronavirus that has caused a global health emergency. They will result in great gains in public health as time goes by.

It is true that vaccination is yet to pick up pace in many parts of the country. While the plan is to inoculate 100 people in each centre daily it may not always be possible to reach the set target. With time, the picture will become less hazy. People should have confidence in the vaccines. They must shed their inhibitions and turn up at the vaccination sessions. Apart from logistics and practicalities, people need to have trust in the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and realise the importance of immunisation to make the drive a success. It is important to allay fears and uncertainties. In this context, dissemination of information assumes



added importance.

The country's top political executives should consider taking the job to inspire confidence, as was done by Joe Biden and many other world leaders. The Government must also consider leaving the choice of the vaccine to the recipients. It should give the country's impoverished citizens the vaccine for free.

**G David Milton**  
Tamil Nadu

### Mamata's tactical move

Sir — With Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announcing that she will contest the Bengal Assembly election from Nandigram, politics in the State has taken an interesting turn. Now, the fight for the BJP is definitely not a cakewalk and the party will have to devise its strategy accordingly. The announcement is significant as Nandigram is the constituency of her former right hand man Suwendu Adhikari, who crossed over to the BJP last month. Only the future will tell whether the announcement will help "Didi" and stop the defections from her party to the BJP. She has also supported the ongoing farmers' agitation which

has been continuing for over 50 days in Delhi-NCR. In 2007, as many as 14 people were killed in clashes in Nandigram between protesting farmers and the police. In the subsequent election, the TMC crafted the "Ma, Maati, Manush" campaign and registered a landslide victory.

**Yash Pal Ralhan**  
Jalandhar

### Why hurt feelings?

Sir — Taking cognisance of complaints that Hindu gods and goddesses have been ridiculed in the web series 'Tandav', the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting sought an explanation from the online streaming platform Amazon Prime Video. In the end the series has proved to be one more case of controversial cinema.

It is quite clear that such shows are produced only to create controversies and get the eyeballs. It seems that the makers of the web series have deliberately mocked Hindu gods and disrespected Hindu religious sentiments for their own selfish gains. The show clearly reveals a lackadaisical attempt at portraying India's diverse polity.

India is the land of peace, harmony and tolerance. Nobody has the right to hurt the sentiments of a religious community just for the sake of entertainment. So, it is in the interest of everyone that such films should be outrightly banned.

**Krishnan Ramani**  
Coimbatore

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

**FIRST COLUMN**

**Leading from the front**

During the Coronavirus pandemic the SCR showed the country how to turn an adversity into an opportunity



RAM ACHARYA

The COVID-19 pandemic may have severely impacted the Indian economy but the South Central Railway (SCR) rose to the occasion by running scores of Shramik Special trains for ferrying thousands of migrant labourers out of Hyderabad to cities and towns in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Odisha. Sensing the growing and urgent nationwide clamour for immigrant labourers to be allowed to head home by train — as opposed to them being forced to trek kilometres (km) on foot, with many of the workers dying in the process — the SCR was first off the mark. It took the initiative of helping out the hungry, impoverished and tired workers who had reached a breaking point. The SCR began an immigrant labour special train from Lingampally near Hyderabad to Hatia in Jharkhand as early as May 1, 2020, followed by 242 special trains from its stations located in Telangana, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh to various stations in North and North-West India. During the next two months, the SCR transported over 3,13,500 passengers and reportedly at the peak of the operations, 43 Shramik Specials were rolled out in a short span of 12 hours.

In the midst of the raging Coronavirus pandemic, the SCR created a safe environment for the labourers who were heading back to their hometowns and villages. The SCR ensured social distancing, repeated sanitising of all trains, use of hand sanitisers by all, contactless thermal scanning and ticket checking through cameras by the ticket checking staff. Plus, the employees deputed at stations wore Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) suits, gloves and facial shields, in order to ensure that they and the passengers remained safe from the virus. They also made sure that the passengers wore masks and followed other COVID protocols. If they had not done so, the consequences for the people returning home and the towns and villages would have been disastrous. Special arrangements for food at specified intervals were made for originating trains as well as those that were passing through, with the support of the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) and several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). As though the COVID-19 contagion was not enough of a crisis for the nation to deal with, disaster struck on May 5 when a major gas leak was reported at Vizag. Consequently, the movement of all trains, including the Shramik Specials had to be halted through the city, and they had to be diverted on alternative routes after a short delay.

However, the shutting down of passenger trains was an opportunity for the SCR to run more of freight and special parcel trains, allowing it to earn revenue when general economic activity was on the decline, nationwide. Weekly special parcel trains were run from the New Kacheguda goods shed near Hyderabad to New Guwahati, carrying fish, dry fish, eggs, lemon, oil, ghee and so on. The COVID-19 outbreak offered the Railways an opportunity to capture new freight, too and it began loading industrial salt from the Kakinada Sea Ports Limited; rice from Nagireddipalli; pulses from Kadapa; onions from Nagarjuna; dry chillies from Reddypalem and last but not the least turmeric from Nizamabad, all destined for Bangladesh.

The all-India rail traffic having been reduced to less than half of its peak levels enabled the SCR to carry out a major overhaul of the iconic bridge over the mighty Godavari River. Built in 1977, the bridge was in need of repair and a major overhaul, but it was almost impossible to shut it down for extended periods on such a busy route. Due to the pandemic, the repair work was undertaken after a gap of almost 43 years, including track renewal over the entire length of the three-km-long bridge, by ensuring a 36-hour complete shutdown of traffic. Track replacement work was carried out with the aid of Plasser Quick Relaying System (QRS) machines after carrying out deep screening work over all the six spans, while the road traffic continued on the lower deck. Similarly, scissors crossovers that had been laid way back in 1970 in Kazipet with wooden sleepers, could now be replaced with Pre-Stressed Concrete (PSC) sleepers, thanks to the possibility of shutting down traffic for 72 hours, which was unthinkable before the pandemic hit the country. Similarly, the Vijayawada yard, a major facility for the North-South and East Coast freight movement had wooden sleepers on its north and south end turnouts. These were replaced with PSC ones during the lockdown period. In all, 8,257 km of track was patrolled on foot and the sidings were completed. Thanks to the steep decline in passenger traffic, 44 km of track between Akola and Akot of the vital North-South link of Akola-Khandwa was converted from metre to broad gauge and 149 km of existing single-line track was doubled.

With five major hospitals and 44 health units spread over its network, the SCR could play a key role in providing critically needed facilities such as quarantine centres, in which 1,017 beds were set up in a short span of three weeks. The SCR's premier and oldest workshop belonging to the era of the Nizam State Railways also rose to the occasion by building automatic hand sanitiser dispensers, foot-operated taps and water coolers. These were located at public places such as cafeterias and main gates, keeping the SCR staff and the passengers safe and earning the SCR tonnes of goodwill. During the pandemic the SCR showed the country how to turn any adversity into an opportunity.

(The writer is former member, Railway Board. The views expressed are personal.)

**BRINGING KARNATAKA'S MARATHI-SPEAKING AND CULTURAL REGION INTO MAHARASHTRA WILL BE A TRIBUTE TO SOLDIERS MARTYRED IN THE BORDER WAR.**  
—MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER  
UDDHAV THACKERAY

**POINT COUNTERPOINT**



**REGIONALISM AND TALK OF LINGUISTICS ARE DETRIMENTAL TO THE UNITY OF THE COUNTRY. I CONDEMN THIS.**  
—KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER  
BS YEDIYURAPPA

**India must stand its ground**

All objections raised by the USTR on the DST levied by India on foreign tech firms are baseless. The Govt must not yield to the pressure tactics of the US administration by withdrawing the tax



UTTAM GUPTA

In its findings on the Section 301 probe conducted under the US Trade Act, 1974, the US Trade Representative (USTR) has *inter alia* concluded that India's digital services taxes (DST) or the so-called equalisation levy (EL) at the rate of two per cent, unfairly targets US companies. The USTR raised three aspects that, it alleges, are inconsistent with global tax principles: First, the levy on US companies has extra-territorial application; second, DST is a tax on the firm's revenue, not its income; and third, it subjects US companies to double taxation.

The above findings could lead to the US imposing duties on Indian goods; restrictions on import of goods and services; restrictions/denial on issuance of service sector authorisations; asking India for compensatory trade benefits and taking binding commitments from New Delhi to phase out the levy.

The stance taken by the US Administration is untenable and totally unjustified. At the outset, let us take a close look at the DST and the reason why India had to introduce it.

The operations of multinational corporations (MNCs) are transnational, with entities located in several countries involving a high-level of interdependence and cross-border flow of goods and services between them, as also direct supplies to retailers and consumers. For firms such as Google, Facebook and Amazon, who do business in digital mode, physical boundaries get blurred. They structure their investment arms through a maze of subsidiaries held outside India in low-tax jurisdictions such as Singapore, Mauritius and Ireland among others.

These technology giants invoice Indian customers through these offshore entities despite having significant revenue, users or paying customers in the country, even as their Indian entity is crafted more like a service company or commission agent to the parent company located abroad. This helps them in booking an overwhelming share of revenues in the parent company (registered in a tax haven) while a very small portion of service/commission revenue and income is reported in the entity registered in India.

In short, these firms make money from their operations in India but don't pay taxes to the Government. On the other hand, India-based e-commerce operators are subject to taxes in the country for revenue generated from the Indian market.

To address this anomaly, in 2016, the Narendra Modi Government introduced EL with an intent to tax Business to Business (B2B) and e-commerce/digital transactions. This tax is levied at six per cent on the payment made by a resident firm to foreign e-commerce companies for online advertisements run on the latter's platform. While making a payment, the resident firm has to deduct tax from the consideration payable and deposit it to the department.

Through an amendment to the Finance Act, 2020, the scope of EL was extended to all sales, gross receipts or turnover of non-residents not having a Permanent Establishment (PE is a fixed place of business normally located in the territory of the source country), who is providing the online sale of goods or provision of services or both to a person residing in India or a non-resident in specific circumstances, such as the sale of advertisement targeted to the Indian market or sale of data collected from it. This levy is at two per cent on the sum received or receivable by an e-commerce oper-

**IT IS IRONICAL THAT DIGITAL GIANTS FIRST USE A DISINGENUOUS ARCHITECTURE TO SHOW REVENUE GENERATED FROM INDIAN OPERATIONS AS HAPPENING IN FOREIGN JURISDICTIONS AND THEN, CLAIM THAT THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NO RIGHT TO TAX THEIR PROFITS. BUT, THEY AND THE US ADMINISTRATION CAN'T GET AWAY FROM THE FACT THAT THEY ARE MAKING PROFIT FROM THEIR OPERATIONS ON INDIAN SOIL. HENCE, THEY ARE LIABLE TO TAX HERE**



ator and is payable directly to the Central Government on a quarterly basis.

Though the USTR has objected to the two per cent DST, it is silent on the six per cent EL on online advertising revenue. All the aforementioned objections raised by it are untenable. At the outset, the levy does not discriminate against any US company as it applies equally to all non-resident e-commerce operators, irrespective of their country of residence. Just because out of the 119 companies likely to be taxed, 72 per cent happen to be American, does not mean that the latter alone have been targeted.

Second, contrary to what is claimed by the USTR, the levy is applied only on sales occurring in the territory of India through digital means. Consequently, the charge that it has extra-territorial application is baseless.

It is ironical that the digital giants first use a disingenuous architecture to show revenue generated from Indian operations as happening in foreign jurisdictions and then, claim that the Indian Government has no right to tax their profits. But, they and the US administration can't get away from the fact that they are making profit from their operations on Indian soil. Hence, they are liable to tax here. In the normal course, for a foreign firm having a PE from where it conducts transactions — including sales made in India — and maintains accounts, receipts, expenditure, profit and so on for local operations, the tax department has a smooth sail. But technological giants don't have a PE on Indian soil. To overcome this hurdle, in 2018, a committee set up by the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had mooted the concept of digital permanent establishment (DPE). The Income-Tax Act pro-

vides for levy of tax on the profit attributed to the Indian operations of such offshore enterprises in the country. The committee proposed tax at the rate of 30-40 per cent, depending on the user base and revenues (only firms with a user base over 2,00,000 would be considered).

As a follow up, in the Finance Act 2018, the Government proposed that "such offshore firms should be taxed in India if they have a market presence above a threshold to be defined in terms of their customer base and revenue." But this needs an amendment to India's tax treaties with all its trade and investment partners. Till that is done (a time-consuming process) the Government has levied tax on the amount received or receivable by an e-commerce operator.

This brings us to the third charge levied by the USTR: "The DST taxes a company's revenue, not its income." Ideally, the profits (or income) made by the foreign entity from its operations in India should be taxed. However, in view of the digital giants not having a PE here and the concept of DPE yet to get incorporated in tax treaties with India's trade and investment partners or till such time an agreement at the international level which is acceptable to all is reached, a levy on the revenue is the only logical way forward. However, efforts are already being made under the aegis of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to arrive at a so-called base erosion profit shifting (BEPS) framework agreement. The OECD had released a draft report on "taxing digital companies" on October 9, 2019, however, progress got stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As for the accusation of US companies being subject to double taxation, it

is for them to sort out with the country where it is incorporated (or country of residence). Merely because they pay tax in the country of residence resulting in double taxation, it can't be a valid basis for denying tax to a jurisdiction where it is legitimately due (India). Even so, several countries of residence happen to be low or nil tax jurisdictions or they provide set-off for taxes paid by MNCs in the country of operation, effectively ensuring nil tax.

India's right to collect tax is also in sync with the stance taken by the OECD under the BEPS framework agreement. It states: "Profits of MNCs should be available for taxation in the country where their customers are, irrespective of any physical presence in that market, and that a formula should be evolved for such taxation."

To conclude, all objections raised by the USTR on the two per cent DST levied by the Indian Government on foreign technology companies are baseless and unsubstantiated. India must not yield to the pressure tactics of the US administration by withdrawing the tax.

At the same time, India should work for early finalisation of the BEPS framework agreement at the OECD. It should evolve a consensus on acceptance of the DPE concept and also get ready with a criteria for treating a foreign company as a DPE. The criteria should give appropriate weight to three crucial parameters i.e. the number of users, paying customers or annual revenue. The tax rate on such companies — treated as DPE — should be equal to the rate applicable to domestic companies to ensure fair play and non-discrimination.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

**Lady Luck has been very kind to Biden**

Joe's years in office will be enlivened by a Republican civil war, quite likely ending in a permanent split of the American Right



GWYNNE DYER

US President-elect Joe Biden is thrice-blessed. Not only did he win the Democratic nomination and then the presidential election but as a result of the events of January 6 — when supporters of outgoing President Donald Trump attacked Capitol Hill — he takes office when the Republican Opposition is in utter disarray and likely to stay that way for a long time. None of that was foreordained, or even very likely.

Just days ago the media and the pundits had declared this candidacy dead. Biden marvelled almost exactly a year ago after winning the

South Carolina primary election by a landslide. It had been dead, too, until African-American voters in South Carolina gave him their overwhelming support.

It was the first primary he had won, and it put him back in the race. Two days later Biden won 10 out of 14 States on "Super Tuesday" and practically wrapped the nomination up. But if South Carolina had scheduled its primary even a few days later, he would have gone into "Super Tuesday" as a loser and probably been written off.

So he got lucky once but it was a bad year for a Democrat to be running for the presidency. Donald Trump was mocked and loathed by the rest of the world and by almost exactly half the US population but Trump's "base" didn't care and the US economy was in excellent shape.

The US media were doing their best to make the presidential race look exciting, because that's what they were going to have to talk and write about through most of 2020. But the fact is that incumbent US

presidents running for re-election when the economy is good almost always win.

Biden's second stroke of luck came just 10 days before he won the South Carolina primary, when the first case of COVID-19 showed up in America. By March it was running wild, but Trump, aware that his re-election depended on a booming economy, avoiding taking any public health measures that would slow it down. Other populist leaders did the same. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been a week or two late on every pandemic-related decision and Britain's per capita COVID death toll is even worse than America's. President Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil downplayed the COVID threat, as did Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Hungary and their people paid a high price, too. But none of them were running for re-election in 2020.

Trump's refusal to back anti-COVID measures like using masks, social distancing and a countrywide lockdown were driven more by



electoral concerns than ideology: Stall the economy and he could lose the election. But of course mass death will also stall the economy in the end, so he couldn't win. He ended up with a crashed economy, 4,00,000 COVID deaths and a lost election, too.

And then, incredibly, he gave Biden another gift: The assault on the Capitol Hill by his followers two weeks ago. In fact, Trump had wanted to join the thousands of hardcore followers who assembled

at Capitol Hill and had told aides in the days leading up to the rally that he planned to accompany them to demonstrate his ire at Congress as it moved to certify Biden's November election victory. But the Secret Service kept warning him that agents could not guarantee his safety if he went ahead. Trump relented and instead hunkered down at the White House to watch television images of the mob rioting he is accused of triggering.

Before that attack on Capitol

Hill, Biden was facing a grim time in office, with at least 70 per cent of Republican voters and a majority of Representatives seduced by Trump's "big lie" that he really won the election by a landslide and that the Democrats had somehow "stolen" it. It was Adolf Hitler, not Joseph Goebbels, who gave the technique that name, but it still works.

"In the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility," Hitler wrote in 'Mein Kampf (My Struggle)': "Because...in the primitive simplicity of their minds (the great masses) more readily fall victim to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods."

"It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths, and they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so impudently. Even though the facts which prove this to be so may be brought clearly to their minds, they will still doubt and

waver and will continue to think that there may be some other explanation."

That is what Biden faced only two weeks ago: A nightmare time in office with the "big lie" rampant and Trump its proud purveyor. And then suddenly Trump, in his manic determination to hold onto power, sent his mob off to try a foredoomed coup in the "Temple of Democracy," as American commentators call it. End of game. Trump is discredited even with a modest but significant proportion of his own base and a growing number of Republican office-holders are in rebellion against the party's subservience to the "Tangerine Tyrant." Biden's years in office will be enlivened by a vicious Republican civil war, quite likely ending in a permanent split of the American Right. This will give Lucky Joe time to do some useful work.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work.' The views expressed are personal.)

## Mindtree net profit rises to Rs 326.5 crore in Dec quarter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT firm Mindtree on Monday reported a 65.7 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 326.5 crore for the December 2020 quarter.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 197 crore in the corresponding period last year, Mindtree said in a regulatory filing. The company saw its revenue grow 3 per cent to Rs 2,023.7 crore in the quarter under review from Rs 1,965.3 crore in the year-ago period, it added. In dollar terms, its net profit rose 59.3 per cent to USD 44.2 million, while revenue declined marginally to USD 274.1 million in the December 2020 quarter over the year-ago period.

At the end of the December, the company's active client base stood at 276, and eight new clients were added during the quarter, the filing said.

# World shares retreat despite strong growth data from China

PNS ■ TOKYO

Markets got off to a slow start for the week despite news that the Chinese economy grew 2.3% in 2020 after a sharp contraction early in the year.

Shares fell in Paris, London and Tokyo but advanced in Hong Kong and Shanghai. Most U.S. markets are closed Monday for a national holiday.

Investors appear to have grown increasingly wary over the deepening economic devastation from the pandemic despite hopes that COVID-19 vaccines and fresh aid for the U.S. economy might hasten a global recovery.

Germany's DAX edged 0.1% lower to 13,769.97 and the CAC 40 in Paris shed 0.4% to 5,588.28. In Britain, the FTSE 100 lost less than 0.1% to 6,731.23. The futures for the



S&P 500 and the Dow industrials both were down 0.3%.

China was the first country to suffer outbreaks of the new coronavirus and the first major economy to begin recovering as meanwhile the U.S., Europe

and Japan are struggling with outbreaks.

The National Bureau of Statistics said growth in the three months ending in December rose to 6.5% over a year earlier, up from the previous quarters 4.9%. The econ-

omy contracted at a 6.8% pace in the first quarter of 2020 as the country fought the pandemic with shutdowns and other restrictions.

Some measures showed a slowing of activity in December, but "The big picture is still that activity remains strong, which is helping to support the labor market," Stephen Innes of Axi said in a commentary. The Hang Seng in Hong Kong gained 1% to 28,862.77, while the Shanghai Composite index climbed 0.8% to 3,596.22.

But gloom prevailed in other major regional markets. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 dropped 1% to 28,242.21 and the Kospi in South Korea lost 2.3% to 3,013.93. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 declined 0.8% to 6,663.00. Shares fell in Southeast Asia and Taiwan.

On Friday, the S&P 500 fell 0.7% to 3,768.25, with stocks of companies that most need a healthier economy taking some of the sharpest losses. It lost 1.5% for the week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 0.6% to 30,814.26, and the Nasdaq composite dropped 0.9% to 12,998.50. The Russell 2000 index of small-cap stocks lost 1.5% to 2,123.20.

Treasury yields have been climbing on expectations the U.S. government will borrow much more to pay for the additional stimulus proposed by President-elect Joe Biden, in addition to improved economic growth and higher inflation. The yield on the 10-year Treasury zoomed above 1% last week for the first time since last spring and briefly topped 1.18% this week.

# Sensex slumps for second day as bears tighten grip

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks wilted under selling pressure for the second consecutive session on Monday as investors stayed on the back foot amid lacklustre global cues.

A sharp drop in the rupee further sapped risk appetite, though gains in market heavyweights RIL and HDFC Bank cushioned the fall.

After a choppy session, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 470.40 points or 0.96 per cent lower at 48,564.27.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tumbled 152.40 points or 1.06 per cent to 14,281.30.

ONGC was the top loser in the Sensex pack, slumping 4.59 per cent, followed by Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank, PowerGrid, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, SBI and NTPC.

Only four index stocks closed in the green - Reliance Industries, Titan, HDFC Bank and ITC, climbing up to 2.37 per cent. HDFC Bank spurred 1.15 per cent after the country's largest private sector lender on Saturday reported a 14.36 per cent jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 8,760 crore for the December quarter, driven by a surge in core income.

Global markets retreated as rising COVID-19 cases clouded optimism over economic



recovery, even as Chinese shares rose after positive GDP data.

"Domestic equities witnessed pullback for second consecutive day as weak global cues continued to weigh on investors' sentiments... While underlying strength of markets remains intact considering rebound in key economic data, sustained growth in corporate earnings in 3Q FY21 with upbeat managements' commentaries and commencement of vaccination process.

"Additionally, favourable monetary policies of global central bankers, weak dollar and large fiscal stimulus in the US are expected to ensure sustain FPIs flow in domestic equities. However, for the week market is expected to be volatile ahead of some crucial

global events. Further, as Union Budget is just two weeks away, rotational trading might be visible in the market," said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

BSE metal, utilities, telecom, healthcare, basic materials, auto and power indices lost up to 4.14 per cent, while energy and consumer durables ended higher.

Broader BSE midcap and smallcap plummeted up to 2.01 per cent. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the positive zone after China posted 6.5 per cent GDP growth in the fourth quarter. The Chinese economy expanded 2.3 per cent in the pandemic-ravaged 2020, while almost all other major economies are expected to contract.

## Sensex tanks 470 points; Nifty drops below 14,300

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex plunged 470 points on Monday, tracking losses in index majors Infosys, HDFC and ICICI Bank amid a weak trend in global markets. After a choppy session, the 30-share BSE index ended 470.40 points or 0.96 per cent lower at 48,564.27. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty tumbled 152.40 points or 1.06 per cent to 14,281.30. ONGC was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding around 5 per cent, followed by Sun Pharma, PowerGrid, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank, Dr Reddy's and Maruti. On the other hand, Reliance Industries, Titan, HDFC Bank and ITC were the gainers. Domestic equities witnessed pullback for the second day as weak global cues continued to weigh on investors' sentiments, said Binod Modi. Barring FMCG, most of the key sectoral indices witnessed sharp correction and volatility index soared over 5 per cent today before recovering from top.

# China's economy grows by 2.3 per cent in 2020

PNS ■ BEIJING

China's economy, which was the first to be hit by the coronavirus pandemic and early to recover from its impact, grew 2.3 per cent in 2020, registering the lowest annual growth rate in 45 years, but bucking the trend of slowdowns being experienced by major world economies.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the world's second-largest economy grew by 2.3 per cent, expanding to USD 15.42 trillion in dollar terms in 2020, according to the data released by China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) on Monday.

In the local currency, the GDP exceeded 100-trillion-yuan threshold to 101.5986 trillion yuan, it said.

The Chinese economy which suffered a 6.8 per cent slump in the first quarter in 2020 after it went into lockdown following the emergence of the deadly coronavirus in Wuhan staged a

steady recovery after quickly containing the COVID-19, while the virus turned into a global pandemic, hitting all major economies around the world, including India.

Aided by strict virus containment measures and emergency relief for businesses, the Chinese economy staged a steady recovery.

In the fourth quarter of 2020, China's GDP expanded 6.5 per cent year on year, faster than the 4.9 per cent growth in the third quarter, the NBS said.

The country's economic operation has recovered steadily with employment and people's well-being effectively guaranteed, the NBS said, adding that the major tasks of economic and social development have been completed better than expected.

Partly, China's global exports of medical supplies, specially relating to coronavirus, has also contributed to growth in manufacturing and exports.



# Forex intervention by RBI to touch \$93 bn by March

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to spend at least USD 20 billion more to support the rupee and increase the forex kitty through the remainder of the financial year, taking its overall forex intervention to USD 93 billion, according to a report.

The report by the Wall Street brokerage Bank of America Securities also expects the central bank to raise banks' HTM



(held-to-maturity) limits of excess government securities by 2 per cent of their books to fund the fiscal deficit if high

forex intervention limits its open market operations (OMOs).

So far this fiscal, the central bank's forex intervention has touched USD 73.7 billion, according to the assessment by Bank of America Securities India economists Indranil Sen Gupta and Aastha Gudwani.

They also feel the RBI to intervene with USD 45 billion in 2021-22 if the CAD remains 0.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

# Man arrested for running network of fictitious firms to help biz evade GST

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A man has been arrested for allegedly running a multi-layered network of fictitious firms for generating fake input tax credit (ITC) worth crores of rupees to help businesses evade GST, according to an official statement on Monday.

The Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) Commissionerate in east Delhi arrested the man and said the total fake ITC quantified so far is Rs 82.23 crore generated out of fake billing to

the tune of Rs 541.13 crore, which is expected to increase as the investigation progresses.

"The network of fake firms was being operated by one Arvind Kumar who used to pass fake ITC for a commission of 4 to 4.5% of the invoice amount," said the statement issued by the CGST Delhi East Commissionerate.

Investigation conducted so far has revealed 46 firms to be fictitious which were being controlled by Kumar and his associates, it said.

# Oppo India in process to file 80 patents, enhance focus on 5G

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Smart devices maker Oppo India is in the process of filing 80 patents and will enhance focus on the development of 5G device ecosystem in 2021, a senior company official said on Monday.

OPPO India vice-president and research and development head Tasleem Arif said that setting up of a 5G lab in the country has reduced the

company's dependency on headquarters and other centres of the smart devices firm.

"At India research and development centre, we not only want to be the first mover on 5G but we are also contributing a lot in IPR. We have filed over 200 IPs (intellectual properties). In that 60 per cent, approximately 120, has already been filed and 40 per cent, around 80, is under

process. All this has happened majorly in the last one-and-a-half years," Arif said on the sidelines of launching Reno5 Pro 5G and Enco X wireless earphones.

The Reno5 Pro 5G and Enco X wireless earphones will start selling in India from January 22 across mainline retailers of the company and e-commerce platform Flipkart for Rs 35,990 and Rs 9,990 respectively.

# Udaan inks distribution partnership with hummel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce platform Udaan on Monday said it has signed a pan-India distribution partnership with Danish sport-style brand, hummel.

As part of this partnership, hummel will leverage Udaan's vast distribution network to offer its range of products across the length and breadth of the country, a statement said.

Founded in 1923, hummel is one of the oldest sportswear brands in the business with roots in football and handball, and has previously been worn by iconic football teams such as Real Madrid, Tottenham Hotspur, Aston Villa, Benfica and the

Denmark national team. hummel continues to sponsor clubs and players within handball and football, Everton being one of them.

In India, hummel is retailing a wide array of products beyond sports shoes such as T-shirts, sneakers, jackets, track pants, training jackets, sweatshirts, bags, accessories amongst others, the statement said.

"We are excited to sign an agreement with hummel to be their exclusive pan-India distribution partner. We will use our extensive reach, tech-enabled platform and experienced team, to cater to hummel's existing and prospective customers across the country," Udaan Head-Lifestyle Business Kumar Saurabh said.

# Power engineers to protest on February 3

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power sector engineers would go for token work boycott across the country on 3rd February to protest against the move to privatise distribution companies by the central government, the All India Power Engineers' Federation (AIPEF) said on Monday.

"Power engineers across the country shall resort to token work boycott and hold protest meetings on 3rd February against privatization policies of the Government of India," All India Power Engineers' Federation (AIPEF) spokesperson V K Gupta said in a statement.

# Sugar output up 31pc in 2020-21 till Jan 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's sugar output rose by 31 per cent to 142.70 lakh tonnes in the first three-and-a-half months of the 2020-21 marketing year that started in October 2020, industry body ISMA said on Monday.

Sugar production in India, the world's second-largest sugar-producing country, stood at 108.94 lakh tonnes till January 15 of the 2019-20 marketing year.

Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) has projected the sugar output to increase by 13 per cent to 310 lakh tonnes in the 2020-21 marketing year on likely higher availability of sugarcane as against 274.2 lakh tonnes last year.

Releasing the latest production update, ISMA said the country's sugar output is high-



er by 33.76 lakh tonne so far this year as compared to last year's production for the corresponding period.

As many as 487 sugar mills were in operation as against 440 in the said period, it said.

Sugar production in Uttar Pradesh, the country's leading sugar producing state, remained slightly lower at 42.99 lakh tonnes till January 15 of

largest sugar-producing state, increased to 29.80 lakh tonne till January 15 of this year from 21.90 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. Production reached 4.40 lakh tonne in Gujarat, 1.15 lakh tonne in Tamil Nadu, while remaining states of Andhra Pradesh & Telangana, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Odisha have collectively produced 12.81 lakh tonne of sugar till January 15 of this year, ISMA said in a statement.

On ethanol, ISMA said oil marketing companies (OMCs) have allocated about 309.81 crore litres for 2020-21 marketing year, including about 39.36 crore litres from damaged food grains and surplus rice. This would enable ethanol-petrol blending of 7-8 per cent, depending on the total fuel demand.

However, some states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Uttarakhand have already achieved blending percentage of 9-10 per cent on January 11. The industry body said that the allocated quantity of ethanol indicates about 20 lakh tonne of estimated net lower sugar production during 2020-21 due to diversion of B-heavy molasses and sugarcane juice to ethanol.

As per market reports, about 3 lakh tonne of sugar was exported during October-December 2020 as per the Maximum Admissible Export Quota (MAEQ) allotted to sugar mills during the 2019-20 marketing year, which was extended up to December 2020, it added.

# B-Town sports drama in 2021: Not just about cricket

The Ranveer Singh-starrer 83, based on India's first-ever cricket World Cup victory in 1983, is being billed as one of the biggest releases of this year, as Bollywood business tries to carefully return to normalcy, and not surprisingly so. India is a cricket-crazy nation, and when one of Bollywood's reigning superstars plays Kapil Dev in a film about the country's first great moment of honour in the sport, it is bound to trigger passion.

Kabir Khan's 83 is not the only Bollywood film lined up based on a cricket theme. There is *Shabaash Mithu*, starring Taapsee Pannu as Mithali Raj, captain of the Indian women's team, besides the Shahid Kapoor-starrer *Jersey*.

What is notable is films based on non-cricket sports, which are gradually being attempted in Bollywood, continue to rise in numbers this year, too. Over the next months, Bollywood stars will engage in football, badminton, athletics, boxing, snooker and chess, too, as Hindi films tackle subjects around these sports, to cater to varying tastes.

HERE'S A LOOK AT BOLLYWOOD'S SPORTS ROSTER IN THE MONTHS AHEAD:



### MAIDAAN

The anticipated period sports drama starring Ajay Devgn is inspired by the true story of Indian football coach Syed Abdul Rahim. He was the coach and manager of the Indian national

team from 1950 till his death in 1963. Major portions of the film have been shot across Lucknow, Kolkata and Mumbai. Shoot is expected to wrap up by April 2021 and *Madaan* is slated to hit theatres on October 15. The film directed by Amit Ravindernath Sharma also features Priyamani, Gajraj Rao and Rudranil Ghosh.



### RASHMI ROCKET

Taapsee Pannu will be seen in a never-before avatar of a runner in this sports drama. The actress recently finished shooting for the Jharkhand schedule of the film which narrates the journey of an athlete. Taapsee, who has just commenced shooting for the final schedule, has shared on social media how she had to undergo rigorous athletic training for the role which even led to pain and inflammation in her muscles. Priyanshu Painyuli plays Taapsee's husband in the Akarsh Khurana directorial.



### JHUND

Amitabh Bachchan will essay a role based on Slum Soccer founder Vijay Barse in this upcoming sports drama. The film narrates the story of a professor who encourages street children to build a football team, in order to help them find a purpose in life. The film is directed by *Sairat* maker Nagraj Manjule.



### SAINA

Parineeti Chopra reprises Badminton star Saina Nehwal in the biopic helmed by Amol Gupte. Manav Kaul essays the role of Nehwal's coach Pullela Gopichand in the sports drama, which also features Paresh Rawal. The film had originally cast Shradha Kapoor as Saina, before Parineeti took over as the champion shuttler.



### TOOFAN

Farhan Akhtar collaborates with director Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra for a new sports drama after the 2013 hit film *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, which showed him as Indian sprinter Milkha Singh. In *Toofan*, Farhan will be seen in the avatar of a boxer and has bulked up for the role. Paresh Rawal, Mrunal Thakur and Isha Talwar are also a part of the cast.



### TOOLSIDAS JUNIOR

Sanjay Dutt features in this just-announced film

which will showcase the journey of a snooker champion. Written and directed by Mridul, Toolsidas Junior stars child actor Varun Buddhadev and Rajiv Kapoor alongside Dutt. The poster of the film describes it as an "exciting and inspiring sports drama" and also heightens curiosity of the viewers with the tagline: "*Bachcha hai, phaad dega*".



### VISWANATHAN ANAND BIOPIC

Aanand L. Rai's yet-untitled film was announced just a month ago, and will narrate the journey of Indian chess grandmaster Viswanathan Anand. Speculative reports suggest that Tamil star Dhanush might play the chess grandmaster in his biopic, but no official announcement has been made on the same as yet.

Then there are the cricket films, of course: 83



The big ticket Ranveer Singh-starrer is one of the most talked-about films of the year, and is slated to hit theatres in the first quarter of this year. The Kabir Khan directorial narrates the historical journey of India's first-ever cricket World Cup win under the captaincy of

Kapil Dev. In the film, Ranveer essays Kapil Dev while Deepika Padukone plays Kapil's wife Romi Dev. The film also stars Pankaj Tripathi, Saqib Saleem, Tahir Raj Bhasin, Harrrdy Sandhu, Ammy Virk, Jiiva, Sahil Khattar, Chirag Patil and Adinath Kothare in key roles.



### SHABAASH MITHU

Taapsee Pannu steps into the shoes of former captain of the Indian women's cricket team Mithali Raj in the biopic. *Shabaash Mithu* is helmed by Raees director Rahul Dholakia. Taapsee will reportedly undergo a three-month cricket training for the film, which is scheduled to go on floors soon.



### JERSEY

Shahid Kapoor has been tempting his fans for quite some time now by sharing photos on social media of his preparation for his role of a cricketer in the upcoming sports drama. The film, which is the Hindi remake of a Telugu hit film of the same name, narrates the tale of a talented but failed cricketer, who decides to try making a comeback in his late thirties for the sake of his son, and play for India. The Gowtam Tinnanuri directorial also stars Mrunal Thakur.

## Steve Martin's 'good news/bad news' about getting Covid vaccine

Hollywood star Steve Martin has shared his experience of getting the coronavirus vaccine. "Good news/Bad news. Good news: I just got vaccinated! Bad news: I got it because I'm 75. Ha!", Martin tweeted on Sunday, reports etonline.com.



He shared that his experience was "smooth as silk". "The operation in NYC was smooth as silk (sorry about the cliché @BCDreyer!) and hosted to perfection by the US Army and National Guard. Thank you all, and thank you science," he added.

website (sorry I don't have the exact site), and waited IN line at the Javits Center," Martin replied. "The actor claimed that the vaccine hasn't had any side effects yet. "Right now, I'm having no side effects," he joked. This isn't the first time Martin has tweeted about Covid. In September, he joked about making sure fans can still recognise him under his mask. He wore a giant "Steve Martin" sign on his head with an arrow pointing down at him. "I always wear a mask when I go outside. But something about it was leaving me anxious and unsettled. I thought about the problem, addressed it, and here is the solution," he tweeted.

## Kangana's Dhaakad in theatres on Gandhi Jayanti weekend



The Kangana Ranaut-starrer spy thriller *Dhaakad* will release theatrically on October 1, the actress announced on Monday with a poster of the film. In the poster, Kangana is seen wielding a sword against the backdrop of blood and gore, setting the action tone of the film. Kangana, who will play the role of Agent Agni, recently flew to Bhopal to kickstart the shooting of the film. "Dhaakad" is India's first female led high octane spy thriller and I am excited as this film is going to mark the beginning of a new era for Indian cinema. An action entertainer of this huge scale deserves a holiday weekend release and I can't wait for the audience to meet Agent Agni on 1st October," Kangana shared. Director Razy Ghai added: "Dhaakad is a project that is very special to my heart. Action films headlined by female actors are a rarity in the Hindi film industry. With this film, we aim to set a new trend and we are thrilled to bring to the audiences in this year. We are mounting it on a grand scale and are leaving no stone unturned to make sure we are at par with any world class actioner." The film will also feature Arjun Rampal. The makers have also roped in Tetsuo Nagata, an award winning cinematographer.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



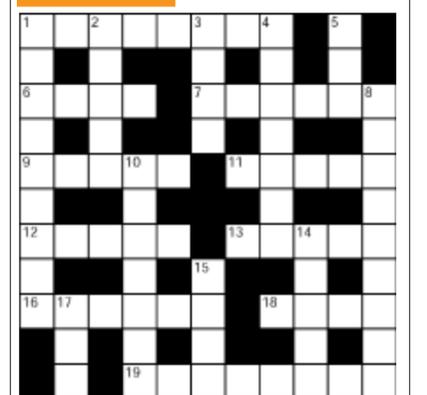
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Small towns
- Overdue
- Changed direction
- In the lead
- A smelly vegetable
- Unlocks
- A measure of length
- Remained in the same place
- Nought
- Illnesses

DOWN

- Mountains that erupt
- A measure for liquid
- A type of door in a fence
- Very unusual
- Something worn around the neck
- Likely to kill or harm you
- Cross and upset
- Paper is made from these
- Counts up
- Black stuff on roads

SOLUTION

S	V	A	B	P
H	I	R	H	E
E	M	P	T	E
A	E	S	R	I
O	I	S	A	P
I	N	D	E	R
N	E	A	G	O
E	V	E	R	Y
S	D	S	N	K

### GINGER MEGGS



## Pankaj Tripathi on misconceptions around 'consent'



**W**ife hi toh hai' (she's your wife after all), 'Mera mood hai toh uska bhi ban jayegi' (If I'm in the mood, she will be too), 'Inki naa main haan hoti hai' (Their no means yes) — actor Pankaj Tripathi is here to shatter the misconceptions in our society around consent. This influential Bollywood actor is making 'poochna zaroori hai' (consent is necessary) the new norm, and putting these fallacies around consent to bed through a powerful social media video: whether or not you are married, consent is a must!

The latest show *Criminal Justice* displays how Anu Chandra, portrayed by actor Kirti Kulhari is a victim of marital sexual abuse — a reality of many married women in India.

This show gives a fictional glimpse into the distressing issue of marital sexual abuse that women across the country continue to

face behind the closed doors of their homes. Speaking about how women struggle in real life with their problems, actor Pankaj Tripathi says, "It was unknown to me as well, on why women kept quiet when they went through such trauma in their personal life, they were tight-lipped when asked to share their problems. I, as a man, didn't know how to decode it. This issue exists in our society, whether we stay in liberal urban cities or places outside the city, so thought why not speak up. But after playing the character of Madhav Mishra and understanding the story, I understood why most women, like her, are not vocal about their problems. Especially with issues related to their married lives, because clearly, the society demands them to be locked in the closed doors of their homes. Through this show, we hope that more and more women share their problems and take the right step for themselves."

# Future of knowledge

In the fast-changing landscape of education, we shall soon see audio taking over traditional and video learning to educate young India

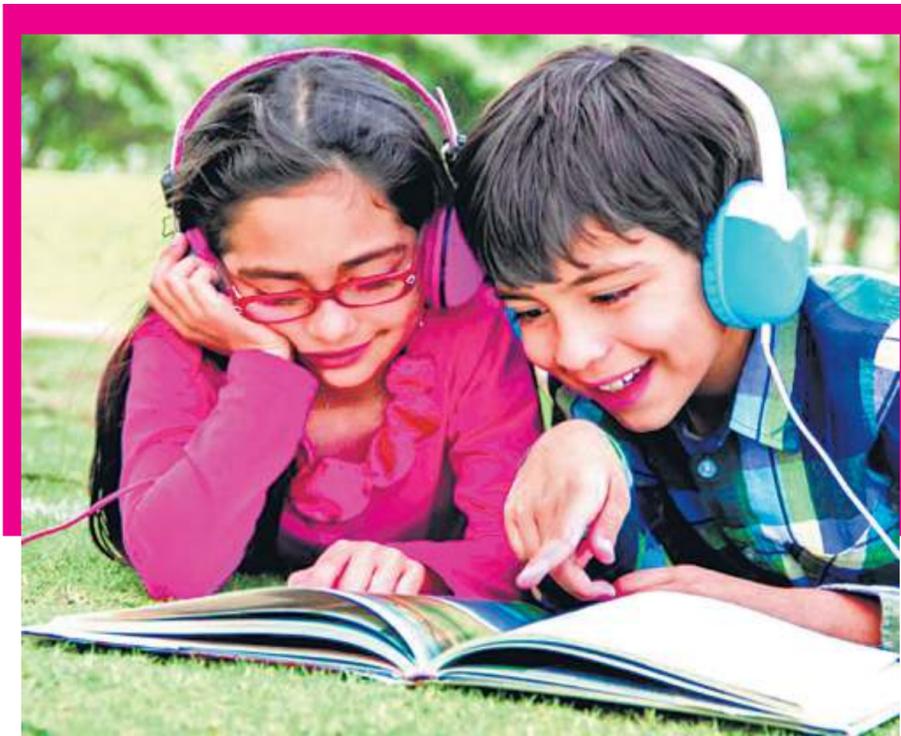
**I**n the year 2020, the world has seen people shifting from offline to online for many life requirements. The year somewhat became the watershed moment for various digital platforms like Video OTT, Edutech, Pharma, Fintech etc., which saw an unexpected surge in numbers. As a country, we are brilliant at adapting to change, look at how we embraced Fintech and Edu-tech both so important for our survival. The adaptation which was slowly happening in 2019 got expedited due to the spread of pandemic and the followed lockdown.

The most significant need for the bottom of our social pyramid has always been 'roti, kapda aur makaan' or succinctly put, education (read knowledge) and financial stability, even more so when pandemic was reaping havoc.

Today, learning is the fastest-changing landscape with a virtual race among various organisations to deliver knowledge and upskilling content through latest and complex technologies. However, this approach may only work well for the metros of India with upwardly mobile TG. If we consider the TG living in tier two, three and four towns and villages, the requirement might be very different. Bharat makes up the most significant part of Indian digital users accessing the internet on mobile devices. The real issue is not the availability of high-quality content and implementation of complex/fancy tech to deliver it to TG but the ease with which the TG can consume the content on devices.

**To summarise, the key challenges would be :**

- Increased screen time on low-end devices with battery challenges.
- Patchy internet to be able to watch videos seamlessly.
- Not truly vernacular.



■ Cost of content and hence the high subscription.

### Need of the hour

What is more relevant and need to be made available to young India is a platform/medium which will make it spontaneous for people to access decent quality content (even if it is non-exclusive) effortlessly with minimal tech and underlying infrastructural requirements. It is only then, we will be able to see the next billion users using digital learning platforms to learn and get empowered to achieve their learning goals.

### Audio is the answer

Audio is the only way to provide all of the above without compromising the quality of learning except for a few specific subjects requiring live/visual session

for better understanding. Audio will democratise the learning ecosystem from every aspect. It will allow the masses to acquire knowledge and learn the subjects of their interest without paying beyond their financial capacities or compulsive buying of high-end devices/data packs.

### Not shooting in the dark

Looking at the global trend from the biggest audio markets — US and China, audio will take over as most preferred media by masses across India.

For instance, in the US, Spotify has spent \$400mn to acquire Gimlet, Anchor and Parcast to acquire podcasting capabilities. Apple acquired Scout FM in Sep 2020. Simultaneously, in China audio platforms like

Ximalaya FM, Lizhi FM (US IPO), DeDao is serving more than 500mn users. De Dao, another Chinese audio content platform, contracts high-profile experts to record podcasts teaching topics in their field. Listeners navigate a marketplace of audio courses and subscribe to the ones they believe will get them (or their children) an "edge."

There are various courses like workplace communication, investing, accent reduction, Chinese history and many more.

Last year the company had served seven million customers, and none of the content was free. Audio courses drive more than 50 per cent revenue for Ximalaya FM and QingTingFM.

Screen-based learning competes with distractions

like Facebook and Netflix for users' attention. By making audio their primary learning consumption mode, people can fit courses into busy lives and easily allow for a habit.

### Future trends in knowledge and audio:

India is the youngest country with 850mn people below the age of 35 years. For this young population, the most significant need is education and financial security. To get better economic opportunities, people need to up-skill, but being engaged in the daily job they have limited time to learn and up-skill themselves.

For example, Uber drivers or Swiggy delivery persons work eight to 10 hours a day and have no time to learn and upgrade themselves. While their hands and eyes

are engaged, they can leverage their ears to boost their skills by converting their non-learning time into learning time.

**Audio has its merit over other mediums without imbibing the negatives of respective mediums like video and print. It provides various benefits to the user, some important ones are as follows:**

- Reduces screen time without reducing learning.
- Passive listening provides for more extended content consumption throughout the day.
- Creation and consumption of content are both much easier in audio format.
- Minimal hardware and connectivity required.

**Year 2021 will be a year of audio providing for:**

**Reduction in screen time:** Students would not sit in front of screen for long hours to gain knowledge. Parents & teachers both have been concerned with excess screen time for their kids.

**Easy access to knowledge in local languages:** Users across India will be able to get easy access to the best of educators, that too in their local language.

**Offline to online classes:** Local and small-time educators will reach millions and teach them in their local language. Thanks to the ease of content creation with audio.

**Up-skill with one click:** Small courses targeted to unlocking better financial opportunity will become a trend.

**User convenience and ease:** People will not migrate to larger cities to gain or share knowledge, creation of content and consumption as both are much easier in audio format.

We shall soon see audio taking over traditional and video learning and will have a much larger mass appeal and usage to educate young India users this year.

(The writer Pulkrit Sharma is CEO and co-founder of Khabri.)

## Queen of Mahishmathi, last book in Baahubali trilogy out!

SHIKHA DUGGAL

**I**n an endeavour to delight readers with the events that led to those depicted in the blockbuster *Baahubali* film directed by S.S.

Rajamouli, bestselling author and screenwriter Anand Neelakantan released *Queen of Mahishmathi* — the third and final book in the *Baahubali: Before the Beginning* series. Hitting stands around the world today, *Queen of Mahishmathi* is a riveting tale, depicting the political and emotional games played in Mahishmathi that will lead to Sivagami's ascension to the throne. Published by Westland Publications, the book is a page-turner. Revealing the events in the film, Anand Neelakantan sketches the journey of Sivagami, Kattappa, Bijjala and many others in a magnificent manner. *Queen of Mahishmathi* sees the culmination of Sivagami's story, where she becomes queen, but the price that she has to pay for her

success is what makes her journey so very bitter-cum-sweet.

Speaking about the book, the legendary author Anand Neelakantan says, "It had been a very stressful year for all of us with this pandemic. However, I am glad that even in these touchy times, I could finish my third novel at a faster pace and bring it to my readers. Post my first and second book in this series — *The Rise of Sivagami and Chaturanga*, I started penning down my third novel. Sivagami and Kattappa are established characters in the minds of all *Baahubali* fans. So, I thought of going back in time and unfolding the journeys of both these strong-willed personalities whose power echoed all across the huge kingdom of Mahishmathi and far beyond. While writing the character of Sivagami, I based her on many historical characters right from ancient times to the modern era." He further added, "*Baahubali* is such a big cult because of the larger-than-life vision of the filmmaker and the producers, and I am happy that I am a part of it too. I hope and



believe this book will make for an engaging read."

Sivagami, a woman of substance, integrity and wisdom, wields power that is overwhelming and unmatched. She remains one of the most iconic and powerful female fictional characters in the history of Indian cinema. Mahishmathi, an empire of

abundance with fiercely loyal subjects and slaves is where the story of Anand's first book in the series, *The Rise of Sivagami* unfolds. In Anand's second book, *Chaturanga*, the female protagonist Sivagami has a fire seething within her, a fire that motivates her to move ahead in her mission despite facing various odds. Anand Neelakantan

has always focused on nuanced, geographically-sensitive narratives and prefers his reader to take their time to process the story that he pens down through his masterpieces. He is one of the leading writers in the country and has a host of riveting historical drama and mythological fictions in his gamut.

# Cracking series finale in store

India need 324 more runs on final day to secure historic win at Gabba



Mohammed Siraj celebrates with teammate Mayank Agarwal after taking his maiden five-wicket haul in Test cricket

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Indian pacers Mohammed Siraj and Shardul Thakur produced another inspirational effort in adverse circumstances but India were set a challenging target of 328 by Australia as the Border-Gavaskar Trophy headed

towards an exhilarating finale in the fourth Test here. The target is a tricky one and the Indian batsmen would get a fair idea whether to go for it by lunch on the final day, which is Tuesday. This was after Siraj and Thakur combined to share nine wickets while dismissing Australia for

294 in their second innings. Siraj (19.5-5-73-5) punched way above his weight with his maiden five-wicket haul but couldn't prevent Australia from posting an imposing target for his team in only 75.5 overs of the second innings batting. At stumps, India were 4

## SUCCESSFUL RUN-CHASE AT GABBA

Score	Team	Opponent	Season
236-7	Australia	West Indies	1951-52
219-2	Australia	West Indies	1975-76
190-3	Australia	England	1982-83

Faisal Features

4th Test, Day 5  
Live from 5:00am IST  
SONY TEN 1, 3 & SIX

for no loss with Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill at the crease.

The highest target chased at Brisbane is 236 and that was seven decades ago which is an indicator why this Australian ground can be equated with Fort Knox. The home team hasn't lost a game here since 1988.

Thakur's dream Test match also got better with figures of 4/61 and a match haul of seven wickets. The most poignant moment was his apparent joy when he took the catch to help Siraj pip him to the coveted five-for landmark.

As Siraj showed that scuffed red kookaburra acknowledging the 957 people in the stands on the first working day of the week, the most generous applause came from his partner in crime, who walked a foot behind him clapping with gusto.

It was the kind of day that Test aficionados wait eagerly — ebbs and flows keeping everyone on the edge of their seats.

The possibility of rain adds to the excitement and the changing weather did affect the contours of Australia skipper Tim Paine's facial expressions which exhibited relief and despair in equal measures.

Among the two captains, Paine is supposed to be the enforcer but this Indian team hasn't stopped surprising its detractors with a spirit, which has made this series one of the

## Drawn series will be worse than 2018-19 loss: Ponting

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Former Australian captain Ricky Ponting feels a drawn Test series against a severely depleted India will be a worse result for the hosts than the loss they suffered at home in the Border Gavaskar Trophy two years ago.

The injury-ravaged Indian team has shown great resilience and grit throughout the current tour of Australia. In the ongoing fourth and final Test, the tourists are without their premier fast bowlers, skipper Virat Kohli and a few specialist batsmen. "I think a drawn series will be worse than the loss a couple of years ago," Ponting told *crick-*

et.Com.Au.

"That's the way I look at it, considering how hard India have found it going through 20 players in a series, (Australia) having (David) Warner back for the last couple of games, (Steve) Smith back for all them that they didn't have last time around.

"A draw would not only feel like a loss to them but be a worse result than last series," he added.

The series is locked 1-1 at the moment. India need 324 runs with all 10 wickets in hand on the final day to pull off a historic win at the Gabba, while a draw will also see them retain the trophy.

finest played in recent times. If Weather Gods don't decide to play the boss, there will be an official winner but certainly not a "loser".

This is the first Indian team which has earned well-wishers in exponential numbers for soldiering on manfully without any complaints.

A bowling attack with less than four-Test experience (if Thakur's debut is discounted)

got 20 wickets without being over-expensive.

Yes, a Mohammed Shami or Jasprit Bumrah's experience would have been invaluable but their absence showed that in terms of temperament, India's next batch of pacers are game-ready.

Yes, they would make mistakes but their predecessors also made plenty on their way to glory.

## Cracks on Gabba strip will play on batsman's mind: Siraj

PTI ■ BRISBANE

An emotional Mohammed Siraj struggled to describe his maiden five-wicket haul in words but sounded a word of caution about the cracks on the Gabba surface creating confusion in the Indian batsmen's minds on the final day of fourth Test.

Playing in his maiden Test series, Siraj grabbed 5 for 73 in the Australian second innings on Monday.

He believed that there are a few spots on the surface, from where the ball might rear up awkwardly when his team sets out to chase a record target of 328 on Tuesday to win the four-match series against Australia.

"When they bowl, obviously there will be some confusion, it will play in the mind of the batsmen that there are cracks on the pitch but our batsmen are prepared for this. We will come to know only tomorrow," Siraj said at a virtual press conference.

When he was asked if he would be required in pursuit of the total, he replied: "If I get opportunity, then I will bat."

But naturally our aim is to win this series, especially after so many injuries, despite which our team fought hard in the first innings," he said.

The short ball to get rid of Steve Smith was his favourite among the 13 wickets in the series, along with the dismissal of Marnus Labuschagne.

"In the whole series, I feel

it would be Steve Smith's wicket, there was extra bounce from the area where I thought I will get it. He is the best batsmen in the world and it gave me a lot of confidence, also the wicket of Labuschagne, it boosted my confidence."

The 26-year-old Hyderabad pacer thanked skipper Ajinkya Rahane for his constant support and encouragement.

"Also the kind of opportunities that the youngsters got, whether it is Natarajan or Washington, all have grabbed them, every one has performance."

"I will especially thank Ajinkya Rahane for trusting the youngsters and showing confidence in me, he was talking me all the time and it gave me a lot of confidence."

Having lost his father during the ongoing tour and being unable to go back for his last rites, Siraj had a difficult last two months but in the end, the hard work has reaped dividends.

"My dad had wished that his son would play and the entire world would watch him. I hope he could have been there to watch this day. This is because of his blessings that I have got a five-wicket haul in Tests. I am speechless and can't express my feelings in words."

"It was a tough situation, dad's demise. I got strength after talking to mom and my focus was to realise dad's dream," he said.

## Rain, thunderstorm in weather forecast for Day 5

AFP ■ BRISBANE

All eyes will be on the weather forecast for Brisbane as the fourth and final Test between India and Australia concludes at the Gabba on Tuesday.

It's been a hard-fought series with the score tied at 1-1 for now. And with Australia getting bowled-out in their sec-



ond innings late in the third session on Monday, we're left with promises to be an exciting fin-

ish to this India tour.

A win or draw will help India retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, while a win is imperative for Australia.

Rain has already had a big say in the fourth Test, with the entire third session of day two being washed out and play being called off early on day four as well.

As per *The Weather*

Channel, there is a possibility of heavy rain in Brisbane on Tuesday. There could be scattered thunderstorms, with a 50% chance of rain.

There are more worrying signs for Australia, who would be keen to get a full day's play, as *AccuWeather* has also predicted the possibility of thunderstorms in Brisbane on Tuesday.

## Smith believes Oz are nicely placed

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Australian batsman Steve Smith reckons that with the Gabba track starting to play a few tricks, staying patient would be imperative for his team's bowlers when they defend an imposing 328 against a determined India on the last day of the fourth and final Test here.

India were 4/0 before the final session of the play was suspended early due to rain on the fourth day.

"I think the game is in a nice place for us. I think the wicket has started to play a few tricks today, couple of balls shot up," Smith said at the virtual post-day press conference.

"So, tomorrow it is just going to be about bowling (in) good areas and letting the natural variation of the day five wicket sort of do its work and hopefully we can hold on to all the chances," he added.

The rain factor is also going to be a crucial one on the final day but Smith would rather focus on controllables.



"Who knows? That is a tough question."

He said the Australian bowlers should remain patient and not go searching for too much. "The Indian players have obviously batted well. Obviously in Sydney, it was 130 (overs) or something, obviously it is a different wicket to that. But for us it is just being patient, not searching too much, bowling good areas and just letting it happen," the prolific batsman stressed.

"I think the more you sort of go searching for on these kind of tracks, then you prob-

## 'Starc will be good to go'

**Brisbane:** Leading pacer Mitchell Starc on Monday gave Australia an injury scare after he grabbed his hamstring but batting mainstay Steve Smith remained hopeful that he would pull through a decisive final day in the fourth Test against India here.

Starc looked uncomfortable during his only over of India's second innings, but Smith expressed optimism that the 30-year-old would be good to go on Tuesday.

"I'm sure he'll get assessed by the medical staff and one thing I know about Mitchell is he's tough and he's played through some injuries before and got the job done, so he will be hopefully good to go tomorrow," said Smith. PTI

ably don't get the reward. So, it is just about hitting good areas consistently and letting the natural variation of the wicket take its course," he reiterated.

## Eng go 1-0 up with 7-wicket win

AP ■ GALLE

Jonny Bairstow and Dan Lawrence held their nerve in a 62-run unbroken stand to guide England to a seven-wicket win over Sri Lanka on Monday on the fifth and final morning of the series-opening Test. England ensured it didn't have any more hiccups in erasing the remaining 36 required on the last day after Sri Lanka had set up a tricky 74-run target on a turning wicket.

England had slumped to 14-3 late on the fourth evening, included a crucial run-out of its captain Joe Root for just 1, before Bairstow and Lawrence combined to usher the tourists to 76-3.

Bairstow remained unbeaten on 35 off 65 balls and Lawrence, who hit a gritty half century in the first innings of debut, finished 21 not out.

Sri Lanka had the chance of a breakthrough after England resumed on 38-3. Bairstow may have been out lbw off Dilruwan Perera's off-spin in the third over, but stand-in captain Dinesh



Chandimal didn't go for the television referral.

Bairstow eventually sealed the victory with a boundary when he swept Perera to square leg.

"To come with little prep and play in the manner we have, has been really impressive," Root said after receiving his man-of-the-match award.

The England captain praised the effort of his two spinners — Dom Bess and Jack



Leach — who snared 14 wickets between them, each bagging a five-wicket haul.

"Brilliant effort, particularly with the little cricket they've played recently," Root said.

"Series like these are always tough but without the prep it's testament to their characters."

The second Test of the two-match series will also be played at Galle, starting Friday. England swept the series 3-0 when it last toured Sri Lanka in 2018.

## Inter beat Juventus to spice up Scudetto race



AFP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan defeated champions Juventus 2-0 to move level on points with Serie A leaders AC Milan on Sunday, boosting their hopes of a first league title since 2010.

Arturo Vidal got his head to a Nicolo Barella cross in the 12th minute for his first league goal for Inter Milan against his former club.

Barella added the second seven minutes after the break as

Inter claimed a first victory over Juventus since September 2016, ending a series of seven matches without a win.

"It was a bad defeat, we didn't expect it, we couldn't have put in a worse performance than this," said Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo after his second league defeat this season.

"Our attitude was wrong, right from the start. We were too passive, fearful, we only thought about the defensive phase."

Inter are equal on 40 points with local rivals Milan, who travel to Cagliari, with Juventus seven points behind the top two in fifth.

"To win against a team like Juve you have to touch perfection," said Inter coach Antonio Conte after his first win in four meetings against the club he led to the first three of their current run of nine consecutive league titles.

"I'm happy for the lads because these are games that give you self-esteem and make you understand that we're on the right path."

## Stones' brace fuels Man City win



AP ■ MANCHESTER

John Stones scored his first Premier League goals for Manchester City in a 4-0 victory over Crystal Palace to help his team leap up to second in the Premier League.

The defender netted twice and Ilkay Gundogan and Raheem Sterling also scored fine goals as City claimed a fifth successive win by overpowering a Palace side missing Wilfried Zaha at the Etihad Stadium.

City moved above Liverpool after the champions drew 0-0 with Manchester United, which has played a game more than its

neighbor.

The opening goal came after some De Bruyne brilliance in the 26th minute. The Belgian brilliantly controlled a cross-field pass from Sterling on the left and instinctively curled a cross into the area with the outside of his right boot.

Stones, in his fifth season at City, read it perfectly and rose to head home his first of the night. He temporarily forgot the new protocols regarding goal celebrations as he ran off toward the corner flag and accepted a hug from Ruben Dias and Gabriel Jesus.

De Bruyne showed more

restraint as he fist-bumped Kyle Walker in recognition of what was his 100th assist for City.

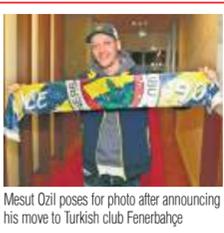
The second goal arrived 11 minutes into second half. It was all Gundogan's own work as he won the ball from Andros Townsend and then curled a shot into the top corner from the edge of the area.

This time there was a comic element to the celebrations as Gundogan accepted congratulatory hugs from his teammates only for Ferdinand to come along and remind of the need to keep their distance. After that, fist-bumps seemed to suffice.

De Bruyne fired another shot narrowly wide before City got its third in the 68th. Guaita did well to keep out a firm header from Dias but the ball rebounded to Stones, who lashed it back into the net almost instinctively.

Sterling, making up for the frustration of a missed penalty in midweek, wrapped up a fine night's work for City when he curled home a free kick from the edge of the area in the 88th.

Palace is 13th in the 20-team standings.



Mesut Ozil poses for photo after announcing his move to Turkish club Fenerbahce

## Messi sees red in Barca's defeat

AFP ■ SEVILLE

Lionel Messi was sent off for the first time playing for Barcelona as Athletic Bilbao stunned the Catalans to win the Spanish Super Cup on Sunday, a dramatic final finishing 3-2 after extra-time.

Moments before Bilbao's momentous triumph was confirmed, Messi threw an arm at Asier Villalibre, who had earlier scored a 90th-minute equaliser in the normal time to deny Barca victory.

Antoine Griezmann looked to have sealed the trophy but Villalibre intervened before Inaki Williams' fabulous strike three minutes into extra time proved decisive.

Messi shook off a thigh problem to start in Seville and was required to play all 120 minutes as Barcelona attempted to take the game to penalties.

Instead, the 33-year-old lost his temper at the end of a combative contest, reacting to a late challenge from Villalibre by swiping his hands across the back of his opponent.

It meant a first ever red

card for Messi in 753 appearances for Barcelona, to go with his two reds for Argentina in 2005 and 2019.

"After so many years in football, Leo knows perfectly well when he is fit to play," said Barca coach Ronald Koeman.

"We talked and he said he was in a good place to start. He has survived the game, given the maximum, nothing more."

Messi's anger will take some of the limelight away from Bilbao, who had already denied the competition a

Clasico final by beating Real Madrid in the semi on Thursday and now have completed the set.

It means a title and the perfect start for

Marcelino Garcia Toral, who only took over as coach less than two weeks ago.

But there was praise too for his predecessor Gaizka

Garitano, who oversaw this team reaching the Copa del Rey final last season, which earned qualification in the first place.

"This is for Gaizka Garitano and his coaching staff as well who brought us here," said Williams.

## Olympics will be proof of victory over virus: Japan PM

AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga vowed on Monday to get the pandemic under control and hold the already postponed Olympics this summer with ample coronavirus protection.

In a speech opening a new Parliament session, Suga said his Government would revise laws to make anti-virus measures enforceable with penalties and compensation.

Early in the pandemic, Japan was able to keep its virus caseload manageable with non-binding requests for businesses

to close or operate with social distancing and for people to stay home.

But recent weeks have seen several highs in new cases per day, in part blamed on eased attitudes toward the anti-virus measures, and doubts are growing as more contagious variants spread while people wait for vaccines and the Olympics draw closer.

Suga said his Government aimed to start vaccinations as early as late February.

"In order to restore sense of safety, I will get the coronavirus pandemic, which has raged worldwide and is now severely affecting Japan, under control as

soon as possible," Suga said.

"I will stand at the frontline of the battle while I get the people's cooperation."

Suga pledged to achieve the Olympics as "a proof of human victory against the coronavirus."

"We will have full anti-infection measures in place and proceed with preparation with a determination to achieve the Games that can deliver hope and courage throughout the world," he said.

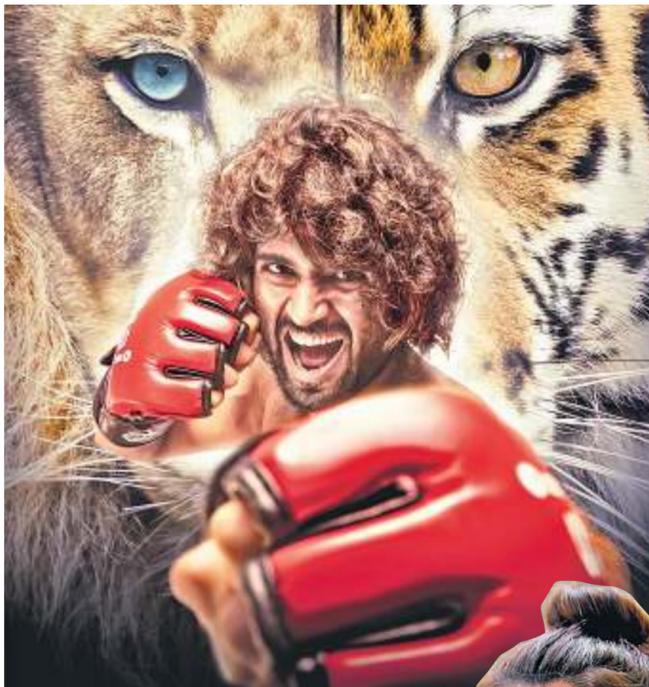
Recent media polls show about 80% of the Japanese public think the Olympics will not or should not happen.

# Deverakonda roars in the first look of *Liger*

**T**he first look and title of Vijay Deverakonda's next with Puri Jagannadh was unveiled by the makers on Monday. Titled *Liger*, the first look shows a bare-chested Deverakonda wearing boxing gloves and roaring, with a tiger and lion in the background. The title refers to a cross breed between a lion and a tiger, while the tagline of the film is 'Saala Crossbreed'. Producer Karan Johar posted the first look with a caption stating, "Proud to present *LIGER*, starring the ruler of big screens and many hearts — Vijay Deverakonda & the fiery Ananya Panday. Directed by the exceptionally skilled Puri Jagannadh, we can't wait to let the world witness this story in 5 languages — Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada & Malayalam. See you at the big screens!" Deverakonda, sharing the poster on Instagram,

wrote: "Humbly announcing our arrival Pan India! Someone with my background shouldn't have reached anywhere near here according to the conventions and set norms. But with sheer madness, passion, hardwork, Here we are! Nationwide madness guaranteed (sic)." The project marks the actor's Hindi debut.

An emotional action-drama, close to 40 percent of *Liger's* shoot was wrapped up last year before the pandemic forced the unit to take a break, which has now extended to 10 months. There is no word on when it will resume. The likes of Ramya Krishna, Ronit Roy, Ali, Vishu Reddy and Getup Sreenu are playing supporting roles in the film. Being shot in Telugu and Hindi, it will simultaneously release in Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta, Puri Jagannadh and Charmee Kaur are jointly producing it.



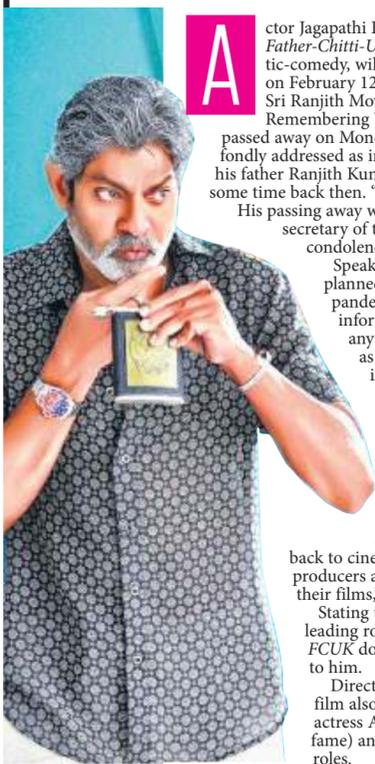
## After Bunny, Maredumilli to host megastar now

**T**he dense forest of Maredumilli which is hosting the shoot of Allu Arjun-starrer *Pushpa* now will soon have a couple of other top tier visitors-megastar Chiranjeevi and Ram Charan. According to a source, director Koratala Siva is planning to shoot some portions of the film in Maredumilli after he got positive feedback from Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar about shooting in the region. While most Telugu filmmakers prefer to go to Kerala to shoot episodes involving a forest backdrop, coronavirus scare meant that they've decided to shoot within the Telugu states as of now.

The source adds, "Portions which see Chiru as a naxalite will be shot in Maredumilli. Besides some sequences, Koratala also conceived an action block to be filmed during this short schedule which will kick off shortly. Charan too has some combination scenes with Chiru. The shoot will commence once Sukumar gives a break to *Pushpa*."

In the film, a socio-political entertainer, Chiru will be seen as someone who fights to protect nature's natural resources, while Kajal Aggarwal has been cast opposite him. A joint production venture between Konidela Productions and Matinee Entertainment, the film is likely to release in May.

## It's a burden to be a leading man: Jagapathi



**A**ctor Jagapathi Babu's next as a solo lead, *Father-Chitti-Uma-Karthik (FCUK)*, a romantic-comedy, will be opening in cinema halls on February 12, producer Damodar Prasad of Sri Ranjith Movies announced on Monday. Remembering V Doraswamy Raju who passed away on Monday, Damu, as the producer is fondly addressed as in the industry circles, said that his father Ranjith Kumar travelled with Raju for some time back then. "He was a dear friend of dad. His passing away was sad news waking up. As the secretary of the Chamber, I offer my deep condolences to his family," Damu said. Speaking about *FCUK*, he said he planned to release it last April but the pandemic thwarted his plans. He informed that there shouldn't be any apprehensions about the title as his production house believes in making good cinema. He extended his thanks to the makers and actors of *Solo Brathuke So Better, Crack, Red* and *Alludu Adhurs* for paving a way for the industry after theaters were shuttered for almost nine months. "It's heartening to see the audience too coming back to cinemas and enjoying films. The producers are now confident of releasing their films," the producer noted.

Stating that it's a burden to accept a leading role, Jagapathi Babu said if *FCUK* does well, it will be a big boost to him.

Directed by Vidyasagar Raju, the film also features Ram Karthik, Tamil actress Ammu Abhirami (*Asuran* fame) and baby Sahasritha in central roles.



## Being in front of the camera is my meditation: Kajal

**A**ctress Kajal Aggarwal treated fans to a candid question-answer session on social media. The actress who got married recently was asked if she would continue acting. Kajal replied saying it is time to break such notions of patriarchy. "Will you continue to do films? Please don't stop doing films," a user asked on her question-answer session on Instagram Stories on Sunday night. "Of course I will #firstlove Let's break patriarchy, high time?" said the actress, who got married to Gautam Kitchlu last year. A fan asked her about her

resolution for 2021. "Balance between home and work. Advancement in every aspect of life," she said.

What's her "most satisfying thing to do?"

"Witnessing a shot go as envisaged. Being in front of the camera is my meditation," Kajal replied.

"What's the one diff u observed before and after marriage?" wrote a user.

Kajal said: "Heightened sense of responsibility for not just myself, anymore. Prioritizing my partner over everyone and everything and vice versa."

The actress also shared that "hypocrisy and lies" used to make her angry "but now I just feel sorry for the person."

Kajal shared that her childhood dream was to become an astronaut and hopes she plays one soon.

# Annamayya and Simhadri producer V Doraswamy Raju passes away

**P**roducer and former Film Chamber President V Doraswamy Raju died of cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Hyderabad on Monday. Starting his production career in 1978 with the blessings of legendary NTR who launched VMC banner, Raju went on to produce films like

*Kirayi Dada, Seetharamayya Gari Manavaralu, President Gaari Pellam, Madhavayyagari Manavadu, Bhale Pellam, Annamayya, Simhadri* and *Vengamamba* among other films in a career more than 40 years. He distributed over 1000 films in Telugu states-particularly in Rayalaseema region. Movies aside, he also left

his imprint on politics as he represented Nagari as an MLA. He also discharged duties as a TTD board member, Distributors Association President and Exhibitors Association President. He also forayed into TV production as a producer.

Prominent personalities of the industry like K Raghavendra Rao, AM

Ratnam, Jr NTR, SS Rajamouli, and Suryadevara Naga Vamsi expressed their grief on the death of Raju. In a couple of posts on Twitter, Rajamouli said that he was fortunate to be associated with Raju for his career-changing *Simhadri* before offering his heartfelt condolences to the deceased's family. "As a distributor

Doraswami Raju *garu* released an incredible 1000+ movies. He also produced some of the great telugu movies ever. *Seetha Ramayya gari Manavaralu, Annamayya* are few of the gems from his VMC banner. (Sic)," the director wrote.

NTR wrote, "As a producer and distributor, he services to the industry have been enor-

mous. He played a key role in the success of *Simhadri*. May his soul rest in peace and I offer my heartfelt condolences to his family (sic)."

Raju's mortal remains will be kept at Film Chamber, Hyderabad today morning for the public to pay their last respects. His last rites will be performed at *ahaprasthanam* after 11 am.

