

ANALYSIS 7

A TRICKY SITUATION

MONEY 8

SENSEX ZOOMS 834 PTS; NIFTY
RECLAIMS 14,500 LEVEL

SPORTS 11

WONDER DOWN
INDIA

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 20, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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WAS UNDER TREMENDOUS
PRESSURE TO SEND KRACK DIRECTLY
TO OTT LAST YEAR:
MALINENI

Page 12

INDIAN-AMERICAN LIVED IN AIRPORT FOR 3 MONTHS DUE TO COVID FEAR, ARRESTED

A 36-year-old Indian-origin man who was too scared to fly due to the coronavirus pandemic and lived undetected for nearly three months in a secure area of Chicago's international airport has been arrested, US authorities said. Aditya Singh lives in a suburb of Los Angeles, California, was arrested on Saturday for living in a secure area at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport since October 19, the Chicago Tribune reported on Sunday. Mr Singh has been charged with felony criminal trespass to a restricted area of an airport and misdemeanour theft, the report said. Prosecutors said that Singh arrived at O'Hare from Los Angeles on October 19.



KERALA TEEN ALLEGEDLY RAPED, ABUSED BY MULTIPLE MEN; 20 ARRESTED: POLICE

A 17-year-old girl from Kerala has been allegedly sexually abused and harassed by more than 30 men over the past few months, police said, adding that seven rape cases have been filed based on her accounts since 2016. Some of the accused in this case are believed to be known to the girl and her mother. The mother claims she was unaware of the incidents; she will be questioned, cops said. In November, the teenager from Malappuram was traced by the police after her mother had filed a missing complaint from Palakkad, about 330 km from state capital Thiruvananthapuram.



WITHDRAW 'DISCRIMINATORY' POLICY FOR INDIAN USERS: GOVT TO WHATSAPP

The government has asked WhatsApp to withdraw any change in the messaging app's privacy policy for users in India, people with direct knowledge of the matter have said. The centre has written to the Facebook-owned app's global CEO Will Cathcart detailing concerns over information security of users, they said. India is WhatsApp's biggest market. "...The new policy of WhatsApp proposes to share the metadata of users' chat with business accounts with other Facebook companies. It would create a honeypot of information about users with Facebook group which can create security risks and vulnerabilities for users," those in the know said.



BIDEN ADMIN SAYS IT WON'T LIFT TRAVEL BANS DESPITE TRUMP STATEMENT

US President-elect Joe Biden's spokeswoman quickly dismissed Donald Trump's announcement Monday that a Covid-19 ban on travelers arriving from much of Europe and Brazil would be lifted, underlining the fractious transition of power. "On the advice of our medical team, the Administration does not intend to lift these restrictions on 1/26," tweeted Jen Psaki, Biden's press secretary. "In fact, we plan to strengthen public health measures around international travel in order to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19."

Idols' desecration
takes political
colour!

2

Need to leverage
Indian IT industry's
prowess: Trai

8

Vax not for people
allergic to any of its
ingredients: SII

5

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksam:

Paush & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Saptami 01:14 pm

Nakshatram: Revati: 12:36 pm

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start

any important work)

Rahukalam: 12:27 pm - 01:50 pm

Yamagandam: 08:16 am - 09:40 am

Varjyam: NIL

Gulika: 11:03 am - 12:27 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 09:56 am - 11:43 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 28/17

Humidity: 29/17 56

Sunrise: 06:49 am

Sunset: 06:04 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated January 19, 2021 5:00 PM

Jagan ask Shah to support his plans

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy on Tuesday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi.

During the one-hour 25 minute long meeting, Jagan sought the Centre's help on a wide range of issues — from accepting the revised cost estimates of the Polavaram project as per 2017-18 rates, issuing re-notification for the shifting of the High Court from Amaravati to Kurnool as part of State Government's plan of decentralisation of governance to Special Category Status and helping AP with funds to bridge the revenue deficit.

Tuesday's was Jagan's second meeting with Amit Shah in the last two months.

According to sources, Jagan discussed at length his plans to have the capitals in the state; the proposal having been stuck in legal tangles.

Since the Chief Minister was accompanied by newly-appointed Additional

Advocate-General Jasti Naga Bhushanam to Delhi, speculations are rife that the letter Jagan wrote to the Chief Justice of India alleging political bias by a sitting Supreme Court senior judge came up prominently for discussion during the meeting.

Jagan is said to have sought the Centre's cooperation and support to shift the executive capital to Vizag and High Court to Kurnool. Jagan also reportedly discussed the alleged insider trading by the TDP leaders that took place in Amaravati.

The YSRCP Government has already written to the Centre seeking a CBI probe into the Amaravati land scam.

The Central Government is yet to respond to Jagan's plea. Notably, CBI comes under Amit Shah's ministry.

Jagan had also said to have apprised Amit Shah about the ongoing tussle with the State Election Commissioner (SEC) Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar.

2

HC quashes case: No insider trading

C PRADEEP KUMAR
■ VIJAYAWADA

In a setback to the State Government, the AP High Court on Tuesday struck down the criminal cases filed by State CID in connection with the alleged insider trading in land transactions at Amaravati.

The High Court ruled that there was no scope for insider trading in the land transactions at Amaravati.

The court, after hearing the arguments from both sides said that Sections under IPC were not applicable to insider trading. It struck down the case filed by the CID.

The CID had filed cases against several people considered close to the main opposition Telugu Desam Party in the State stating that they had purchased lands in Amaravati as they were privy to information from the Chandrababu Naidu Government that the area was being developed as

HC reserves orders on SEC plea over local body election

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday reserved its orders on the pleas regarding the Gram Panchayat elections in the State even as it rejected implead petitions filed by teachers and employees.

2

state capital. The state government argued that the leakage of information to a select few people about the capital city amounted to insider trading.

2

Told to raise funds, AP BJP finds going tough

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
■ VIJAYAWADA

A communique by the BJP central leadership has landed the party's Andhra Pradesh unit, which has just about started gathering steam, in a fix. The BJP central leadership has placed the responsibility of mobilising funds to meet office expenses and sustain their activities squarely on the state units.

The communiqué said that

the party's central leadership would not release funds to state units to meet office or poll expenses and advised them to mobilise funds on their own.

Accordingly, it is understood to have given a ball-park figure on how much the units should generate.

According to BJP sources, the party's central leadership has decided to suspend the financial support to units in states where the party is not in power.



JOEBILATION

WILL WEISSERT
■ WASHINGTON

Back when the election was tightening and just a week away, Joe Biden went big.

He flew to Warm Springs, the Georgia town whose thermal waters once brought Franklin Delano Roosevelt comfort from polio, and pledged a restitching of America's economic and policy fabric unseen since FDR's New Deal.

Evoking some of the nation's loftiest reforms helped Biden unseat President Donald Trump but left him with towering promises to keep. And he'll be trying to deliver against the backdrop of searing national division and a pandemic that has killed nearly 400,000 Americans and upended the economy.

Such change would be hard to imagine under any circumstances, much less now.

2

Pothireddypeta celebrates White House post for one of its own

VENKAT RAM REDDY LAKKADI
■ HYDERABAD

A festive atmosphere prevailed in Pothireddypeta village of Huzurnagar mandal in

Karimnagar district as news reached the village of the appointment of a son of the soil as the speechwriting director for United States President-elect Joe Biden.

Villagers are on cloud nine after hearing the news about Cholleti Vinjay Reddy's appointment.

Vinay Reddy's father Narayana Reddy, a doctor by

profession, had migrated to America in 1970. Vinay Reddy was born and brought up in America. However, the family has not completely cut its roots from Telangana and still owns

three acres and a house in the village of Pothireddypeta. Narayana Reddy, who did his schooling in the village, pursued MBBS in Hyderabad.

2

Sub-inspector ends life over love affair

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Gudivada II Town Sub-Inspector P Vijay Kumar ended his life by suicide late on Monday. Colleagues and family members suspect that an extramarital affair with a beautician could be the reason for his extreme step.

According to reports, Vijay Kumar hanged himself from a ceiling fan at his residence. It is said that recently he got married but was staying with a beautician. Vijay Kumar who hailed from Eluru, West Godavari District and was a 2012 batch.

The S-I had married a woman from Eluru three months ago, but allegedly continued his relationship with the beautician.

The body was shifted to Gudivada Government Area Hospital for post mortem. Police have registered a case and are investigating.

The S-I's family members alleged that Vijay Kumar as he was unable to cope with the pressure exerted by the beautician pressure to continue his relationship with her.

2



A year on, ABV's woes far from over

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

There seems to be no respite in sight for senior IPS officer AB Venkateswara Rao, who has been in the wilderness for the past one year.

After his initial suspension period ended in August last year, the Jaganmohan Reddy government extended it by another six months.

No wonder the senior IPS officer has alleged harassment, humiliation, and victimisation by the present dispensation. Venkateswara Rao was suspended in February last year and will be unable to resume duties at least till next month, an entire year.

His contention that he can't be suspended on the grounds of corruption when the said purchase of the equipment which the state government had cited for action against him never took place has fallen on deaf ears of the powers-that-be.

2

Desecration of idols takes political colour!

In a state like Andhra Pradesh, it is definitely very hard to draw the attention of people with just an ideological strength base, some theories and plausible preaching! But it's very easy to reach sections of its people as protagonists of religion, region and caste. Political parties often choose to go for a blame game against their rivals, hoping to get political fruits. It's a two-pronged strategy to get political mileage and put detractors on the defensive.

Political rivalry between the YSRCP and the TDP in Andhra Pradesh has now assumed religious overtones, following police 'findings' with regard to the string of incidents involving desecration of shrines, mainly idols in Hindu temples. The finding that the 'miscreants' included political activists



PIN POINT

has given ammunition to both parties, which are out to fix each other.

The Ramatheertham incident, which took place in Vizianagaram had, sent shock waves across the state, jolting the administration to action. For many years, agent provocateurs did not whip up religious passions, though caste conflicts have at times resulted in fury and flames disturbing social harmony. Even during the surcharged atmosphere post demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in December 1992, the state was by and large peaceful, unlike several states that witnessed widespread and spontaneous 'reactions' to that infamous incident.

But now the YSRCP has launched a political tirade against the Telugu Desam Party, which is paying back

For many years, agent provocateurs did not whip up religious passions, though caste conflicts have at times resulted in fury and flames disturbing social harmony. Even during the surcharged atmosphere post demolition of the Babri Masjid, the state was by and large peaceful.

the ruling party in its own coin. So, observers see a distinct possibility of polarisation of votes on the basis of religion during the upcoming bypoll for the Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency. The bypoll has been necessitated by the sudden death of present member belonging to YSRCP Balli Durgaprasad Rao. BJP has jumped into the poll fray without consulting Jana Sena, its friendly party headed by actor Pawan

Kalyan, causing embarrassment to the latter. BJP's proposed Rath Yatra against 'growing attacks on Hindu temples all over the state' has increased political heat. Probably influenced by the widely perceived reason for BJP's rise at the Centre, almost all right-of-centre parties are falling back on out-right Hindutva or Hindutva-like ideology to impress voters and grow their individual vote banks.



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

AP DGP Gautam Sawang's 'confirmation' that some TDP and BJP leaders were involved in the attacks on temples has drawn severe condemnation from various quarters, including the two parties. Interestingly, the same DGP had previously brushed aside the argument regarding possible political

conspiracy and asserted that the attacks were the handiwork of 'senseless miscreants'. Naturally, YSRCP cadre across the state welcomed the 'startling revelations' of the DGP, though others question the propriety of the DGP's disclosure of the 'findings' much before the completion of enquiry by SIT. In retrospect, how can the DGP blunt opposition leaders' taunt that he should shed his uniform and join YSRCP?

The lack of surveillance cameras in many temples has complicated matters for the authorities. Still, the Government appears to be vigorously trying to nab the culprits. What happened in the case of the demolition of Babri Masjid in December 1992? Will people have faith in a system if an organised crime could not reach the stage of punishment?

The YSRCP, when it was in

the Opposition, had expressed its displeasure at the functioning of the Police Department after a youth attacked then opposition leader YS Jaganmohan Reddy with a sharp knife (used in cockfight) at Visakhapatnam airport. To lay it on thick, Jagan then evinced no interest in getting treatment from local doctors under the supervision of AP police citing his apprehension that the police might do harm to him. Jagan then travelled to Hyderabad for treatment in the neighbouring state. Earlier, in another incident, he had warned AP police personnel at the same airport of 'dire consequences'. He squatted on the runway along with other leaders protesting the behaviour of police towards him.

Coming back to the imminent polarisation ahead of the Tirupati bypoll, it appears

that BJP is strategically pushing its hidden agenda to delete the very concept of Special Category Status from the minds of people. What the saffron party is trying to wish away is that in 2014 it was then BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi who made the crucial announcement regarding SCS on the hallowed soil of Tirupati during campaigning for the General Election. It is a different matter that BJP leaders, including Modi, may become voiceless if people call them out during campaigning tomorrow. Meanwhile, it pays for the saffron party to take an aggressive stand on its Hindutva agenda in AP. For, the emergence of 'ruling classes' such as Reddy, Kamra & Velama have changed the political dynamics in the state, with religion receding to the background.

Sunitha elected unopposed to Council

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former TDP leader Pothula Sunitha has been elected unopposed for the vacant MLC seat for which the Election Commission of India had issued the notification recently. However, the results will be formally announced after a few days as per the poll schedule released by the ECI.

As the last date for filing of nominations ended on Tuesday and no other papers were filed, the victory of Sunitha is but a mere formality.

Sunitha was elected to the Council on behalf of the TDP, but had resigned in October following a complaint lodged by her party seeking her disqualification after she voted against the Rule 71 motion despite a whip being issued.



Give liberally for Ram temple, Muslims told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Muslim woman has appealed to members of the community to come forward and donate liberally for the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya.

Zahara Begum, trustee of the Tahera Trust, recalled that all communities, especially Muslims, come forward to make arrangements to celebrate Vinayaka Chavithi, Dasara and Ram Navami by offering donations, thus reflecting the unity in diversity synonymous with India. She appealed to Muslim community to come forward and cooperate in all possible manners, including donating liberally,

Muslims help make arrangements to celebrate Vinayaka Chavithi, Dasara and Ram Navami by offering donations.

for the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya.

Zahara Begum appealed to Muslims to donate through Nidhi Samarpana during the Nidhi Sekarana programme for the building of Rama Temple at Ayodhya.

She said that Muslims can donate anything upward of Rs10 as per their convenience.

Zahara Begum said that while working in villages, sometimes most remote and some advanced, for over 10 years, she noticed that Hindus have helped by donating land to build masjids, idgahs and graveyards. She stated that non-Muslims had donated a good extent of cultivable land to Muslims.

Zahara Begum said that India is known for its spirituality, heritage, multiple traditions, multicultural ethos and languages and there is no other country in the world like India. She said that people of all communities including Muslims have freedom of everything in India.

No insider trading over Capital: HC

Continued from Page 1

One of the buyers of the land Kilaru Rajesh moved court challenging the CID cases. He alleged that there were no complaints from any person who had sold their lands at Amaravati and asked how the government could file cases without any complaint from the sellers.

It's nothing but a witch-hunt by the Jaganmohan Reddy government, advocate Posani Venkateshwarlu argued on behalf of the petitioner.

It now remains to be seen whether the Jaganmohan Reddy government moves the Supreme Court against the High Court order.

Jagan ask Shah to support his...



Continued from Page 1

A discussion about the prevailing political situation in the state, especially the increase in attacks on Hindu temples and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu's strategy to take up Hindutva agenda also came up for discussion, sources said. He

also discussed funding for the Polavaram project and several other sops promised by the Centre to AP.

It may be noted that the BJP central leadership on its part has been maintaining friendly ties as per the federal spirit with YSRCP.

However, it has given a clear roadmap to the party's state unit leaders to take on the Jaganmohan Reddy government. The BJP also needs YSRCP's support in the Upper House of Parliament to pass certain key and crucial legislations.

YSRCP will face Congress fate, warns BJP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A belligerent BJP state general secretary S Vishnuvardhan Reddy on Tuesday cautioned the ruling YSRCP, saying that it would meet the same fate as

of the Congress if it tries to stop his party's Rath Yatra proposed from February 4.

Talking to reporters here, Vishnuvardhan Reddy said that YSRCP leaders were rattled by the announcement of

BJP's Rath Yatra from Kapila Theertham to Ramatheertham. "Going by their nervousness, police will create hurdles for the Yatra," the BJP leader said.

"Come what may, we will take out the Rath Yatra. Going

by the utterances of the YSRCP leaders ever since the announcement of the Yatra we expect police and the ruling party to create hurdles. I don't know why they are so rattled," he said.

5 top cops awarded for taking on Naxals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Five police officers from Andhra Pradesh have been awarded the Antrik Suraksha Seva Padak-2020 for discharging their duties efficiently in Naxal-affected places in the state.

DGP Gautam Sawang on Tuesday handed over the Antrik Suraksha Seva Padak 2020, awarded by the Central government, to these five police officers.

The police officers who received the medal from the



DGP were DIG Palaraju (Technical), DIG Kranti Rana Tata (Anantapur Range), DIG Rajasekhara Babu (Law and Order), Bhaskar Bhushan (SP Nellore) and Vishal Gunni (SP Guntur Rural).

179 fresh cases in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP's coronavirus tally rose to 8,86,245 as 179 cases were added afresh in 24 hours ending 9 am on Tuesday.

A health department bulletin said the total recoveries went up to 8,77,443 after 231 more patients got cured. The Covid-19 toll rose marginally to 7,142 following one fresh death. Active cases came down to 1,660.

In 24 hours, Chittoor district reported 40 fresh cases, Krishna 35 and Guntur 24. Seven districts reported less than 10 new cases and three others added between 10 and 20.

Pothireddypeta...

Continued from Page 1

He and his wife Vijaya Reddy visit the village every six months and meet relatives and old friends.

Thirupathi Reddy, Vinay Reddy's grandfather, served as the sarpanch of Pothireddypeta village for 30 years. While Narayana Reddy migrated to the US, his elder brother Raji Reddy and younger Prabhakar Reddy are settled in Hyderabad.

Cholleti Kishan Reddy, a close relative of Vinay Reddy, expressed happiness over the appointment of Vinay Reddy as Biden's speechwriter.

The entire village, in fact, is elated after hearing the

news, he said, wishing that the son of the soil brings more accolades to the village by achieving higher positions.

Vinay Reddy, who was born and brought up in America, had visited the village in his childhood.

According to a post from the Moritz College of Law, of which he is an alumnus, Vinay Reddy served as Biden's chief speech writer during his second term as Vice President to Barack Obama, as deputy speechwriter for the Obama-Biden 2012 re-election campaign and was also the speechwriter for the Biden-Harris transition.

Not going to be easy...

Continued from Page 1

Asked if she felt safe going to the inauguration, she said, I am very much looking forward to be sworn in as the next vice president of the United States and I will walk there to that moment proudly with my head up and my shoulders back.

Kamala Harris and the future Second Gentleman of the US Doug Emhoff participated in a service event at Martha's Table in Anacostia on Monday, packing food into plastic bags which will be distributed. The couple were seen packing bags with the list laid out for them two potatoes, two oranges, a macaroni and cheese, etc.

Told to raise funds, AP BJP...

Continued from Page 1

It's not known how they would respond to donating funds to the BJP.

By themselves, the BJP leaders in AP are not financially strong. In fact, 80 percent of the party workers and leaders, including MLCs and ZPTCs, are from the upper middle classes. Only a few leaders are from the business class.

Two BJP MPs from AP — Satyanarayana Chowdary and CM Ramesh — have the ability to raise funds, but they are lukewarm to the idea, given the fact that they have not been given any prominence in the party.

Incidentally, Satyanarayana Chowdary funded the TDP poll expenses in 2014 and also

prior to that. After he crossed over to the BJP, a function hall he owns in Vijayawada is being used to run party activities.

TG Venkatesh, another MP, is lending financial support to BJP activities in Kurnool district. No other political leader has been making a notable financial contribution to the party activities.

The general feeling among BJP AP leaders is that mobilisation of funds in the State is not going to be easy.

A senior party leader who wished to remain anonymous admitted to receiving orders in this regard but ruled out mobilisation of funds to meet the out of turn expenses.

He however denied the central leadership has fixed targets

to raise funds.

The situation in Telangana is not as critical as that in AP, thanks to the party being represented by Union minister G Kishan Reddy, three MPs, MLAs, MLC and several industrialists who crossed over from the TDP or Congress.

Moreover, industrial hub, IT hub and real estate hub are located in Hyderabad and this is the sector where the money is. Businessmen are nowadays quite happy to donate to the BJP, especially following its performance in Dubbaka and then the GHMC elections.

Besides, many traders from the north have been conducting businesses in Hyderabad since long and are considered to be sympathetic to the BJP.

A year on, ABV's woes far from over

Continued from Page 1

Venkateswara Rao, who his peers and detractors call ABV, was the additional DGP overlooking the intelligence operations in the Chandrababu Naidu regime.

He had always faced intense criticism from YSRCP leaders, especially from a key aide of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and party Rajya Sabha Member V Vijayasai Reddy.

When in Opposition, Vijayasai Reddy never missed any opportunity to criticise ABV. He alleged that ABV worked for the political interests of Chandrababu Naidu and also accused him of luring the then 23 YSRCP MLAs into the TDP fold.

ABV wielded immense power and influence during the TDP term. In fact, during his stint as the intelligence wing boss, ABV was said to have enjoyed more power than a DGP who is the State Police chief.

It was no surprise that as soon as Jagan stormed to power, ABV was transferred from the Intelligence operations and not given any posting. After making him sit idle for months, ABV was suspended, pending inquiry, on the grounds of corruption during the TDP regime.

While the inquiry was still on, a Review Committee in April last year recommended extension of his suspension by another six months.

"On January 18, 2021, the Review Committee reviewed the suspension of ABV and recommended that the suspension be extended for further period up to 180 days with effect from August 6, 2020 or till further orders whichever is earlier," the Government order said.

‘Golden hour’ lost due to lack of trauma care centres along NH

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Even as the National Road Safety month began from January 18, the lack of Trauma Care Centres (TCCs) along the National Highway in Andhra Pradesh remains to be a concern, which is killing the golden hour, the time duration in which an accident victim can be saved.

In AP, there are about 13 trauma care centres in 13 districts and all of them are attached to the district hospitals and none is located on the NH. Moreover, none of them falls in the Level-1 category.

The TCCs being located in the busy areas is also blocking the movement of the ambulances. For instance, the ambulances often get stuck in traffic jams while heading to KGH Trauma Care Centres.

The total road network of AP is about 1.46 lakh km. While the National Highway cover 2,949 km in the state, 42,511 km come under the State Highways and 1.01 lakh km under the district roads.

"With the absence of the trauma centres along the NH-16 and state highways, KG Hospital in Vizag city, RIMS Hospital in Srikakulam and very a few other hospitals have



been receiving over 40 accident cases in a day. There are no ambulances at the accident prone stretches identified on the Highways. A majority of the accidents come to KG Hospital after the Golden Hour," said a traffic police.

"In majority of the cases, the accident death cases could be prevented if the victims are brought within one hour what we call golden hour. So, we have taken up a pilot project to identify the points where the trauma units could be set up and improve the coordination among the hospitals," said Andhra Pradesh Neuro Scientists Association secretary MV Vijay Sekhar.

"A pilot project has been taken up to improve the trauma care facilities along the National Highway in Andhra Pradesh. Given the number of

road mishaps, there are a very few government hospitals equipped trauma centres. Consequently, the accident victims are succumbing to injuries, though they are preventable with enough trauma centres," he said.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had floated a scheme named "Capacity Building for developing Trauma care Facilities in Government Hospitals on National Highways" from 2014 with the objective to bring down preventable deaths because of road accidents to 10 per cent by developing a pan-India trauma care network in which no trauma victims has to be transported for more than 50 kilometres and a designated trauma care facility is available at every 100 km on the national highways.

Experts moot use of drones along NH on lines of UP, Maharashtra

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Use of drones to oversee road safety along the National Highways in Andhra Pradesh on lines of a pilot project undertaken by Maharashtra Police along the Mumbai-Pune Expressway could be explored, suggested former union secretary EAS Sarma to the AP Road & Transport department on Tuesday.

In a letter to MT Krishna Babu, Principal Secretary to Govt of AP, Sarma shared the letters issued by two public spirited citizens of Vizag, Bhagavanudu and Hanumanta Rao to the District Collector and the Commissioner of Police, Visakhapatnam about the possible use of drones to oversee road safety.

In view of the frequent occurrence of accidents on the National Highway passing through Visakhapatnam district, the suggestions made by Bhagavanudu and Hanumanta Rao deserve a serious consideration.

"I understand that the use of drones for highway safety

is being experimented in different parts of India. For example, the Kanpur police are also trying out drones to monitor and prevent traffic accidents as per reports," he said. He suggested the AP Road Transport department to get in touch with the Maharashtra and UP police to get their feedback so that the shortcomings in their respective schemes may be addressed and the scheme improved upon.

While the application of drones is certainly a positive development, some others feel that it is too expensive and not as effective as it is being made of.

However, he also highlighted the negative side of the use of drones and enclosed a press release on the draft regulations issued by the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation on deployment of drones and these regulations will have to be kept in view as the indiscriminate use of drones may interfere with the air traffic, posing new threats to air safety.

YSRCP turned state into a violence hub, alleges Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP supremo and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday alleged that the YSRCP government led by YS Jaganmohan Reddy had turned the state into a hub of violence by resorting to a series of murders and atrocities. He said that the 'Dharma Parirakshana Yatra' would begin on January 21 covering 700 villages in the segments of Tirupati Parliamentary constituency and added that the Yatra would be held for 10 days.

TDP chief deplored that the Chief Minister and the Ministers were not behaving like elected people's representatives but they were behaving like rowdies to terrify people.

Even the people were publicly questioning the behaviour and attitude of the ruling party MIAs, he said.

Interacting with the leaders of Tirupati Parliamentary constituency via video-conference, the TDP Chief alleged that over 2,000 farmers have committed suicides in just 20 months, 400 atrocities have been committed on women, physical attacks have been made at 1,350 places and over 16 TDP activists have been murdered. Gangi Reddy was murdered at Tamballapalli and a Dalit youth Om Pratap died under suspicious circumstances in Punganur, he added.



"An YSRCP MLA threatened none other than the District Superintendent of Police in a public meeting and challenged the SP to come for a debate. A woman MPDO, who was harassed by another ruling party MLA, staged a protest in the police stations itself in the midnight," Naidu said.

Naidu bemoaned that the otherwise peaceful districts - Chittoor and Nellore also have been witnessing attacks and atrocities. "Over 15 miscreants attacked a TDP leader Venkatesh in Sullurupeta with knives yesterday," he said.

"A sub-inspector of police, who raided the gambling den of a minister committed suicide, but it is being suspected that he was murdered, a suicide or a suspicious death," the TDP chief said.

"Punganur Dalit youth just questioned the government about cheap liquor brands

Dharma Parirakshana Yatra will be held for 10 days from Jan 21. It will cover 700 villages in the segments of Tirupati LS constituency, says Naidu

being sold under the Jaganmohan Reddy regime. Soon, he met with a suspicious death. Weavers' leader Nandam Subbaiah was lured to the spot and then murdered just for exposing corruption in house sites. Nandyal residents Abdul Salaam's family threw themselves under a speeding train. Abdul Sattar attempted suicide in front of the SP office itself. These were all examples of the YSRCP's atrocious rule. CM Jaganmohan Reddy and the DGP were responsible for all this violence," he alleged.

SHORT TAKES

Vijayamma, Sharmila appear before Nampally court

HYDERABAD: The mother of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's mother YS Vijayamma and his sister YS Sharmila on Tuesday appeared before the special sessions court for the trial of MP and MLA cases at Nampally in a case registered against them in the year 2012 for conducting a road show in violation of election code at Parakali in Warangal district. The session judge of the court directed the other accused in the case former Konda Surekha and her husband Muralidhar Rao to appear before it on January 27 of this month. Both YS Vijayamma and YS Sharmila told the court that they came to attend the proceedings of the court from Bengaluru. They also pleaded before the court that they were not guilty of the charges slapped against them by police concerned and added that they were ready to fight the case and face the trial in the case. On the other hand, Konda Muralidhar Rao And his wife Konda Surekha told the court they were not able to depose before the court due to the death of the mother in law of their daughter. The additional Public Prosecutor of the Court Banala Ajay Kumar has represented the authorities concerned in the case. The Parkal police slapped sections 188 and 391 of IPC and section 127 of Representation of People's Act.

Ramamurthy who envisioned Polavaram remembered

VIJAYAWADA: The services of Sonti Venkata Ramamurthy, who was the first generation civil servant and who had initially proposed Polavaram project, was remembered. Attending the 57th death anniversary of Sonti Ramamurthy at Bapatla on Tuesday, Bapatla Agricultural College Associate Dean Dr G Ramachandra Rao said that Sonti Ramamurthy was the first Indian to serve as the Chief Secretary to Government of Madras Presidency and first-generation civil servant who brought name and fame to all Telugu people. He said that the present Polavaram project was also Ramamurthy's brainchild and he put in untiring efforts and diligently pursued the project. He further said that Ramamurthy also served as Governor of the Bombay Presidency. He mentioned that Ramamurthy was instrumental in solving the country's food problem during the pre-independence days. He was honoured as Knight Commander of the Indian Empire by the British.

Tribals of Chindepalli get house site pattas

VIJAYAWADA: As many as 41 tribals belonging to Yenadi families of Chindepalli Tribal Colony in Tirupati, Chittoor district, received permanent housing plots from the State government under YSR Jagannanna Illa Pattalu Scheme. The community outreach model of SOS Children's Villages of India, brought children of 23 eligible families, out of 41 families, under its direct care in 2016. The NGO has transformed the Yenadi tribal community into a self-reliant one, securing parental care for their children. The household income has increased sustainably, the community has broken itself free from the clutches of moneylenders and the school dropout rate has been brought down from 90 per cent to 0 per cent. There has been no child marriage, which used to be very common, since last two years.

Government fixes fees for PG professional courses

VISAKHAPATNAM: The AP Higher Education Regulatory and Monitoring Commission (APHERMC) fixed the fee structure for all PG courses for the block period 2020-21 to 2022-23 in private unaided professional institutions for MBA and MCA, M.Tech and M-Pharma. APHERMC had held a meeting in December to determine the fee structure for all PG courses. If other amount is charged under any other head or guise (donations), the same would amount to charging of capitation fee and in that case the institution shall be liable to be prosecuted under Section 9 of Andhra Pradesh Educational Institutions (Regulation of Admissions and Prohibition of Capitation Fee) Act, 1983 (Act No. 5 of 1983) apart from imposing appropriate penalty under the APHERMC Act, 2019 and the APHERMC Rules, 2019 as amended subsequently from time to time. The fee is an all-inclusive annual fee, including like tuition fee, affiliation fee, cost of identity card, medical fee, inter college/inter university sports, games & cultural meet fee, computer/internet fee, college magazine and student activities, student health care scheme, student welfare fund, study tour, alumni fund, sports and games fee, examination fee including stationery, maintenance and amenities fee, extracurricular activities fee, development fee. The same fee shall continue for the students admitted during the block period of 2020-21 to 2022-23 till they complete the course.

Cops arrest Devineni, foil attempts to stage deeksha

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tension prevailed at Gollapudi for a while as senior TDP leader and former Minister Devineni Umamaheshwara Rao tried to stage deeksha at NTR statue here on Tuesday. The police controlled the situation by arresting the leader and foiled his proposed deeksha.

The TDP and YSRCP rushed to the spot raising slogans against each other which lead to a tense situation.

The TDP leader emerged at the place suddenly covering his face with mask and wearing cap and rushed towards the NTR statue to start deeksha as he announced last night, responding to Civil Supplies

Minister Kodali Venkateswara Rao's absurd comments that he would thrash Rao at his house itself. The former Minister was seen running towards the NTR statue but the police surrounded him and whisked away to the police station, amid slogans by the TDP activists.

The TDP activists led by former MLA Tangirala Soumya prevented the vehicle in which the former Minister was being taken to the police station, while the party activists squatted on the road and demanded the release of senior TDP leader.

Earlier, the police barricaded the road leading to the former Minister's house and did not allow the TDP activists to go to his house. The police also

detained TDP MLC Buddha Venkanna in his house here when he was going to Gollapudi to extend solidarity with Rao.

Police said that prohibitory order under Section 144 of CrPC and Police Act 30 were clamped at Gollapudi as a precautionary measure and no programme would be allowed to be conducted. The former minister was not given permission to embark deeksha at NTR statue, Police clarified.

Speaking to the media, Gannavaram MLA Vallabhaneni Vamshi said that Nani dared for an open debate on a TV channel with the TDP leader but he wanted to embark deeksha which was not proper.

YSRCP's tirade leaves BJP cadre confused

MARTHI SUBRAHMANYAM
■ VIJAYAWADA

The BJP rank and file fail to decipher whether the YSRCP is an allied party or a foe to the BJP because of the piquant situation that has arisen due to the alliance between the YSRCP and BJP at the national level and lack of it at the state level. The BJP has been strongly using its Hindutva card, in the backdrop of attacks on shrines, and its cadres are perplexed at the tirade launched by the YSRCP Ministers against it for the past one week failing to come to grips with the situation.

The cadres are confused whether the YSRCP is an allied party or a rival party. Alternatively, whether the

tirade was launched against the BJP only to rein in the TDP, which is out to use the Hindutva card of late, to limit the fight between the YSRCP and the BJP? The Jagan government stepped up attack on the BJP following DGP Goutam Sawang's statement that the BJP was also behind the attacks on temples along with the TDP.

The statement sparked angry reaction from the BJP which demanded the scalp of the DGP and accused the government of encouraging attacks on temples. By questioning the payment of Rs 5,000 honorarium to pastors only to encourage religious conversions, the BJP sought to woo the Hindu voters to its side.

But the onslaught of the YSRCP left the BJP gasping for

breath. Earlier, Kodali Nani, minister in Jagan Cabinet, called the BJP more dangerous than virus, but Somu Veeraj, party AP unit president, chose not to respond to it.

In a fresh onslaught, ministers Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao, Botsa Satyanarayana, Avanti Srinivas and others started questioning the very policies of the BJP. When Chandrababu Naidu was the CM, Kamineni Srinivas of the BJP was a Cabinet member. The YSRCP pointed out that the BJP minister enjoyed his post as the then Babu regime went about demolishing some temples fixing the BJP in a piquant situation.

The BJP sources admit that it would serve as an ideological blow to the party.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The DIG (Visakha Range), LKV Ranga Rao, said that they arrested six persons in connection with the Paleswaram temple case at Santhabommali in Srikakulam district.

The DIG said that the old Nandi idol that was replaced a couple of years ago in the temple with a new one, was placed under a tree on the temple premises.

Due to the recent incidents of attacks on religious places, some persons took discarded Nandi to a nearby village square and placed in on a pedestal which was constructed for installing the statue of a politician. Some of them

clicked the photos of the Nandi and uploaded on social media and it had gone viral creating a little unrest in the village.

Based on the CCTV footage, 11 persons have been identified and six have been arrested. The VRO has lodged a complaint against 22 persons and a majority of them is believed to be associated with a political party.

The investigation into the incident revealed that the accused persons committed the crime with an intention to create communal disharmony.

Speaking about Ramatheertham incident in Vizianagaram district, the DIG said that six teams have been deployed and efforts were on to nab the culprits.

Irrigation Dy EE lands in ACB net

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Anti-Corruption Bureau officials on Tuesday caught a Deputy Executive Engineer of Irrigation department for accepting Rs 1.5 lakh.

The accused officer, Rayana Srinivasa Rao, Dy Executive Engineer, River Conservancy Sub-Division, Krishna Central Division, Vijayawada has demanded bribe of Rs 1,50,000 for giving permission for de-casting of sand in the lands taken on lease by him at Gajjalanka village in Kolluru mandal ,Guntur district.

One Bhattu Vijaya Sagar, hailing from Challapalli in Krishna district, lodged a complaint stating that Rayana Srinivasa Rao, has demanded a bribe of Rs 1,50,000 for giving permission for de-casting of sand in the lands taken on lease by him at Gajjalanka and forwarding the clearance letter to EE, Krishna Central Division, Vijayawada for onward submission to Asst. Director, Mines & Geology, Guntur.

The Guntur Range ACB officials laid a trap and caught the Deputy Executive Engineer red-handed in his office located at PWD Compound besides PWD Grounds, Vijayawada, when he was accepting the bribe from the complainant.

The tainted amount was recovered and relevant records were seized from him. He was arrested and produced before the Special Judge for SPE & ACB Cases, Vijayawada and the case is under investigation.

TDP hails HC verdict on 'insider trading'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party senior leader Alapati Rajendra Prasad on Tuesday asked whether Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy would tender his resignation following recent Andhra Pradesh High Court's order dismissing the charges of 'insider trading' in the Amaravati capital city lands. Rajendra Prasad asserted that it was evident that all the allegations levelled by the Chief Minister and his Ministers on the Capital city lands were baseless and false.

The High Court order had proved that the ruling YSRCP had deliberately hatched a conspiracy to destroy Amaravati with utter disregard for the future prospects of Andhra Pradesh.

Realtors mull use of artificial sands to meet demand

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As the sand scarcity continues to hit the construction sector in Andhra Pradesh, realtors are seriously considering using artificial or manufactured sand as an alternative.

Artificial or manufactured sand is made out of rocks by the artificial process and it differs from river sand in its properties and nature. It is obtained from specific hard rock (granite) using the first quality technology and it has all the desired properties of sand. It does not have any silt materials or organic impurities which are best-suited for concrete construction. This makes it an ideal alternative to natural sand.

With the increasing acceptance of manufactured sand as a solid alternative, the demand for this material is increasing day-by-day owing to several factors, explained the realtors. Some representatives of the Confederation of Real Estate

Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) - Andhra Pradesh, in Vizag said: "Even though, we are happy with the new sand policy, sand scarcity still continues to haunt realtors in Andhra Pradesh. We have to opt for manufactured sand due to the scarcity to complete the works on time, said a CREDAI member.

"The construction material prices have skyrocketed and scarcity of sand is further compounding the problem. There has been a 15 to 20 per cent increase in costs. For instance, the price of steel witnessed an increase of 15,000 per tonne. Steel was earlier available at Rs 40,000, but now costs over Rs 55,000. Likewise, the costs of all other materials have skyrocketed in the last few months," he said.

In view of the shortfall in domestic supply, the developers are planning to opt for natural sand from neighbouring states.

Unveil people-friendly sand policy to save construction industry: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP MLC P Ashok Babu on Tuesday demanded that the state government announce a true people-friendly sand policy immediately to prevent the State economy from slipping into a deeper crisis and to create confidence among the builders and construction workers.

Ashok Babu asked as to why Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was not able to sacrifice just Rs 750 crore for the sake of free sand policy which would revive construction industry worth thousands of crores. Lakhs of

construction labourers, plumbers, electricians, painters and people dependent on this sector will be benefitted, he said.

"Sand is just a golden goose for the CM, Ministers and some MLAs and they don't have any concern for the suffering of the common people, he alleged.

Addressing a press conference, the TDP MLC said that not just realtors and developers, but masons and workers were also hit badly because of the policy being implemented by YSRCP.

"Construction costs went up by 30 to 35 percent. The

coolies were also demanding higher wages saying that they were unable to meet ends because of high rates of essential commodities. The workers regret that they could not save anything as liquor, which was available at Rs 60 to Rs 70 in the past, was now priced at Rs 150 to Rs 200. The sand crisis had thus hit all sectors of the State economy," he said.

He said that the AP total budget came to Rs 2 lakh crore but Jaganmohan Reddy was not willing to sacrifice Rs 750 crore for the sake of providing free sand to breathe new life into the construction industry.

Centre likely to hike Kisan aid

RAJESH JAIN NIDARKAR
■ HYDERABAD

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN) will bring smiles on faces of farmers, thanks to the Centre as the cash assistance of Rs 6,000 per annum is likely to be increased to Rs 10,000 per annum. However, it has not been officially announced.

The Union Ministry of Agriculture has sought the views of the States on the decision to increase as per the verbal instructions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A letter was also sent to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh in that regard. However, the Centre has decided to remove the farmers, who are currently paying income tax from the list of Kisan Samman beneficiaries' list. The decision will benefit a large number of farmers, it is learnt.

Currently, the Kisan Samman scheme is applicable



only to those farmers, who own five acres of agricultural land. However, this limit will be increased in the revised guidelines. Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitaraman will present the Union Budget on February 1, 2021. During that time, Kisan Samman will gather the views of all the States and release new guide-

lines for the implementation of the scheme. Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 24, 2019, this ambitious scheme has so far benefited 11.50 crore farming families across the country. In all, 51,17,791 families in Andhra Pradesh and 34,81,656 families in Telangana are on the beneficiaries' list.

The Prime Minister is taking other crucial decisions in the agriculture sector to achieve the goal of doubling the income of farmers. As part of this, the Kisan Samman scheme was launched for farmers. Right now, the scheme provides financial assistance of Rs 6,000 to farmers.

The Central government is depositing money into farmers' bank accounts in three instalments at the rate of Rs 2,000. In this budget, the Modi government has decided to provide more financial facilities to farmers. Among them is a proposal to increase PM Kisan assistance, said a senior official with key responsibilities in the agriculture department.

A recent survey conducted by the Central government found that small farming families are also struggling to make their ends meet as there is no income. The Centre has identified the need for more financial assistance as the con-

The Centre has decided to remove the farmers, who are currently paying income tax from the list of Kisan Samman beneficiaries' list. The decision will benefit a large number of farmers, it is learnt

dition of farmers has become miserable. Narendra Modi called on the Central and State governments to come forward with a joint venture and a new idea to support farmers in such difficult situations. As part of this, an additional Rs 3,000 was distributed to the farmers. Kisan credit cards were also handed over.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the budget proposals for the financial year 2021-22 to Parliament on February 1. In this context, the government will announce an increase in cash assistance to farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme.

Sunita Lakshma Reddy vows to resolve women's problems

P ANAND KUMAR
■ NARSAPUR

Chairperson of State Women's Commission Vakati Sunita Lakshma Reddy has vowed to work to resolve women's problems and to extend them economic and social justice.

Speaking to The Pioneer here on Sunday, she said that she would live up to the expectations of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao who appointed her as the chairperson of the women's body.

Women encountering problems can contact the Commission by dialling the toll-free number 181, or can drop a postcard explaining their problem. The Commission takes up some cases on a suo moto basis. Anybody can also come to the Commission's office to lodge a complaint.

She said that she received a total of 15 complaints so far ever since she took over as the



Chairperson. Most of them are related to domestic violence cases. She assured them to infuse confidence among them by taking suitable action in domestic violence cases.

However, she said that some women are not freely coming forward to complain in a majority of the domestic violence cases for fear of losing their honour.

She assured such women to keep their information confidential and extend all kind of support to them.

Women encountering problems can contact the Commission by dialling the toll-free number 181, or can drop a postcard explaining their problem. The Commission takes up some cases on a suo moto basis. Anybody can also come to the Commission's office to lodge a complaint

The victims of domestic violence would receive all kind of support from the government like providing them protection and helping them avail loan facility from various institutions to enable them to start cottage industries. She said that the Commission would sensitise women of self-help groups, who in turn sensitise women, on the services being provided to them by the Commission.

2BHK houses realising dream of the poor: Minister

PNS ■ MEDCHAL

Minister for Labour Chamakura Malla Reddy said that the government was positive towards the poor and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao was working resolutely for the development of the poor.

On Tuesday, the minister, along with Medchal-Malkajigiri District Collector Sweta Mohanty, held a review meeting at the Collectorate with officials of the respective departments on double bedroom houses and various development works in the district.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that the government has taken the construction of double bedroom houses very seriously to realise the dream of the poor.

The minister directed the authorities to hand over double



Minister for Labour Chamakura Malla Reddy interacts with Medchal-Malkajigiri District Collector Sweta Mohanty at a review meeting in the Collectorate on Tuesday

bedrooms to all those who are eligible. The minister also directed the authorities to ensure that the double bedrooms at Jawaharnagar are specially built for the physically challenged are handed over to them.

How many applications have been received from urban and rural areas of the district? How many of them have been iden-

tified as eligible? How is the progress of double bedroom structures? He asked the officials concerned.

The minister explained that there was a delay due to the Corona and the authorities should take steps to expedite the present works by arranging meetings with the contractors concerned and expedite the works.



Dantewada (Chhattisgarh) MLA Devi Karma at Vemulawada temple in Rajanna Sircilla district on Tuesday

Dantewada MLA at Vemulawada

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRCILLA

Dantewada (Chhattisgarh) MLA Devi Karma, who visited the Vemulawada temple, along with her family members, was accorded a traditional welcome by the temple officials. Vemulawada police provided an additional security for the MLA, who arrived at

the temple with the Z Plus category.

Speaking on the occasion, she said, "I wanted to have a darshan of the Lord at Vemulawada temple for a long time, but could not visit the temple due to unavoidable circumstances. But, at last, I performed pujas and offered prayers to the presiding deity."

'Bangaru Telangana' only for CM's kin, alleges Chugh

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh on Tuesday alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has been deceiving people in the name of 'Bangaru Telangan ' by indulging in large scale corruption and promoting nepotism.

Addressing the working committee members of BJP Mahila Morcha here on Tuesday, he said 'Bangaru Telangana' was only for the Chief Minister and his family members.

He lambasted the TRS government for failing to fulfil any of the promises it had made in the election manifesto. "In the corruption-ridden government, unemployment has been increasing and KCR has failed to provide two lakh



BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh addresses the working committee members of BJP Mahila Morcha in Sangareddy on Tuesday

jobs as promised during the elections.

Chugh exhorted the women wing of the BJP to disseminate information about pro-poor policies and programmes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which the TRS government had failed to implement.

■ BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh lambasted the TRS government for failing to fulfil any of the promises it had made in the election manifesto

Expressing satisfaction at the manner the BJP has been striking roots in the State, he said the party workers must fan out in all nooks and corners of the State deliver PM's message of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" so that no section of the society was left out in the development programmes and policies.

Targeting his attack on the government, he said, in Telangana all sections of people were feeling frustrated and have been looking for a new wave, which the BJP has promised to deliver in the State.

Former IAS Narendra Luther passes away

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former IAS officer Narendra Luther passed away of age-related ailments early on Tuesday. A civil servant, author and columnist, Luther was active till the very last, serving as the president of the Society to Save Rocks, Hyderabad.

After his retirement, he turned towards his passion — writing on Hyderabad history and culture and the rulers of the erstwhile Princely State.

Luther won several awards for his work in Urdu and some of his books and articles were translated into a number of Indian and foreign languages. He had also produced many acclaimed documentaries, including India's first full-length animation film on Quli Qutb Shah and the myth of Bhagyamati

Born in Rawalpindi in present-day Pakistan, Luther's family came to India during the partition. He was 15 at that time.

After his MA in Political Science, Luther was selected



for IAS in 1955 and after district training in Visakhapatnam, posted to Gudur.

It was from then his association with Hyderabad and its hoary history began.

Recalling Luther's contribution, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao expressed condolences to the bereaved family.

Luther is survived by his wife Bindi, son Rahul, daughter Sandhya and grandchildren. The funeral was held later in the day at the Vaikuntha Mahaprasthanam, Whisper Valley, Jubilee Hills.

Chada launches 'Palle Palle Ku CPI' in Karimnagar dist

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

CPI State secretary Chada Venkat Reddy launched the State-wide 'Palle Palle CPI' at Chinna Mulkanur village in Chigurumamidi mandal of Karimnagar district on Tuesday. Venkata Reddy hoisted the party flag at the bus stand to kick off the programme. It was conducted at Indurti, Ogulapur, Gagireddy Palle, Sundaragiri, Chigurumamidi, Rekonda and Bommanapalli villages in the district.

He alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had given many promises to the people in the elections, but was wasting time with vociferous words without fulfilling them. He criticised the Chief Minister for misleading the people by not giving double bedroom houses, three acres to Dalits, unemployment benefits and pensions.

The TRS, which took part in the bandh against the anti-farmer laws brought by the Centre, demanded that the TRS clarify its stance on those laws.

He said that the CPI had launched a the state-wide cam-



CPI State secretary Chada Venkat Reddy launches 'Palle Palle CPI' at Chinna Mulkanur village in Chigurumamidi mandal of Karimnagar district on Tuesday

paign in the villages to find out the problems of the people and would carry out more struggles in the future for the redressal of grievances.

He called upon the party leaders and workers to be prepared for the agitation against the anti-people policies of the Central and State governments.

CPI district secretary Ponaganti Kedari, assistant secretary Koyada Srujan Kumar, Praja Natya Mandali

state president and secretaries Palle Narsimha, Kannam Lakshminarayana, State Council members Ande Swamy, Boini Ashok, Goodem Lakshmi, zonal secretary Nagelli Lakshma Reddy, assistant secretaries Jeela Sampath and Ande were present on the occasion.

Chinna Swamy, District Council members Terala Satyanarayana, Boini Patel, Kasireddy Manikantha Reddy and others participated.

Artistes have power to influence society: Collector

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Artistes have the power to influence society, opined District Collector K Shashanka. He was the chief guest at the Government Employees' Cultural Festival, which was started at the Collectorate Auditorium on Tuesday.

The Collector inaugurated the programme by lighting the traditional lamp. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the role of artistes in the Telangana movement and during the independence was commendable.

Many, who exhibited their skill in cultural programmes during their school and college education, have moved away from it all together after getting a job.

He said that cultural competitions are being organised to inspire the employees. He said that everyone should participate



(Top) A ballet being staged to mark the Government Employees' Cultural Festival in Karimnagar on Tuesday



(Bottom) Collector K Shashanka lighting the lamp to inaugurate the cultural programmes

and holidays. The song rendered by the Collector on the occasion attracted the attention of the audience. Karimnagar Police Commissioner Kamalasan Reddy said that music has the power to melt rocks. Additional collectors Shyam Prasad Lal, Narsimha Reddy, DRO Venkata Madhava Rao, PD Mepma, DEO Janardhan Rao, DWO Sharda and others participated.

Frontline workers urged to get vaccinated to meet target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country has so far vaccinated 631,417 frontline workers using two shots manufactured locally, one licensed from Oxford University and AstraZeneca and another developed at home by Bharat Biotech in partnership with the state-run Indian Council of Medical Research.

The drive started on Saturday, with 30 million healthcare and other front-line workers first in the queue, followed by about 270 million people older than 50 or deemed at high-risk because of pre-existing medical conditions.

The health ministry said India inoculated more people

on its first day than the United States, Britain or France. But it said it expected a greater number of volunteers, especially in major states such as Tamil Nadu and Punjab, lagging other states.

Vinod K. Paul, who heads a government committee on vaccine strategy, told a news conference health workers who failed to take vaccine doses set aside for them were not fulfilling their "societal responsibility". "Please understand the whole world is clamouring for vaccines," said Paul. "If our healthcare workers, our doctors and nurses, if they are declining to take it, I feel sorry," he said. "I plead with them, on behalf of the government, because we

don't know what shape this pandemic will take going forward." India, the world's biggest manufacturer of vaccines, announced it will begin exporting shots on Wednesday.

On Tuesday it reported 10,064 infections, the fewest in seven months, taking the total to 10.58 million. Deaths rose by an eight-month low figure of 137, taking the overall tally to 152,556.

Some doctors have expressed doubt about the Bharat Biotech vaccine, which was given approval for emergency use without efficacy data from late-stage clinical trials. The government says it is safe and effective. Paul said he received his own shot of the it on the first day.

Seminar on library mgmt

PNS ■ WARANGAL RURAL

An all-party meeting of the Library Association in Warangal Rural district was held in Geesugonda town on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Bochu Vinay. An awareness seminar was conducted on the management of libraries, condition of the staff and the rules and regulations of the Covid on the premises of the library.

District directors Puttapaka Kumaraswamy, Kampa Rajeshwar Reddy, Warangal rural district DEO Vasanthi, adult education officer Ramesh Reddy, panchayat secretary Suman, district library secretary Sarita, library staff and others were present on the occasion.

CBI raids Patancheru regional PF office

PNS ■ PATANCHERU

CBI officials conducted a raid on the Patancheru regional PF office following a complaint that a bribe was demanded from a PF subscriber. Searches were conducted from 3 pm on Monday till 1 am on Tuesday.

Bharat Reddy, who works as a senior social security assistant in the office, was found to have taken a bribe of Rs 3,000 during the raids by the authorities. Authorities had to work hard to track down the bribe money taken by the employee.

A case was registered against Bharat Reddy after they finally found the money during the inspection. Panchanama was conducted and he was taken into custody at 1 am and a case was registered and he was shifted to the CBI office. An official on condition of



CBI officials at Patancheru regional PF office

anonymity said that details of the arrest would be communicated to the press from the CBI office.

Known as the largest industrial hub, Patancheru, employs millions of people in various industries in the region. The PF accounts related to all of them are maintained at the Patancheru PF office. HMS

leader Ishwar Prasad alleged that the PF staff and officials were making lakhs of rupees in collusion with the employers for not maintaining the PF accounts of industry employees and workers in accordance with the government rules.

Many clients have complained that they have to pay bribes to officials for with-

HMS leader alleged that the PF staff were making lakhs of rupees in collusion with the employers for not maintaining the PF accounts of employees

drawing the money from the PF account and transfer the account. When this reporter tried to contact PF Regional Office Commissioner Krishna Shankar seeking an explanation on the allegations but he was not available.

Vax not for people allergic to any of its ingredients: SII

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People who are severely allergic to any ingredient of COVID-19 vaccine 'Covishield' are advised not to take it, Serum Institute of India said.

According to the fact sheet for the vaccine recipient by the Serum Institute of India, one should not get the Covishield vaccine if the person had a severe allergic reaction after a previous dose of this vaccine.

The ingredients of Covishield vaccine are "L-Histidine, L-Histidine hydrochloride monohydrate, Magnesium chloride hexahydrate, Polysorbate 80, Ethanol, Sucrose, Sodium chloride, Disodium edetate dihydrate (EDTA), Water for injection," Serum Institute said.

The fact sheet for the vaccine recipient on the website of the vaccine major is to help the recipient understand the risks and benefits of the Covishield vaccine.

The vaccine maker also said that the vaccine recipient should also tell the healthcare provider about all the medical conditions before getting the Covishield vaccine including, "if you have ever had a severe

allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) after any drug, food, any vaccine or any ingredients of Covishield vaccine".

The recipients should also mention to the healthcare provider, if they have fever, if they have a bleeding disorder or are on a blood thinner and also if they are immuno-compromised or are on a medicine that affects your immune system, it added.

The fact sheet also says that if a person is pregnant or plans to become pregnant or is breastfeeding she should tell the healthcare provider before taking the jab.

COVID-19 vaccination resumes in Mumbai, Pune after 2 days

PNS ■ MUMBAI

After a gap of two days, the COVID-19 vaccination drive resumed in Mumbai and Pune on Tuesday morning, but unlike the first day, there was hardly any rush of beneficiaries for taking jabs in the metropolis.

A doctor at a vaccination centre in Mumbai said the response was slow in the morning, but the process was



gradually picking up.

The inoculation drive resumed at nine centres in Mumbai and 28 centres in the neighbouring Pune district, officials said.

The Maharashtra government had suspended the inoculation process on Sunday and Monday due to some problems in the Co-WIN app, created by the Centre for managing registration for the vaccination.

On the first day of the vaccination on Saturday, only 1,923 out of 4,000 registered beneficiaries got the doses in Mumbai, as per the BMC.

On Tuesday, the vaccination process started around 9 am at all the centres in Mumbai, as per BMC officials.

However, unlike Saturday, there was hardly any rush of registered beneficiaries at the vaccination centres.

Shah praises role of Delhi Police during pandemic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday praised the role of the Delhi Police during the coronavirus pandemic and said the police force has been providing exemplary services to people of the national capital. He also said that the police force tackled the north-east Delhi riots last year and brought back peace to the city.



"Be it tackling the northeast Delhi violence, or the lockdown announced after the outbreak of coronavirus, or the unlocking process, or the movement of migrant workers, the Delhi Police has provided exemplary services to the people," Shah said at an event held at the Delhi Police headquarters here.

The minister said the Delhi Police has a very large area of responsibility as various key installations come under its jurisdiction that include Rashtrapati Bhavan, embassies of a large number of countries, headquarters of many key organisations, science centres, among others.

14 migrant workers, baby girl crushed to death by truck

PNS ■ SURAT

Thirteen migrant labourers and a year-old-girl from Rajasthan who were sleeping by the roadside in Gujarat's Surat district were among 15 dead after a dumper truck ran over them on Tuesday, police said.

Those killed include eight women and a migrant worker from Madhya Pradesh, police said. While 12 of them died on the spot, three died during treatment at a hospital, police added.

Except for the 19-year-old worker from Madhya Pradesh, all the other deceased were from villages in Banswara district in south Rajasthan, police said.

The tragedy took place near Kosamba village, around 60 km from Surat, police said. The truck driver, who apparently lost control over the vehicle after hitting a sugarcane laden tractor, has been booked under sections of the IPC and Motor Vehicles Act, police said.

The truck driver and the vehicle's 'cleaner' were also injured in the accident and are being treated at a hospital.

The truck ran over the migrant construction workers on the Kim-Mandvi road shortly after midnight, Surat



SP Usha Rada said.

The truck driver lost control over his vehicle after dashing against the tractor and veered off the road onto the pavement where the workers were sleeping, she said.

The truck was on its way to Mandvi from Kim. The driver lost control of the vehicle after it hit sugarcane hanging out of the tractor trolley coming from the opposite direction.

"The truck's front window pane shattered on impact, which blocked the driver's vision. The truck then veered off the road and crashed into the sleeping labourers," she said.

Three workers injured in the tragedy are being treated in a nearby hospital, the police official said.

The deceased were identified

as Rahul Mahida (19), Manisha Mahida (19), Vanita Mahida (17), Sangeeta Vasunia (27), Champa Panda (16), Nareesh Panda (25), Rajila Mahida (25), Vikesh Mahida (27), Shakan Vasunia (21), Mukesh Mahida (25), Lila Mahida (22), Anita Mahida (40), Dilip Vasania (20), Shobha Vasania (23) and one-year-old girl Tejal Mahida.

Except Rahul Mahida, a native of Madhya Pradesh, all other victims were from Rajasthan, police said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that ex-gratia of Rs two lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund would be given to the next of kin of each person killed in the accident and Rs 50,000 would be given to each injured.

INDIA CORNER

Three booked for transporting cattle in cruel manner

An offence has been registered against three persons in Maharashtra's Palghar district for allegedly transporting cattle into the state in a cruel manner, police said on Tuesday. The police intercepted a truck at Khanivade toll naka on Mumbai-Ahmedabad



Highway on Sunday and found 250 cattle, including goats and sheep, which were being transported in inhuman conditions from Rajasthan, an official said. While the truck driver managed to escape the scene, the police caught hold of the cleaner, the official said, adding that one of the goats had died in the vehicle. The police have seized the animals worth Rs 8.40 lakh and also confiscated the truck, he said. An offence under section 429 of the IPC and relevant provisions of the Cruelty to Animals Act has been registered against Chenna Khan, Gulam Khan and the truck owner, it was stated.

Will be discharged from hospital in four to five days: Naik

A week after he met with a tragic accident, Union AYUSH Minister Shripad Naik said he would be discharged from Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) near here in four to five days. Naik (68), the Union Minister of State for Defence and AYUSH, was admitted to the GMCH on January 12 after he met with an accident while on his way back to Goa from neighbouring Karnataka. Speaking to PTI, Naik said with everyone's blessings and by God's grace, he has recovered from the tragic accident. "I am seeing this day after a long time. I appeal to people not to crowd at the hospital to meet me. I will be discharged in four to five days and after that, I will meet everyone," he said. Naik urged his well-wishers to pray for his recovery from wherever they are without visiting the hospital.



The Union Minister, who has been recovering well at the GMCH, greeted the hospital staff and doctors, as he was brought out of his ward on a wheelchair on Tuesday.

Chhattisgarh: Two women Naxals arrested in Bijapur

Police have arrested two women Naxals, including a key cadre carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh on her head and wanted for attacks on police personnel, in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, an official said on Tuesday. Joint teams of the District Reserve Guard, Special Task Force and District Force nabbed the two rebels on Monday, the police official said. Korsa Mase alias Shanti (24) was apprehended from her native place Padeda under Gangalloor police station area, while Sunita Karam (20) was nabbed from Cherla road in Parned police station limits, he said. Mase, a member of company no.1 of the Mad division of Maoists and carrying a reward of Rs 8 lakh on her head, was allegedly involved in several Naxal incidents, including attacks on police teams and damaging public property, he said.



Red Fort shut till Jan 26; sample of crow tests positive for bird flu

A sample of a dead crow from Red Fort has tested positive for bird flu and orders have been issued to restrict the entry of public into the monument, officials said on Tuesday. Around 15 crows were found dead in the premises of Red Fort a few days ago. A sample from a dead bird was sent to a Jalandhar-based laboratory for testing, Rakesh Singh, the director of the Delhi government's animal husbandry department said. Entry of public into monument has been restricted till January 26 as a precautionary measure, he said. On Saturday, samples from a dead owl in the Delhi zoo had tested positive for avian influenza.



BCCI announces Rs 5 crore bonus for Indian team

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Tuesday announced a Rs 5 crore bonus for the Indian cricket team after the Ajinkya Rahane-led side won the fourth and final Test against Australia to clinch the series 2-1 and retain the Border-Gavaskar trophy.

India chased down 328 in the final Test to end Australia's 32-year unbeaten run at the Gabba, Brisbane. BCCI President Sourav Ganguly and Secretary Jay Shah tweeted within minutes of each other to make the announcement of a bonus.

"Just a remarkable win...To go to Australia and win a test series in this way...will be remembered in the history of Indian cricket forever...Bcci announces a 5 cr bonus for the team...The value of this win is beyond any number...well done to every member of the touring party," Ganguly tweeted.

Girl sexually abused by 38 still undergoing counselling: Cops

PNS ■ MALAPPURAM (KERALA)

A 17-year-old girl, who recently disclosed that she had allegedly been sexually abused by 38 persons, is still undergoing psycho-social counselling, police said on Tuesday.

The girl was being counselled at the state-run Nirbhaya Centre here and there was no plan to send her back home, considering her safety, the police said.

Based on the girl's disclosure in November last, a total of 29 cases had been registered so far and 20 persons arrested in this connection, a top police official said.

"We have registered 13 and 16 cases separately. Of the total 40 accused, 20 have already been arrested and we are on a hunt to trace 20 more accused," district police chief Abdul Karim U told PTI. Of the arrested 20, 15 went out on bail and five were remanded, he said.



He said mother was the lone close relative the victim had and it was not safe to send the girl back home.

"The victim continues to undergo counselling at the Nirbhaya Centre. If higher-ups seek any report from us in this regard, we will object to sending her back home to join her mother due to safety reasons. We take into consideration her mental condition also," the officer added.

The teenager's ordeal came to light during a counselling

session at the Nirbhaya centre recently, police said.

The girl had been sexually abused in 2016 when she was 13 and then a year later.

After the second incident, she was sent to the Child Home and allowed to go with her mother about a year ago.

According to the police, the girl was missing for sometime after she was released from Child Home and was traced to Palakkad in December last and brought to the Nirbhaya centre.

‘Farm laws designed to destroy agriculture’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre's new farm laws are designed to "destroy" the agriculture sector, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Tuesday and asserted that the only solution to the farmers' issue is to repeal the legislations. At a press conference, Gandhi also released a booklet highlighting the "plight" of farmers in the wake of the Centre's three farm laws.

He alleged that the laws will put the entire agriculture sector in the hands of "three to four crony capitalists".

The Centre's new farm laws are "designed to destroy" the agriculture sector, the former Congress chief said.

"I support the protesting



farmers 100 per cent and every single person in the country should support them as they are fighting for us," he said.

There is just one solution that these three laws will have to repealed, Gandhi said when asked about the impasse in talks between the government and the protesting farmers.

Hitting back at BJP president J P Nadda for his tweets earlier in the day criticising him, the Congress leader said it was an "attempted distraction". The farmers know that it was Rahul Gandhi who stood up in Bhatta Parsaul and over the land acquisition issue, not BJP leader Nadda, he said.

"I am not afraid of anyone, neither of (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi nor of anyone else. I am a clean person, they can't touch me. They can shoot me, but can't touch me. I am a patriot and I protect my country, and I will keep doing it," he said.

Thousands of farmers, mostly from Haryana and Punjab, have been protesting at several border points of Delhi since

November 28 last year, demanding a repeal of the three laws and a legal guarantee to the minimum support price (MSP) system for their crops.

Enacted in September last year, the three laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed their apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of the MSP and do away with the "mandi" (wholesale market) system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

SC seeks report from panel on cleaning of river Yamuna

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Tuesday sought a report from a committee, set up by the NGT, on its recommendations for improving the water quality of the Yamuna river and the extent to which the authorities have implemented them.

The NGT, on July 26, 2018, had constituted the monitoring committee comprising its former expert member B S Sajwan and former Delhi chief secretary Shailaja Chandra on the cleaning of the Yamuna and had directed it to submit an action plan in this regard.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde took note of the submission of amicus curi-

ae and senior advocate Meenakshi Arora that the NGT-appointed panel has been monitoring the cleaning of Yamuna water.

In the proceedings conducted through video conferencing, the bench, also comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and Vineet Saran, asked the committee to submit its report on recommendations made by it for improving the quality of water of Yamuna and the extent to which they have been implemented.

Earlier, the top court had taken suo motu cognizance of contamination of rivers by effluent in the country and had decided to take up the pollution of Yamuna river first.



Climate change may intensify floods

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Future climate change will cause an uneven shifting of the tropical rain belt -- a narrow band of heavy precipitation near the Earth's equator -- leading to increased flooding in parts of India, a new study warns.

The study, published in the journal Nature Climate Change, examined computer simulations from 27 state-of-the-art climate models, and measured the tropical rain belt's response to a future scenario in which greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise through the end of the current century.

According to the research, a northward shift of the tropical rain belt over the eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean could



result in "intensified flooding in southern India," and may impact global biodiversity and food security by 2100.

The scientists, including those from the University of California (UC) Irvine in the US, said this "sweeping shift" of the rain belt was disguised in previous studies that provided a global average of the influence of climate change.

However, they said climate change caused the atmosphere to heat up by different amounts over Asia and the North Atlantic Ocean.

The current study highlighted the drastic alterations to come over future decades in India by isolating the response in the Eastern and Western Hemisphere zones.

"In Asia, projected reduc-

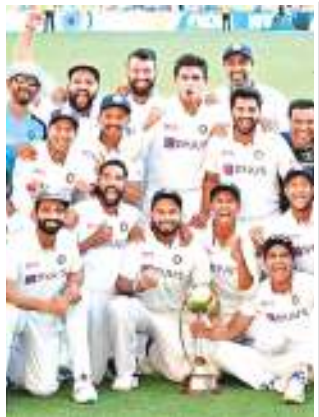
tions in aerosol emissions, glacier melting in the Himalayas and loss of snow cover in northern areas brought on by climate change will cause the atmosphere to heat up faster than in other regions," said study co-author James Randerson from UC Irvine.

"We know that the rain belt shifts toward this heating, and that its northward movement in the Eastern Hemisphere is consistent with these expected impacts of climate change," Randerson said.

According to the scientists, the study combined the engineering approach of system's thinking with data analytics and climate science to reveal subtle manifestations of global warming on regional rainfall extremes.

Gabba forever!

The 2020-21 Australian tour will remain etched in the memory of Indian cricket fans as long as they live



One month ago, editorials across newspapers were bemoaning the state of Indian cricket. An almost full-strength Indian cricket team was bowled out for 36 runs in Adelaide and, despite drawing the white-ball matches three-all, many feared the worst in the forthcoming Tests. After all, India's talismanic batsman and captain Virat Kohli was headed home to be with his wife for the birth of their first child. Injuries had begun to take their toll even before the first match and, given Australia's strict two-week quarantine rules, flying in replacements at a moment's notice was actually impossible. Foreign commentators, always quick to slam India, predicted a whitewash. Yet, somehow in an incredible show of resilience and extraordinary leadership and bat-

smanship by stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane, India won the second Test at Melbourne, the best possible gift they could have given Indian cricket fans heading into the start of the new year after what had been a truly woeful 2020 for almost everyone. In and of itself, that was a great story of redemption, coming back from Indian cricket's worst moment in contemporary history to win handsomely. Many compared that moment to the heroics of VVS Laxman and Rahul Dravid at the Eden Gardens two decades ago. But that was a simple redemption story; this play needed a third act. An act that began with the first match of the new year in Sydney, where a brave Indian second-innings rearguard performance prevented the hosts from winning the Test.

But the play ended in Australia's fortress of the Gabba in Brisbane, a ground where the home team had not lost in over three decades. And India playing essentially their second XI, giving a part-timer Washington Sundar — who had not played a first-class match in three years — his first cap and boasting a bowling line-up with just five caps among them. On top of that, a young batting line-up was facing an experienced Australian pace battery and a spin bowler playing his hundredth Test. India's heroics at Melbourne and Sydney were commendable, but most Indian cricket fans thought that a draw at the Gabba would be a great result. The last Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series will remain etched in the minds and memory of the cricket aficionados as the ultimate decider that tested the resilience, composure and physical fitness of the players. The young and largely inexperienced Indian team battled it all in this Test series, within themselves and with the world outside: Issues with facilities, racial slurs, losing key players at crucial junctures, injury after injury, issues with bubble life for multiple months *et al*. However, the actions of one of India's former heroes, Rahul Dravid, in shaping this new Indian team under his tutelage as the coach of India's 'A' team must not be dismissed. There was a sense of resilience in this team that 'The Wall' himself would have been proud of. Not only did Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur play the most unexpectedly pleasant seventh-wicket partnership, keeping India in the game in the first innings, Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, the senior man whose body faced blow after blow, and finally Rishabh Pant, the Delhi boy whose abilities have been openly questioned and in whose perseverance in the team many allegations of favouritism have been thrown at India's management, a young India found its new cricketing heroes. This is more than a redemption story, this is more than a coming-of-age story; this is an epic, a story for the ages. The Indian cricket team's grit and determination, particularly by a group of inexperienced young men is a story for the ages. When India won the 2011 World Cup at the Wankhede Stadium, they got an open-top bus ride through Mumbai and while COVID-19 protocols might mean that this team cannot get one, make no mistake, they truly deserve it.

Remove Chinese hamlet

The Govt, Opposition trade barbs over reports of a village having come up in a disputed area of Arunachal Pradesh



Even as India and China are locked in a bitter border standoff in eastern Ladakh for over eight months, and both the countries have held several rounds of military and diplomatic dialogue in order to resolve the standoff but without making any significant headway, reports have emerged that China has built a village comprising 120 houses five km inside the disputed territory in Arunachal Pradesh. The provocative development, which ostensibly pertains to November last year, was detected by satellite images taken by Planet Labs. This is the same area where the People's Liberation Army (PLA) had detained five locals last year. The village is on the banks of the Tsari Chu river in the Upper Subansiri district and China has all along disputed India's ownership claim over the area. It is feared that China wants to maintain pressure on India by opening several fronts along the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC), stretching from Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east. The development has understandably rung alarm bells in India's security establishment and the Opposition has also rolled up its sleeves to take on the Government. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi trained his guns on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue of national security after the development was reported. "Remember his promise — '*Mai desh jhukne nahi dunga*'," Rahul wrote on Twitter. Randeep Surjewala, another Congress leader, also slammed the Prime Minister, asking: "...Where is the '56-inch chest'?" Returning the fire, BJP president JP Nadda said that the scion, his party and family had repeatedly lied on the issue of China: "When will Rahul Gandhi, his dynasty and the Congress stop lying on China? Can he deny that thousands of km, including the one in Arunachal Pradesh he is referring to, was gifted by none other than Nehru to the Chinese? Time and again, why does Congress surrender to China?" The BJP chief added: "Does Rahul Gandhi have any intention to cancel the Congress party's MoU with China and their Communist Party? Does he intend to return the Chinese largesse to trusts controlled by his family? Or will their policies and practices continue to be dictated by Chinese money and MoU?"

For its part, the Government has "taken note of the construction" along the border and ramped up its infrastructure development projects. The Indian security establishment maintains that the coming up of this village is in violation of several agreements between the countries. The pacts clearly say both countries to "safeguard due interests of their settled population in the border areas" and "strictly respect and observe the LAC". This piece of land was apparently under Chinese occupation since 1965 but, as disputed territory, no country should change the *status quo* as per international law. "If this is true, it is clear that the Chinese have altered the *status quo* by converting a disputed area into a permanent settlement of Chinese nationals. What does the Government have to say about these startling facts?" Congress leader P Chidambaram said. If the Government's claim that it is Indian territory is correct, it should unequivocally take up the matter with Beijing and get the settlement removed. Earlier on June 15-16, 2020, Indian and Chinese troops had clashed on the Galwan valley ridges at a height of nearly 14,000 ft; at least 76 Indian soldiers were reportedly injured in addition to the 20 dead. Indian intercepts also revealed that the Chinese side suffered 43 casualties.

opinion

Indefensibility of amorality

Though only three US Presidents have been tainted with the blot, Donald Trump is the only one who has faced two impeachments



BHOPINDER SINGH

Impeachment is essentially symbolic, but the sort of sticky symbolism with a moral dimension that stands the test of time. History books that transcend time and lives bear the impeached person's name with an unflattering asterisk of transgression. Only three Presidents of the United States (US), out of the 45 that preceded Joe Biden, were tainted with this blot, with Donald Trump going down in posterity as the unique one, with two impeachments! The Constitution of the US describes acts that are deemed "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanours" to be impeachment-worthy. Beyond the legality of formal conviction in a classic justice sense, impeachment is tantamount to abuse of public and constitutional trust, with possible intersection of legal criminality, subsequently. But the man whom the usually reserved Dalai Lama suggested had a "lack of moral principle", i.e. Trump, remains brazen and unrepentant.

Others like Richard Nixon, who had faced a near-certain prospect of getting impeached, had resigned from office just before impeachment. The other two impeached US Presidents, Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton, had in hindsight considerably less deleterious and violative portents to democracy as compared to the ingloriousness of Trump's acts. Andrew Johnson, arguably a racist himself who had succeeded the colossus of democracy, Abraham Lincoln, was impeached for a technicality of violating the Tenure of Office Act when he removed a federal appointee without consulting the Senate. History reflects that impeachment as more of a partisan act that seized upon an unacceptable presidential action but perhaps not warranting the burden of impeachment. Similarly, Bill Clinton had perjured himself by lying to the investigators about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, as also encouraging the White House staff to toe the said line. The undeniable dereliction and misconduct was perhaps still short of breaching the high rails of "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanours". The fine difference was illustrated by a rival Republican Senator, Susan Collins, who agreed that Clinton had conducted himself disgracefully, but perhaps short of



a crime, when she still voted against the impeachment by stating: "In voting to acquit the President, I do so with grave misgivings for I do not mean in any way to exonerate this man." Bill Clinton was visibly, and admittedly, embarrassed and repentant.

Trump was, on the other hand, first impeached for the abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. He had allegedly pushed Ukraine to snoop into the commercial affairs of his ultimate nemesis, Joe Biden, and therefore enlisted a foreign power in corrupting the democratic elections. Trump had also withheld military funds from the Ukrainians in order to coerce them to do so. But Trump's misdemeanours had continued with his denialist approach by further ordering the Executive Branch to not comply with the Congressional subpoenas for the trailing documents and testimonies. However, unlike the bipartisan expressions that surrounded the Clinton or Nixon build-up, Trump had managed to polarise and divide the nation into extremities that ensured that, barring one Republican Senator, all had acquiesced blindly to Trump. The second Trump impeachment was unprecedented in its

seriousness of accusative import, "incitement for insurrection". The self-interest of Republicans, which was in play to defend Trump during the first impeachment on partisan lines, was equally visible in the second impeachment, with 10 Republican Senators disassociating themselves from supporting Trump, owing to worse consequences in repeating their partisan decision. The Joint Chief of Staff had issued an internal memo that sought to remind the uniformed fraternity of their sole fidelity to the Constitution and alluded to the potential disruption of the Biden inauguration as "against the law" — further suggesting the graveness of the unconstitutionality that Trump was accused of.

The weight of the 10 Republicans who bolted out of the Trump bandwagon is much more than its arithmetical significance, as it is about the assertion of bipartisan courage, democratic values and basic common sense. In many ways, this internal dissenting note has allowed the Republicans of absolve and permanently cleanse themselves of Trumpism, post-January 20, 2021. While the impeachment process was rushed through the last days of Trump's presi-

dency, its necessity is contextualised to the public healing of the shame of "coup" and offering a restorative opportunity and agenda for bipartisan politics hereinafter. The singular Republican who had yielded to the dictates of his personal conscience in voting against Trump's first impeachment, Mitt Romney, noted evocatively in Trump's second "coming" that there must be "meaningful consequences" when a President incites an attack against the Congress and, more importantly, against all known tenets of democracy.

Opinions now abound that the new President, Biden, need not federally prosecute Trump and sustain the divisive and inflammatory 'Donald Trump show' to linger, irate passions and sustain dangerous rumours. Trump's descent into indefensible infamy and notoriety that had toyed with reckless ideas like attacking Iran before elections, imposing quasi-martial law or actually triggering social unrest by insisting upon his allegations of "fraudulent elections", "can't play in the hands of these people", "elections that were stolen" and suchlike, has already brought the US to the unthinkable brink of anarchy and civil war. The isolation of Trump among his

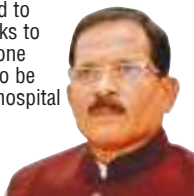
own party leaders and ostensible loyalists has shifted gears from private murmurs behind closed doors to open calls for introspection within. The triggers for the much-needed course correction have not been the legality, but the loss of morality, surrounding Trump's indefensibility. In a shifting sign of times, Republican leader Mitch McConnell had freed Republican Senators from toeing any party line and, instead, urged them to "vote with their conscience"; the subliminal writing on the wall for Trump is unmistakable. Indeed, Trump will be expected to continue his slanderous rants, unsubstantiated falsehoods and desperation to retain the centre-stage but the loss of moral high ground for the Republican Party, going forward, will drop Trump from the only political anchor that sustains his relevance. It is not the electoral triumphs, unchallenged dominance or legality in the court, but the diminishment of morality as captured in this symbolic impeachment that ended a destructive streak and individual.

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

SOUNDBITE

I have finally managed to see the daylight, thanks to blessings from everyone and God. I am likely to be discharged from the hospital in four to five days.

MoS Defence
Shripad Naik



The EU has planned to start raising and allocating in the next few months the main part of the \$906 billion recovery fund to bail out the bloc's economies hit by COVID.

EU commissioner (economy)
Paolo Gentiloni



The characters that are my favourite are not liked by people much. I am not saying that the audience is wrong. It's just that my likes and dislikes are different.

Actor
Nawazuddin Siddiqui



I am terribly sorry because it is not nice to say goodbye to the coach. It's my decision and I take responsibility for this decision.

Polish FA president
Zbigniew Boniek



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BJP's poll gimmick

Sir — The decision of the Central Government to observe the birthday of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose that falls on January 23 as "Parakram Diwas" from now on is a political stunt with an eye on the forthcoming West Bengal Assembly elections.

It is a move to appease voters in West Bengal. Netaji is our real hero who fought for the freedom of the nation and floated the Azad Hind Fauj to fight for India's independence. The Governments latest move reeks of dirty politics as the BJP or the NDA Government did not have time to remember Netaji during the last six years. But the people of Bengal are wise enough to not fall into such traps and vote judiciously on the basis of the work done and schemes floated by the Government.

We, as responsible citizens, must rise to the occasion and show the door to such politicians and parties. The BJP must stop fooling and misguiding people and should concentrate on real issues like unemployment, malnutrition, poverty, illiteracy, health and so on.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Pride justifiable, but don't go overboard

This refers to the editorial '*Diaspora power*' (January 19). It is heartening that President-elect Joe Biden has appointed as many as 20 Indian-Americans in the US Administration, with 17 of them at various positions in the White House — 13 out of 20 also happen to be women. Leading the charge is, of course, Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris. But from finance and management to health, law to Press relations, foreign policy to national security, those who trace their roots to India have found space.

This is indeed a reflection of how well the Indian-Americans have done in that country. It also reflects their talent and acumen and, more importantly, none of these appointments have raised any eyebrows. But even as India takes justifiable pride in the achievements of these individuals, it is important to remember that all those who are in the new administration are American citizens. Their first loyalty is to the US Constitution and American national interests as defined by the President who has appointed them. Yes, their presence will enhance understanding of India in the administration and is symbolic of close ties. But these individuals have their own

Audience verdict is final

Sir — It refers to the editorial '*OTT Tandav*' (January 19). It seems that such controversies serve the interests of both the film makers and political parties as these give the much-needed publicity to a web series and also help the political parties in polarising society. The films, as well as seri-

als, are called the mirror of society, reflecting exactly what's happening. The flip side is that moviemaking is a professional line where the *raison d'être* happens to be the business alone.

The fact that every movie or serial has to undergo scrutiny as per the guidelines laid down by the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry

before release notwithstanding, one or the other controversy keeps raising its ugly head every now and then. It is really disappointing and shows that such controversies are politically motivated. We, as audiences, should use our wisdom to judge what is offensive and what is not.

Azhar A Khan
Rampur



N Sadhasiva Reddy
Bengaluru

Respect the Tricolour

Sir — It is very unfortunate that every year after the Republic Day and Independence Day celebrations, hundreds of flags are strewn on pavements and streets and people keep stomping on them. We must remember that the national flag is our pride and we must respect the symbol of democracy, freedom and brotherhood.

Similarly, we must respect our national anthem and national song. It is often seen that even when the national anthem is being played on radio or television, many people don't stand up to pay respect. They are busy talking on their mobile phones or chatting with their friends. The Independence Day and Republic Day represent the true spirit of independent India and mark the patriotic fervour of all Indians who celebrate these events with great enthusiasm. By disrespecting our national symbols like the Tricolour, we inadvertently disrespect our freedom fighters, our Constitution and our nation.

Jubel D'Cruz
Mumbai

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Unite for the sake of the nation

It is high time the Opp stood united and formed a strategy to keep the Govt on its toes in the Budget Session



KALYANI SHANKAR

The forthcoming Budget Session of Parliament is likely to be a boisterous one, with a lot of controversial issues expected to be raised by the Opposition. Although Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi has stated that the Narendra Modi Government is ready to face all the issues, the Opposition is sharpening its knives. This Parliament session is important as it is the first one of the year. Though it is being held amid the COVID-19 pandemic, all protocols will be in place to protect the members. The Parliament session will commence on January 29 and conclude by April 8, with a recess of 20 days between February 15 and March 8. President Ram Nath Kovind will address the customary joint session on January 29. This will be followed by the placing of the Economic Survey the next day and on February 1, the Union Budget will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. It will be her third consecutive one. Budget making in the middle of a raging pandemic is a difficult process and breaking the age-old tradition the Finance Ministry will not print the Union Budget for 2021 and will go paperless. All eyes are on the Government as the Budget would shed light on how the Centre allocates the funds to different sectors. Almost all the pillars of the economy are affected and it is going to be a challenge to balance revenue and expenditure. Sitharaman has promised to build a “stronger economy” and stated that the Budget will be an unprecedented one, as never before in living memory has a Government faced a situation “where tax collections are struggling to keep up with the budgeted number” and “the demand for goods and services is sluggish.”

The Opposition has enough ammunition to attack the Government with, including the COVID vaccination drive, the ongoing farmers’ agitation, the struggling economy, China’s aggressive postures, price rise, the job loss scenario, the continuation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) agitation, the plan to construct a new Parliament building, allegedly at a budget of ₹20,000 crore and so on. A senior Congress leader claims that though the political parties stayed away from the farmers’ agitation but in Parliament, they will be vocal about their support to the growers. The Opposition plans to question the Government on employment generation, reverse migration, the border impasse with China and Indo-Pakistan relations, the Government’s handling of the pandemic and the vaccination drive that was kicked off on January 16. Plus, weak States would seek more financial assistance to deal with the pandemic and the Health Ministry and other important sectors need more allocation of funds. The Finance Minister has said: “The Budget would take note of all the inputs received from the health sector to take this forward.”

The Government is also getting ready with some key legislation like the Personal Data Protection Bill, pending Bills from last year, including the DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill, the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill and the Dam Safety Bill.

However, the big question is whether the highly divided Opposition will be effective in cornering the Government in Parliament? There is no leader tall enough to unite them, although Congress chief Sonia Gandhi tries to hold a meeting before the Parliament session each year. However, the Congress is undergoing a crisis with a section of leaders questioning the Gandhi family. The party has bought time with the promise of an AICC session in early 2021. According to senior Congress leader Anand Sharma, there will be floor coordination. There are speculations that the non-BJP non-Congress Opposition might unite under Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar.

Though the BJP is close to getting a majority in the Rajya Sabha, the strategy is to divide the Opposition to get even controversial legislations passed. That was how the NDA Government managed to get legislation like the triple *talaq*, the CAA, repeal of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, passed. The Opposition should change its strategy of walkouts, rushing to the Well of the House and so on and instead focus on participating in debates and raising issues so that the Government is forced to answer questions. The lawmakers should fulfil their duty of scrutinising the Budget and keep the Government on its toes. The way a responsible Opposition would function is to use the Question Hour, Calling Attention Motions and debate on the President’s address to hold the Government accountable. On its part, the Government, too, should take the Opposition into confidence. Sadly for the nation, both believe in confrontation. With elections to five States on the horizon, all the parties will play to the gallery. It is a matter of concern that the country lacks a strong and vigilant Opposition because a vibrant democracy needs one. The Opposition parties should show a united face in Parliament. When the late Rajiv Gandhi won 403 seats in 1984, the Opposition with a dozen vocal leaders, highlighted the Bofors Scam successfully, which led to his ouster. So it is not the numbers that matter but the strategy to deal with the Government that is important. It is high time the Opposition stood united and formed a strategy to keep the Government on its toes.

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

YOU MAY WIN MANY ELECTIONS BUT I VOW FROM THIS HOLY LAND OF NANDIGRAM THAT I WILL NEVER ALLOW THE BJP TO ENTER BENGAL.
—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER
MAMATA BANERJEE





I TAKE A VOW TODAY THAT IF I CANNOT DEFEAT HER (MAMATA) IN NANDIGRAM BY A MARGIN OF HALF A LAKH VOTES, I WILL QUIT POLITICS.
—BJP LEADER
SUVENDU ADHIKARI

A tricky situation

Islam does not allow conversions for the sake of marriage. One has to convert out of love for the religion and not for any other reason. But still forced conversions take place in India and Pak



BISWAJEET BANERJEE



LUBNA NAQVI

Forced conversions are not new in the subcontinent. Reports regularly pour in from India as well as Pakistan about illegal conversions of women/girls through force, deceit or other methods which are in contravention of the law of the land. The issue was highlighted after the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Government brought a legislation termed the Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, that is meant to stop forceful conversion of women/girls from other religions to Islam, which the Right-wing sympathisers call the “Love Jihad Act.” Around the same time in Pakistan, a report claimed that about 1,000 women/girls are converted to Islam every year in the country.

It is the minority community which faces the brunt of an interfaith marriage, when it goes wrong. In India, Muslims who are in a minority, account for 15 per cent of the population while minority Hindus make up 1.60 per cent of the total population of Pakistan. Likewise, the Christian population comprises of 1.59 per cent of the total population of the Islamic Republic. Both the countries are facing the problem of conversion of non-Muslim women/girls. Sometimes this change of faith is coerced and many a time it is by mutual consent. But in both the cases sparks fly, creating a law and order problem.

Human Rights activist and advocate in Pakistan’s Supreme Court, M Shoaib Ashraf says: “There is no law to stop forced conversion in our country. But it is also true that Islam does not allow conversions for the sake of marriage. This is considered exploitation of the faith. One has to convert out of the love for the religion and not for any other reason.”

However, the Indian Constitution upholds that the right to marry is a component of the right to life which comes under Article 21. It states: “No person shall be deprived of his life and personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law.”

Delivering a historic judgment in the Hadiya and Shefin Jahan case, Justice DY Chandrachud of the Supreme Court of India said: “The choice of a partner whether within or outside marriage lies within the exclusive domain of each individual. Intimacies of marriage lie within a core zone of privacy, which is inviolable. The absolute right of an individual to choose a life partner is not in the least affected by matters of faith. The Constitution guarantees to each individual the right to freely practise, profess and propagate religion. Choices of faith and belief as indeed choices in matters of marriage lie within an area where individual autonomy is supreme.

“They form the essence of personal liberty under the Constitution. Matters of belief and faith, including whether to believe, are at the core of constitutional liberty. The Constitution exists for believers as well as for agnostics...Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of identity...Society has no role to play in determining our choice of partners.”

The courts in both the countries are working effectively to protect the rights of citizens when it comes to forced conversions. Recently, while hearing a case pertaining to a 14-year-old girl who had converted, the Lahore High Court gave a judgment that religion is a matter of heart and conviction and the court cannot adjudicate on such matters.

“DESPITE THE JUDICIARY PROTECTING THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE AND PRIVACY OF A PERSON, THE ISSUE OF INTERFAITH MARRIAGE HAS BEEN USED BY POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANISATIONS IN BOTH INDIA AND PAKISTAN TO FURTHER THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS. THIS SITUATION EMERGES AS A BLOT ON A CIVILISED SOCIETY AND SHOULD END AS IT OFTEN LEADS TO VIOLENCE AND RELIGIOUS CLASHES”



While delivering the verdict the court said: “What one believes in his or her heart is not a judicial matter.” These decisions hold good when an interfaith marriage carries the purity and virtue which the institution of marriage espouses. However, incidents of forced conversions are galore and sometimes they take a political hue.

On August 21, the Meerut police recovered the bodies of Priya and her daughter Kashish. They were allegedly killed by Shamshad. Priya, a divorcee, befriended Shamshad on a social networking site where he impersonated himself as Amit Gurjar — a Hindu. When Priya came to know about the truth she protested. In another case the Budaun police arrested Asif who posed as a Hindu man called Rajkumar and befriended Neha. A year later he allegedly killed her when she came to know of the truth.

But then, there are cases of true love where a person converts to another religion freely or wants to marry out of their own community/religion of their own free will. For instance, take the case of Muskan (Pinkii) who married Rashid in Dehradun in July 2020. They duly informed the Superintendent of Police as required under the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018. But both Rashid and Muskan were arrested under the new law when they paid a visit to Moradabad in UP. Muskan was pregnant at that time and later she alleged that she lost her baby because of police atrocity.

In the last two months, as many as 86 people have been named in 16 First Information Reports (FIRs) since the notification of the new Ordinance in the State. Out of these, 79 are Muslims, who have been slapped with charges of enticing a woman/girl and forcing her to convert to Islam. In one case 26 people, including five women, were booked in Etah for allegedly converting a 21-year-old woman by force. In Mau, 16 people have been named in an FIR whereas in Sitapur, 14 were booked in another such incident.

However, in Pakistan there is no law to stop forced conversions. “In the absence of legislation explicitly banning and criminalising forced conversion from minority religions to Islam, the affected families (mainly Hindus, Sikhs and Christians) have to use other laws, including those against kidnapping, forced marriage, child marriage and rape of minors to penalise the offender,” says Tahira Abdullah, a social activist.

Ashraf says that in the absence of a law in Pakistan, if the victim claims she has converted on her own, there is little that can be done to prove her wrong. “We cannot determine what is behind the consent. If a girl from a poor family converts to marry a man from a rich background, there is no way to know whether she has converted out of love or if she has been lured. But this should also in a way be considered an unlawful thing as some form of coercion has always been used,” he says.

Jibran Nasir, advocate and lead campaigner at Never Forget Pakistan and trustee Elaj Trust, says: “Young girls are kidnapped and converted and video messages are circulated in which the girl says that she is happy after being converted. We argue in court that girls do not necessarily scream or shout, for us to know that it is a forced conversion. Forced conversion is a crime whether one who is coerced openly admits it or not.”

The coerced conversion, especially of young Hindu and Christian girls in Sindh and Punjab province in Pakistan, continues unabated in absence of explicit laws criminalising it. According to data

provided by the Centre for Social Justice, Pakistan between 2013 and 2020 the highest number of cases of alleged forced conversions were in Punjab (52 per cent) followed by Sindh (44 per cent). A clause on forced conversion, inserted into a draft law by Hindu legislators, was actually removed before enactment in Sindh province and it has repeatedly failed enactment in the national Parliament, despite clear directives from the Supreme Court of Pakistan),” says Abdullah.

Ashraf seconds her claims saying that the term forced conversion is very vague in Pakistan. “It denotes some form of force being used — whether verbal, physical or psychological like threats to family. When the same person is brought to court and they say they have converted of their own will, there is not much the court can do about it,” he says.

In Pakistan on the insistence of the family, the court can send the person to some safe place so as to give them some time and space to review their decision. The courts have no criteria to determine if force was used except if the person tells the judges that there was no coercion. Experts opine that the courts can only give decisions based on legal provisions and not beyond.

Despite the judiciary protecting the institution of marriage and privacy of a person, the issue of interfaith marriage has been used by political parties and organisations in both India and Pakistan to further their personal interests. This situation emerges as a blot on a civilised society and should end as it often leads to violence and religious clashes.

(Banerjee is Executive Director, The Pioneer, Lucknow, India while Lubna is Freelance Journalist and Human Right activist, based in Karachi. The views expressed are personal.)

Reopen schools for younger children soon

By cutting off or limiting access to education, the pandemic has worsened existing inequalities and hampered the economic growth of poor families



SURESH KUMAR

Nearly 10 months after the nationwide lockdown began, India is now in the process of reopening its schools, albeit, in a phased manner, with all COVID protocols in place. However, most States that have decided to reopen schools are only allowing grade 10 and 12 students to attend classes. The younger children are still confined to their homes and online classes will continue till it is deemed fit to open all schools fully, from nursery to grade 12.

It is a sad fact that many children from vulnerable communities in India depend on schools for one

square meal a day. The Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme was the reason many went to school. The closure of schools hit underprivileged children the most, because not only were they hungry, they did not have a smartphone, laptop or internet connection to continue their education online, unlike their privileged counterparts.

According to a study by Oxfam India, as many as 80 per cent of Indian students were unable to access online schooling during the lockdown and many might not even return to classrooms when they eventually reopen for everyone.

Many of these children were the first in their family to attend school and get an education. Their parents and grandparents never got a chance to do so because of various socio-economic reasons. By cutting off or limiting access to education, the pandemic has effectively worsened existing inequalities and hampered the economic growth of low-income families. In a country where over half the population is below the age of 25, lack of access to education is a

deterrent which will prevent children from becoming contributing and productive members of society.

Government data suggest that despite having 600 million internet users, only 20 per cent know how to leverage the same. If one glances through the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS), over 60 per cent women in 12 States and Union Territories have never used the internet, which begs the question: How will their children study online? The absence of digital literacy programmes in the country is a glaring gap, which came to the forefront once the schools shut down and education went online. According to a Telecom Regulatory Authority of India survey, Bihar — a State where child trafficking for sex and cheap labour is rampant — has the lowest number of internet subscribers in the country with just 32 people in every 100 having access to it.

Yes, the lockdown was announced to curb the spread of a highly contagious virus. But even as India began to “unlock” in phases,

schools continued to remain shut. Earlier, daily wage earners, who were working in the informal sector, with no social security went to work knowing that their children were safe at school. Now, because of the pandemic, their children accompany them to work sites. They are picking up the trade. They are struggling like their parents and their chance to build a different life is being snatched away from them. In addition to this, their parents no longer have steady jobs. Hence, they are struggling to make ends meet, are no longer being paid and are having to resort to borrowing funds from moneylenders, friends and other family members.

Several organisations which are working against child labour have reported that moneylenders are charging alarmingly high interest rates. They also report that several people are having to borrow money for their daily needs such as food and water. A lot of these people are extremely poor and are suffering from some form of debt bondage. They are mostly Dalits, who have

spent the majority of their lives in servitude and salvery.

They often borrow money but are unable to pay the same back and, therefore, have to “work off” the debts. Often this means that their child is also put to work. Take the example of 12-year-old Rahul from Gaya, Bihar, who has been completely deprived of any learning opportunity in his village since the pandemic began. As a result of the same, he has fallen into the trap of child trafficking. Before the pandemic began, his father, under duress, gave consent to a trafficker, because of which Rahul was employed in a bangle factory in Jaipur. He was lucky enough to have been rescued (in Jaipur) before being taken to the factory. He and 29 other minors from the same district were rescued from a luxury bus that was engaged in transporting children all the way from Gaya to Jaipur. All the 30-odd students were enrolled in different schools and were regular with their classes before the lockdown was imposed. Now they remain unoccupied, bored and vul-

nerable to predatory traffickers.

The United Nations’ policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on the world’s education system points to the fact that the closure of schools and other learning spaces has impacted up to 99 per cent of students in low and middle-income countries. It warns that the effects on child labour and trafficking could be enormous. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 152 million minors worldwide are involved in child labour, of which 73 million are involved in slavery, bonded labour, dangerous work and sexual exploitation. It is feared that in poorer countries, many children will completely lose their connection to education and will not return to school at all, as they have to contribute to their family income. They have started believing that their family can no longer afford to educate them and most of the time this is true. India has the highest number of child labourers. According to the Census 2011, there are 10.13 million child workers. The ILO’s 2016 data

indicates that there are 23.8 million child labourers in India. Schools and programmes for children, such as protection centres or youth clubs, are also currently failing in their function as early warning systems. The pandemic has effectively hidden from sight occurrences of domestic violence in families as well as attempts by local child traffickers or moneylenders to recruit children as workers. The focus must now be to ensure the safety of students and teachers. All stakeholders must put in place protocols for reopening of schools even for the younger children. There has to be an extensive assessment on the learning loss and a well thought out plan to bridge the gap and schemes to retain students. The Government will also have to arrange for funds required to equip both schools and students in rural India to continue their learning journey.

(The writer is Executive Director, Center DIRECT, Human Liberty Network. The views expressed are personal.)



Need to leverage Indian IT industry's prowess: Trai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Increasing R&D investment to expand technology development capabilities and leveraging Indian IT industry's prowess to serve requirements of Indian and global telecom players can help in moving towards Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India), Trai chairman PD Vaghela said on Tuesday.

Speaking at the 15th India Digital Summit, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) Chairman PD Vaghela outlined some of the steps that can be taken to make "speedy progress and to make India self-reliant" in the telecom space. "We need to increase investment in research and development (R&D), this is very important...To be self-reliant in the technology space, which is critical for economic and statistical perspective, we need to transform from consumer to producer of technology," he said.

To upgrade and expand technology development capabilities, investments need to be made in the complete ecosystem, including research, innovation, standardisation, prod-



uct development, testing and certification, he added.

This requires a complete overhaul of the existing practices and policies and industry-academia linkages need to be established, he said.

"The commercial research innovations standardisation and product development need to be incentivised. Such innovation can also focus on meeting developing countries' requirement in the most effective manner and this will open vast market for such products for India," he added.

Vaghela said India's IT industry capability can be leveraged to build, operate and maintain software products that can serve Indian as well as

global telecom industry, at a reasonable price.

"We all know that the maximum value addition is in the technology development, designing of products and services over the life cycle.

Keeping in view India's strength in these areas, global companies have already started to establish their R&D centres in India. India has potential to be a global leader in telecom software development and servicing space," he added.

Government and regulators can play a major role in encouraging digital innovation and incentivising the development of digital technology for the benefit of society, he noted.

Vaghela said there is a need to push indigenous telecom products in India amid the booming growth in mobile and fixedline broadband as well as rise of Industry 4.0 and digital automation.

India has launched a series of market reforms in the last few years that form the foundation for enhancing India's appeal as a manufacturing base. With the skill base in India that includes telecommunication also and the scale of domestic market and technology orientation, India presents an attractive option for global manufacturers," he added.

Highlighting the growing consumption of data, Vaghela said the role of data centres attains equal importance towards becoming self-reliant in the digital space. "...While India has taken a major leap in the digital space during the last six-seven years, a lot is required to be achieved. And we all have to work together. This is one area where we can become self-reliant very fast if the government, industry and academia come together and come out with solutions to the some of the challenges, which we are facing," he added.

Mindtree shares climb 6 pc as net profit jumps

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of IT firm Mindtree jumped 6 per cent on Tuesday after the company reported a 65.7 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit for the December 2020 quarter. The stock gained 5.96 per cent to Rs 1759.70 on BSE.

On NSE, it jumped 5.79 per cent to Rs 1,760. Mindtree on Monday reported a 65.7 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 326.5 crore for the December 2020 quarter, and said its deal pipeline continues to be healthy and strong.

The Bengaluru-based company had posted a net profit of Rs 197 crore in the year-ago period. Its revenue grew 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.

"We have been working on improving our operational parameters since last year. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, there has been a progress made that has helped us in terms of improving our margins," Mindtree Chief Financial Officer Vinit Teredesai said during an earnings briefing.

Sensex zooms 834 pts; Nifty reclaims 14,500 level

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex soared 834 points on Tuesday, tracking strong gains in index majors HDFC twins, ICICI Bank and Reliance Industries amid an upbeat trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE index ended 834.02 points or 1.72 per cent higher at 49,398.29. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 239.85 points or 1.68 per cent to 14,521.15.

Bajaj Finserv was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying around 7 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, HDFC, L&T, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma and NTPC.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra, ITC and M&M were the laggards.

According to Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities, having seen massive pullbacks in last two trading days, domestic equities witnessed sharp rebound mainly led by strong cues from global markets.

"Positive statement from Janet Yellen about possibility of



acting big to support economy bolstered confidence among investors globally," he said.

US President-elect Joe Biden's nominee for treasury secretary, former Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen is calling on Congress to do more to fight the recession to avoid an even worse downturn.

In the testimony prepared for her confirmation hearing on Tuesday before the Senate Finance Committee, Yellen said more aid is needed to get coronavirus vaccines distrib-

uted -- key to ending outbreaks -- to reopen schools and help families struggling with job losses stay fed and housed.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended with significant gains, while Shanghai was in the red.

Stocks exchanges in Europe were also trading on a positive note in early deals.

Meanwhile, the global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 1.22 per cent higher at USD 55.42 per barrel.

MONEY MATTERS

European car sales suffer worst plunge ever in pandemic

European car sales plunged by nearly a quarter last year as the pandemic provoked the worst crisis ever to hit the capital-intensive industry. New car registrations sank by 23.7 per cent, or 3 million vehicles, to 9.9 million units, according to new figures released Tuesday by the European Automobile Manufacturers Association. It said lockdowns and other restrictions "had an unprecedented impact on car sales across Europe." All major markets recorded double-digit declines, down 32.3 per cent in Spain, 28 per cent in Italy and 25 per cent in France. Germany suffered a more contained 19 per cent drop. December sales were just 3.3 per cent lower than the previous year, but performance varied drastically between markets. Italy and Spain both had double-digit dips, Germany gained 10 per cent while Spain was flat.



Alembic Pharma Q3 net profit up 25 pc to Rs 293 crore

Drug firm Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Tuesday reported a 24.92 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 292.57 crore for the December quarter mainly on account of robust sales. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 234.19 crore for the

corresponding period of the previous financial year. Alembic Pharmaceuticals said in a regulatory filing. The consolidated revenue from operations of the company stood at Rs 1,314.33 crore for the quarter under consideration. It was Rs 1,209.13 crore for the same period a year ago, it added. "It was another good quarter for the company led by strong growth in the India formulation business. The API business continued to perform well in the current quarter," Alembic Pharmaceuticals Managing Director Pranav Amin said. Shares of Alembic Pharmaceuticals were trading at Rs 1,055.20 per scrip on the BSE, down 1.39 per cent from its previous close.

BHEL wins national award for excellence in financial reporting

State-run engineering firm Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) said it has won Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) National Award 2019-20 for excellence in financial reporting. The award was received by Subodh Gupta, Director (Finance), BHEL from Arjun Ram Meghwal, Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises. The last time this recognition was granted to BHEL by ICAI, was in the year 1981-82. Notably, an independent jury unanimously selected BHEL in the 'Infrastructure and Construction Sector' category, for the award for FY 2019-20 after screening at various levels. Conferred by ICAI, this honour is accorded in recognition of the highest degree of compliance with accounting standards, statutory guidelines, regulations and disclosures, manifesting exemplary excellence in presentation of financial statements.



Maruti shares gain over 2 pc as co hikes prices of select vehicles



Shares of Maruti Suzuki India on Tuesday gained more than 2 per cent after the firm increased the prices of select models by up to Rs 34,000 to offset adverse impact of rising input costs. The stock jumped 2.24 per cent to Rs 7,990 on the BSE. At the NSE, it gained 2 per cent to Rs 7,990.30. The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India on Monday said it has increased the prices of select models by up to Rs 34,000 to offset adverse impact of rising input costs. The company is increasing the prices owing to an increase in various input costs... The new prices are effective from January 18, 2021, Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. The price change varies across models and ranges up to Rs 34,000 (ex-showroom-Delhi), it added.

Profit at Chinese state industry rises with virus recovery

PNS ■ BEIJING

Profit at state-owned companies that dominate China's banking, oil and most other industries rose by as much as 25% last year as the country recovered from the coronavirus pandemic, the government said on Tuesday.

Total revenue for national-level companies rose 2.2% over 2019 to 30.3 trillion yuan (\$4.7 trillion), according to Peng Huagang, secretary general of the State-Owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission.

Speaking at a news conference, Peng said profit rose 2.1% to 1.4 trillion yuan (\$215 billion).

The ruling Communist Party has built up such "national champions" over the past two decades, but their monopolies and multibillion-dollar subsidies prompt complaints by the public that they are a waste of money and gouge consumers with high prices.

Peng's agency oversees 97 companies directly under the Cabinet including PetroChina Ltd, Asia's biggest oil produc-



er; China Mobile Ltd, the world's biggest phone carrier by number of subscribers, and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China Ltd, the world's biggest bank by assets.

SASAC companies also dominate air travel, insurance, securities, shipping, internet access, power generation, construction, nuclear power technology and coal and steel production.

Chinese industries benefited from the economy's relatively early reopening starting in March after the ruling party declared victory over the virus that emerged in the central city

of Wuhan in late 2019.

Total economic activity rose 2.3% in 2020, possibly making China the only major economy to grow while the United States, Europe and Japan struggled with rising infections. Growth accelerated to a two-year high of 6.5% over a year earlier in the three months ending in December. Profit at 24 national-level state companies rose by more than 25% over 2019 and two had profit of more than 100 billion yuan (\$15.4 billion), Peng said, without identifying them or giving other details.

Dunzo raises USD 40 mn in funding from Google, others

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Local commerce platform Dunzo on Tuesday said it has raised a fresh round of USD 40 million (about Rs 292.7 crore) in capital from a clutch of investors including Google and Lightbox, among others.

The funding round saw participation from new and existing investors, including Google, Lightbox, Evolve, Hana Financial Investment, LGT Lightstone Aspada, and Alteria, among others, a statement said.

"This capital stems from a year of robust growth amidst the pandemic. In the coming year, the local commerce platform will focus on deploying its playbook for sustainable growth across its fastest-growing cities such as Mumbai, Chennai and Pune," it added.

With a gross merchandise value (GMV) growth of 2X over the past year, Dunzo is now about USD 100 million annualised GMV business, the statement said.



Gold gains Rs 198; silver jumps by Rs 1K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold gained Rs 198 to Rs 48,480 per 10 gram in the national capital on Tuesday following a rally in international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, it had closed at Rs 48,282

per 10 gram. Silver also marched higher by Rs 1,008 to Rs 65,340 per kilogram from Rs 64,332 per kilogram in the last trade.

In the international market, both gold and silver were quoting gains at USD 1,843 per ounce and USD 25.28 per ounce, respectively.



India asks WhatsApp to drop move for changes in privacy policy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian government has asked WhatsApp to withdraw the recent changes in the privacy policy of the messaging app, saying unilateral changes are unfair and unacceptable.

In a strongly worded letter to WhatsApp CEO Will Cathart, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said India is home to the largest user base of WhatsApp globally and is one of the biggest markets for its services.

The proposed changes to the WhatsApp Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, without giving users an option to opt-out, "raise grave concerns regarding the implications for the choice and autonomy of Indian citizens," it wrote. The ministry asked WhatsApp to withdraw the proposed changes and reconsider its approach to information privacy, freedom of choice and data security.



WhatsApp had on January 16 delayed the introduction of the new privacy policy after user backlash over sharing of user data and information with the parent company, Facebook Inc. Stating that Indians should be properly respected, the ministry said, "any unilateral changes to the WhatsApp Terms of Service and Privacy would not be fair and accept-

able." With over 400 million users in India, the changes will have a disproportionate impact on the country's citizens, it said.

It asked WhatsApp to provide details of the services provided by it in India, categories of data collected and permissions and consents sought.

Also, WhatsApp has been asked to explain if it conducts

profiling of Indian users on the basis of their usage, as well as explain difference between the privacy policy in India and other countries.

WhatsApp has also been asked to provide policy on data and information security, privacy and encryption.

It has also been asked to detail data sharing with other apps and if it captures information about other apps running on the mobile phones of the user. Besides, complete technical architecture and server hosting data of Indian users have been asked to be furnished along with details of access to a third party.

The changes "enable WhatsApp, and other Facebook companies, to make invasive and precise inferences about users which may not be reasonably foreseen or expected by users in the ordinary course of assessing these services, the ministry said.

The updated terms would enable WhatsApp to collect "highly invasive and granular metadata" such as time, frequency and duration of interactions, group names, payments and transaction data, online status, location indicators as well as any messages shared by users with business accounts. "The collection and onward sharing with Facebook companies, of sensitive personal data of individuals portends an ecosystem where any meaningful distinction between companies and WhatsApp will cease to exist," it said.

"This approach has the potential to infringe on core values of data privacy, user choice and autonomy of Indian users," it said.

WhatsApp had earlier this month begun asking its 2 billion users worldwide to accept an update of its privacy policy if they want to keep using the popular messaging app.

SHREYA SRIKONDA

Our very own YouTube talents are all set to show off their talent on the big screens. In the south, not many talented artists could make it to the big leagues without proper connections. One way to pass by these barriers is through YouTube! Many popular YouTube sensations are now foraying into movies in a seamless transition. The best part is that they are familiar faces to the audience, most of which have been acquainted with the YouTuber creator family from the early stages. The mid 2000s saw YouTube content boom that came with the platform being easily accessible and a great place to show off all kinds of talent. Making full use of this opportunity, talented

youngsters started making content about relatable things in their daily life that could reach other young people. From “Don’t you hate it when…” to “Ten things I like about…”, almost every relatable topic has been covered by YouTubers. From the popularity that they got from the initial boom, YouTubers became local celebs, inspiring many others to join the ranks. The content creator family grows every year with more innovative ideas, bigger production value and

more tailored scripts. So it’s not a shocker that the next thing on many of these YouTubers’ lists is movies!

the big Screens!

Sejal Kumar

One of India’s top YouTubers, Sejal Kumar has made a name for herself for her vlogs and lifestyle videos. In 2018, she starred in *Engineering Girls*, a web-series in which she shares the screen with Krithika Avasti and Barkha Singh.

Ravi

Ravi Teja is another young YouTube content creator who’s made his recent foray into movies with Kiran Abbavaram’s *Sebastian P.C 524*. He says that in YouTube, the crew is smaller, there’s no time restriction, and you’re fully aware of how the script is. In bigger productions, two minutes of content can take up a whole day. Speaking on what got him started on his journey, he says “YouTube was a way to gauge the Telugu audience’s response to us as content creators. We experimented with genres and styles to see what worked best, while making a name for ourselves in the community. Movies make me really happy, though.”

Ravi makes a choice based on his comfort with his audience. He says that if he had to choose between movies and YouTube, he’d pick the latter! “I’d choose YouTube, it’s easier to communicate with the audience and to understand what they expect of us, and they’ll tell you if they don’t like the content. So I like that open communication that only YouTube can provide.” He hopes to do more movies and has a lot of exciting projects lined up!


Alekhya Harika

The format of every other video content creation is different from that of movies. The rigid schedules, the busy sets and the bustle of the crew can be intimidating for those not familiar with them. This bubbly Telugu sweetheart of the masses, better known as Dethadi Harika, was seen in the Tamil remake of Sandeep Reddy Vanga’s *Arjun Reddy*. She plays the role of a nurse in this movie, and says she loved the experience. “I had a friend recommend me to the co-director of *Arjun Reddy*, who directed the Tamil version. They were looking for Telugu actresses for a natural look. They thought I was the right fit, and I got the project,” she said. “The experience was amazing, everyone was so professional! They didn’t even waste a single second during the shoots, and they were so kind to everyone,” she adds. Harika says she learnt a lot from her experience there. She adds, “I learnt to be punctual and how to work better. I would definitely love to act in many more movies, in Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam.”

Udbhav Raghunandan

The man behind the Chicago Subbarao persona Udbhav Raghunandan, does not attempt to draw a line between content creation and filmmaking. He makes a distinction between them, but believes at their core, they share the same goal. “For me, at a basic level, it’s all different forms of storytelling. Through my YouTube channel, I tried to tell stories woven around my experiences.” The main differences he notices from his entry into films is the convenience of being able to focus on just acting, without the pressure to write scripts and get editing done as he would for YouTube.

There might be similarities that overshadow how different both



forms of media are, but when it comes down to it, big productions are a completely different ballgame from YouTube creations. “For movies and web series, we narrate stories at a bigger level for a longer time. It boils down to the writing. To grab viewers attention, there has to be compelling writing. In YouTube, I tried connecting with my audience in a much shorter span of time. When they relate to it, it becomes shareable content that will reach more people.”

When asked what he would choose between YouTube and movies, he said “YouTube was a stepping stone for me to get into movies. I never wanted to be a YouTube content creator, but it just happened.”

Though his dream was always to be in the movies, he does not undermine YouTube’s power as a platform. “Whichever medium, content should be the priority. There should be effort behind it, and subscribers or the audience should not be taken for granted.”

Sri Vidya Maharshi

The actress who rose to fame with witty, relatable content on ChaiBisket’s *GirlFormula* says that it was a very organic process for her along with other YouTubers. “Having a bunch of videos online can easily help as a portfolio, secondly you have your own dedicated viewership who will come to a movie because they want to watch you.” On a practical level, she says, her YouTube career helped her



understand a lot more things about movie-making than a newcomer would have. When asked about how she adapts to the difference in responsibility, budget and timeline, she says, “I think it depends on how much you believe in the role, I’ve had to let go of a little bit of my inhibitions to really get into the character someone else has written for me.” She’s working on a web-series for now, taking it slow and figuring out how the film industry works, as she says she’s only worked with friends so far. “I’m not very medium-specific, I’m fine with whatever platform, as long as there’s scope for me to present myself in the best way possible,” she says.

Harsha Chemudu

Known by the moniker Viva Harsha, this actor/comedian is one of the best known Telugu internet personalities. He speaks in detail about how Youtube has reached content saturation. Harsha shot to fame for his role in the 2013 *Viva* video by Sabarish Kandregula which would be fresh in your memory if you’re above ten years old.

The video was just the right mix of funny, relatable and clever, so in the initial boom of YouTube, fresh Telugu content was received very well.

The YouTube star says that his goal was to be an actor right from the beginning. “We had a lot of scripts ready, we don’t know why we chose to do *Viva* or



why it took off the way it did.” He explains how the huge increase in the amount of content out on YouTube is leading to lesser quality.

His advice to those planning to explore content creation: “Don’t plan to make a viral video, it can’t be predicted. If the content is good, then it will make its way around, it’s like magic, it just happens.”

The YouTuber has gone on to play pivotal roles in several films including *Colour Photo*, *Bhanumathi & Ramakrishna* and also has a talk show to his credit.

Healthy side of hemp

Unlike popular belief, hemp does not have psychotropic effects. In fact, its seed has many healthy benefits, says **ROHIT SHAH**



nitric oxide in the body. It is a gas molecule that makes blood vessels relax and dilate, which leads to controlled blood pressure and a reduced risk of heart disease. According to Pub Med, increased arginine intake coupled with decreased levels of C-reactive protein (CRP) and high levels of CRP is linked to heart disease in the majority of people.

Helpful in skin disorders

A balance of omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids in the human body are significant to the immune system and hemp seeds are a good source of these fatty acids with about a 3:1 ratio of omega-6 to omega-3. Hemp seed oil relieves people from dry skin, itchiness, inflammation and thus, reduces the need for skin medication.

A source of plant based protein

Plants often lack the amino acid lysine which is why complete protein sources are rare in the plant kingdom. Hemp seeds are considered a complete protein source as they provide all the essential amino acids and contain high levels of arginine and glutamic acid.

Helps control stress and anxiety

Cannabidiol or CBD is considered a cannabinoid which is leaf extract of the cannabis plant. CBD is known to have benefits on stress, seizure disorders, anxiety and pain relief. (The writer is the co-founder and CEO of Hemp Horizon)

subsequently, increasing the number of producers. Further, increasing awareness regarding the dietary advantages of its oil, coupled with the growing demand from the personal care and cosmetics industries is expected to drive the market growth.

Unlike popular belief, hemp does not have psychotropic effects on the human body. In fact, its seed has many healthy benefits and is actually 33 per cent protein. The small, brown seeds are rich in fibre, protein, and healthful fatty acids, including omega-6 and omega-3s. Their antioxidant properties may reduce symptoms of numerous ailments in addition to improving the health of the heart. The nutritional power and hardness of hemp seed could significantly address the global protein needs and starvation problems.

Raw hemp seeds are one of the richest sources of complete protein as it is packed with 33-37 per cent pure digestible protein. Only algae such as marine phytoplankton, AFA blue-green algae and spirulina exceed hemp in protein. Additionally, 47 per cent of a hemp seed is composed of good fats, a vital composition of omega-3 and omega-6. Here are a few benefits of hemp seeds:

May control the risk of heart disease

Hemp seeds contain good amounts of the amino acid arginine, which produces

CarryMinati drops new rap single *Vardaan*

Having wrapped up the first schedule of the upcoming thriller-drama *Mayday*, Asia’s numero uno YouTuber and avid rapper, CarryMinati aka Ajey Nagar released his 6th rap single titled *Vardaan* across all major streaming platforms. The inspirational track dishes out life lessons for young teenagers embarking on their grown-up journey. Ajay is seen touching upon a plethora of emotions that an average teenager experiences whilst transitioning from the adolescent to the adulthood stage, right from seeking validation from family and peers about their choices to sacrificing dreams and passions due to lack of access to the right kind of education and guidance. With this track, he assumes the name of a true modern-age motivational coach encouraging his legion of fans to fervently pursue their calling and take inspiration from his personal life story.

CarryMinati states, “2020 got me thinking about a lot of things, including my early teenage years and how I climbed the ladder of success despite all the odds and the backlash. Last year was quite disheartening in a lot of ways, so I thought I would kick start 2021 on a more encouraging note by giving out a strong positive message. This track is a dedication to all the young minds out there to not pay heed to the opinions of those who don’t matter. This is my story of the trials and tribulations I faced on the journey of pursuing my passion and I hope my humble effort will inspire the youth in some way.”

CarryMinati started making videos on YouTube when he was 10. At 21, he has over 28 million subscribers on YouTube which is among the highest in South Asia. In 2019, he was the only Indian to be listed in the Time Magazine’s ‘Top 10 Next Generation Leaders’ and only Indian to collaborate with and interview Tom Cruise and Henry Cavill to help promote their film *Mission: Impossible-Fallout*.

The music for the single was composed by

CarryMinati’s older brother Yash Nagar a.k.a. Willy Frenzy. He says, “2020 was like a doom year that ruffled quite a few feathers. For Carry and me personally, when the YouTube vs TikTok row happened, it was such an emotional moment but then we didn’t take defeat and created *Yalgaar* as a retort. We decided that this year, it will be no different and we will not shy away from being our most authentic selves and fuel the spirit of those who seek some motivation to go the unconventional way with our track *Vardaan*. I hope this track inspires listeners to heal and get back on track with their lives, as in the end, it’s all about rising above the storm like a warrior phoenix!”



WONDER DOWN INDIA

India does winning talk, pull off historic Test series win Down Under

PTI ■ BRISBANE

They say heroes are ordinary people doing extraordinary stuff. If one wanted to see a Live demonstration of it, Gabba was the place to be where Australia's cricketing pride and invincibility was torn to shreds by a bunch of Indian rookies who didn't seem to care for either history or reputations.

A target of 328 lay in front of them and with all the broken bones and bruised bodies in the dressing room, it would have been perfectly understandable to chase a draw to retain that coveted Border-Gavaskar trophy.

But they wanted more and that's precisely what they walked away with.

So what if their regular captain was on paternity leave? So what if their pace spearhead and premier all-rounder were out injured? So what if the crowd in Sydney had caused some mental scars with their racist chants?

So what? Asked a lot which had seen adversity of a more intense kind in their personal lives. They knew all about it and on the field, they showed how to stand up to it.

On Tuesday, a minefield of talent called Rishabh Pant (89 not out off 138 balls) channelled his inner *Mad Max* to scare the daylight out of the Australians with his breathtaking strokeplay. He couldn't care less for the history that the home team had not lost at 'Fortress Gabba' in the past 32 years.

He was out to change it. Coach Ravi Shastri knew how momentous it was. He would know, he was part of the ride and he made no bones about it.

"It is the toughest tour ever. Nothing surpasses this. After 36 all out, this is unreal," Shastri said, admitting that at the end of it all, he had tears in his eyes.

If Shastri's intense declaration reflected his flamboyance, stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane's reticence shone through



in his response.

"I looked good because everyone contributed," he said.

The highlights package of Pant's battle with Nathan Lyon can be enjoyed repeatedly in times to come as he demolished the 100-Test man in company of debutant Washington Sundar (22), who hooked the world's best fast bowler, Pat Cummins, for a six.

No one moved from their seats as Pant cut, drove, and paddle-swept to make a statement to his detractors while gifting India one of their finest overseas wins during the dying moments of the final session with an off-driven boundary.

While Shubman Gill (91 off 146 balls) announced his arrival on the global stage, Cheteshwar Pujara (56 off 211 balls) surpassed all the pain barriers en route his slowest Test fifty that held the game in balance for Pant to launch a final assault.

The Australian team wouldn't feel too good about not being able to win a Test match with an opposition that was finding it difficult to field a fit first XI a day prior to the Test match.

Add to it, the visitors were also left quite hurt by the racial slurs directed at the likes of Mohammed Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah by

the crowd during the Sydney Test.

The series will be remembered for ages and the impact that Ajinkya Rahane's team had on the cricketing fraternity and the fans in general will be written in golden words when a fresh history of Test cricket after 2000 is written.

In terms of relevance, a series win without Virat Kohli, Mohammed Shami, Ravindra Jadeja, Ravichandran Ashwin and Jasprit Bumrah not being available at various points, is zillion times more significant than the 2-1 win in 2018-19 when the opposition didn't have Steve Smith and David Warner in their ranks.

First time, people celebrated draws, became empathetic to players with limited abilities and believed in their team.

The stands were near-empty at the Gabba thanks to the Covid-19 crowd restrictions but make no mistake that Test cricket seemed well and truly alive and kicking.

With its beautiful ebbs and flows, the fifth day was witness to three separate schools of batsmanship, so very dissimilar to each other.

Gill, who is now going to be the "Real Deal", was free-flowing in his stroke-making with his "beside the line of the ball" technique as he rode the bounce to hammer home the advantage and briefly make India favourites to win the battle.

The two sixes off Mitchell Starc — a slash over backward point and a thump over deep mid-wicket — will be the ones for the keeps.

The disdain while thrashing the Australian bowlers would have made even Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli proud. India have now got Kohli's heir apparent and the 21-year-old is here to stay for the longest time.

Pujara, on the other hand, saw the Australian try out the menacing short ball tactic. He took a few on the helmet, a few more on the chest and other parts and a painful one on the knuckles but remained unfazed.

Gill and Pujara showed that there are multiple ways to skin a cat. If Pujara was ready to duck, sway and cop body blows off Josh Hazlewood and Cummins, showing the art of survival, Gill, on his first tour of Australia, was ready to be the intimidator by bringing the pull shot out of his repertoire.

The duo, during its 114-run stand, showed that very contrasting styles can co-exist without conflict even as fans of both

genres argue who has the more appropriate approach for the format.

Even Pant with his cavalier ways would have added his two cents to the debate on various styles.

But for the uninitiated, the three distinct schools can be suitably de-constructed — Pujara's was more of investing in an LIC policy with safe returns while Gill's approach, with his collars-up, was akin to mutual funds and Pant would most likely play his game in high-stakes stock market where winner takes it all but at times at a heavy price.

While the final day performance is sure to hold a special place but the story of this match won't be complete without a more than honourable mention of what Shardul Thakur and Washington Sundar did on the third morning and afternoon.

Had that partnership not been there, it wouldn't have been as easy for India as it seemed in the end. Thakur and Washington gave hope of a fight, Pujara, Gill and Pant, with their performances, honoured that fight.

Coach Ravi Shastri was once panned for his "best travelling Indian team" comment but after January 19, very few would disagree that this is the "toughest Indian team on road".

Biggest moment of my life: Pant

PTI ■ BRISBANE

After playing a key role in India's breathtaking and successful run chase in the series-deciding fourth Test against Australia, Rishabh Pant on Tuesday called the historic win as the "biggest moment" of his life.

"This is one of the biggest moments of my life now, and I'm happy that all the support staff and all my teammates supported me even when I wasn't playing," Pant said at the post-match presentation ceremony.

India did not play Pant in either the preceding ODI or the T20 series. But the young wicketkeeper-batsman made an impression in the Test series, playing a combative 97-run knock in the second innings in Sydney and again here on Tuesday.

"It's been a dream series. The team management always backs me and tells me, you are a match-winner and you have



to go win the match for the team. I keep thinking every day that I want to win matches for India, and I did it today," Pant said.

India skipper Ajinkya Rahane initially struggled to find words but gathered himself to praise his courageous teammates.

"It means a lot to us. I don't know how to describe this, but our boys showed a lot of character and determination after the Adelaide Test," Rahane, who led India in the absence of Virat Kohli, said.

"I'm really proud of each individual," Australia captain Tim Paine graciously admitted that they were outplayed by the Indians.

"We were here to win the series, but we have just been outplayed by a disciplined and tough Indian side who fully deserve the series win. We have to look back over a lot of things, and we'll go through it as a group."

"We have been outplayed by a better side this series," he said.

'Never ever underestimate India'

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Outplayed by an inexperienced and injury-plagued India, a shocked Australia head coach Justin Langer on Tuesday said one massive lesson that he has learnt from the setback is to "never ever, ever underestimate" the "really tough" players from that country.

A visibly shaken Langer lauded India for the lion-hearted effort to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy 2-1 despite playing with a second-string side, especially after being decimated inside three days in the series-opener in Adelaide. That loss included India's lowest-ever Test score of 36 in the second innings.

"It was an incredible Test series and in the end there is always a winner or a loser. Today Test cricket is the winner. It's gonna hurt us big time. India deserved full credit. They have been outstanding but we have learnt lessons from it," Langer told *Channel 7*.

"First, you can never take anything for granted, second never ever, ever underestimate the Indians. There are 1.5 billions Indians and if you play in that first eleven you got to be really tough, don't you?"

Langer said the fightback after the Adelaide debacle was nothing short of remarkable especially after injury-forced ouster of big players like Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja.

India found new stars such as Shubman Gill, Washington Sundar, Shardul Thakur and Mohammed Siraj among others who surprised the Aussies with their never-say-die spirit.

"I can't compliment India enough. They haven't gone away after that first Test match which we won in three days, bowled them out for 30 odd. For them to fight back like they did is amazing, credit to them. The big lesson for us is that you can't take anything for granted. India never got away," he said.

all his life.



SHARDUL THAKUR

He comes from Palghar and as a 13-year-old had hit six sixes for his school Vivekananda International Borivali in a Harris Shield Match. Who is the most celebrated alumni of Vivekananda International? India's white ball legend Rohit Sharma. Both Shardul and Rohit have had the same childhood coach — Dinesh Lad, whose son Siddhesh also plays for Mumbai.

WASHINGTON SUNDAR

The name Washington was his father's tribute to his own mentor PD Washington, who had funded his studies and kits when he was young and faced financial hardships. A month after PD Washington's death, his own son was born and he named him Washington Sundar.

We are all overjoyed at the success of the Indian Cricket Team in Australia. Their remarkable energy and passion was visible throughout. So was their stellar intent, remarkable grit and determination. Congratulations to the team! Best wishes for your future endeavours.
—PM NARENDRA MODI

A historic cricketing triumph scripted in Australia! Congratulations to India's talented young cricket team for winning the hard-fought test series. The team showed exceptional skills and resilience. The nation is proud of their achievement.
—PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND

EVERY SESSION WE DISCOVERED A NEW HERO. Every time we got hit, we stayed put & stood taller. We pushed boundaries of belief to play fearless but not careless cricket. Injuries & uncertainties were countered with poise & confidence. One of the greatest series wins! Congrats India.
—SACHIN TENDULKAR

WHAT A WIN!!! Yessssss. To everyone who doubted us after Adelaide, stand up and take notice. Exemplary performance but the grit and determination was the standout for us the whole way. Well done to all the boys and the management. Enjoy this historic feat lads. Cheers @BCCI
—VIRAT KOHLI

Khushi ke maare pagal. This is the new India. *Ghar mein ghuskar maarta hai.* From what happened in Adelaide to this, these young guys have given us a joy of a lifetime. There have been World Cup wins but this is special. And yes, there is a reason Pant is extra special.
—VIRENDER SEHWAG

Well done captain @ajinkyarahane88 this this biggest series win I feel. Without many big names you guys have showed the way how it's done congratulations @BCCI
—HARBHAJAN SINGH

Test cricket's heart is beating strongly! That was an extraordinary win @BCCI & a fantastic series to watch. Aussies not lost at The Gabba since 1988. Wow
—STUART BROAD

What a Test match! The depth of Indian Cricket is scary. @RishabhPant17, sweet number 17. Well played young man. #testcricket at its very best
—AB DE VILLIERS

Only issue with India beating Australia in such an INCREDIBLE manner, is that the Test was played in Brisbane. A city that doesn't deserve an event so good! Rolling on the floor laughing. Pant — the boy who turned into a man today in Australia, in cricketing terms!
—KEVIN PIETERSON

The Greatest Test series win of all time ... Well done #India you have just shown the way for England to get back those Ashes back later in the year ...
—MICHAEL VAUGHAN

Remarkable. Injuries galore, absent players, & beating Australia at their fortress at the Gabba. This has been the most remarkable test series victory I've watched in my experience. India's depth of talent, heart and character must forever lift an entire nation. Congratulations.
—IAN BISHOP

Congrats to the Indian cricket team @BCCI! That's one of the best series wins I can ever remember on Aust soil & to do it after being bowled out for 36, plus a depleted squad-shows tremendous character, resilience, courage & belief. Just fantastic @RaviShastriOfc @ajinkyarahane88
—SHANE WARNE

Speechless !!! Fortress Gabba has been breached !! What a great great game of Test match cricket . I still have goosebumps . Complete team effort. *Jab hausle ho Buland toh har mushkil lage aasaan !* #TeamIndia Flag of India #Merabharatmahaan
—MITHALI RAJ

One of the greatest test series wins ever. Congrats India and well played Australia, what a series #INDvsAUS.
—GOOGLE CEO SUNDAR PICHAI

An amalgamation of fascinating life stories that scripted one of the most memorable moments in the history of Indian cricket.

The men who humbled Australia in their own backyard, defying odds and naysayers, are not the ones staring from the billboards in manic metro cities but shy, quiet and unassuming characters from the suburbs and the hinterlands.

These are strong character artists of an author-backed film rather than mega stars with bulging biceps of 200-crore pot-boilers.

Pioneer Sport presents back stories of the magnificent bunch which gave Indian cricket 'a win to remember' for ages to come.

RISHABH PANT

Rourkee has always been known for its finest engineering college, now an IIT



but this is also the hometown of Rishabh Pant, son of school owner parents. There was a time that on occasions a young Pant, accompanied by his mother would reach

MOHAMMED SIRAJ

Son of an auto-rickshaw driver from Hyderabad's Lancer. He lost his father during the tour but decided to stay for the team and miss the last rites. He got a maiden five for in his debut series and was all choked up while dedicating the feat to the memory of his father. The youngster handled racist abuse from Australian fans with the same resolve.

NAVDEEP SAINI

Delhi in wee hours of morning on weekends to attend training at the famed Sonnet Club and before the crack of dawn rest at the Gurdwara before heading to the ground. He played an IPL game days after his father Rajendra's sudden demise.

Son of a bus driver from Karnal, he used to play tennis ball matches for ₹1000. Delhi first-class player Sumit Narwal brought him for the Ranji Trophy nets where then captain Gautam Gambhir picked him for tournament-proper. It was met with stiff resistance from none other than Bishan Singh Bedi who protested that a player outside Delhi domicile was being picked. This led to Gambhir putting his foot down and he never misses an opportunity to remind the detractors what Saini seemed capable of even at that time.

SHUBMAN GILL

The heir apparent of Virat Kohli was born in a Punjab village called Fazilka to an affluent farmer family. His grandfather had prepared a pitch in the farming field for his dearest grandson before his father decided to shift to Mohali so that his son's cricketing ambitions got wings. He

was a member of the India U-19 World Cup team. Recently, on his Instagram



account, he had voiced his support for ongoing farmers' protest.

CHETESHWAR PUJARA

The man from Rajkot is not very expressive but has dealt with adversity because of a strong mental make-up largely due to his coach and father Arvind Pujara. He lost his mother while playing junior cricket but never wavered from his goal despite the tragedy. Those hits on the body and knuckles in Brisbane on Tuesday will be the medals he would like to wear

Varun is boxer *Ghani*

After being shot for 25 days so far, Varun Tej's next with debutant director Kiran Korrapati is going into a non-stop mode, with the fresh schedule set to go on for a couple of months in Hyderabad from February 15, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

Actor Varun Tej's next with debutant director Kiran Korrapati, where he plays a boxer, has been titled *Ghani* — after his character's name in the film. Varun's cousin Ram Charan unveiled the first look and title by taking to his social media pages on Tuesday. "Very nice and packs a punch!! Happy Birthday @IamVarunTej!! All the best team," Charan wrote. Flaunting a chiselled athletic figure, Varun is seen punching a boxing bag with concentration at the extreme end of the motion poster.

A joint production venture between Allu Venkatesh and Sidhu Mudda, the title is a sports drama with commercial bells and whistles. The supporting cast is stacked up with the likes of Jagapathi Babu, Suniel Shetty, Upendra, Nadiya and Naveen Chandra while *Dabangg* 3 girl Saiee Manjrekar is making her Telugu debut with the project. Having resumed last November after the COVID-19 induced break, Kiran has shot the project for 10 days and is now

gearing up for a lengthy schedule (before the pandemic struck, Kiran shot for 16 days in Visakhapatnam, where the story is set).

"The next schedule starts from February 15 and will go on till April 25, witnessing close to 85 percent of the film being wrapped up. Hyderabad and its surrounding areas will host this leg of filming. Kiran wanted to commence the fresh schedule this month but with Varun testing positive last month, he postponed the schedule. The actor, in the meanwhile, has started shooting for Anil Ravipudi's *F3*," a source close to the unit tells us.

The source adds that the remaining portions of the film will be filmed in NCR region and north eastern India towards the end of May in a schedule of 15 days, calling it a wrap for talkie portions.

"The makers, however, are yet to decide on where to film a couple of songs." The film will storm into the cinema halls this July. "It is mounted on a lavish scale and is Varun's biggest budgeted till date," the source ends.



tollywood

Kamal undergoes leg surgery; will be discharged in 4-5 days

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan on Monday underwent a leg surgery at a Chennai hospital and is doing well, his daughters Shruti Haasan and Akshara Haasan said in a statement on Tuesday. The Makkal Needhi Maiam chief had on Sunday said he would be undergoing a follow-up surgery on his leg.

Shruti and Akshara took to Twitter on Tuesday to update followers on the veteran actor's health following the surgery, which they said was a success.

"We would like to begin by thanking you for your overwhelming support, prayers, and genuine concern regarding our father's recent medical procedure. We are happy to inform all of you that the surgery was a success!" the statement read. The surgery was per-

formed at Sri Ramchandra Hospital in Chennai.

Shruti and Akshara said the doctors, attendees and the hospital management are taking good care of their father.

"He is in good spirits and working towards speedy recovery. He will return home in four to five days. After a few days of rest and recuperating from the surgery, he shall be ready to interact with people as always."

The Haasan sisters expressed gratitude to people for the love and blessings showered on their father.

"We are grateful that your good energy will be a big part of your speedy recovery," the statement concluded.

On the films front, Kamal's next releases include *Indian 2* with Shankar and *Vikram* with Lokesh Kanagaraj.



RRR's climax shoot kicks off



It looks like the filming of SS Rajamouli's much-anticipated *RRR* has reached the fag end, as the maker on Tuesday announced that the climax portion shoot has begun. "The CLIMAX shoot has begun! My Ramaraju and Bheem come together to accomplish what they desired to achieve..."

#RRRMovie #RRR (sic)," the director posted on Twitter. His lead actors — Jr NTR

and Ram Charan — used the terms "super excited" and "highly charged" to describe shooting for the sequence, whose filming is going on at a specially erected massive set in Hyderabad. According to a source, Rajamouli has hired a stuntman Solomon Raju to design the whole sequence with emotional tones. Raju trained the fighters for more than 100 days so that Rajamouli will not lose time on the sets. The rehearsals of Raju with his team have been recorded and

Rajamouli picked the best sequences to incorporate into the film, the source adds. Set in 1920s pre-independent India, *RRR*, a production venture of DVV Danayya, revolves around the fictional exploits of two real freedom fighters Komaram Bheem (played by NTR) and Alluri Seetharama Raju (Charan). The likes of Ajay Devgn, Olivia Morris, P Samuthirakani and Irish actors Alison Doody and Ray Stevenson are essaying significant roles.

Was under tremendous pressure to send *Krack* directly to OTT last year: Malineni

Director Gopichand Malineni is smiling. His film, *Krack*, released amid other films like *Master*, *Red* and *Alludu Adhurs* emerged as the Sankranti winner. The box-office share is steady despite the 50 percent occupancy rule and COVID-19 concern. But a day before the release — on January 8th — things were far from rosy as he understood that the film will not have a smooth release the next day as producer Tagore Madhu's financial issues with some distributors meant that the release had to be held back until the second show. While Malineni doesn't want to delve into what exactly transpired, he wants no director to go through the pain he endured. "NV Prasad, Vamsi (of Sithara Entertainments) and Damodar Prasad stood by me during this 24-hour window, offering me a great deal

WITH KRACK PERFORMING WELL AT THE TURNSTILE, DIRECTOR GOPICHAND MALINENI IS BACK ON THE SUCCESS TRACK. WHILE ASSURING THAT *KRACK 2* IS DEFINITELY ON THE CARDS, HE INSISTS THAT HIS NEXT WILL BE PRODUCED BY MYTHRI MOVIE MAKERS. HE MIGHT ALSO HELM THE HINDI REMAKE OF *KRACK* IF HE GETS A RIGHT TEAM.

of support,' he recalls.

Malineni also remembers that he was under tremendous pressure to sell the film to OTT platforms from last March to October last year. "I always believed that *Krack* was ideal for the big screen as it's filled with mass elements. It is the reason why at one point I even tweeted that '*Krack* in theatres only'. The film is the biggest hit of Ravi Teja's career while running only to 50 percent occupancy," he beams.

He points out that the likes of VV Vinayak, Trivikram, Harish Shankar, Boyapati Sreenu, Vamshi Paidipally, Surrender Reddy and Anil Ravipudi rang him to appreciate the film post the release. "Even megastar Chiranjeevi garu phoned me and spoke well about the film. He added that my son looks like a dead ringer to me," Malineni lets out a smile. The director's son played the role of Ravi Teja and Shruti Haasan's son in the film.

He assures that *Krack 2* will be made definitely but his next commitment is for Mythri Movie Makers. Is it true that Balakrishna will spearhead it? "I've penned a story in the lockdown and it is on a level higher to that of *Krack*. As far as the casting goes, I will give the details probably after a week or 10 days," he shares, adding that there are multiple Hindi personalities who are interested in the remake of *Krack*. Will he direct it as well? "It depends on who I get as an actor and which production



house is attached to it. Actors like Akshay Kumar, Ajay Devgn and Ranveer Singh fit the lead part."

—NG



Adipurush motion capture begins

The on-sets work on *Adipurush*, starring Prabhas and Saif Ali Khan, commenced with motion capture technology in a studio setup in Mumbai on Tuesday. With the film involving a lot of VFX shots, director Om Raut, it is believed, is conducting a test shoot before he launches the film in Mumbai on February 2. Most Hollywood tentpole movies are shot using motion capture technology.

Commenting on the latest development, Bhushan Kumar, who is jointly producing the film along

with Krishan Kumar, Om Raut, Prasad Sutar and Rajesh Nair, said in an official statement, "At T-Series, we have always encouraged new ideas and concepts and this coupled with cutting edge technology, paves the way for the future of filmmaking. Om and his team are creating an entire world of *Adipurush* with the latest technology, commonly used in international cinema but will be explored in Indian filmmaking for the first time. We are proud to bring to our audiences — *Adipurush*."

Speaking about the project, Raut had said last year, "It is the story of Prabhu Ram. It's one aspect of the

epic saga; it's my screen adaptation of the epic. There are too many preparations underway. Fortunately, the research is already in place. From a historical point of view, the notes are already there. But when you do a screen adaptation, there's a lot of research from authenticity, technology points of view. A lot of storyboards are happening, asset creation, designing the characters as we speak."

The likes of Kriti Sanon and Keerthy Suresh are rumoured to be in the race to bag Sita's role.

To be filmed in Hindi and Telugu, the project has been scheduled to release on August 11, 2022.