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FRATERNITY MUST TO PRESERVE INDIAN UNITY

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VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY JANUARY 26, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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PAWAN BEGINS SHOOTING AYYAPPANUM KOSHIYUM REMAKE
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TATA IN TALKS TO LAUNCH MODERNA COVID-19 VACCINE IN INDIA: REPORT

Tata Group's healthcare venture is said to have started initial discussions with Moderna Inc for a partnership to launch its COVID-19 vaccine in India, the Economic Times reported on Monday. Tata Medical & Diagnostics could team up with the India's Council of Scientific and Industrial Research to carry out clinical trials of Moderna's vaccine candidate in India, the report said, citing officials familiar with the matter. Moderna did not respond to Reuters request for a comment outside business hours, while Tata Medical & Diagnostics did not immediately respond.



'GOVERNOR HAS TIME TO MEET KANGANA, BUT NOT FARMERS': SHARAD PAWAR

Is Punjab Pakistan? NCP chief Sharad Pawar asked a sea of farmers at Mumbai's Azad Maidan where they had gathered today in support of their comrades camped in protest in and around Delhi. Hailing them for having come to the city all the way from Nashik, in solidarity with those gearing up for a massive tractor rally in the national capital, the senior leader condemned the Union government's view of those agitating. "We have seen for the past 60 days, without bothering about the cold, the sun, or rain, the farmers from UP, Haryana, and Punjab have been protesting. They (Centre) say these are Punjab farmers."



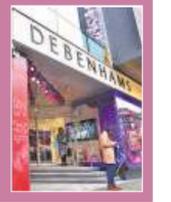
SP BALASUBRAHMANYAM AWARDED 2ND HIGHEST HONOUR, PADMA VIBHUSHAN

Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and music legend SP Balasubrahmanyam have been awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award in India, the government announced today. Celebrated singer SP Balasubrahmanyam was conferred the honour posthumously. He died in a Chennai hospital last year after almost two months of treatment. Former chief minister of Assam Tarun Gogoi and former union minister Ram Vilas Paswan have also been awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the third highest civilian award posthumously. Former Lok Sabha speaker Sumitra Mahajan has also been conferred the Padma Vibhushan.



UK RETAILER DEBENHAMS SHUTS ALL STORES, AROUND 12,000 JOBS LOST

UK department store chain Debenhams is to shut all its outlets, administrators for the collapsed group said Monday, with the loss of around 12,000 jobs. Debenhams, which has long struggled with fierce online competition, will see its brand live on however after British online fashion group Boohoo bought the group's intellectual property assets. Debenhams collapsed last month, having struggled to adapt from a bricks-and-mortar business long before the coronavirus pandemic forced shoppers online. Its stores will reopen following the lifting of the UK lockdown to liquidate stock, administrators FRP Advisory, brought in to salvage parts of the business, said in a statement Monday.



SC dismisses AP appeal on holding of GP polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a setback to the Jagannathan Reddy government, the Supreme Court on Monday said that it cannot be part of an "ego battle" and dismissed an appeal against the High Court order upholding the State Election Commission decision to hold gram panchayat elections in the state. The State government has sought postponement of gram panchayat polls due to the ongoing Covid-19 vaccination drive.

The top court observed that elections have been held in far more difficult conditions and successfully. Referring to the State government and State Election Commission, the apex court said ego problem between two authorities is leading to lawlessness. Saying "We cannot be part of this ego battle", a bench of Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Aniruddha Bose dismissed the appeal of the State government. The court said: "We will not interfere with the decision of the State Election Commission."

At the outset, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the State government, said that about five lakh police personnel were to be vaccinated and asked how polls could be held at this time. He said even States like Goa have deferred the elections. The bench said that every time there is an election, the State government approaches the court but it needs to be understood that the poll panel has to hold elections.



After series of meetings, Jagan gives the nod

SNV SUDHIR ■ VIJAYAWADA

The intense drama that unfolded over the last few months over holding of gram panchayat polls in Andhra Pradesh ended on Monday with the Jagannathan Reddy government conceding to the Supreme Court ruling. Minutes after the Supreme Court pronounced its judgement on the SLPs filed by the

State Government and the Government Employees Federation, Chief Minister YS Jagannathan Reddy held a series of meetings with his top aides, senior Cabinet colleagues, Chief Secretary, panchayat raj department senior officials and the advocate-general.

After taking stock of the situation, Jagan is said to have given the go ahead on holding of the polls even though there



CS seeks Centre's guidance on Covid vaccination

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Adityanath Das on Monday sought the Centre's guidance on continuing with the Covid vaccination drive in the State since both the inoculation and gram panchayat polls have to be taken up as per the directions of the AP High Court. In a letter to Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bushan, the Chief Secretary said that the same frontline workers who are to be vaccinated would be deployed at polling stations across the state.

"This issue is more serious in the case of police personnel who number only 73,188 but have to be deployed to 1,35,000 polling stations," the CS wrote.

Ready, confident of victory in elections, asserts Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Stating that as a party, the YSRCP welcomes the Supreme Court verdict, Advisor to the Government Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Monday said that the party was ready to face the polls.

"We are always confident of winning the polls any time they are held. Our government was only concerned about the health of the public and also the government staff. That's the reason why we fought till here," Sajjala said after the meeting with the Chief Minister.

He added: "Otherwise, we don't have any other ill intentions or motives behind knocking on the door of the



Supreme Court or resisting holding the polls. We have high regards and respect for Constitutional bodies." Sajjala went on to say "We suspect there are some unidentified forces that are working behind the SEC. The SEC had been adamant on holding these polls."



Parties doing 'drama' over farmers' protest: Fadnavis

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Modi has done full justice to Ambedkar and the Constitution

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Biden to sign orders to promote 'Made in America' products

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SEC reschedules first phase of polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minutes after the Supreme Court dismissed the Special Leave Petition filed by the AP Government on Monday, State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar issued a fresh notification, rescheduling the gram panchayat polls.

Stating that no arrangements have been made, the SEC pushed the first phase of

polls that were to be held on February 5 to February 21.

As per the original schedule announced by the SEC on January 18, gram panchayat polls in Andhra Pradesh were to be held in four phases on February 5, 9, 13, 17. As per the schedule revised on Monday, the polls now would be held on February 9, 13, 17 and 21.

In his notification, the SEC said that the Commission had convened a video conference

with the Collectors, SPs and other officials on January 23 and communication was also sent to the Chief Secretary, DGP, Principal Secretary (Panchayat Raj), Principal Finance Secretary and Commissioner (Panchayat Raj) to join him to review the preparedness for conducting gram panchayat elections besides requesting the Chief Secretary to give necessary permission to the Collectors and other district

officials to participate in the conference.

"Government officials neither participated nor issued instructions to the Collectors and other officials to participate in said video conference and a communication was received from the Chief Secretary requesting to defer the video-conference as the Government has filed an SLP in the Supreme Court," the SEC said.

Govt's extra charge adds fuel to the fire

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

While the fuel prices keep skyrocketing, the Andhra Pradesh government levying additional charges besides VAT is adding to the burden on consumers.

After the YSRCP came to power, it increased the additional fixed charges on fuel while not fiddling with the VAT.

AP remains to be one among the few states with high taxes on fuel. According to the latest report of Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell, AP, Telangana, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Assam are imposing over 30 percent VAT on fuel.

The AP government is now levying a fixed amount of Rs 4 and top of it Rs 1 for road development cess apart from 31 percent VAT. On diesel, it imposes 22.25 percent VAT, fixed amount of Rs 4 per litre and road cess of Rs 1.

The previous TDP regime used to impose Rs 2 per litre in addition to the VAT of 31 percent and 22.25 percent on petrol and diesel respectively.

The YSRCP government made the hike stating that the government resources have dried up because of reduction in revenues amid the Covid-19-imposed lockdown. The VAT hike will help the government earn Rs 600 crore revenue.

Few department officials said the government is



ensuring that the overall rates do not exceed those prevailing between 2015 and 2018. Several states are facing a similar situation and they too made upward revision of taxes to offset the loss of revenue.

Apart from this, YSRCP government issued an ordinance providing for levy of a Road Development Cess of Re 1 each per litre on petrol and high-speed diesel that would net around Rs 500 crore annually. The cess amount would be transferred to the Andhra Pradesh Road Development Corporation for exclusive use in developing road infrastructure.

AP Lorry Owners Association members are of the view that the government should focus on increasing the sale of petrol and diesel instead of increasing taxes. As the prices of petrol and diesel are higher in AP compared to the neighbouring States, there is a decline in the sale.

Rs 3,174.15 crore GST deficit released to AP, TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Finance Ministry has released the 13th weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore to the states on Monday to meet the goods and services tax compensation deficit.

In total, Rs 5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 states and Rs 483.40 crore to three Union Territories with Legislative Assembly who are members of the GST Council.

The remaining five states - Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Sikkim do not have a gap in GST revenue.

SAYING IT WITH LIGHTS



The Andhra Pradesh Secretariat is tastefully illuminated as part of the Republic Day celebrations on Monday.

Centre plans green tax on old polluting vehicles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre plans to impose a green tax on old polluting vehicles soon in a bid to protect the environment and curb pollution.

Vehicles like strong hybrids, electric vehicles and those running on alternative fuels like CNG, ethanol and LPG will be exempted while the revenue collected through the green tax will be utilised for tackling pollution, a statement said on Monday.

'Educated' parents put faith in spirits, kill 2 girls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a bizarre incident, a highly educated couple allegedly killed their two daughters, both in their 20s, in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, hoping that the girls would come back to life within hours due to spiritual power as the Kaliyuga ends, turning into the Satya Yuga.

In fact, the father of the girls himself is said to have called one of his colleagues over the phone soon after the incident on Sunday night and disclosed the killings, police said.

The shocked colleague immediately tipped off the



V Purushottam Naidu with his wife and daughters in happier times.

police, who rushed to the couple's house and found them in a trance.

Police suspect that the family had apparently been following certain occult practices for

some time now.

According to Madanapalle Deputy Superintendent of Police Ravi Manohararachi, it was the mother who bludgeoned the daughters to death.

One of the girls was tonsured before she was killed, the DSP said. The man remained a spectator as his wife went about the alleged killings.

The younger daughter was first killed with a trident. The elder one was then bludgeoned with a dumbbell.

Police sources said the couple had actually planned to kill themselves as well to prove that they would come back alive but the timely entry of police per-

sonnel averted the possible suicide.

V Purushottam Naidu, M.Sc, PhD, worked as an associate professor in the Government Women's Degree College in Madanapalle. He was also the college Vice-Principal.

His wife Padmaja, a post-graduate and gold medallist, was correspondent and principal of a local private school.

The eldest daughter Aleikhya (27) was doing her post-graduation in Bhopal while the younger Sai Divya (22) was a ward in the KM Music Conservatory of AR Rahman.

TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Pausa & Shukla Paksha Panchangam
Tithi: Chaturdashi: 01:16 am (Next Day)
Nakshatram: Punarvasu: 03:49 am (Next Day)

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 12:28 pm - 01:53 pm
Yamagandam: 12:28 pm - 01:53 pm
Varjyam: 03:30 pm - 05:09 pm
Gulika: 11:04 am - 12:28 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 01:21 am - 03:00 am
Abhijit Muhurtam: NIL

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 33/20
Humidity: 60%
Sunrise: 06:49 am
Sunset: 06:08 pm
Current Weather Conditions Updated: January 25, 2021 5:00 PM

Modi has done full justice to Ambedkar and the Constitution

With the country celebrating the 71st anniversary of its Constitution today, many express doubts whether fruits of India's Freedom have trickled down to people and whether the dreams of the architect of our Constitution have been fulfilled.

The Congress was in power for over five of the seven decades of India as a Republic. In the backdrop of the sabotage done to the Constitution and injustice rendered to its architect Dr BR Ambedkar during the five-and-a-half decades of Congress rule, it is necessary to understand the current political situation in the country.

The BJP, which regards the Constitution as a holy book, declared November 26 to be observed as Constitution Day to sensitise people of Dr Ambedkar's ideals. Prime

Minister Narendra Modi made the announcement while laying the foundation stone for the Statue of Equality (Dr Ambedkar statue) in Mumbai on October 11, 2015.

The Constitution says that India is Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic.

Modi holds the constitutional post as the PM; the BJP has been voted to power twice under his leadership. Leader of the BJP Parliamentary Party, which has majority in Parliament, and his team, is authorised to take decisions on behalf of the people.

How can decisions of the democratically-elected government become ultra vires the Constitution?

The dark days when the Constitution was trampled upon, fundamental rights were denied, Opposition leaders put behind the bars, voices of the common man stifled, elected governments pulled

Modi holds the constitutional post as the PM; the BJP has been voted to power twice under his leadership. Leader of the BJP Parliamentary Party, which has majority in Parliament, and his team, is authorised to take decisions on behalf of the people.

down, dynastic rule implemented and the Prime Minister rendered a puppet have gone. The forces responsible for the dark era are now on the verge of extinction.

Yet they cry hoarse that Modi is functioning unconstitutionally.

The welfare schemes being implemented by the BJP Government are designed in tune with the spirit of the Constitution. The PM, soon coming to power, declared that working in tune with the objectives of the Constitution like uniting everyone and

treating everyone equally is his duty.

The new agricultural laws also advocate development to reach villages to ensure their growth on par with towns and cities. But the Opposition parties have been provoking farmers to meet their political ends.

They know well that if they fail to thwart the efforts of the Centre to ensure the fruits of the Constitution trickle down to the grassroots level, they would have no political survival.

Modi reminded the people



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

time and again that the Constitution gives not only rights to the citizens but also enshrines fundamental duties for them. He made it clear that every school and every college should sensitise the new generation about the Constitution.

Maintaining a balance between rights and duties would strengthen our country,

he quoted Mahatma Gandhi as saying.

The Part-VI of the Constitution clearly lays down duties of the citizen, vis-à-vis the people and the country. We should remain loyal to the National Flag and Anthem. We should keep our surroundings clean and cleanse our systems and show respect to Indian culture, social values and strive for development of the country. Our duty is to desist from lending support to fissiparous forces and work united to protect the country's unity and integrity.

The BJP does not say anything different to this.

Unfortunately, those who have no respect for the country's values and integrity and lending support to antisocial, fissiparous forces and terror-

ists have been claiming that their rights have been trampled upon. They have also been encouraging casteism in the country. How far are they justified in making these claims?

How can those who have been unwilling to act as responsible citizens and have no regard for patriotism value the Constitution? It should be debated on the occasion of the Republic Day.

The Congress not only failed to value the Constitution but also insulted Ambedkar. During its rule, it did not publish any works of Ambedkar. It did not establish any organisation in his name.

The portrait of Ambedkar was unveiled in the central hall of Parliament during VP Singh's term. The National Front Government announced Bharat Ratna for Ambedkar.

Ambedkar vehemently opposed Article 370 giving special status to J&K and incorporated Article 365A giving equal weightage on par with other Indian states.

The decision taken by the BJP government to make J&K, going through turbulence for over seven decades, an integral part of the country rendered full justice to the Constitution.

Division of J&K and Ladakh and abrogation of Article 370 led to implementation of one nation and one Constitution in the country, declared Modi on Republic Day last year.

Today a struggle is going on between the true patriots, who derived inspiration from Ambedkar and his Constitution, and forces bay- ing for power in spite of looting the country for decades.

People know who really years for the development of the country.

TRULY SPEAKING

AP records lowest number of Covid cases in over 7 months

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Only 56 new cases, a record low in more than seven months, were reported in Andhra Pradesh as 27,717 sample tests were conducted for coronavirus in 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday.

The state also reported 141 more recoveries and two fresh fatalities in a day, a health department bulletin said.

After 1.29 crore total sample tests so far, the gross confirmed positive Covid-19 cases touched 8,87,066, at the rate of 6.87 per cent, it said. The total recoveries went up to 8,78,528 and deaths to 7,149. The state now has 1,389 active cases.

In 24 hours, only Krishna district added 11 new cases while five districts reported between five and ten each. Three districts logged zero cases, three districts two each and another, three, according to the bulletin.

Chittoor and West Godavari districts reported one fresh Covid-19 death each.

Japan MNC breaks ground for manufacturing facility

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Japanese electronics major Panasonic Life Solutions India on Monday held the ground-breaking ceremony for its new manufacturing facility in Sri City.

Panasonic Life Solutions India is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Panasonic Corporation. The Japanese company plans to make a total investment of Rs 600 crore in two phases in Andhra Pradesh. The previously announced investment of Rs 294.7 crore in phase one is part of the company's robust manufacturing and expansion plans to support the infrastructure and increase production capacity in India.

Upon completion, the new facility will be Panasonic Life Solution India's eighth electrical equipment material production base in India, followed by facilities in the North and West regions.

The facility will include a state-of-the-art assembly line of



the electrical equipment materials and wiring devices offered by the company. It will be built over 33 acres of land spread over 133,546 sq m at Sri City Industrial Park. The aim is to provide direct employment to at least 600 people in the state by the year 2022. Due to the pandemic, the new unit will now commence its operations

of manufacturing the electrical appliances by April 2022.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the facility was held in the presence of various dignitaries of Sri City, construction company M/s Takenaka India Private Limited and due to the Covid protocol, Panasonic Life Solutions India Pvt. Ltd Managing Director,

Tetsuyasu Kawamoto, attended the ceremony virtually.

Speaking on the occasion Kawamoto said, "India is growing exponentially in terms of housing development. The real estate market, especially in Andhra Pradesh, will witness a paradigm shift in the post-pandemic era. The pandemic had brought businesses to a halt. However, we look forward to a revived growth journey and contribute to the speedy economic recovery of the country."

He said that the new facility in Sri City, once completed, will help the company significantly scale up production in India and generate employment opportunities for the locals in Andhra Pradesh. "With a strong commitment towards the government's vision of 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat', the completion of this land will assist in strengthening our relations with the Government of Andhra Pradesh," Kawamoto said.

Vote a powerful instrument in your hands, Governor tells

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on Monday said that the vote is not merely a right to be exercised mechanically as and when elections are held, but is a powerful instrument in the hands of the people.

"Exercise of the right to vote makes people sentinels of the noble tradition of democracy," the Governor said.

Speaking at the launch of 11th National Voters Day celebrations at the Durbar Hall in Raj Bhavan, Harichandan said the Right to Vote is the mother of all political rights provided under the Constitution.

The Governor said that every citizen of the country, especially the youth, should feel proud of performing their respective constitutional duties as this will ensure their meaningful participation and significant contribution to the growth of the Nation and Society.

Centre plans green tax on old polluting...

Continued from Page 1

"Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has approved a proposal to levy a 'green tax' on old vehicles which are polluting the environment," it said in a statement.

The proposal will now go to the states for consultation before it is formally notified, it added.

Under the scheme, transport vehicles older than eight years could be charged green tax at the time of renewal of fitness certificate at the rate of 10 to 25 per cent of road tax.

"Personal vehicles to be charged green tax at the time of renewal of registration certification after 15 years; public transport vehicles, such as city buses, to be charged lower green tax; higher green tax (50 per cent of road tax) for vehicles being registered in highly polluted cities," the statement said. Differential tax will also

be charged depending on fuel (petrol/ diesel) and the type of vehicle.

Apart from strong hybrids, electric vehicles and alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol, LPG etc, vehicles used in farming, such as tractor, harvester and tiller will be exempted from the tax, the statement said.

According to the ministry, the revenue collected from the green tax will be kept in a separate account and will be used for tackling pollution. The states will be required to set up state-of-art facilities for emission monitoring, it added.

Listing the benefits of the green tax, the ministry said that it will dissuade people from using vehicles that damage the environment and motivate them to switch to newer, less polluting vehicles.

"Green tax will reduce the pollution level, and make the polluter pay for pollution," it added.

After series...

Continued from Page 1

Highly placed sources had hinted that the CS will now issue a notification and communication to concerned departments and also the district administration on holding the polls after which the collectors, SPs and other government officials will participate in the videoconference that will be held by the State Election Commissioner (SEC) to discuss the arrangements.

Despite the SEC issuing poll schedule and notification, on the ground, no arrangements were made. No government official had taken part in the numerous videoconferences the SEC had called in the last few months.

The CS is also expected to write to the SEC sounding the government's readiness to conduct the polls.

SC dismisses AP appeal on holding of GP

Continued from Page 1

Rohatgi said that the State has also to see that the police and doctors are vaccinated and the Panchayat elections can be held from March 1 after the frontline workers are vaccinated by January 28.

He said that the High Court should have found out whether elections and vaccination can happen together or not. The bench said that the state government is supporting the order of a single judge which does not give any reason for suspending the schedule of elections.

It noted that staff associations should have found out whether elections have passed resolutions against State Election Commissioner Ramesh Kumar.

Rohatgi said that the state government has nothing to do with that person.

"Ego problem between the two authorities is leading to lawlessness. We cannot allow lawlessness to happen. How can resolutions be passed against the SEC N Ramesh Kumar? Elections have been held in far more difficult conditions and successfully," the bench said.

The bench said that it is very easy to blame or judge anyone, but States have conducted elections even during Covid-19 and even though there was a spike of cases in Kerala, it cannot be said that polls were the reason.

Panchayat elections were held in Kerala in December 2020.

"We cannot be a part of this ego battle. There are some political and administrative decisions. Some decisions have to be taken by the State Election Commission," the

bench said.

When some intervenors tried to intervene in the matter, the bench pulled them up and said, "Your behaviour is atrocious and undesirable".

The top court said it will not interfere with the decision of the State Election Commission and dismissed the plea of the State government.

In its appeal, the state government has said that the High Court has completely erred in not considering that the SEC and its commissioner N Ramesh Kumar have taken the decision of conducting elections to local bodies without examining any relevant considerations.

In fact, the respondent (SEC and Kumar) is not qualified - having no medical expertise - to decide whether Elections ought to be conducted at a time when vaccination drive is on

full swing and the effect of elections on (i) the vaccination drive and (ii) the spread of virus, the appeal said, adding that Kumar has rejected the concerns raised by the State.

On January 21, the High Court had given its nod to hold elections to gram Panchayats in four phases from February 5.

It had struck down the order of a single judge delivered on January 11 suspending the poll schedule announced by Ramesh Kumar while allowing the appeal.

On January 8, the SEC had announced the schedule for conduct of elections to gram panchayats in four phases beginning February 5, even as the state government contended that holding elections would not be possible in view of the coronavirus vaccination programme. Notification for the first phase is scheduled to be issued on January 23.

SEC reschedules first phase of...

Continued from Page 1

He said that the poll panel received information from several quarters that necessary arrangements were not made by the district administrations to receive nominations scheduled from January 25 for Phase-I of Gram Panchayat elections awaiting instructions from the Government.

"The State Election Commission came to a conclusion that the election process has been vitiated as the district administration has not made arrangements

for receiving nominations for the phase-I gram panchayat elections," Ramesh Kumar said.

He said that therefore, the State Election Commission, "in exercise of the powers conferred under Rule 7 of Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj (Conduct of Elections) Rules, 2006 read with Section 200 & 201-A(1) of Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 (Act 13 of 1994) and Article 243K of the Constitution of India, hereby, reschedules the Phase-I Gram Panchayat elections".

Ready, confident of victory in elections, asserts Sajjala

Continued from Page 1

The government had instructed the departments concerned to make arrangements for the polls.

He added that the SEC will be held responsible if anything adverse happens to the staff on poll duty or the public during the polls. Sajjala also said that the government will write to the Centre on vaccination programme in the backdrop of panchayat polls in the state.

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₹ 50, 120 (10 gm)	
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₹ 71, 300 (1kg)	
₹ 50	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹131
Without Skin	₹149
Broiler at Farm	₹90
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	396
VIJAYAWADA	516
VISAKHAPATNAM	505
RETAIL PRICE	₹3. 96

Govt's extra charge adds fuel to the fire

Continued from Page 1

The government can generate more revenue by focusing on increasing the volume of sales and reducing taxes, he observed.

"When the rate of fuel is high, a price hike, even by a decimal, will bring the rates up. The state tax is not imposed on the base price of the fuel, but after addition of the Central tax and dealer's commission," said a petrol bunk owner in Vizag, reacting to the price hike.

CS seeks Centre's guidance on...

Continued from Page 1

In his letter to Rajesh Bushan, Adityanath Das pointed out that each police personnel thus will have to be deployed at three polling stations on an average, on rotation basis by moving from one location to another.

"Some of them will be on other bandobast arrangements like monitoring of model code of conduct, and execution of non-bailable warrants," the CS wrote.

"Simultaneously, all polling personnel are deployed away

from their place of work and their residence as per the guidelines of the Election Commission. This will lead to huge logistical problems and the polling personnel will not be able to be vaccinated as the session site allotted to them through Co-Win software will be based on their office/home location but they will be deployed elsewhere. Those who are vaccinated for the first dose at one location will not be available at the same location for the second dose," he wrote.

Rs 3,174.15 crore GST deficit released to AP, TS

Continued from Page 1

Accordingly, Rs 3,174.15 crore has been released to the two Telugu states - Rs 1,336.44 crore to Telangana and Rs 1,810.71 crore to Andhra Pradesh.

Until now, 70 per cent of the total estimated GST compensation shortfall has been released to the States and Union Territories with Legislative Assembly. Among this, Rs 71,099.56 crore has been released to the states and Rs 6,900.44 crore has been released to the three Union Territories with Legislative Assembly.

'Educated' parents put faith in spirits, kill 2 girls

Continued from Page 1

The daughters were staying with their parents since the Coronavirus-induced lockdown.

The police investigation has revealed that Sai Divya posted a message on social media: "Siva has come...work is done."

Several mysterious images have been found in the house along with those of various deities.

They said that the accused would be arrested only on the advice of medical personnel after subjecting them to medical tests.

According to the mother Padmaja, her younger daughter Sai Divya had been behaving erratically and threatened the

family to jump off from the rooftop. Pujas were performed at their home suspecting that Sai Divya might have come under a spell.

She said that her elder daughter Alekhya had also demonstrated similar behaviour.

As both the sisters started behaving erratically, the family made arrangements to perform special prayers. These prayers were performed for four days.

The family began to believe that Sai Divya was possessed, and had got mystic powers. They believed that Sai Divya could even open doors in the house psychically.

The mother said that she used to behave erratically and she acted differently through

the day. According to the DSP, going by their interaction, the family "transcended the peaks of spiritualism".

"They asked us to wait for a day as their daughters will come back to life again," he said. Manoharachari said the family was well-educated and it was very puzzling why they resorted to such an act.

Police have detained the couple in their house and started questioning them even as forensic teams began examining the closed-circuit television footage to establish if someone else were also involved in the spiritual rituals practised by the family.

Post-mortem on the bodies of the two sisters has been completed. The police registered a murder case against the parents.

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Jagan tells MPs to raise issues of state interest in Budget session

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP is planning to raise issues of public interest in the Parliament during the upcoming Budget session. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy held a meeting with the party MPs here on Monday and apprised them of the issues to be raised in the Parliament.

Releasing funds for Polavaram, re-notification for the relocation of High Court, Special Category Status to the state of Andhra Pradesh and political angle related to the desecration of temples are among the issues that would be voiced in the Parliament.

The Chief Minister directed the MPs to stress on the Polavaram project's arrears totalling Rs 1,569.86 crore and the revised estimates to the tune of 55,656.87 crore that needs to be approved.

With regard to the Polavaram project, the State



government has already discussed and written letters to the Prime Minister and Home Minister to approve the revised estimates.

He recalled that former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu during TDP rule had agreed to the special package putting the Polavaram project at stake. He directed the MPs to give utmost importance to Polavaram project and insist for the approval of revised cost estimates to complete the project on time.

The Chief Minister also told

the MPs to raise the issues of decentralisation of capital activities, integrated development bills passed by the State along with issuing a re-notification to shift the High Court to Kurnool.

The Chief Minister asked them to raise the problems regarding the new railway zone in Vishakhapatnam.

Referring to the attacks on temples, he instructed the MPs to be prepared with a comprehensive report. "Investigations revealed that people with political backgrounds were involved

in these incidents. Malicious propaganda was spread on social media. Action is being taken against people involved in these attacks irrespective of religion," he said.

He reminded that it was TDP followers who shifted the Nandi idol from a temple at Santhabommali of Tekkali constituency in Srikakulam district and false information was propagated that YSRCP followers were involved in the incident. Even Chandrababu Naidu and his party members have changed their version

after CCTV footage was released, he remarked.

He asked the MPs to raise the conspiracies hatched by the TDP through attacks on temples and urge the Centre to complete the CBI inquiry into the Antarvedi temple chariot fire issue.

Referring to special category status, the Chief Minister said that he had written several letters and appealed the Centre on every occasion he visited Delhi, to grant the special category status to the state.

Under the employment guarantee scheme, there are arrears of Rs 3,707.77 crore, he said and asked the MPs to request the Centre for increasing the number of working days from 100 to 150.

Besides, the CM advised the MPs to raise the establishment of Tribal University, Disha Act, Nivar compensation, pending funds, and various other issues.

Naidu welcomes SC verdict on gram panchayat polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday welcomed the Supreme Court judgment that has paved way for holding the panchayat elections in Andhra Pradesh.

The TDP chief asserted that after coming to power, the ruling YSRCP has violated Constitutional norms in many instances. No system or institution was being allowed to function peacefully and normally. Hurdles were being created at every step, he lamented.

In a statement issued here, the TDP chief raised apprehension that all the four pillars of democracy - legislature, judiciary, executive and the media were being undermined by the ruling party. "YSRCP leaders have been issuing threats to the heads of the Constitutional institutions," he alleged.

"A bill was passed to abolish the Legislative Council altogether out of political vendetta. The honest and committed officers were being targeted and harassed. The judiciary and the courts were coming under unforeseen attacks. The judges were being threatened. The State Election Commission was ignored. The State Election Commissioner was unduly criticised in the name of caste," Naidu alleged.

Naidu recalled how GO 2430 was brought to kill the voice of the media in violation of the Right to Freedom of Expression enshrined in the Constitution.

"The ruling party colours were pasted on the government offices with total disregard for decorum and democratic values. The people's sentiments were hurt in every way possible. The orders of the

'Hired leaders of employees' associations misleading staff'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhi on Monday accused some leaders of Government employees' associations of mortgaging the interests of the lakhs of their colleagues for the sake of narrow personal gains and undue political favours.

Pattabhi asserted that these 'hired leaders' of employees were acting solely at the behest of the YSRCP leaders. "They were making wrong statements boycotting the gram panchayat elections, though thousands of employees were ready to attend poll duty at the scheduled time," he said.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader posed a series of questions to the employees' leaders, asking them why they were silent when the Jaganmohan Reddy Government has been giving a raw deal to the Government employees in extending provident fund, life insurance, retirement benefits, surrendered leave, Compensatory Pension Scheme, Leave Travel Compensation, Pay Revision Commission and so on.

"Most of these facilities

need just administrative clearance but the ruling party was creating hurdles. The benefits that used to be handed over to employees in mere days and weeks, are now being given after four to five months," Pattabhi claimed.

"The Chief Minister had promised cancellation of Compensatory Pension Scheme within a week after coming to power but no action has been taken even after 20 months. Unfortunately, the CPS contributions are not being paid. The TDP regime made timely payments and stood in first place in the entire country at that time," he said.

The TDP leader sought to know why Jagan has not extended benefits in the past 20 months even though the report of the Pay Revision Commission was readily available.

"The 'hired leaders' of the employees were silent for reasons best known to them. They were levelling false allegations against TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu who actually gave a greater benefit of 43 per cent fitment with 18 arrears," Pattabhi claimed.

AP govt grants ₹50 lakh aid to kin of deceased ASHA worker

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh Health Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas said that the reason for death of ASHA worker Vijaya Lakshmi has not been ascertained yet, the govt has decided to grant compensation of Rs 50 lakh for the family of deceased, says Minister

of Vijaya Lakshmi's death, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy responded immediately and sent us to support the bereaved family members," Alla Nani said.

He said that Vijaya Lakshmi has insurance of up to Rs. 50 lakh which applies only to health workers discharging Covid duties but not for vaccination.

He said that CM YS Jagan would, however, provide Rs 50 lakh on behalf of the state government on humanitarian grounds. He added 3.88 lakh people have registered for vaccination across the state and so far 1.5 lakh people have been vaccinated against Covid. So far, only 39 people have developed symptoms like dizziness, cold and fever and it has been clarified that there was no need to be vaccinated despite being registered for vaccination.

If there are any health reasons, it is suggested that they could consult doctors and take the vaccine.

Though the cause for the death of ASHA worker has not been ascertained yet, the govt has decided to grant compensation of Rs 50 lakh for the family of deceased, says Minister

in Tadepalli mandal in Guntur died on Sunday. She was vaccinated for coronavirus on the January 19.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Alla Nani said that it was unfortunate that Vijaya Lakshmi died.

The cause of her death will be known only when the post-mortem report comes out and steps will be taken to get the postmortem report quickly, he added.

"Whatever may be the cause

Narayana tells people, parties to uphold spirit of democracy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CPI national secretary Dr K Narayana on Monday called upon people and political parties to uphold the spirit of democracy.

Welcoming the Supreme Court verdict on panchayat polls, he hoped that a peaceful atmosphere will prevail in the state. It may be recalled that the state government led by YSRCP and the State Election Commission were at loggerhead over conducting elections to local bodies in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

He said: "It is unfortunate that differences erupted between the SEC and state government over conducting local body polls." He welcomed the decision of the Supreme Court which paved way for the SEC to conduct panchayat elections.

Narayana lauded the efforts State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar in discharging duties in his capacity as the head of a Constitutional body.



Finding fault with the state government for creating hurdles for panchayat polls, the CPI leader said that the issue has been settled with the decision of the Supreme Court.

The state government and SEC should set their differences aside and work together for conducting the elections in an amicable atmosphere at least not, he added.

Criticising the employees' associations for opposing the elections, he said that the employees should now cooperate with the government and the SEC in holding polls.

PADMA AWARDS

Disappointment for Telugu states

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Padma Awards 2021 announced by the Centre on Monday on the eve of Republic Day came as a big disappointment for the two Telugu states as both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh drew a complete blank with regard to Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan awards.

While Andhra Pradesh had to contend with just two Padma Shri awards, Telangana got only one Padma Shri award.

The lone winner from Telangana was Kanaka Raju, who was selected for Padma Shri for Art. The two Padma Shri winners from AP were Rama Swamy Annarapu for Art and Prakasarao Asavadi for Literature and Education.

The Centre declared 7 Padma Vibhushan Awards, 10 Padma Bhushan Awards and 102 Padma Shri Awards across the country. However, none from Telugu States figures in the list of winners of Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan.

REPUBLIC DAY GRANDEUR



A bullock cart moves past the Secretariat Building that has been illuminated with dazzling lights to mark Republic Day celebrations at Velagapudi on Monday.

Vizag cops to close rowdy-sheets of reformed criminals

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to encourage good behavior among rowdy-sheets, Vizag city police will review the rowdy-sheets and close them in case the criminals were found reformed over the years.

For instance, E Ramana,

had applied for Police Clearance Certificate to make a passport and go to Republic of Turkey for employment.

However, a rowdy-sheet was opened against him at Gajuwaka Police Station since 2007 for his involvement in various crimes. Though he was acquitted in the cases, rowdy-

sheet against him was still open even though he had not involved any case since then.

Therefore, PCC could not be issued to him. Currently, he is working as Fire Safety Officer in a private firm.

Hence, a Commissionerate level committee will look into these kinds of issues and

resolve them thereby making sure that no one suffers unnecessarily. The committee will meet in the conference hall at CAR Grounds every Monday at 11.30 am to review the rowdy-sheets.

The process of continuance/retention/deletion of the rowdy-sheet needs to be

streamlined. There is no uniformity in the benchmarks or standards set by the concerned jurisdictional officers with in the commissionerate in taking a call on the rowdy-sheets. The latest technological and scientific tools available must be adequately applied to aid the review process.

3 persons held for grabbing land

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The City Police on Monday arrested three persons for grabbing a piece of land belonging to a private person and trying to sell it to someone else.

The arrested have been identified as Kodigudla Venkata Ramana, Pachi Ramesh and

Pothina Jaya Balakrishna, all residents of Visakhapatnam.

When the deal was brokered, the survey was conducted and boundary stones were fixed. But in August 2020, when Kanakaraju visited the site, he found that the survey stones were removed and land was levelled.

Fearing that someone was trying to grab their land, both Kanakaraju and Ramarao built boundary walls.

is located in Bottavanipalem in Madhurawada and Kanakaraju had purchased it for Rs 8.40 lakh.

The remaining extent of land was bought by one Nelli Ramarao and both the deals were brokered by the accused Pachi Ramesh.

When the deal was brokered, the survey was conducted and boundary stones were fixed. But in August 2020, when Kanakaraju visited the site, he found that the survey stones were removed and land was levelled.

Fearing that someone was trying to grab their land, both Kanakaraju and Ramarao built boundary walls.

In the meantime, all three accused visited the site and threatened them.

Later, taking advantage in the absence of Kanakaraju as he was posted at Punjab border, the accused damaged the boundary wall and tried to construct a shed and also erected a board stating that the site was not for sale and it belonged to one Vanappalli Nagamani, said the DCP.

Based on a complaint filed by the victims, the police investigated and arrested the accused under various sections of AP Land Grabbing (Prohibition) Act and sent them to judicial remand, on Monday.

V-P opens integrated weapons system design centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the Integrated Weapons System Design Centre at DRDO's APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Complex here on Monday.

The facility would enhance the capability in design and development of command and control systems for surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems and ballistic missile defence (BMD) systems, said Defence Research and Development Organisation.

The DRDO officials explained that the centre would give thrust to the overall system design and evaluation methodology for state-of-the-art mis-



sile systems and would help in improving the performance of missiles. This would play a major role in the realisation of highly complex futuristic aerospace and defence systems.

Laboratory (DRDL) and Research Centre Imarat (RCI).

He also showcased a range of indigenously developed missile systems and avionics technologies. The Vice-President evinced keen interest in DRDO technologies and various test facilities being used for advanced technology developments.

Addressing the DRDO fraternity, he complimented the scientists for their hard work and dedication even during the nationwide lockdown and said the efforts by DRDO have led to the phenomenal technological advancements in the form of a series of successful missions such as HSTDV, SMART,

ATGM, NGARM, HELINA, NAG, BRAHMOS etc.

He mentioned that the DRDO is an epitome and torchbearer of scientific social responsibility and is a place of eternal learning. The role played by the DRDO during the pandemic has set an example for others to emulate.

He said that the development of a range of indigenous defence systems by DRDO has given confidence to the Indian government for banning import of 101 items.

Remembering former President Kalam, Naidu said the scientific institutions of the country should never work in the incremental mode.

SHORT TAKES

Sharmila condemns report on differences with Jagan, to sue



Chief Minister and YSRCP supremo YS Jaganmohan Reddy's sister YS Sharmila condemned a story that was published in a vernacular Telugu daily on Sunday. She also threatened to take legal action against the media house. A vernacular Telugu daily on Sunday carried a story stating that serious differences had cropped up between Sharmila and Jagan. The report also claimed that she was

miffed and was contemplating to launch a political party in Telangana. In a statement on Monday, she found fault for writing baseless stories about YSR family. She said: "It's wrong on the part of a media house to write about a family. It's against morals. I condemn such baseless story and will take legal action on that media house."

AP girl bags Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Shakti award



Ameya Lagudu, a student of Class 8 in Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar, has been selected for the Prestigious Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Shakti Puraskar 2021. She is the second student from Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar to bag the prestigious award in a row. The Government of India has been awarding Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Shakti Puraskar on Republic Day to children with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievements in the fields of innovation, sports, arts, culture, social service, scholastic field and bravery. The award function will be held in New Delhi every year, but the function was virtually organised due to Covid pandemic this year. Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually interacted with the awardees on Monday through video-conferencing in which Union Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani ji was also present. Ameya Lagudu has been learning South Indian Classical dance forms of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi since the age of four. She has performed her Arangetramp (a debut solo performance of the artist after a successful training.) at the age of six. Ameya's talent has been recognised by many national and international organisations and lauded her outstanding talent in dance. She has performed more than 100 programs on various national, international platforms so far.

CAPSULE

Punjab-Haryana Judge elevated to CJ of Manipur HC

Hyderabad: The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the elevation of the Judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court Justice PV Sanjay Kumar as the Chief Justice of Manipur State High Court. Justice Sanjay Kumar hails from Telangana State. It may be recalled that several Bar Associations of the State have staged protests when Sanjay Kumar, who was the senior judge of Telangana High Court, was transferred as the judge of Punjab and Haryana High Court in October 2019.

Accord permission to farmers' rally: HC

Hyderabad: Responding to a lunch motion petition filed by the Telangana Rythu Sangam, a Farmers Association, the Telangana High Court on Monday directed the Rachakonda Police Commissioner to accord permission to a rally of the farmers with curbs. In its petition, the association urged the High Court to issue orders to the police to accord permission for the rally that begins at LB Nagar and culminates at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium in Uppal between 2 pm and 5 pm on January 26, which happens to be the Republic Day. The association told the High Court that it was taking out the rally to extend solidarity with the agitating farmers in New Delhi, who are demanding the withdrawal of controversial farm laws enacted by the Central government.

Mandal surveyor lands in ACB net

Hyderabad: The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths arrested Doma mandal surveyor G Bhagyavathi and a computer operator A Prem Kumar on Monday for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 3,000 from a complainant for doing an official favour. Bhagyavathi allegedly demanded the bribe from the complainant, Syed Khaja Yadhullah Hussaini of Mehdipatnam through Prem Kumar for forwarding the survey report pertaining to Hussaini's land to the office of the assistant director, Survey and Land Records, according to a press release.

A hostel for cattle at Ponnala

P VENKATESHWARLU ■ SIDDIPET

Shelters for orphans roaming on roads is quite common and heard about hostels for students, working men and women. But, can we believe that even livestock have hostels...? Yes, it is true. A cattle hostel has been set up at Ponnala village in Siddipet district, which falls under the Siddipet urban mandal, which is represented by Minister for Finance T Harish Rao, and it is his innovative idea.

Those who are unable to rear cattle can put them in the hostel and give monthly maintenance. The women of Siddipet district, who have been involved in dairy farming, embraced this innovative idea. Comfortable cattle sheds without mosquitoes and the arrival of veterinarians once a week are arranged at the shelter to accommodate up to 160 cattle. Many are interested in dairy cattle, but are reluctant to feed them while others have no place to accommodate them.

Therefore, the idea to construct a hostel for cattle was conceived and it was constructed at Ponnala village in Siddipet district. The project was taken up at a cost of Rs 2 crore under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGN-



REGS) and Rs 1 crore grants from corporates under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

When the idea came up it was decided to hand over the responsibility of their management to the local self-help group women. Thirty women came forward. Many of them have experience in animal husbandry. All of them have been imparted training by the officials of the

Development Organisation on basic issues like milking using machines and cutting grass.

The farmers can hand over the dairy cattle to the hostel and the rest of the work is done by these 30 women. Grazing, washing, cleaning and milking them will be done by them. Furthermore, the functioning of surrounding dairies are being monitored and training in cova-

Those who are unable to rear cattle can put them in the hostel and give monthly maintenance. The women of Siddipet district, who have been involved in dairy farming, embraced this innovative idea

ghee making, creating a brand name for those products and arranging sales will be done by the officials. However, the owners have to pay a certain amount per month to a buffalo for its maintenance. The women's team aims to ensure that everyone in the village has dairy cattle, keeps them in hostels and achieves high milk yields.

The women take care of all the animal husbandry in the village. But, who has not been raising dairy cattle for the past few years. This has had an impact on the economic status of women. Nirmala, a member of the hostel, said that it is a good opportunity for women to become financially independent. In addition to the money coming in the form of livestock management in the shelter, the income comes from milk from own buffaloes. Over 200 litres of milk is being procured from the hostel is being sold for Vijaya Dairy per day.

Kishan Reddy urges CM to allot land for NCDC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy has urged Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to allot land for the setting up of a National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) by the Central government in the State.

In a letter, addressed to the Chief Minister, a copy of which was released to the media here on Monday, he said that the Central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a number of steps across the country for the medical field, especially for medical research. As part of this, the State government has been informed about the proposal to start a NCDC (formerly National Institute of Communicable Diseases) in Hyderabad in 2019. The Central government has also allocated the required funds for it. In response, the Telangana government also agreed in principle to allocate the required space and informed the Central government.

A high-level team of central medical health officials came



If the NCDC is set up in Hyderabad, it will be a key institution that will benefit the people of the State, along with many other Central government research institutes like CCMB and IIC, already operating successfully in Hyderabad

to the State in 2020 and held discussions with the Health Minister and other government officials. The State government has proposed some buildings for the NCDC. But, the Union Health Ministry has made it clear to State government officials that old buildings are not fit for the NCDC establishment and requested to allocate three acres of land to construct new buildings. But, unfortunately not even a step has been taken in terms of land allotment over the last one year.

If the NCDC is set up in Hyderabad, it will be a key institution that will benefit the people of the State, along with many other Central government research institutes

like CCMB and IIC, already operating successfully in Hyderabad. There is an urgent need to set up such an organisation in the Hyderabad metropolis in these difficult circumstances of fighting the Corona epidemic. The establishment of this institute by the Central government will make it a focal point for medical research for many hospitals in the public and private sectors in Hyderabad as well as Telangana.

"Therefore, I urge you, as the Chief Minister of Telangana, to take the initiative to immediately identify and allocate required land for the establishment of the prestigious NCDC in the State," Kishan Reddy said in his letter.

PALAMURU-RANGAREDDY LIFT IRRIGATION SCHEME

Aruna seeks apology from govt for extending deadline

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP national vice-president DK Aruna demanded that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao tender apology to the people of Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda districts for extending the deadline of the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme (PRLIS).

Addressing a media conference here on Monday, Aruna, who took objection to the government increasing the deadline for completion of the project, described the extension as atrocious.

She charged the government not even spending Rs 6,000 crore so far under the project, which was taken up at a cost of Rs 60,000 crore.

Change of design of the project has been causing severe injustice to the people, she said adding that the promise to



complete the project in a year was a lie.

She pointed out that all irrigation projects taken up in the Mahabubnagar district have been kept pending. The State government has been inclining towards the construction of an underground pump house with an eye to earn kickbacks.

She demanded that the government lift water from the Jurala project to the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme. She demanded that the State government explain

■ BJP national vice-president DK Aruna charged the government not even spending Rs 6,000 crore so far under the project, which was taken up at a cost of Rs 60,000 crore

■ Change of design of the project has been causing injustice to the people, she said adding that the promise to complete the project in a year was a lie

how it is going to irrigate 12 lakh acres with one tmc feet of water.

She declared that the BJP would execute another project on Jurala soon after coming to power.

Vivek terms Kaleshwaram 'a failed project'

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

G Vivek Venkatswamy, the former MP and BJP Core Committee member, alleged that the family of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had embezzled lakhs of crores in the name of irrigation projects in the State. Addressing a press conference at the Kataram mandal headquarters, he said that the Kaleshwaram project was a failed project as it was redesigned for kickbacks.

He said that people from all over the country were coming forward to donate with the

Vivek said that people from all over the country were coming forward to donate for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya

intention of becoming partners in the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

BJP district president Kannam Yugender, district BJYM president Gorre Sasi Kumar, district general secretary Ranjit Kumar and Chintakani MPTC Vijaya Reddy and others were present on the occasion.



G Vivek Venkatswamy, the former MP and BJP Core Committee member, seeks donations in Kataram mandal headquarters in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district on Monday for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya

Karimnagar cop selected for HM medal

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

M Suresh, a Reserve Inspector of Karimnagar City Police Training Centre, was selected for the Home Ministry Medal. He is one among the six officers selected for the coveted medal from the State.

In all, 277 officers across the country will receive the medal on the occasion of Republic Day. Suresh was selected for the medal under the outdoor category for giving training to different cadre officials during the year 2019-20. He received a communication from the Home Ministry and Bureau of Police Research and Development wing in this regard on Monday. Along with the medal, he will receive Rs 25,000 cash prize. A native of Inavolu of Warangal Urban district, Suresh joined the police department as a Reserve Sub-Inspector in 2012 and has been promoted as an RI in 2020.

VIOLATION OF OBC QUOTA IN FACULTY RECRUITMENT

EFLU V-C skips public hearing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC spokesperson Sravan Dasoju, who unearthed the irregularities and violations of OBC reservation in faculty recruitment at the English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) said that Vice-Chancellor Suresh Kumar was caught unaware.

He alleged that the Vice-Chancellor Suresh Kumar intentionally skipped the public hearing on this important issue and deputed only the OSD, along with the Registrar to appear before Thalloju Acharya, a Member of National BC Commission, who has ordered them to give an explanation on the malpractices in the recruitment of faculty.

The furious Member of the National BC Commission, Acharya, who couldn't satisfy with the responses given by the university authorities, ordered to cancel, or withhold the total recruitment process until he received a valid and satisfactory reply from the V-C of EFLU. Therefore, he summoned V-C



AICC spokesperson Sravan Dasoju addresses the media on misdeeds in English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU) faculty recruitment in Hyderabad on Monday

and other officials concerned to appear before him on February 3 in New Delhi, along with the UGC Secretary. Acharya also ordered them to produce the service registers of all faculty and the roster system that they have followed till date.

While speaking to the media here on Monday, along with Anil Kumar Yadav, General Secretary, All India Youth Congress, and Prof PL Vishveshwar, Sravan Dasoju lashed out at the Vice-Chancellor and also the other universities, which have been deliberately violating the Constitution regulations, ignor-

ing the UGC guidelines and indulging in dirty malpractices in recruitment of faculty with an intention to render injustice to OBC candidates while displaying nepotism to favour their kith and kin, who are ineligible.

"Why the EFLU didn't follow the UGC norms in filling up the faculty. Why does the university have only 25 OBCs out of 63 actual positions? Why didn't the university follow the 27% OBC reservation in the recently advertised 58 vacancies? Does EFLU think there is no single BC candidate fit for a job?" Sravan asked.

PV Vigyana Vedika design unveiled

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Tourism V Srinivas Goud unveiled the design of PV Vigyana Vedika at his office in Ravindra Bharati here on Monday to develop the native village Vangara of former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao.

On the directive of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, the PV Vigyana Vedika is being constructed at Vangara village at a cost of Rs 11 crore as part of the PV centenary celebrations to explain PV greatness to the posterity, he said. The Vedika would be groomed on the lines of the



Abdul Kalam memorial garden. He traced the political eleva-

tion of PV Narasimha Rao to the PMO from the humble origins of a village Patwari. He

recalled reforms introduced by PV Narasimha Rao. PV's residence would be developed into a museum and the PV Vigyana Vedika would be built on an eight-acre site in Vangara village.

As part of it, in the first phase, a water fountain and lighting facility, photo gallery, meditation centre, science museum, maze garden, amusement park for children, statues of freedom fighters, amphitheatre and food courts would be provided at a cost of Rs 686.25 lakh, he said. The articles used by PV Narasimha Rao would be used in his museum, he said.

BJP takes dig at Rahul over 'knickerwalla' jibe

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP senior leader NV Subhash has rebutted the comment made by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi that 'knickerwallahs' from Nagpur can't decide the future of Tamil Nadu.

In a statement here on Monday, Subhash said the Congress leader's remarks over RSS was 'brutal' and made 'out of frustration' over successive poll debacles. Rahul Gandhi was well aware that his party can do nothing in Tamil Nadu politics, hence, he was targeting RSS, which was in no way concerned with Tamil Nadu politics. Instead of improving prospects in the poll-bound Tamil Nadu, Rahul Gandhi was using the public places for spewing venom against the

BJP and the RSS. Before making remarks against the RSS, the Congress leader should think of his dynasty politics, which ruled the country over decades destroying the very foundation of Indian culture and tradition with pseudo secularist ideologies.

The BJP leader said Rahul Gandhi has to introspect first what Congress did in Tamil Nadu and the role of the Congress party was minimal in southern States. But he wanted to gain popularity by levelling charges against the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He advised Rahul Gandhi to build his party image and strengthen the party wings at least to get a minimum percentage of votes in the ensuing elections, he remarked.



GOVT SCHOOL GETS A FACELIFT



The Government School for Girls in Sircilla has a given facelift, thanks to Minister for Municipal Administration and IT K Tarakarama Rao. The school was refurbished on par with corporate schools

Cong asks govt to bear cost of fixing new water meters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government should bear the entire cost of installation of new meters for the beneficiaries of 20,000 litres free water scheme in Greater Hyderabad, demanded Hyderabad City Congress Committee (HCCC) Minorities Department chairman Sameer Waliullah.

Sameer Waliullah said on Monday that the guidelines issued by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) on January 23 were not practical and they must be modified. As per the guidelines, he said that the consumers were being asked to link their Customer Account Numbers (CAN)

with Aadhaar to avail of the scheme. Furthermore, domestic consumers in non-slums areas are being asked to fix a new meter by spending between Rs 1,498 and Rs 2,147 each.

"The High Court had opposed the mandatory provision of Aadhaar details in connection with the registration of properties. Therefore, how could the HMWSB force the consumers to link their CAN with Aadhaar to get 20,000 litres of free water?" he asked.

He said that more than 50% of the households in the city have no water meters and the Board is charging them a nominal bill of about Rs 200 to Rs 300. They are consumers with consumption of less than 20,000 litres per month.

PORTRAIT UNVEILED BY PREZ WAS THAT OF THE ACTOR WHO PLAYED BOSE IN BIOPIC?

Row over Netaji portrait at Rashtrapati Bhavan

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A portrait of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose unveiled by the President at Rashtrapati Bhavan is that of an actor, who played him in a biopic, posts on social media claimed on Monday.

President Ram Nath Kovind unveiled Netaji's portrait on Saturday to mark his birth anniversary, named "Parakram Diwas" by the Centre. A post on his timeline has gone viral with users saying the portrait is not that of Netaji at all, that it is actually of Prosenjit Chatterjee, who played Netaji in the 2019 biopic "Gumnam". BJP sources have rubbished the charge, asserting that the photo was provided by Netaji's family to famous Padma Shri award winning artist Paresh Maity, who painted the portrait. "The photo does not resemble Prosenjit at all. It is an unnecessary controversy," the sources said.

It is not clear yet which member or which branch of the family provided the photo. Paresh Maity, 56, is from Bengal's East Midnapore district and currently lives in



President Ram Nath Kovind unveils freedom fighter Subhas Chandra Bose's portrait at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Saturday

Delhi. Among those who ridiculed the portrait was Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, who tweeted: "After donating Rs 5 lakhs to the Ram temple the President honours Netaji by unveiling a portrait of Prosenjit, the actor who played him in biopic 'God Save India' (because this

government certainly can't)." She has now deleted the tweet. In his role as Netaji, Bengali movie star Prosenjit Chatterjee bears a striking resemblance to the renowned freedom icon in the 2019 film and he reportedly used prosthetics for his transformation. The claim that his portrait is up as Netaji's at

Rashtrapati Bhavan has inspired several memes and jokes on Twitter, with people calling for the inauguration of a portrait of Ben Kingsley as Mahatma Gandhi and Vivek Oberoi as Narendra Modi.

This is the latest twist to the tussle over Bengal's icons in the bitter lead-up to elections in the

"Among those who ridiculed the portrait was Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra, the President, Ram Nath Kovind, honours Netaji by unveiling a portrait of Prosenjit, who played him in biopic"

State in April-May. Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, on Netaji's birth anniversary on Saturday, had refused to complete her speech after "Jai Sri Ram" slogans were raised by BJP supporters at a mega event at the iconic Victoria Memorial in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Balakot info went to Arnab through Modi, alleges Rahul

PNS ■ KARUR (TN)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the "person through which" prior information on India's air strikes in Balakot in Pakistan in 2019 was made available to Republic TV editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami.

The Congress MP, however, did not provide evidence to back up his claim. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) also did not immediately respond to the unfounded claim.

Addressing a roadshow here during his final day of election campaign in poll-bound Tamil Nadu, he said only five people, including the PM and the Defence Minister, would have prior information of the planned strikes.

"Some days ago it came out that a journalist knew about the air strikes in Balakot. Three days before the (Indian) air force bombed Pakistan, an Indian journalist was told it was going to happen," he said.

This meant the lives of our IAF pilots were put at risk," he said.

"Now, five people in this world knew about Balakot (air strikes). Prime Minister of India, the Defence minister of India, the National Security Adviser



and the Chief of the Air Force and the Home minister."

"Nobody else in the world knew about Balakot before it happened. Now I want to understand why an enquiry has not started on who told this journalist about Balakot before it happened. The reason is that one of these five people told this man. One of these five people betrayed our Air Force," he charged.

He alleged that "one of these people put the lives of our pilots in danger."

"If the Prime Minister did not do it then why is he not ordering an enquiry. Think about it."

The only reason that the Prime Minister has not ordered an enquiry is because he is the person through which that message has gone to this journalist," Gandhi claimed.

Else, the PM should investigate and tell which one of these five people did it, Gandhi demanded.

Purported chats between Goswami and former Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) head Partho Dasgupta, which mentioned that the former was privy to the 2019 air strike, by the IAF on the biggest JeM training camp in Balakot had surfaced recently.

The IAF had carried out the strike deep inside Pakistan on February 26, 2019 in the wake of killing of 40 CRPF personnel in Kashmir's Pulwama district then by Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Gandhi also hit out at Modi once again over the Sino-India face-off, saying "today the Chinese army is sitting inside Indian territory."

INDIA CORNER

Maha BJP's Pankaja Munde demands nationwide OBC census

Maha BJP leader and former state minister Pankaja Munde on Monday said there should be a nationwide census of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities. Talking to reporters here, she said the demand for an OBC census had been made earlier by her father late Gopinath Munde, one of the tallest leaders of the party in the state. "Caste wise census should be done. It will give justice to various communities. I will raise this issue with the Centre," she said. The former Parli MLA had, on Sunday, tweeted in Hindi demanding an OBC census. Meanwhile, replying to a query on a Marathi television channel about her cousin and NCP minister Dhananjay Munde facing a rape allegation, which was later withdrawn by the woman complainant, the BJP leader said it never occurred to her to make this issue "a weapon for political gain".



Minister blames Goa Miles service for tourist taxi trade woes

Goa BJP minister Michael Lobo on Monday said violations committed by the app-based cab operator Goa Miles was affecting the tourist taxi trade in the state. He said the Goa Miles service was launched by former chief minister late Manohar Parrikar on August 6, 2018 as a state tourism department initiative with the hope that all tourist taxi operators would join the former, but that did not happen. "It has created conflict between the tourist taxi business and Goa Miles. Parrikar has created this problem and left us," Lobo said, adding that Goa Miles need not be given a separate counter at the airport here since it is app-based and can be hailed from anywhere. Lobo's statement comes against the backdrop of the North Goa Tourist Taxi Association giving a deadline of 15 days to the state government to wind up Goa Miles. The association has claimed Goa Miles drivers were breaking the queue system outside hotels.



Camera traps at Rajaji Reserve to keep vigil on relocated tigers

One hundred camera traps have been installed in the western part of Rajaji Tiger Reserve to keep a constant watch on the movement of relocated tigers, officials said on Monday. Recently, two tigers, one male and the other female, were relocated from Corbett Tiger Reserve to Rajaji to increase their population in its western part. "We have set up 100 camera traps in the western part of Rajaji to keep an eye on the relocated tigers. We are getting pictures of their movement in the reserve regularly. We are also actively exploring whether the relocated male tiger who ran away from its enclosure at Motichoore range of the reserve can be radio collared once again," Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Vinod Kumar Singhal said.



Multi-tier security setup put in place for R-Day across J-K

A multi-layered security arrangement has been put in place at all the venues across Jammu and Kashmir to ensure peaceful Republic Day, officials said on Monday. The focus is on the Maulana Azad Stadium here, the venue of the main function where Lt Governor Manoj Sinha will take a salute and unfurl the national flag, they said. Besides the Maulana Azad Stadium, official functions will be held at all district and tehsil headquarters, including block development offices across the union territory, to mark the 72nd Republic Day on Tuesday. "A multi-layered security arrangement has been put in place at all the venues of the Republic Day fete to ensure peaceful celebrations and thwart any attempt by terrorists to disrupt the functions," a police official said. He said the security has been stepped up at vital installations, including railway stations, bus stands and important religious places like Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Reasi district and Raghunath Temple in Jammu, besides more checkpoints have been set up along the highways as part of the arrangement to keep a strict vigil.



CHALLENGE TO LAW ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS

SC refuses to transfer to itself cases from Allahabad HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to transfer to itself petitions filed in Allahabad High Court challenging new law of Uttar Pradesh regulating religious conversions for the inter-faith marriages.

A bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian said that it would like to have the advantage of the High Court order. Taking note of the observation of the bench, the Uttar Pradesh government preferred to withdraw the transfer petition.

Senior advocate P S Narasimha, appearing for Uttar Pradesh government, said to avoid multiplicity of proceedings before the High Court and the top court, the



transfer petition may be allowed.

The bench said, "We have issued notice does not mean that the High Court cannot decide the issue."

It said, "Why should we stop the High Court from hearing the matter. Let us have the advantage of the High Court verdict."

The top court had on January 6, agreed to examine controversial new laws of Uttar

Pradesh and Uttarakhand regulating religious conversions for the inter-faith marriages.

It had, however, refused to stay the controversial provisions of the laws and issued notices to both state governments on two different petitions.

The top court had issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments and sought their response within four weeks.

Parties doing 'drama' over farmers' protest: Fadnavis

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Monday alleged that some political parties were doing "drama" and spreading wrong information over the issue on farmers' protest against the Centre's three new farm laws.

His remarks came in the wake of a rally organised by farmers in Mumbai which has been supported by the NCP and Congress in Maharashtra. Talking to reporters here, Fadnavis, who is the leader of opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly, claimed that it was the previ-



ous Congress-NCP government which allowed contract farming and direct purchase of farm products.

He said so much time has passed since the farm bills were passed (by the BJP-led central government last year) and Maharashtra did not witness any protest against it.

Slain CRPF man gets President's police medal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CRPF Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Mohan Lal who "chased and fired" at an explosives-laden car that rammed into a force bus in Pulwama killing him and 39 troops onboard in 2019 has been decorated with the highest police medal for gallantry on the eve of the Republic Day on Monday.

A total of 207 police bravery medals were declared by the Union government apart from 89 President's police medals for distinguished service and 650 police medals for meritorious service, as per a list published by the Union Home Ministry.

PM Modi interacts with kids awarded Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday lauded the contribution of children in raising awareness about hand-washing during the COVID-19 pandemic, and said that a programme tastes success if they become part of it.

In an interaction with the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar' awardees via video conferencing, Modi praised the winners and said they should never stop working and stay humble all the time.

He also asked them to work for the country, urging them to think of what they can do as the nation approaches the 75th year of its Independence.



The prime minister also asked them to read biographies and said it will keep inspiring them.

Speaking to a boy who made farming equipment, Modi said modern agriculture is the need of the country. Children also played a big

role in spreading awareness about sanitation as part of the 'Swachh Bharat' programme, he noted.

The prime minister said that this year's awards are special as the recipient earned them in the difficult times of Corona.

Display of tobacco near edu institutes in 25 cities: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 72 per cent points of sale around educational institutions in 25 cities of the country were found displaying cigarettes, bidis and smokeless tobacco products near candies and sweets at the eye level of children, according to a recent study.

The study titled 'Big Tobacco Tiny Targets' was conducted in October and November 2019 to build more evidence on how key gaps in Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003, allowing point of sale advertising and product display, are being exploited by tobacco companies to target youth and children.

A total of 1,011 educational institutions were investigated for this study using a mobile app in 25 cities across 10 states by two public health groups -

- Voluntary Health Association of India and Consumer Voice. In total 885 points of sale were identified selling tobacco products within 100 yards of educational institutions, the survey report stated.

This is in violation of section 6(b) of COTPA which states that no person shall sell, offer for sale or permit sale of cigarettes or any other tobacco product in an area within a radius of one hundred yards of any educational institution.

"Out of the 885 points of sale investigated, 640 (72.32 per cent) points of sale displayed cigarettes near candies and sweets to attract children, 669 (75.59 per cent) had displayed tobacco products at the eye level of the child," the report said.

Further, 117 (13.2 per cent) points of sale had outdoor advertising, 369 (41.69 per



cent) had posters and 107 (12.09 per cent) had big banners.

This advertising violates Section 5(2) of COTPA and Notification GSR 345(E) which established strict rules for any display boards used at entrances of shops where tobacco is sold, report said.

"Free distribution of tobacco products and promotion through discounts is prohibited under section 5(3) of COTPA," the report said.

Out of the 885 points of sale, 771 (87.12 per cent) sold single stick cigarettes, 553 (62.49 per cent) displayed tobacco products hiding graphic health warnings on them and thereby neutralizing their effectiveness.

"The tobacco industry must be held accountable for their aggressive sale and advertising efforts around educational institutions," said Bhavna B Mukhopadhyay, the chief executive of Voluntary Health Association of India.

"Our educational institutions are not safe so long as the tobacco industry continues to lure our children and youth into buying their deadly products,"

Ashim Sanyal the chief officer of Consumer Voice said Tobacco companies have been exploiting loopholes in the law by selling and advertising their products around educational institutions and endangering the lives of the young generation.

"We urge the government to strengthen COTPA 2003 to protect our children and youth from falling prey to the tactics of tobacco companies," he said.

Advocate Ashok Agarwal, the national president of All India Parents Association said easy availability of tobacco products and their attractive advertisements trap children into lifelong addiction.

"We appeal to the government to improve the current laws and penalties to check tobacco companies from enticing our children to these harmful products," he said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Happy new R-Day!

Being celebrated in the midst of a raging pandemic, this year's parade will register many firsts

The Republic Day is all about pomp, show and gaiety. Primarily, it showcases India's military might and features its tanks, missiles, torpedoes, submarines, fighter jets and, of course, its men. The event related to the nation's prowess is accentuated by tableaux displaying the rich cultural heritage, diversity, its values, principles, the Government's initiatives and schemes, milestones achieved and the road ahead. However, the 72nd Republic Day, which is being celebrated in the midst of a raging pandemic, will not be the same. It will be a low-key affair marked by several firsts and many first-time misses. First and foremost, there will be no chief guest, making it the first R-Day parade in over 50 years without the presence of the most important guest; thus making it a bit insipid. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had been invited as the chief guest but he had to cancel his visit in the backdrop of the outbreak of a new COVID strain at home. Before this, India didn't have a chief guest for the R-Day parade in 1952, 1953 and in 1966. Second, due to COVID restrictions the route of the parade, which begins at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, has been cut short and it will this year conclude at the National Stadium (India Gate) instead of the Red Fort as every year. The soldiers marching down Rajpath would wear masks, as will the spectators. Further, there will be no gravity-defying stunts by the motorcycle-borne men and the size of the marching contingents has been reduced from the regular 144 to 96. The veterans' parade has also been cancelled this year due to the pandemic. All this has been done to ensure that the social distancing protocol is adhered to. Even the number of spectators has been brought down to 25,000 from 1.25 lakh last year.



The tableau of the Union Territory of Ladakh will participate in the parade for the first time, featuring the Indian Astronomical Observatory, located at Hanle near Leh, one of the world's highest sites for optical, infrared and gamma-ray telescopes. Among the other firsts will be the participation of the country's first woman fighter pilot, Flight Lieutenant Bhawana Kanth, and a flypast with the newly-inducted Rafale jets that will be part of different formations during the flypast. In yet another first, at least 122 soldiers of the Bangladesh Armed Forces will take part in the R-Day parade. Reportedly, this is only the third time since Independence that a foreign military contingent has been invited to be part of the national parade. The upgraded Schilka weapon system will showcase India's strength in the parade, led by the only woman contingent commander from the Army. In another first, Uttar Pradesh's tableau will showcase a replica of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. It will also display the culture and tradition related to the ancient temple town. On the other hand, the Republic Day — which is celebrated with patriotism and fervour — will be marred by the farmers' tractor rally on restricted routes inside the Capital.

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PICTALK



A worker pastes a sticker on a carpet ahead of the Republic Day parade in New Delhi

Not a one-day wonder

Srishti becoming the Uttarakhand CM for a day is symbolic but let's learn to respect women all other days, too

Days after Kamala Harris assumed charge as the United States Vice-President with many firsts to her credit — the first woman, first coloured person and the first Asian-American to reach that office — 20-year-old Haridwar student Srishti Goswami has become probably the first Indian to take over the chief ministerial reins of any State, albeit for only a day, without winning any election or without being a member of any legislature. Following an initiative by the Uttarakhand State Child Rights Commission, as January 24 is celebrated as the National Girl Child Day since 2008, Srishti held meetings with the State's top bureaucrats and asked the officials to take steps for checking the migration of youth, especially from the rural areas, and expressed concern over the growing instances of drug peddling in the State. She also instructed the officials to clamp a ban on the sale of tobacco products within a 500m radius from educational institutes. Talking about the inevitable comparisons with Anil Kapoor-starrer *Nayak*, a confident-looking Srishti, whose father is a shopkeeper, said: "He (Anil Kapoor) was a reel-life *nayak*. Here, I became a real-life *nayak*, and I wish to continue on this path by entering politics at some stage."



Of course, the development is largely symbolic and seemingly aimed at wooing the State's women voters. It reminds one of seeking the blessings of very young girls to mark the single day of *kanya puja* towards the end of Navratras. But why stop the deifying at only one day? What's really needed is that we, as a people, treat the fair gender fairly and as an absolute equal. The skewed gender ratio needs to be balanced and improved. Women must be empowered by educating them, not exposing them to discrimination and harassment and trusting them with responsibilities. Give them what they deserve rather than giving them something in charity. There are varied ways to empower women other than symbolically making them the Chief Minister. Though it was done in a noble spirit, the trustees are not authorised to be the owners of a trust. People's representatives had better work for what they are chosen for rather than making attention-grabbing short-sighted moves. Gimmicks don't work anymore. Only performance counts.

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In the footsteps of Donald Trump



DEEPAK SINHA

Under him, America abdicated its role as the beacon of democratic norms. Trumpism may be on the wane there but it is alive and flourishing in India

Former United States President Donald Trump's blatant disregard for all norms of civilised behaviour, his overt racism combined with an oversized ego and the propensity to lie — 21 per day during his term as per *The Washington Post* — are well known. Yet, despite this, or the 400,000 pandemic deaths directly attributable to his lack of leadership, or his futile and rather ludicrous attempts to overturn the election results, he still continues to enjoy the support of approximately 34 per cent of the population as per the latest Gallup Poll.

This is indeed intriguing, and while much of it can be attributed to racism, bigotry and illiteracy, it was his sophisticated use of the media, especially social media, that was probably the game-changer. Unfortunately, while his brash and uncouth ways may have made him a laughing stock internationally, it also made for a very dangerous and unstable world, in which America had abdicated its role as the beacon of democratic norms and human decency. Worse, he became the poster boy for a cohort of other tinpot dictators and autocrats globally, suddenly free to do as they pleased, with little fear of retribution.

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it," said Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Minister for Propaganda. However, he did add a caveat: "The lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie and thus, by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State." It's something every autocrat and dictator instinctively understands.

While swatting flies with a sledgehammer has its advantages, there are those who have understood and utilised the concept of "Zohnerism" to their benefit. The term, coined by journalist James Glassman, refers to "the use of true facts to lead a scientifically ignorant public to a false conclusion". It is derived from the experiment conducted in 1997 by Nathan Zohner, a 14-year-old student, who gathered petitions to ban "DHMO", or Dihydrogen Monoxide, as the basis of his science project, titled "How Gullible Are We?" The experiment involved calling for a cohort of other tinpot dictators and autocrats globally, suddenly free to do as they pleased, with little fear of retribution.



Trump used this phenomenon to good effect. While established media outlets may not have fully played along, the conservative and extreme Right-wing media outlets, like *Fox News* and *One America News Network*, did broadcast his lies and conspiracy theories with telling effect. The digital social media platforms too, such as Facebook and Twitter, were no less complicit in spreading his message of hate till they finally banned him for inciting violence.

After what we have witnessed during his presidency, it would be fair to say that the American democracy, despite its deep roots stretching back 244 years, has survived a direct assault on its very foundation by Trump and his acolytes by a hair's breadth. Thanks, in no small measure, to the strength of its democratic institutions and the upstanding character of the people who run these. An outstanding example, but not the only one, being that of former Vice-President Mike Pence, who did not let his unwavering support and loyalty to President Trump get in the way of doing the right thing, despite intense pressure to subvert the constitutional process. The other institution that deserves accolades, surviving with its dignity and reputation intact, was the judiciary. Trump had expected that having appointed a total of 200 Federal Judges with lifetime tenures, including two to the Supreme Court, they would remain beholden to him and act in a manner to support his agenda. He was, therefore, understandably shocked and disappointed when nearly all of his 60-plus challenges to the election results were summarily rejected by the courts, including two by the Supreme Court.

While Trumpism may be on the decline in America, it is alive and flourishing here in India. Make no mistake, the current dispensation — while



YET, HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL. AFTER ALL, WE HAVE JUST WITNESSED A YOUNG UNTESTED INDIAN CRICKET TEAM RISE LIKE A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES OF ITS WORST DEFEAT. WE TOO SHOULD SHUN FEAR AND DO THE RIGHT THING; THE REST WILL FOLLOW.

more circumspect and less colourful — has been just as damaging for our democracy. Our secular traditions are in tatters, empathetic behaviour forgotten and democratic institutions have all but crumbled, lacking even a shred of credibility. A vast majority of our media have become willing handmaidens of the Government. The military is being incrementally politicised and even our final bulwark, the judiciary, especially the apex court, is perceived to be functioning in tandem with the Government. Worst of all, we have no Opposition leadership worth the name, debilitated by the cancer of dynastic ambition. Yet, hope springs eternal. After all, we have just witnessed a young untested Indian cricket team rise like a phoenix from the ashes of its worst defeat. Despite being deprived of its charismatic leader, another stepped up from the shadows, doing the impossible and leading the team to victory. Similarly, we too should shun fear and do the right thing; the rest will follow.

(The writer is a military veteran, who is a consultant with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BJP'S POLL GIMMICK IN WEST BENGAL

Sir — The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is playing dirty politics in West Bengal. The party and its leaders are trying to gain sympathy of voters by portaying that they are the only ones who really respect the great Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and his ideology. The visit of the BJP leaders to West Bengal on the 125th birth anniversary of Bose on January 23 was only a political stunt with an eye on the forthcoming Assembly elections. The BJP is reminded of such great leaders only at the time of elections.

The ruling party leaders are trying to fool the people but the voters of West Bengal are wise enough not to fall into their trap. The people have realised that the BJP leaders can go up to any extent just for the sake of winning the elections. The State can even be plunged into widespread violence for the sake of politics. The BJP will gain votes by creating a law and order situation. It is high time that the BJP concentrated on the real issues confronting the State and its people rather than showing off its bogus image. West Bengal is grappling with poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and several other problems besides COVID. Both the Centre and the State Government must focus on the real issues troubling the people and not on poll gimmicks.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

FARMERS HAVE NO OPTION

Sir — India is all set to witness a majestic march past at the Rajpath and a mammoth tractor rally by the farmers in Delhi on the Republic Day. The farmers' rally will attract wide attention. The farmers have reiterated that repeal of the laws is the only acceptable proposition for withdrawal of the agitation. In fact, the offer of the Government to put the laws on hold for 18 months itself is illogical as the Supreme Court has already stayed their implementation until further orders. However, the court can withdraw the stay soon, and the laws will come into force immediately. Faced with such vagueness, farmers fear

Congress faces Hobson's choice



Party (BJP) at the national level is nothing but a joke.

Now, instead of working upon the electoral challenges of the Assembly polls over the next five months, the rank and file of the Congress will be mulling over the direction the party should take in its leadership choices. For a section of the party's workers, the fear of past factionalism in the party makes the Gandhi family an effective glue to bind various factions together and maintain overall discipline.

Even if that comes at the cost of the party being accused of being captive to dynastic politics, the lack of alternative leadership still makes Rahul Gandhi a formidable choice. However, its inability to find an adept leadership is not only pushing the party into irrelevance but also causing a huge void in the Opposition space — giving a free run to the ruling BJP Government at the Centre.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

that a decision to retreat after accepting the offer could prove costly for them eventually.

An argument advanced against giving legal status to the Minimum Support Price (MSP) is that it would put a heavy burden on the national exchequer. It runs counter to the repeated assertions that farmers are free to sell their produce anywhere in the country. Here, wouldn't the envisioned higher prices for agricultural produce in the market — being 'opened up' now — reduce the dependence on the MSP and lessen the burden on the Budget? Farmers have deciphered the intentions and the arguments.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

TAKE THE JOB FOR HERD IMMUNITY

Sir — In 2020, all the countries including India faced an unprecedented challenge in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. In some countries like the UK and the US, Coronavirus is still rearing its ugly head and hospitals are looking like war

zones. It will take some more time for all the countries to recover from the unwelcome guest's impact. At this juncture, the decision to supply millions of COVID-19 vaccines free of cost from India to multiple countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Myanmar, Seychelles, Mauritius, Brazil, Morocco and so on is really laudable. The UK, Dominica, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are some other countries interested in COVID-19 vaccines from India as these vaccines are safe and cost-effective without compromising on safety standards.

India is clearly upstaging China in the COVID vaccines' supply. India is planning to vaccinate its 300 million people, almost the population of the US. Indians should dismiss all their apprehensions in taking vaccine jobs. We must come forward to make the inoculation drive successful.

V Nagendra Kumar | Hyderabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

The LDF Government recommending a CBI inquiry against me is a clear case of political vendetta. I and my party colleagues are not afraid of the inquiry.



Former Kerala Chief Minister — Oommen Chandy

One of the benefits of being 65 is that I'm eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. I got my first dose this week, and I feel great. Thanks to the scientists and all others.

Microsoft founder — Bill Gates

I know people love me. I get to know about it through social media. Sometimes I feel that the love of the audience is like a fixed deposit with me and I have to pay them back with interest.



Bollywood actor — Pankaj Tripathi

The best England players will want to play as many games as possible against India, in India. Pick them! Then they go to IPL and earn everything they deserve.

Former England cricketer — Kevin Pietersen

There is a defect in the DNA of Mamata Banerjee, and she hails from a demoness culture. No demon can love Lord Ram. Banerjee is a dishonest and evil person.



Uttar Pradesh BJP MLA — Surendra Singh



FIRST COLUMN

WAKE UP AND SMELL THE COFFEE

The Congress is at a 'historic low.' It will sit in Opposition again if CWC polls are not held soon



KALYANI SHANKAR

Will the Gandhi family continue to control the over 136-year-old Congress Party? Will it shrink further? This are the questions bothering not just Congress leaders but also millions of party workers and supporters. The party is in the grip of a serious leadership crisis that is symptomatic of a larger malaise. Now it has reached a stage where some senior Congress leaders are questioning the dynasty openly. For instance, last August, 23 Congress leaders, including the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, his deputy Anand Sharma and some former Congress Chief Ministers, had written a letter to interim party chief Sonia Gandhi demanding a "full time" leadership, dissolution of power to State units and revamping the Congress Working Committee (CWC) in line with the party's constitution. Though Sonia managed to douse the fire then, the dissent continues, as was confirmed in last week's CWC meeting, where there was a public spat between the 'old guard' and the Gandhis. The leaders realise that just Modi-bashing or the past glory of the party are not enough to get the Congress back in power. Added to that, are concerns over talented leaders leaving the party for greener pastures. For instance, a young leader like Jyotiraditya Scindia, who was close to Congress scion Rahul Gandhi, left the party to join the BJP.

If the Congress is serious about revival, it has to introspect. With the dynasts unable to get the party back to power for two consecutive terms, the family and consequently the party, has become weak. As for the leadership crisis, Sonia has had her innings. Rahul has failed twice and the Priyanka Gandhi Vadra magic has not worked in Uttar Pradesh. Above all, the Gandhis want to continue in power, so there's no possibility of fresh blood leading the grand old party.



So, in order to cure the sickness in the Congress, one has to diagnose the root cause first. While the AK Antony Committee was set up in 2014 for this purpose, the findings of the report were never even discussed in the party. After its loss in 2019, the party didn't even bother to go through the motions of setting up a committee. Then, there is the lack of a smooth generational change in the organisation. While Sonia was able to install her son as the party chief and induct her daughter as general secretary, she could not check the party's erosion or build trust in the apprehensive old guard. When Rahul took complete charge between 2013 and 2019, his evident discomfort with the seniors and the latter's animosity against 'Team Rahul' was very evident. This must change.

Plus, the party must go back to grassroots politics and prepare the cadre, which will work during the elections. This is vital as the Congress has lost contact with the people. Also, there is a need for decentralisation of authority in order to empower State and district-level leaders and give up Delhi-centric functioning. The party must also develop second-rung leaders. There was a time when the States had strong Chief Ministers, and the presidents of various Pradesh Congress Committees (PCCs) wielded power. In such a situation, if the party lost in a region, then accountability could be fixed. That is not the case anymore. Also, in a coalition era, the Congress needs to redefine itself and befriend regional parties. The Gandhis need to change the way they have run the Congress in the last decade or so. They need to create a new narrative to attract voters and redefine the party's ideology. If the Gandhis do not wake up now, the party will deteriorate further. As Azad said, the party is at a "historic low." It will continue to sit in the Opposition for the next 50 years if elections to the CWC and key organisational posts are not held. The Congress must wake up and smell the coffee.

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

Fraternity must to preserve Indian unity

Kinship not only acts as the binding element between unity and equality, it gives birth to new rights which facilitate the constitutional goal of an egalitarian society



ROBIN DAVID

The Indian Constitution came into effect on January 26, 1950 and the Constituent Assembly first met on December 9, 1946 to draft it in the Constitution Hall, now known as the Central Hall of the Parliament. The Constituent Assembly firmly resolved to mould the dreams and aspirations of Indians after the freedom struggle.

Historical background: Since the beginning, the Constitution makers were transparent and knew their purpose and direction. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru while moving the Objectives Resolution in the Constituent Assembly said: "Laws are made of words but this Resolution is something higher than the law." He urged the members of the Assembly to treat the Objectives Resolution as a declaration, an undertaking and a pledge to achieve what they promised the people of India and the yet unborn citizens: A Constitution to call their own.

The Objective Resolution declared India as an independent, sovereign, republic. Pandit Nehru said: "India is bound to be sovereign, it is bound to be independent, and it is bound to be a republic." Clearly, the Constituent Assembly's intention was to end the monarchical system. The debates and deliberations in the House led to the Objective Resolution taking the form of the Preamble of the Constitution. However, the 'Mountbatten plan' divided India into two new dominions on June 3, 1947, causing political changes to the Constituent Assembly. Thus, the Resolution needed amendment to factor in the changed political context.

On August 29, 1947, the Constituent Assembly formed the Drafting Committee, of which BR Ambedkar was the convener. The Drafting Committee rendered meaning and form to the Preamble and incorporated other matters in the body of the Constitution. It took two years, 11 months and 17 days to complete the historic task of drafting the Constitution of India.

Preamble: Ambedkar's new preamble defined the essential features of the Indian State and its socio-political objectives. While drafting the Constitution, the makers imagined an egalitarian society built on the values and the spirit embodied in the Resolution. Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava, a member of the Constituent Assembly, said: "The Preamble is the most precious part of the Constitution. It is the soul of the Constitution. It is the key to the Constitution. It is a jewel set in the Constitution. It is a proper yardstick with which one can measure the worth of the Constitution."

The trinity of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity: The egalitarian society the founding fathers envisioned, rests on four pillars established in the Preamble: The pillars of Justice, Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. However, the word 'Fraternity' is mentioned in the Constitution only once. Also "Fraternity" and has not occupied much space in judicial discourse by the Supreme Court compared to Justice, Liberty and Equality. The French Revolution inspired the Drafting Committee to adopt the trinitarian concept of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity preceded by Justice. The French were the first to raise the slogan, "Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!" against oppression by the State, to demand political participation and to promote brotherhood. Of the three revolutionary slogans, *fraternité*, called for unity and solidarity, to be bound as citizens of one nation. In his concluding remarks on November 25, 1949, Ambedkar said: "We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy. What does social democracy mean? It means a way of life which recognises liberty, equality and fraternity as the principles of life."

Ambedkar asserted that the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are to be treated as



FRATERNITY MUST BE SEEN IN THE LAWS AND ENACTMENTS BY PARLIAMENT AND THE LEGISLATURE. FRATERNITY MUST PERCOLATE INTO PEOPLE'S LIVES TO UPHOLD A SENSE OF BROTHERHOOD THAT THE CONSTITUTION MAKERS ENVISIONED FOR INDIA. THE IDEALS OF LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND FRATERNITY ARE COEXISTENT, INTERDEPENDENT AND INSEPARABLE

The writer is Advocate, Supreme Court of India, and partner, Dua Associates. The views expressed are personal.



a trinity and not as separate and mutually exclusive items. They must be seen as enforcing elements that cannot be divorced from each other. He said: "They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them."

Ambedkar pointed to the existing social and economic inequality in Indian society and the significance of the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity to eliminate those inequalities. On October 17, 1949, Acharya Kripalani applauded the inclusion of Fraternity in the Preamble. "Again I come to the great doctrine of fraternity, which is allied with democracy. It means that we are sons of the same God, as the religious would say, but as the mystic would say, that there is one life pulsating through us all, or as the Holy Bible says, 'We are one of another.' There can be no fraternity without this."

Courts on fraternity: The Bombay High Court in the Indian National Mines Overmen vs Western Coalfields Limited case, challenging the compulsory deduction of ₹50 from the salary/wages of its employees for transfer to the Prime

Minister's National Relief Fund cited the explanation given by Ambedkar on Fraternity. The court said that "fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians. In a country like ours with disruptive forces of regionalism, communalism and linguism, it is necessary to emphasise and re-emphasise that the unity and integrity of India can be preserved only by a spirit of brotherhood. India has one common citizenship and every citizen should feel that s/he is Indian first, irrespective of other basis. In this view, any measure at bringing about equality should be welcome." The court relied on 'Fraternity' in the Preamble and Ambedkar's speech on obligations imposed under the Fundamental Duties chapter, which do not otherwise have any legal sanction.

In the Prathvi Raj Chauhan vs Union of India case, addressing the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Justice Ravindra Bhat of the Supreme Court said that fraternity holds a crucial place in the scheme of our nation's consciousness and polity. However, he said that "Fraternity" is one of the lesser explored areas in the Constitutional discourse of the judiciary. The court observed that, "The Fraternity assured by the Preamble is not a declaration of a ritual handshake or cordiality between communities that are diverse and have occupied different spaces: It is far more."

While evaluating the constitutional validity of the appointment of local tribals as special police officers in Maoist-hit regions of Chhattisgarh in the Nandini Sundar vs State of Chhattisgarh case, the apex court stressed on the importance of fraternity. It said, "Our Constitution posits that unless we secure ... conditions of

social, economic and political justice for all who live in India, we would not have achieved human dignity for our citizens, nor would we be able to promote fraternity among groups of them. Policies that run counter to that essential truth destroy national unity and integrity." The court said that the Constitution casts a positive obligation on the State to take necessary steps to protect the fundamental rights of all citizens. The State is obliged to secure conditions where dignity of its citizens is protected to enable all to live in conditions of fraternity. Fraternity not only acts as the binding element between unity and equality, it gives birth to new rights which facilitate the constitutional goal of an egalitarian society. The right to live with dignity and respect, free from oppression and untouchability. The fundamental rights granted in the Constitution are structured on the principles liberty, equality, and fraternity. These ideals are inscribed in the Constitution's Preamble. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, which is contemporaneous with the Indian Constitution, recognises inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. This is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Thus, the Constitutional value of 'Fraternity' must be palpably seen in the actions of the State and Constitutional functionaries. Fraternity must be seen in the laws and enactments by Parliament and the Legislature. Fraternity must percolate into people's lives to uphold a sense of brotherhood that the Constitution makers envisioned for India. The ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity are coexistent, interdependent and inseparable.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

TESLA HAS TAKEN A MISGUIDED APPROACH TO DEVELOPING FULLY AUTONOMOUS CARS AND ITS FULL SELF-DRIVING SYSTEM WILL FAIL.

—WAYMO CEO JOHN KRAFCHIK



TO MY SURPRISE, TESLA HAS BETTER ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE AS COMPARED TO WAYMO (MONEY)

—TESLA CEO ELON MUSK

Heal sick healthcare sector with booster shot in Budget

If the Govt truly seeks to involve private capital, the Union Budget must relax unrealistic price restrictions and nix outdated rules

Now when the Union Budget 2021-22 is around the corner, in the midst of one of the worst public health emergencies faced by humanity in recent memory, it is high time for the healthcare industry to articulate its concerns and expectations. Only a well-formulated and balanced annual financial statement with adequate allocation and focus on all critical segments, as well as on secondary aspects, can prepare the country to improve its health services and meet the challenges of inoculating such a large population as ours.

Need to address poor spending on healthcare: There is an urgent need to raise the allocation on health as a propor-



GURPREET SANDHU

The writer is president, Council of Healthcare and Pharma, and founder Reva Pharma. The views expressed are personal.

tion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The gap is so large and the population so underserved that this would have to be done for several years in succession to alleviate the situation.

The forthcoming financial statement should focus on significantly higher allocations for Research & Development (R&D) in biotechnology, epidemiology and pharmaceuticals including vaccines and in building healthcare infrastructure. The ongoing pandemic reiterates the need for increased public spending on healthcare which is still in the range of 1.3 per cent of the GDP, far lower than what has been stated and promised.

More allocation must for infrastructure and skill development: It is another key area that the Government should prioritise. India has less than a bed and a doctor per 1,000 population, far lower than the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) standards. We need to invest in setting up an increased number of medical colleges with requisite infrastructure while giving due importance to key departments which play a significant role in preventing infections in hospital environments, apart from the operating rooms and Intensive Care Units (ICUs). There is also a pressing need to contain the problem of antibiotic and antimicrobial resistance for getting the desired



improvement in overall outcomes. If the Centre truly seeks to involve private capital it must relax unrealistic price restrictions and do away with outdated rules. One initiative that can be taken is to ask the medical and pharmaceutical companies to direct their Corporate Social

Responsibility funds for development of healthcare infrastructure and capacity building.

Expansion of digital healthcare must be the focus of the Union Budget: The country needs connected healthcare — a digital ecosystem where real-time data from top Government and private hospitals and diagnostic centres flows into a data centre that tracks, monitors and predicts changes in disease patterns, so that timely action can be initiated to obviate the expensive follow-on treatment. In this context, the National Digital Health Mission is a step in the right direction. It needs to be strengthened and investments are required to be made to create the infrastruc-

ture and capacity for collecting and analysing data.

Need to expand the ambit of medical insurance: The annual financial statement 2021 also needs to ensure that medical insurance is extended as much as possible to drive the idea of universal healthcare in the country. Treatments like dental procedures, mental healthcare and homecare for the sick need to be included as part of health insurance policies.

Therefore, the Union Budget must be a well-thought out document from the healthcare sector's perspective and the allocation of 1.6 per cent of the GDP in the previous Budget must be improved under all circumstances.

FOREIGN EYE



CAUSES AND FAILED ALLIES

Celebrity activism is a misnomer in Pakistan. *Me Too* exposed sexual coercion by media moguls who controlled women's careers and revealed how power of the perpetrator are drivers of sex crimes. Moreover, it is only possible to get justice for the offence in the formal workplace. The exclusion of students and informal workers from protection is a travesty. (Dawn editorial)

Govt may tweak customs duties on host of goods in Budget 2021

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government may tweak customs duties in the Budget next week on several goods, including furniture raw materials, copper scrap, certain chemicals, telecom equipment and rubber products, to promote domestic manufacturing and exports, sources said.

They said that while import duties could be tweaked on over 20 products such as cut and polished diamonds, rubber goods, leather garments, telecom equipment and carpet, the customs duties could be removed on select raw materi-

als (like wood in rough, swan wood and hard board) used for furniture manufacturing and copper concentrate.

"Expensive raw materials impact India's price competitiveness in the international market. The country's exports of furniture is very low (about one per cent), while countries like China and Vietnam are major players in the sector," they added.

The government may also consider reducing customs duties on coal tar pitch, and copper scrap, while raising the levies on certain finished goods like refrigerator, washing machine and clothes dryer,

one of the sources said.

The government is already taking steps to boost domestic manufacturing such as introduction of production-linked incentives scheme (PLI) for several sectors including air conditioners and LED lights.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will unveil the Budget 2021-22 on February 1. "Tweaking of duties on these goods would help promote self-reliant India campaign and boost domestic manufacturing," they added.

Last year, the government increased import taxes on several products such as furniture, toys, and footwear.



Rupee rises by three paise to settle at 72.94 against USD

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee rose by 3 paise to settle at 72.94 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, extending its gains for the fifth straight session despite heavy selling in the domestic equity market.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 72.95 against the American currency, and hit an intra-day high of 72.89 and a low of 72.96 in day trade.

It finally finished at 72.94, higher by 3 paise over its last close. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 72.97 against the American currency.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.10 per cent to 90.32.

"The rupee has managed to hold its fort around the 72.90 to 73 levels, but given the sell-off in equities and the likeli-



hood of a rebound in the dollar index, we see the trend tilting slightly towards depreciation going forward," said Sugandha Sachdeva VP-Metals, Energy & Currency Research, Religare Broking.

In terms of the global cues, the Federal Reserve's policy decision this week is not expected to be ultra-dovish. More so, markets will be watching the Fed's guidance on rates and any outlook on its bond buying plan, Sachdeva added. Another key factor to watch out for the rupee is the

Union Budget. "If the government compromises on the fiscal guidance by a huge margin in an attempt to revive the economy, rupee may take a hit and further depreciation looks likely on the cards. We expect the Indian rupee to hover in the range of 72.50-73.50 in near term," Sachdeva said.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 530.95 points or 1.09 per cent lower at 48,347.59, while the broader NSE Nifty declined 133 points or 0.93 per cent to 14,238.90.

Sensex tumbles 531 pts; IT stocks play spoilsport

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The BSE benchmark Sensex dived nearly 531 points to close at 48,348 on Monday, prolonging its losing streak to the third straight session, weighed down by massive selling particularly in energy and IT stocks.

After swinging nearly 1,000 points during the session, the BSE benchmark settled with a loss of 530.95 points or 1.09 per cent at 48,347.59.

The 30-share index opened over 375 points higher and hit the day's high of 49,263.15 before succumbing to selling pressure that took the index to the session's lowest point at 48,274.92.

Likewise, the NSE gauge Nifty plunged 133 points or 0.93 per cent to end the session at 14,238.90.

On the Sensex chart, Reliance Industries fell 5.36 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, Asian

Paints, UltraTech Cement and PowerGrid - dropping as much as 4.72 per cent.

Of the Sensex constituents, 21 closed in the red and only 9 in the green.

Among the gainers were Axis Bank, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Auto, Bajaj FinServ, HDFC Bank and Dr Reddy's.

Analysts are of the view that markets may remain volatile in this holiday-shortened week amid monthly derivatives expiry, quarterly earnings and the upcoming Union Budget.

Indian equity markets will remain closed on Tuesday for the Republic Day.

Asian shares closed higher on Monday.

On the forex front, the rupee ended 3 paise higher at 72.94 against the US dollar.

Meanwhile, Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.56 per cent higher at USD 55.69 per barrel on Monday.

Kotak Mahindra Bank Q3 profit rises 16 pc to Rs 1,854 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector lender Kotak Mahindra Bank on Monday reported a 16 per cent increase in standalone net profit at Rs 1,854 crore for the third quarter ended December, as bad loan situation improved.

The bank had posted a profit of Rs 1,596 crore during the October-December period of the previous financial year.

Total income rose to Rs 8,124.92 crore during the quarter under review from Rs 8,077.03 crore in the year-ago period, Kotak Mahindra Bank said in a statement.

"Net Interest Income (NII) for Q3FY21 increased to Rs 4,007 crore, from Rs 3,430 crore in Q3FY20, up 17 per cent. Net Interest Margin (NIM) for Q3FY21 was at 4.51 per cent," it said. Gross NPAs at the quarter-end declined to 2.25 per cent of the total advances as compared with 2.46 per cent at the end of the third quarter of 2019-20.

Net NPAs too eased to 0.50 per cent of the assets in October-December 2020, against 0.89 per cent a year ago. Covid related provisions as on December 31, 2020, stood at Rs 1,279 crore. In accordance with the Resolution Framework for COVID-19 announced by the Reserve Bank of India in August last year, the bank has approved, for certain eligible borrowers, one-time restructuring of 0.28 per cent of net advances, it said.

On the consolidated basis, the bank's profit increased by 11 per cent to Rs 2,602 crore as compared to Rs 2,349 crore in the same period a year ago.

Total income during the October-December period rose to Rs 14,835 crore from Rs 13,542 crore in third quarter of 2019-20.

FinanceMin releases weekly instalment of Rs 6K cr to states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry on Monday released the 13th instalment of Rs 6,000 crore to the states to meet GST compensation shortfall, taking the total amount of fund released to Rs 78,000 crore.

Till now, 70 per cent of the total estimated GST compensation shortfall has been released to the states and union territories (UTs) with legislative assembly.

The Centre had set up a special borrowing window in October 2020 to meet the estimated shortfall of Rs 1.10 lakh crore in revenue arising on account of the implementation of the GST.

The finance ministry in a statement said it has released the 13th weekly instalment of Rs 6,000 crore to the states to meet the GST compensation shortfall. Out of this, an amount of Rs 5,516.60 crore has been released to 23 states and an amount of Rs 483.40 crore has been released to the 3 UTs with legislative assembly (Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, and Puducherry).

The amount has been borrowed this week at an interest rate of 5.30 per cent.

"So far, an amount of Rs 78,000 crore has been borrowed by the central government through the special bor-



rowing window at an average interest rate of 4.74 per cent," it added. Out of this, an amount of Rs 71,099.56 crore has been released to the states and an amount of Rs 6,900.44 crore has been released to the 3 UTs, the ministry said.

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

In addition to providing funds through the special borrowing window to meet the shortfall in revenue on account of GST implementation, the Centre has also granted additional borrowing permission equivalent to 0.50 per cent of Gross States Domestic Product (GSDP) to the states to help them in mobilising additional financial resources.

Permission for borrowing the entire additional amount of Rs 1,06,830 lakh crore (0.50 per cent of GSDP) has been granted to 28 states under this provision, the statement added.

MONEY MATTERS

Strides Pharma gets USFDA nod for generic drug



Strides Pharma Science on Monday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market generic Ursodiol capsules, used in the treatment of Primary Biliary Cirrhosis (PBC), in the American market. The company's step-down wholly owned subsidiary, Strides

Pharma Global Pte Ltd, Singapore, has received approval for Ursodiol capsules in 300 mg strength from the United States Food & Drug Administration (USFDA), the drugmaker said in a statement. The company's product is bioequivalent and therapeutically equivalent to Allergan Sales' Actigall capsules, it added. According to IQVIA MAT November 2020 data, the US market for Ursodiol Capsules USP 300 mg is around USD 45 million.

Dixon arm inks deal with HMD for making Nokia smartphones



Dixon Technologies, a contract manufacturer of electronic goods, on Monday said its wholly-owned subsidiary Padget Electronics has entered into an agreement with HMD India for manufacturing Nokia smartphones. "Dixon's wholly-owned subsidiary - Padget Electronics, has entered into an agreement with HMD India for

manufacturing of Nokia smartphones. The smartphones will be manufactured at Padget's manufacturing facility situated at Noida, Uttar Pradesh," the company said in a regulatory filing. Dixon Vice Chairman and Managing Director Atul B. Lall said: "...we have partnered with HMD Global as manufacturers of Nokia smartphones in India, which is an iconic brand.

IOC raises Rs 1,290 cr in debt



Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOC), the nation's top oil firm, has raised Rs 1,290.20 crore in debt to refinance existing borrowings and meet business expenses. In a stock exchange filing on Monday, IOC said it has issued "5.60 per cent unsecured, listed, rated, taxable, redeemable, non-convertible debentures of Rs 10 lakh each

aggregating to Rs 1,290.20 crore on private placement basis". IOC had in October last year stated that it plans to raise Rs 2,000 crore debt on a private placement basis. "The funds raised through this issue will be utilised for, inter alia, refinancing of existing borrowing and/or funding of capital expenditure of the company, including recoupment of expenditure already incurred and/or for any other purpose in the ordinary course of business," it said on Monday.

German business confidence drops more than expected



German business confidence declined more than expected in January as businesses grappled with coronavirus restrictions and an uncertain outlook, a closely watched survey showed Monday. The Ifo institute's monthly confidence index fell to 90.1 points from 92.2 in December. Managers' assessment of both the current situation and the outlook for the next six months worsened. Economists had expected a decline to 91.4 points. The Ifo said that "the second wave of coronavirus has brought the recovery of the German economy to a halt for now."

Germany shut restaurants, bars, sports and leisure facilities on November 2 in an effort to halt a sharp rise in coronavirus infections. That succeeded for a while, but didn't bring case numbers down. Schools and nonessential shops were closed on December 16, and the restrictions were extended last week until February 14. Although cases are now falling, authorities are worried about the potential impact of new virus variants such as the one first detected in Britain. The German economy, Europe's largest, shrank by 5 per cent last year, ending a decade of growth. That was still a smaller drop than many had expected.

Rajasthan CM to hold meeting with MNCs

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot will hold a virtual discussion with the representatives of various multinational firms on Wednesday over investment opportunities in the upcoming Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Region (PCPIR).

The PCPIR is being developed by Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Limited (RIICO) near HPCL Rajasthan Refinery and Petrochemical Complex in Barmer.

The region will host downstream industries.

"The webinar will be participated by several multinational companies such as Shell, ExxonMobil, Mitsubishi Corporation, Wacker Polymer, Petro China and Indian companies - including Reliance, Vedanta, and SRF.

"The meeting is expected to bring in further recommendations from the potential investors for the planning of the region," according to an official of the industries department. The first phase of Petroleum, Chemicals and Petrochemicals Investment Region has already been developed by RIICO over 243 hectares of land at a distance of 9 kilometres from the refinery site.

Skill provider Lrnable Group launches two platforms for recruitment, training

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Skill provider Lrnable Group on Monday said it has launched two platforms -- Mytat.co and Lrnable.com -- for recruitment and training of candidates with an aim to bridge the skill gap in the country.

Mytat.co would offer recruitment services and Lrnable.com would focus towards mapping, enhancing and upgrading skills, the company said.

Citing reports, it said that the Indian workforce has observed the highest skill gap, where 94 per cent of employees reported a skill mismatch. "Addressing the need, the



students, institutions and employers across different industries.

"We realised the grim situation of the skill gap in India along with regular struggles of students, trainers, recruiters as well as corporate, at large. This is done with a central and unified approach to enhance and connect skills of candidates to potential employers with a dual objective - elevate employability and increase the ROI for companies via the hiring of the right resources," he added.

Kumar said the company is targeting to train about 80 lakh students, aspiring to enter the job market, in the next two years.

'Reliance Ebitda back to pre-pandemic levels driven by consumer businesses'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has seen pre-tax profit recover to pre-pandemic levels on the back of continued growth in consumer businesses, Moody's Investors Service said on Monday.

The oil-to-retail-to-telecom behemoth on Friday reported a 0.7 per cent Ebitda (earnings

before interest, tax and depreciation and amortisation) growth for the quarter ended December 31, 2020, compared with the corresponding quarter in the previous year.

"A strong performance in digital services and retail segments underpinned the improvement in consolidated earnings, a credit positive," Moody's said commenting on the earnings.

Continued growth in earnings combined with the company's strong balance sheet with zero net debt on a reported basis will keep Reliance's credit metrics strong for its Baa2 rating over the next 12-18 months, it said.

Its digital services segment reported a 48.4 per cent Ebitda growth driven by an increase in subscriber additions, higher average revenue per user and

growth in the company's fibre-to-the-home (FTTH) business. The company's retail segment earning grew by 13 per cent on the back of an increase in the number of retail stores and increased shopper footfalls.

Moody's expected earnings within digital services to continue to grow over the next 12-18 months on the back of further ramp-up of its home and enterprise broadband services.

UBI completes IT integration of all Andhra Bank branches

PNS ■ MUMBAI

State-owned Union Bank of India on Monday said it has completed IT integration of all branches of erstwhile Andhra Bank with itself.

In November last year, the lender had completed its IT integration with erstwhile Corporation Bank.

The amalgamation of Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank with Union Bank came into effect from April 1, 2020.

"With this achievement, the entire IT integration of erstwhile Andhra and Corporation Bank branches with Union Bank of India has been completed," the lender said in a release.

All customers of erstwhile Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank have been successfully migrated to core banking solution (CBS) of Union Bank. It has also rolled out internet banking, mobile banking, UPI, IMPS, treasury and swift for erstwhile Andhra and Corporation Bank customers.

"We are extremely delighted to achieve complete integration of all branches and delivery channels of erstwhile Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank."

Biden to sign orders to promote 'Made in America' products

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden will sign a series of executive orders on Monday to promote "Made in America" products and strengthen supply chains, senior officials said, asserting that the new administration remains committed to working with partners and allies to modernise international trade rules.

Prominent among the executive orders include a strict enforcement of procuring products made inside the country by federal agencies. This is very significant given that contracting alone accounts for nearly USD 600 billion in federal spending.



Biden is taking action to reset the US government's longstanding approach to domestic preferences to create an approach that will remain durable for years to come and grow quality, union jobs,

The executive order directs agencies to close current loopholes in how domestic content is measured and increase domestic content requirements and appoints a new senior leader in the Executive Office

according to a senior administration official.

It is long overdue that the US government utilises the full force of current domestic preferences to support America's workers and businesses, strengthening the economy, workers, and communities across the country, the official

said. The President's Executive Order establishes the goals and standards necessary to use federal purchasing, and other forms of federal assistance with domestic preference requirements, as a way to proactively invest in American industry so it can continue to lead in the global marketplace,

the White House said.

For the executive order, "Made in America" refers to domestic preferences related to federal procurement, federal grants, and other forms of federal assistance. Buy American and Buy America refers to the specific statutes that go by those names, it said.

The executive order to be signed by Biden at the White House, directs agencies to close current loopholes in how domestic content is measured and increase domestic content requirements and appoints a new senior leader in the Executive Office of the President in charge of the government's "Made in America" policy approach.

Tisca Chopra set to direct a 'nice, tight murder mystery'

A feature film was just waiting to happen, since she writes well. "This came about quite naturally, I am really excited. It is a nice, tight murder mystery told in a very unusual style," Tisca Chopra told a news agency.

"The script for my directorial feature has been ready for almost a year now and we were ready to shoot in January last year. I hope to shoot it this year in winter because the story is such that it needs to be shot in winter. So, fingers crossed we will shoot it this year," she adds.

What encouraged her to direct a full-length feature film? "As an actor, you are always telling other people's stories. You are part of helping other people fulfill their vision. When you move forward, you also want to sometimes tell your own stories," she points out.

Tisca says this was something she realised while working on the short film *Chutney*, which she scripted and produced, and *Rubaru*, which she scripted, produced and directed.

Being an actor and then switching to direction requires shift in vision, she observes. "Directing is a completely different ball game to acting. You have so many departments and you are the head of all departments. Feature film, especially, is an art director's medium because it is seen through the mind's eye of the director, and I

think it is crucial that the director holds it together," says Tisca.

"You are kind of leading people, encouraging them on board, almost charming them into loving and believing in your story. Its quite different from being an actor, which is just being yourself and here there is a large team, and you have to make sure that everyone is coming together to bring a film to life," she adds.

"I have the deepest gratitude that I have had the opportunity to tell stories that I really like and that people also love the stories that I love. Writing, acting, directing, comes from my love for stories. I think it is a question of you wanting to tell stories," says Tisca.

What was the trigger that prompted her to give filmmaking a serious thought? "Necessity is the mother of invention. Nobody was making that kind of story and I wanted to make. So, I decided to make it and it did so well," she said, adding: "People like stories and ultimately what we are, are stories. Stories about ourselves in our own head."

On the acting front, Tisca will start shooting for a new series titled *Fear* in February. While she is tightlipped about details, she says: "My role will require a lot of physical effort from my side in terms of hardcore physical training and changes in terms of diet, because it requires me to have a lean look. So, that is the first series starting in

February. It's called *Fear*."

Tisca made her debut in Bollywood with the 1993 film *15 August* but her breakthrough role happened only with the 2007 release, *Taare Zameen Par*.

She says she is satisfied with her acting career so far.

"Most certainly I have got my due and what is my due? I have got work and I am continuously getting to work with the brightest minds in the business, whether it is an Aamir Khan or a Sudhir Mishra or an Akshay Kumar or Anil Kapoor and in their home productions," she said.

"I have got the opportunity to work with lovely talents like Irrfan Khan and Nandita Das. I also get to work with same people again and again and have made deep friendship with such actors. From the bad films of the nineties to come out and reinvent oneself in 2000s and go into the 21st century with a solid career, I am very fortunate and feel very thankful," she adds.



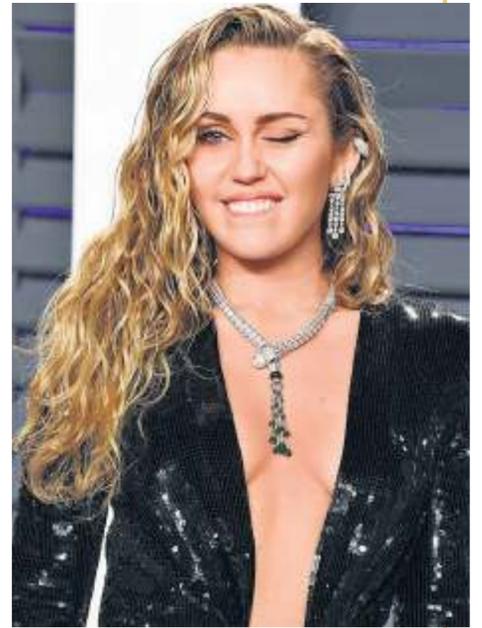
Miley Cyrus to sing for healthcare workers at Super Bowl gig

Singer Miley Cyrus is set to perform at a special Super Bowl LV pre-game concert, which will be held specifically for healthcare workers.

Cyrus shared the news on Instagram on Sunday. "SUPER BOWL LV!!!! I'll be there for TIKTOK TAILGATE!!! I can't wait to put on a show for the NFL's honoured guests before the game... Health care workers from Tampa and around the country!" Cyrus posted.

TikTok Tailgate is a pregame event for the 7,500 vaccinated healthcare workers who have been invited to attend at Tampa's Raymond James Stadium in Florida next month, reports etonline.com.

There will be other performances too. Singers Eric Church and Jazmine Sullivan will deliver "The Star-Spangled Banner" before the game. Additionally, H.E.R. will sing *America the Beautiful*.



PeeCee blown away by love for *The White Tiger*

Priyanka Chopra, Rajkumar Rao and Adarsh Gourav-starrer *The White Tiger* has been trending globally on Netflix since its release on January 22. An emotional Priyanka recently took to her social media handles to express gratitude.

The actor said the response to the movie has made her heart happy. She mentioned in a post, "Ending opening weekend with a full heart. I'm blown away by the love for #TheWhiteTiger's release on @netflix this weekend. Your support in watching this film has made it trend globally in the top 10 in less than 48 hours + counting. Thank you to every one of you who watched, posted, shared amazing reviews, and held space for this incredible cast & crew." Priyanka Chopra plays an American-Indian, Pinky, in *The White Tiger*. Rajkumar



Rao plays her entitled husband, whereas newcomer Adarsh Gourav essays the role of Balram who struggles to fight the system that is hell-bent on keeping him in 'his place'.

The movie opened to a mixed response. Noted film critic Shubhra Gupta gave it three stars as she complimented the central performance. A section of her review read, "The film belongs to Adarsh Gourav, who channels that very specific, razor-sharp mixture of obsequiousness and rage, to come up with a stellar performance." Helmed by acclaimed director Ramin Bahrani, *The White Tiger* has been adapted from Aravind Adiga's book of the same name.

Kareena's fitness mantra: "A little bit of yoga, a little bit of calm"



Kareena Kapoor, who is expecting her second child with husband and actor Saif Ali Khan, takes her fitness regimes very seriously. Her latest Instagram post is a reflection of that. The actress, who recently launched the

#PUMAxKareena collection, dressed in the brand's athleisure. We also got a glimpse of Kareena's baby bump as she sits and practices yoga. She summed up her pregnancy fitness mantra in clear words: "A little bit of yoga. A little bit

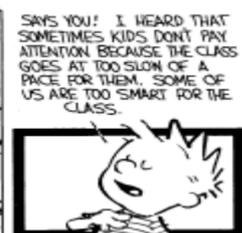
of calm. #PUMAxKareena, starting strong." In no time, the actress' Instagram filled up her post with heart emojis. The first one to comment was her friend and film producer Rhea Kapoor, with whom Kareena worked in the 2018 film *Veere Di Wedding*.

FUN

ARCHIE



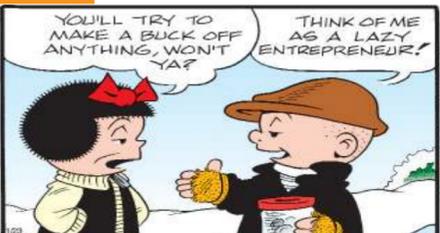
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



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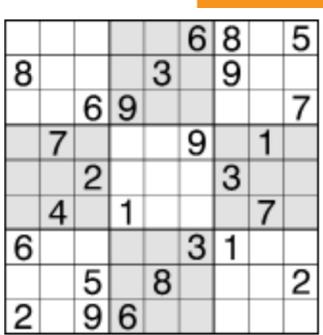
- 1 A three-sided figure
- 7 Following
- 8 Tiny
- 9 Assistant
- 10 Finest
- 12 Moist
- 14 A glass container
- 17 Have a quarrel
- 18 Living
- 19 Cut paper with these

DOWN

- 4 Depart
- 5 A big important church
- 6 Squashed right down
- 11 A vegetable that grows underground
- 13 A witch's power
- 15 Small tree branches
- 16 Tame animals



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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



THIS REPUBLIC DAY

Watch true stories of courage, sacrifice

Twenty-one years after the Kargil War, the sacrifices of India's Bravehearts remain etched in the nation's collective memory. The war began with the infiltration of Pakistani troops into Indian territory in May 1999. After 60 days of fierce fighting, the war

ended with the Indian Army recapturing occupied territory. Over the two months of the war, the Indian Army proved beyond doubt that they would stop at nothing short of complete victory. Now, with special access to military personnel and historical records, a new film retells the story of 'Operation Vijay' with dra-

matic recreations of hard-won battles on the arduous road to victory.

The action-packed *Kargil: Valour & Victory* premieres on January 26, at 9 pm on HistoryTV18 channel. The military documentary outlines the events of the Kargil War showcasing true stories of unflinching bravery and the actions of five excep-

tional young men on the frontline whose actions have come to define courage and sacrifice for generations of Indians. These men represent the many heroes who fought for India. As many as 30,000 Indian soldiers played their part in the war, over 500 were killed and more than 1,300 wounded. The documentary is a trib-

ute to all of them! The film also features top military personnel who were in the thick of the action at the time.

The Kargil War was the first armed conflict in the Indian sub-continent in the nuclear age. Responding to the offensive actions from a belligerent neighbour, Indian forces undertook

military operations in the most inhospitable Himalayan terrain at altitudes of over 15,000 feet. Young Indian officers and jawans endured oxygen deprivation, vertical ascents and extreme conditions on Ladakh's barren slopes and summits to oust the enemy and win back strategic peaks. By the time the war

was won, India had lost some of her finest soldiers. The documentary tells the story of these Bravehearts during the war.

Marking India's Republic Day, the new documentary is the latest in a set of world-class shows honouring the Indian armed forces. *Kargil: Valour & Victory* recounts acts of grit and

sacrifice against a well-entrenched enemy occupying high ground. The film's explosive battle scenes come to life with world-class production values and specialist filming on location in Ladakh. The battles of Tololing, Khalubar, Point, Tiger Hill and Turtuk are recreated with trademark rigour.

Taking paw-per care of your pet!

SHREYA SRIKONDA

For pet-parents in the city, it can be quite a task to get their pet looking clean and pretty while making sure they're healthy and comfortable. Due to many reasons like a lack of understanding, lack of time or lack of resources, many pups and kitties around the city run around with overgrown nails, matted fur and untreated wounds.

It can get tough for the busy people among us to give their dogs a nice wash once in a while. For those people, Furrries Pet Food & Grooming in Jubilee Hills provides all the services you could require to keep your pet looking their cutest self. Arundhati Gaddala, the woman behind the magic, started the store with her mother in 2015 and began grooming their clients' pets in 2017. She says, "It started with my mum and I struggling to care for 5 dogs at once. We couldn't find any service that was helpful. Most pet services aren't open on Sundays so it got tough managing everything along with the pets. So my mother thought we should start our own service, and I loved the idea!" They have their loyal clients who get their furry little ones to get shampooed, washed, groomed and decorated. They cut the pet's nails and cut their hair.

The importance of pet grooming tends to go unnoticed by many. With the furry breed of dogs to the energetic short-furs, it's easy for canines to get skin infections because of the sweat, residual moisture, bacteria and dirt. There are many breeds of dogs in the city that are not naturally attuned to heat and pollution. These dogs can get



many health complications if not regularly checked. Fleas, ticks, and other bugs can cause a lot of itchy and discomfort. "A lot of pet-parents care for their pets, but the service we offer is quicker and easier, we have all the right tools and the right space to do the necessary work." She recommends that those looking to start caring for their pets' fur do the required research. She suggests staying in touch with a professional and paying attention to the little details like the type of shampoo used, the length of nails, and the temperature of the water and other such details.

"I believe pet-grooming is important, firstly because they can't communicate with us naturally. It can be hard to tell when they get restless, and grooming is a natural part of upbringing. Starting from brushing and washing, a lot of bacterial,

fungal diseases and other such issues can be avoided with a little care," says Arundhati. Their store offers pet accessories and clothes as well, so your pet will look the cutest!

A few tips to help you if you venture to groom your pet at home (though it is recommended you seek professional help):

Wash and brush

- ♦ If your dog has a smooth, short coat, you only need to brush once a week. Use a rubber brush to loosen dead skin and dirt and follow with a bristle brush to remove dead hair.

- ♦ If your dog has short, dense fur that's prone to matting, like that of a retriever: brushing once a week is fine. Use a slicker brush to remove tangles and catch dead hair with a bristle brush. Don't forget to comb the tail!
- ♦ If your dog has a long,



luxurious coat, daily attention is necessary, you'll need to remove tangles with a slicker brush. Next, brush her coat with a bristle brush.

- ♦ For long-haired pooches, it's a good idea to set up a daily grooming routine to remove tangles and prevent mats. Gently tease out tangles with a slicker brush, and then brush your pet with a bristle brush. If matting is particularly dense, you may try clipping the hair, taking care not to come near the skin.

Clipping nails

As a rule of thumb, a dog's nails should be trimmed when they just about touch the ground when they walk. If your pet's nails are clicking or getting snagged on the floor, it's time for a trim. A nail-trimming every ten days to two weeks is recommended for cats and giving them something to scratch is recommended.

For those soft spots

If your dog's inner ears appear dirty, clean them with a cotton ball or piece of gauze dampened with mineral oil, hydrogen peroxide or a liquid ear cleaner specially formulated for this purpose. Fold your pet's ear back gently and wipe away any debris or earwax that you can see on the underside of his or her ear, lift away the dirt and wax. Inner-ear skin is delicate, so talk to your vet about best cleaning practices. For kitty ears, a healthy feline ear flap has a layer of hair on its outer surface with no bald spots, and its inner surface is clean and light pink. If you see any discharge, redness or swelling, your cat's ears should be checked by a veterinarian.

Here are a few simple yet effective parenting tips that will put your mind at ease and help to nurture your child's learning abilities

Parenting is a task no one prepares you for, and is perhaps the best example of learning on the job as there is no prior training or benchmark to follow. In a nutshell, it is a rollercoaster ride. However, regardless of the absence of a set standard to be a good parent, every parent, especially new parents, have the urge to be the best parents their child can have. There are several things you can do to make this journey more effective and have a positive impact on your child. One such crucial thing is your child's early learning and development. Every parent wishes for their child to grow into a smart, successful and happy individual. If you are a new parent, here are eight simple yet effective parenting tips that will put your mind at ease and help you nurture your child's learning abilities.

Countless experiences
Each child is born with infinite potential. Did you know that in the first few years of life, more than one million neural connections form every second in our brains? After this period of fast-tracked proliferation, the connections become reduced through a process called synaptic pruning where the brain then works on making the existing connections more efficient.

Since early childhood is a time of tremendous brain development, it is important to expose your baby to as many experiences and opportunities as possible.

Believe in your child's potential
Most parents unconsciously underestimate their baby's ability to learn, which sets limitations on their phenomenal capabilities. Believing in

your child's potential and encouraging them to learn will produce miraculous results and unearth their hidden abilities.

Teach something new every day
Every single day in our life presents an opportunity for us to learn something new. For babies, this is maximised infinitely. Children naturally tend to be curious and are always keen on discovering new things to learn about. With most parents now working from home, this may be the perfect time to spend quality time with your baby to teach them something new each day — be it a physical activity or a creative one like art, music or dance.

Steer clear of screen time
At a time when technology has been a game-changer, especially during a global pandemic where we spent most of our time indoors, our screen time has surged dramatically. In addition to this, parents are now increasingly turning to technology to keep their babies occupied or teach them new things. According to studies, kids' screen time has increased by 50 per cent since the onset of



Embrace the journey

Teach something new every day

the pandemic. It can have an adverse impact on your baby by hampering their creativity and thinking abilities. So, steer clear of screen time at all costs to safeguard and nurture your baby's abilities.

Keep lessons crisp

The attention span of babies is no longer than two to three minutes. New parents believe that the child has lost interest in the activity, when in fact, they simply lack the attention span to continue an activity for a longer time. Hence, parents must keep lessons crisp and succinct to avoid loss of focus. This brings us to the next point.

Avoid repetition

How often we, as adults become bored of repetitive things? Repetition makes an activity boring, resulting in a loss of engagement and interest. Given that babies have less attention span, avoid repeating lessons and activities. Ensure that you keep it to a bare minimum.

Provide them space to learn and grow

One of the most common mistakes that parents make is pushing their children to fulfill their unfulfilled dreams. For instance, if a parent wished to become a dancer but was unable to for any reason, they tend to push their baby into dancing even if the child doesn't display passion or interest in it. Children aren't born to be moulded into anyone's ideologies. Allow your child the space to grow without piling your expectations onto them.

Nurture and guide them

There exists a surprisingly fine line between neglecting your child's needs, nurturing and guiding them, and burdening them with too many expectations. Offering the necessary handholding but also allowing them the freedom to choose who they want to be or what they want to do is vital to nurturing your baby into a smart individual.

(The writer, Raghav Himatsingka, is the founder of Raising Superstars.)

England whitewash Lanka

AFP ■ GALLE

Dom Sibley and Jos Buttler anchored a run chase after a jittery start as England beat Sri Lanka by six wickets on Monday in the second Test to sweep the series 2-0.

Sibley and Buttler put on an unbeaten 75-run stand as England, who were struggling at 89/4, got to their target of 164 in an extended final session on the fourth day in Galle.

The result gave England a second successive Test whitewash in Sri Lanka after winning all three matches in the island nation in 2018.

England were given a deadline to finish in the day after spinners Jack Leach and Dom Bess skittled out Sri Lanka for 126 in their second innings.

Left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya claimed three wickets that gave Sri Lanka hope and helped him to his Test-best match figures of 10-200.

Debutant spinner Ramesh Mendis got the key wicket of skipper Joe Root, who scored 11 after his 186 in England's first innings total of 344, to add to the scare given to the tourists.

Embuldeniya took Zak Crawley for 13 and then ended Jonny Bairstow's stay after a quickfire 29, putting England's nerves on edge, but Sibley calmly moved to his third Test half-century.

Leach and Sibley took four wickets each to set up England's win.

The hosts started their second innings early in the day with a lead of 37 but it all came to an end in the afternoon session.

Number 10 Embuldeniya top-scored with 40, after taking



Joe Root holds winners' trophy after England beat Sri Lanka in 2nd Test ©ICC

seven wickets with his left-arm spin to end England's first innings on 344. He was the only batsman to score more than 20 as Sri Lanka collapsed from 29 for one in their second innings.

Embuldeniya put up some resistance with a ninth-wicket stand of 48 with Suranga Lakmal, who made 11 not out, before Root took the final two wickets with his off-spin.

Leach's left-arm spin got Kusal Perera trapped lbw for 14, and off-spinner Bess sent back Oshada Fernando for three in the first session. First-

innings centurion Angelo Mathews was then bowled by Bess for five and Chandimal fell to Leach, with James Anderson taking a superb running catch.

Earlier Dilruwan Perera trapped overnight batsman Leach lbw for one on just the 11th ball of the day after England resumed on 339 for nine in Galle.

Leach took a single and number 11 Anderson hit a boundary off Embuldeniya, who returned career-best figures of 7-137 in just his ninth Test, to add five runs to the overnight score. Riding on Root's 228,

We'll carry confidence from SL win against 'world's best' India: Root

AFP ■ GALLE

Skipper Joe Root on Monday said England will take confidence from their 2-0 Test sweep in Sri Lanka to challenge world No 1 India on their own patch.

Root, who led by example with match-winning knocks of 228 and 186 in the first and second match respectively, said the team looks in good shape ahead of the four-Test series in India that starts in Chennai on February 5.

"We've got four very important games against arguably the best team in the world in their own conditions," Root said. "We'll have to play right at the top of our game to win out there but we couldn't be in a better place to go and challenge them."

The England team face a period of quarantine upon entry to India ahead of the series, but Root said the measures had not fazed the squad.

"We're gonna have seven or eight days with no cricket, six days in quarantine and then three very important days of prep ahead of the series," he said. "But what we have got is a huge amount of confidence coming out of these two games."

'DEFINITELY PROGRESS'
England have won five

England won the opening Test of the resumed series, which started last March but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

straight Tests away from home as they got past hosts South Africa in the final three matches of a four-match series to triumph 3-1 in January last year.

"Definitely progress. As I mentioned before this game, we have in the past struggled in away conditions," said Root.

"For us to be able to turn that round, find ways of consistently taking 20 wickets is really impressive. We have just got to stay hungry and keep looking to get better."

England though will be without Jonny Bairstow for the opening two India Tests as part of the team's rest and rotate policy for its players during the coronavirus pandemic. Buttler, who scored 55 and an unbeaten 46 in the second match, will return home after the first Test.

Root said the team, which will be boosted by the return of Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer, will have to keep up with player rotation in these uncertain times.

"We always want our best players there as often as possible, because of the world we're in right now it's not feasible and we have to manage that the best we can," said Root.

"But he's still got an opportunity to affect the series and sure he'll be desperate to keep up the good form."

England now head to India for a four-Test series starting February 5 in Chennai. The first two Tests will be played to empty stadiums.

Babar hopes to counter tough Proteas in home

AP ■ KARACHI

Babar Azam will make his Test captaincy debut on Tuesday against a tough South Africa team that is touring Pakistan for the first time in more than 13 years.

Azam has recovered from a thumb injury that kept him out of the two-Test series in New Zealand, which Pakistan lost 2-0.

"I missed the series against New Zealand, but it's a proud moment for me that I am doing my captaincy debut in my own country," Azam said on Monday. "South Africa is a good team. You can't take them lightly, but conditions suit us more because most of us have played here."

South Africa last toured Pakistan in 2007 because the country was forced to organize its "home" Test series in the United Arab Emirates following a terrorist attack on a bus carrying the Sri Lanka team in Lahore in 2009.

The second Test will be played in Rawalpindi from February 4, followed by the three-match Twenty20 series in Lahore from February 11-14.

Pakistan is out of the race to qualify for the World Test Championship final at Lord's in June while South Africa has only a mathematical chance to make it with India, New Zealand, Australia and England among the top contenders.

Azam is well aware of Pakistan's poor Test record against South Africa, winning only four of 26 against the Proteas. One of Pakistan's 15 losses came at the National Stadium — the venue for the



first Test — when South Africa toured in 2007.

"We should not think about past, we should focus on what's ahead of us," Azam said. "It's a fact that we don't have a good record against them, but we have prepared well and we hope to give our best against them this time."

Pakistan has included six uncapped players in a 17-man squad. Opening batsman Imran Butt and left-arm spinner Nauman Ali could make their Test debuts on Tuesday.

Azam also said Pakistan might go with an additional spinner along with Yasir Shah.

"We have practiced here for a week now and the wicket looks a bit slow," Azam said.

Only South Africa coach Mark Boucher has previously played red-ball cricket in Pakistan, while the experienced Faf du Plessis has twice toured Pakistan over the last four years but played only in the T20 for-

mat. "I'm sure this Pakistan team is going to be tough," South Africa captain Quinton de Kock said when the team arrived. "I think our biggest challenge is the conditions that we could face, the unknowing of the things that we have to deal with."

Boucher said he expected the wicket in Karachi to help spinners and it might tempt him to include an extra spinner along with first choice left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj.

"It's (the wicket) definitely going to turn," Boucher said. "The conditions are going to be proper subcontinent conditions where I don't think there's a lot of assistance for seamers."

"We've definitely come in with the mindset that if you want to win a series away from home, you've got to make a couple of brave calls at the end, (and) the selectors and the team are going with that mindset into the game."

Final chance for domestic players to impress in Mushtaq knock-outs

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

It will be the last chance for the domestic players to impress before the all-important IPL auction when the knock-outs of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy begin here on Tuesday.

While Karnataka will go all out looking to retain the title, the seven other teams which have made it to the quarter-finals, will be itching to make an impact and get their names inscribed on the trophy.

The event marked the resumption of the much-delayed 2020-21 domestic season in the country.

A mighty Punjab team stands between Karnataka and their title defence as the two teams will square-off in the first quarter-final, which is expected to be an even battle.

Punjab made it to the knock-outs from Elite Group A after winning all their five games in the league stage, while Karnataka also scraped to the final eight, despite being second on the points table in Group A, having lost one game.

The match could be touted as battle of openers as Punjab possesses the young Prabhshimran Singh, who is in good form, with 277 runs, while Karnataka will bank on the stylish southpaw Devdutt Padikkal, who has 207 runs from five games.

Both the sides have an equally strong middle-order. However, Punjab could have a slight edge in their pace attack



with Sidharth Kaul (10 wickets) and Sandeep Sharma in their arsenal.

Sharma in particular is lethal in the shortest format of the game. But Karnataka have the likes of Abhimanyu Mithun and Prasadh Krishna, who can be equally dangerous.

Even the contest is somewhat equal among the spinners as Punjab has Mayank Markande while Karnataka will bank on the lead spin duo of experienced J Suchith and Shreyas Gopal.

In the second quarter-final, for Tamil Nadu, who were runners-up last season, attacking opener N Jagadeesan, who is the leading run-getter in the tournament so far with 315 runs and skipper Dinesh Karthik, will again be the key players in their clash against Himachal Pradesh, who came through from Elite

Group C.

The TN bowling unit did a superb job for skipper Karthik though it was without ace spinner R Ashwin, yorker specialist T Natarajan and all-rounder Washington Sundar who were away on national duty in Australia.

Leg-spinner M Ashwin and left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore were quite a handful but it was Baba Aparajith, who was the surprise packet, taking the new ball and enjoying a great degree of success too.

The trio will have a crucial role to play in the knockouts if TN has to go all the way as would the pacers — Sandeep Warrier, M Mohammed and Aswin Crist.

In the third quarter-final too, it could be tough for Baroda to overcome the challenge of Haryana, without the services of

the Pandya brothers — Hardik and Krunal.

While Hardik did not play the tournament as he was practicing for the white-ball series against England, Krunal had to leave the tournament mid-way following his father's demise.

Haryana have been in splendid form and it is their spinners — India player Yuzvendra Chahal, Jayant Yadav and Rahul Tewatia, who will give them an upper hand against Baroda.

But Baroda led by Kedar Devdhar, who has amassed 226 runs in five games, can spring a surprise. And for that to happen, left-arm inform pacer Lukman Meriwala (11 wickets) and Atit Sheth (8 wickets) hold the key against a vulnerable Haryana top-order.

In the fourth quarter-final, Rajasthan, who qualified from Group D, will be the run-away favourites against Bihar, who have qualified from the Plate Group.

The Mushtaq knock-outs, will also be the first time that matches will be played at the refurbished Sardar Patel Motera Stadium. It will be interesting to see how the pitch behaves with the two Tests between India and England to follow at the venue.

Line Ups: Quarter-final 1: January 26: At 12 noon: Punjab vs Karnataka. Quarter-final 2: January 26: At 7 PM: Tamil Nadu vs Himachal Pradesh. Quarter-final 3: January 27: At 12 noon: Haryana vs Baroda. Quarter-final 4: January 27: At 7 PM: Rajasthan vs Bihar.

Chelsea sack Lampard

AFP ■ LONDON

Chelsea sacked manager Frank Lampard on Monday after 18 months in charge, with former Paris Saint-Germain boss Thomas Tuchel reportedly set to replace him at Stamford Bridge.

Sunday's 3-1 FA Cup fourth-round win against Championship side Luton was not enough to save Lampard, whose team slumped to ninth place in the Premier League.

The club's Russian owner Roman Abramovich said: "This was a very difficult decision for the club, not least because I have an excellent personal relationship with Frank and I have the utmost respect for him."

"He is a man of great integrity and has the highest of work ethics. However, under current circumstances we believe it is best to change managers."

Former PSG boss Tuchel, who was abruptly sacked by the French champions in December, is in line to take over, reports said.

Chelsea said it had been a "very difficult decision" to part ways with the 42-year-old, who replaced Maurizio Sarri in July 2019.

Chelsea are struggling in ninth place in the Premier League table, 11 points behind leaders Manchester United.

They have lost five of their past eight Premier League matches after a good start to the season. Lampard signed a three-year deal in 2019 and despite a transfer ban, led them to the FA Cup final and a fourth-place finish in his first managerial campaign at Stamford Bridge. But a huge outlay of around £220 million on new players including Ben Chilwell and German attackers Kai Havertz and Timo Werner has failed to translate into improved results. Lampard's points-per-game average of 1.67 is the fourth-lowest of any permanent Chelsea manager in the Premier League. Tuchel only became available a month ago when he left PSG, less than five months after taking them to the Champions League final, which they lost to Bayern Munich.

The 47-year-old German won back-to-back league titles with PSG, but that was not

enough to satisfy the club's Qatari owners, who replaced him with former Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino.

Prior to PSG, Tuchel impressed at Borussia Dortmund, having started his managerial career with Augsburg and then Mainz.

Lampard is Chelsea's record goalscorer and won three Premier League titles during his glittering playing career at Stamford Bridge, as well as the Champions and Europa Leagues and other domestic honours.

His first managerial posting was at Championship club Derby. In his one season in charge, they reached the Championship play-off final, where they lost to Aston Villa.

Lampard then became the 10th full-time manager appointed by Abramovich since the billionaire bought the club in 2003.

"He is an important icon of this great club and his status here remains undiminished," said Abramovich. "He will always be warmly welcomed back at Stamford Bridge."

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B'desh complete WI clean sweep



Bangladesh players & support staff pose with winners' trophy ©BCBtigers

AFP ■ CHATTOGRAM

Bangladesh completed a clean sweep of the West Indies by securing a 120-run victory on Monday in the third and final ODI.

Skipper Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah all hit half-centuries to help Bangladesh post 297-6 after West Indies captain Jason Mohammed won the toss and

decided to bowl first.

The West Indies, however, were bowled out for 177 in 44.2 overs, with Bangladesh's bowlers denying them any significant partnerships.

Tamim scored 64 from 80 balls at the top of the order to establish the innings while Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah paced the innings toward the end. All three scored 64. Shakib hit a patient 51, his

first half century since returning to cricket following a suspension imposed by the ICC for his failure to report corrupt approaches.

Bangladesh fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman denied West Indies a fluent start in its pursuit of a stiff chase. He broke through with the wicket of Kjorn Otley before removing Sunil Ambris (13) for the third time in a row in the series.

Off-spinner Mehidy Hasan and Saifuddin then ripped through the middle order, reducing the visitors to 93-5.

Rovman Powell counter-attacked and hit 47 off 49 balls with two fours and two sixes to be the team's top-scorer. Saifuddin returned 3-51 while fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman and Hasan claimed two wickets each.

The two teams will now play a two-match Test series, starting on February 3.



Practice makes perfect for Fernandes

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

ole Gunnar Solskjaer hailed Bruno Fernandes's dedication to perfecting his free-kick technique as the Portuguese's stunning strike a thrilling 3-2 win over Liverpool to reach the FA Cup fifth round on Sunday.

Solskjaer handed Fernandes a rare rest from the start with United leading the way in a tight Premier League title race.

But the Red Devils' talisman came off the bench to win a compelling cup tie at Old Trafford, devoid of the caution both sides showed in a 0-0 draw when they met a week ago on league duty.

"When you leave him out like I did today, he stayed about 45 minutes after training yesterday shooting free kicks so I was pretty confident he could score one if he got the chance," said Solskjaer. "He's never happy with me

when I tell him to go inside after training when he's playing the next day, so he got some practice yesterday."

Liverpool's wait for a first domestic cup win of Jurgen Klopp's reign goes on to compound their faltering league form.

The English champions have fallen six points behind United after failing to score in their last four league games.

However, there was hope for Klopp of a revival as Mohamed Salah scored twice.

ATM restore 7 point lead



AFP ■ MADRID

Luis Suarez scored a brilliant late goal as Atletico Madrid came from behind to beat Valencia 3-1 on Sunday and move seven points clear at the top of La Liga.

After Real Madrid thrashed Alaves on Saturday, Barca had earlier followed suit with a scrappy victory over Elche.

But Atletico were under-terred in the capital, as their considerable advantage was restored again, with a game in hand.

"We don't get carried away or think too far ahead, we think about getting better," said Atletico coach Diego Simeone.

Suarez finished off a flowing move that had started almost on Atletico's goal-line before substitute Angel Correa capped another slick string of passes to end Valencia's resistance.

The visitors had taken an early lead in stunning fashion, Uros Racic curling into the top corner from 35 yards but Joao Felix equalised and Atletico came back, in a way that has begun to feel expected.

Felix was replaced by Correa after an hour by Simeone after assisting Suarez and scoring a goal for himself that should send a message to his coach, who has handed

ed the 21-year-old a spell on the bench in recent weeks.

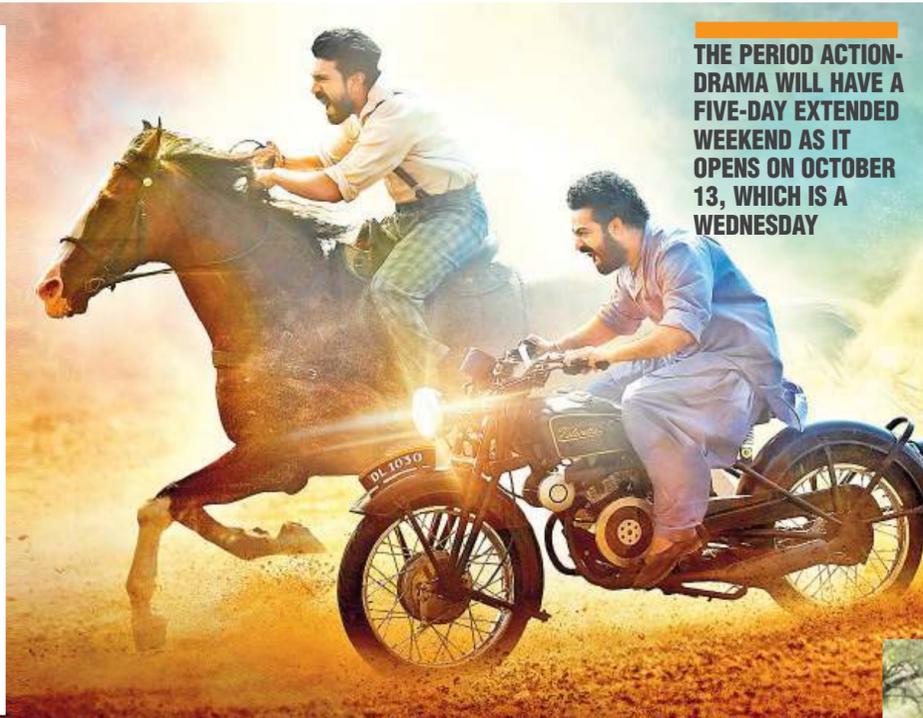
"It's not written that footballers have to play 90 minutes," said Simeone. "Joao scored a goal, made an assist, he came off and on came Correa, who scored a goal and was close to another. The competition is healthy."

Simeone knows the pressure will mount as the La Liga trophy comes more into view, yet his team are showing an assuredness now that is offering little encouragement for Barcelona and Real Madrid.

RRR for Dasara

SS Rajamouli's *RRR*, one of the hotly anticipated movies, will be debuting on the big screen this October 13 — two days before the country celebrates Dasara. "We have come to the end of *RRR*'s shooting schedule and are very excited to bring this film to the audiences. We are happy to celebrate a massive festival like Dussehra with the audience, in the theatres," said film's producer DVV Danayya on Monday, while revealing a new still which has his lead actors marching ferociously riding a motorcycle and a horse respectively. With 13th falling on a Wednesday, the film will have an extended weekend of five days and many trade trackers believe it's a smart move by the makers to register humongous openings. The film will also be opening

in Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and several other Indian languages simultaneously. Starring NTR, Ram Charan, Ajay Devgn, Alia Bhatt, Samuthirakani and Allison Doody amongst a host of other popular actors from Indian cinema, *RRR*, set in 1920s pre-independent India, revolves around the fictional exploits of two real freedom fighters Komaram Bheem (played by NTR) and Alluri Seetharama Raju (Charan). Announcing the release of the near Rs 500 crore budgeted film, the duo of Tarak and Charan tweeted, "Fire and water will come together to make an unstoppable FORCE as you've never witnessed! Get Ready to experience Indian Cinema in its finest avatar on October 13, 2021 (sic)."



THE PERIOD ACTION-DRAMA WILL HAVE A FIVE-DAY EXTENDED WEEKEND AS IT OPENS ON OCTOBER 13, WHICH IS A WEDNESDAY

Gang Leader brothers' reunion on Acharya sets

On Sunday, pictures of megastar Chiranjeevi with Sharath Kumar and Murali Mohan have gone viral, with many fans of the megastar dubbing it as a reunion of *Gang Leader* cast. In the 1991 blockbuster, the three actors played brothers Raghupati, Raghava and Rajaram. The film helped Chirru to consolidate his mass image further and garner new following as well.

Murali Mohan termed the gathering as totally unplanned. "On Saturday at Ramoji Film City, Chiranjeevi garu was shooting for *Acharya*, Sharath Kumar garu for Mani Ratnam's film and I for Arka Media's project. We met on the sets of *Acharya* accidentally and immediately went down the memory lane of shooting for *Gang Leader* as brothers. As we met 30 years later, Chiranjeevi garu suggested that we capture the moment and share it with fans," the veteran actor posted in a video message.



Pawan begins shooting Ayyappanum Koshiyum remake

BRAHMAJI, SAMUTHIRAKANI, NARRA SRINU AND MURALI SHARMA ARE PLAYING SUPPORTING ROLES IN THE ACTION-DRAMA, A THAMAN MUSICAL

More than a month after it was launched, the principal photography of *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* remake, headlined by Pawan Kalyan and Rana Daggubati, began in Hyderabad on Monday. Aluminum Factory is

hosting shoot, which witnessed Pawan partaking in the shoot on day one itself. Generally, the actor tends to join the sets of his films after they are shot for a week but the remake had his presence on day one. An action sequence, under the supervision of Dilip Subbarayan, is being

filmed on him right now, with the schedule set to go on for another nine days. Directed by the late Sachy, *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* was about a relentless ego clash between a proud havildar Koshiyum (played by Prithviraj) and an upright but occasionally hot-headed SI Ayyappanum (Biju Menon), transforming

into an intense psychological game over its running time. Trivikram Srinivas, who has penned the screenplay, has tweaked the original and given it a new spin, taking into consideration the images of both Pawan and Rana. Director Saagar K Chandra's inputs have been incorporated as well. Rana, who will be

reprising Prithviraj, will join the shoot shortly, while the likes of Sai Pallavi, Aishwarya Rajesh, Brahmaji, Samuthirakani, Narra Srinu and Murali Sharma will be seen in other key roles in the Sithara Entertainments production. Pawan will be completing this film by March-end before he joins Krish's film.

Nikhil, Sudheer set for hat-trick

The actor-director duo of Nikhil and Sudheer Varma who have teamed up for successful films like *Swamy Ra Ra* and *Keshava* are collaborating for a hat-trick. *The Pioneer* has exclusively learnt. According to an industry insider, their new film will be produced by BVSN Prasad under Sri Venkateswara Cine Chitra. It will also be the first time that the duo will be teaming up with the popular production house.

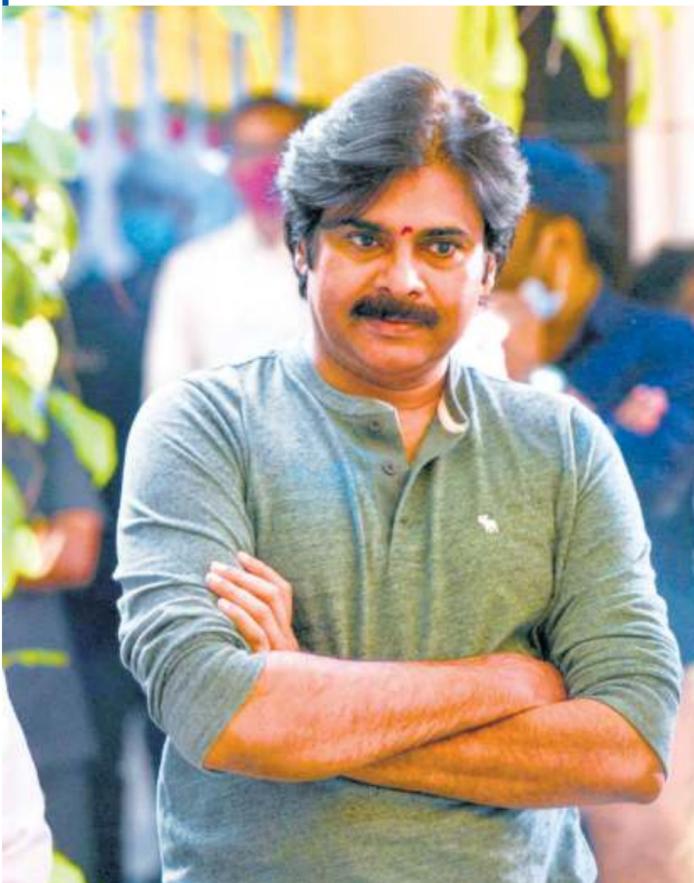
The source informs, "This new project has been in development for the past five months. It's a fast-paced thriller packed in with humour and is set abroad. With most of SVCC films with a foreign backdrop shot in London, chances are that this film too will be filmed entirely in the Queen's City. Sudheer will be directing it from a script of an upcoming writer. The untitled project like Sudheer and Nikhil's earlier efforts will be a breath of fresh air for the audience and they are extremely excited about it. Technically, Sudheer is planning to raise the bar once again as the film's story offers him the scope."

The source adds that the film,

however, might take time to roll as Nikhil and Sudheer are occupied right now. "While the former is shooting for Surya Pratap's *18 Pages* presently and will commence Chandoo Mondeti's *Karthikeya 2* soon, the latter will take South Korean hit *Midnight Runners* to floors from early summer. So it's likely that the new project will roll six-seven months from now or may be more," the source concludes.

After the influential *Swamy Ra Ra*, which heralded a new era in Telugu cinema, and the hit *Keshava*, best friends Nikhil Siddhartha and Sudheer Varma are now set for their third venture. Sri Venkateswara Cine Chitra will pool in resources for the foreign-set title, reports

NAGARAJ GOUD



Krack streaming date postponed

The *Pioneer* was the first to break the news (Jan 12) that Ravi Teja-starrer *Krack* will stream on *Aha* from January 29 onwards. While it was a short time for a film to make its digital debut, producer Tagore Madhu and the streamer's think-tank entered into agreement over this last year

itself. The streamer extensively promoted the date last week but the latest is that the film will now drop on February 5. With the film collecting a share Rs. 33 crore from 15 days and emerging as a Sankranti winner despite competition from other films like *Master*, *Red* and *Alludu Adhurs*, Ravi Teja, Madhu and Gopichand Malineni

requested *Aha* co-owner Allu Aravind to defer the streaming release by a week at least, a source tells us. Understating their concerns, Aravind, who is a fan of the theatrical experience, obliged. *Krack*, which tells the story of a powerful cop Shankar's tiff with three criminals of Ongole, has been particularly lapped up by the mass audience.

