

ANALYSIS 7

REPEAL OF FARM LAWS:
PM MODI'S VOLTE-FACE

MONEY 8

NO PROPOSAL TO RECOGNISE BITCOIN AS
A CURRENCY: FINANCE MINISTER

SPORTS 12

1ST TEST ENDS
IN DRAW

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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RAW AGENT IN
GHOST?

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OMICRON RISK VERY HIGH

WHO warns of 'severe consequences' in case of surge

No deaths linked to Omicron till date

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The new Omicron variant of Covid poses a "very high" global risk and could have "severe consequences" where there are surges, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Monday, adding that it is not yet known how contagious and dangerous it is.

The Omicron variant is likely to spread internationally, the WHO said, urging countries to prepare by accelerating vaccinations and put mitigation plans in place

to maintain essential health services.

"Omicron has an unprecedented number of spike mutations, some of which are concerning for their potential impact on the trajectory of the pandemic," WHO said in a statement.

"If another major surge of Covid-19 takes place driven by Omicron, consequences may be severe," said a technical note, adding though that "to date, no deaths linked to Omicron variant have been reported."

"The overall global risk related to the new variant of concern

Omicron is assessed as very high," said the organisation. More research is needed to understand Omicron's potential to escape protection against immunity induced by vaccines and previous infections, said WHO.

Crucial data on Omicron is expected in coming weeks. WHO believes it can affect vaccinated people too. "Covid-19 cases and infections are expected in vaccinated persons, albeit in a small and predictable proportion," it said.

Countries start shutting down borders

Tokyo: Japan said on Monday it would close its borders to foreigners, as the world's third-largest economy joined Israel in taking the toughest measures against the new coronavirus variant Omicron, which also cast a cloud over Australia's re-opening plans. Markets, however, regained some composure as investors await more details of the variant, after sinking last week on fears it could bring fresh curbs, threatening a nascent economic revival from a two-year pandemic. Potentially more contagious than prior variants, Omicron, first identified in South Africa, has been found in Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, and the Netherlands.

New Covid variant stokes concern but vaccines still most important tool

The Omicron variant carries concerning mutations that may make it more transmissible and allow it to evade immunity, scientists said on Monday, stressing that the one certainty in the uncertainty of the many things unknown is this -- Covid is not a short-term crisis and vaccines are still a critical tool. As the world and India slides into escalated Covid anxiety and the global scientific community grapples with the emergence of a new strain with multiple

mutations, several experts here said current Covid vaccines are likely to be effective against Omicron too. The B.1.1.529 Covid variant, first detected in South Africa last week, was designated by the World Health Organisation as a Variant of Concern (VOC), the health body's top category for worrying coronavirus variants. Public policy expert Chandrakant Lahariya noted that Omicron has around 50 mutations. Of these, 32 are in spike proteins, which the virus uses to enter the human cells, and 10 are mutations of high relevance. These include H655Y, N679K and P681H mutations which potentially increase the transmissibility.

OMICRON SYMPTOMS

1. Patients infected with this strain show extreme tiredness. This is not limited to any age group. Young patients also show extreme tiredness.
2. There is no major drop in oxygen saturation levels.
3. Patients infected with Omicron strain have not reported loss of taste or smell.
4. Patients of Omicron variant have, however, complained of "scratchy throat"
5. Most patients of Omicron strain have recovered without hospitalisation, say doctors.

'No case of new 'Omicron' variant of Covid detected

No case of the new Omicron variant of coronavirus has been detected in India yet, a senior government official said on Monday. The B.1.1.529 Covid variant or Omicron, first detected in South Africa last week, was designated by the World Health Organisation as a 'variant of concern', the health body's top category for worrying coronavirus variants. A senior official said no case of the new Omicron variant has been detected in India yet

and Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomic Consortium INSACOG is closely monitoring the situation and expediting the results of genomic analysis of positive samples of international travellers. Amid the mounting concerns over 'Omicron' spreading to many countries, the Centre on Sunday introduced stricter guidelines for people travelling from or transiting through 'at-risk' countries.

Court asks TS, Centre to respond on paddy logjam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Monday directed the Union and State governments to immediately provide details of paddy procurement in Telangana.

The court was hearing a petition filed by law student Bommanagari Sreekar seeking an order directing the State government to procure paddy.

In his petition, Sreekar said that the State government had entered into an agreement with the FCI for procurement of grain. The petitioner disclosed that an agreement has been reached to procure 40 lakh metric tonnes.

TS on tenterhooks as Covid clusters pop up

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a worrying turnaround from the steady decline, three Covid clusters have erupted in Telangana over the past 10 days, triggering fears of a new variant entering the country.

In all, over 100 students have tested positive from these three educational institutions, leaving officials and parents on tenterhooks. This was the first time since reopening of residential schools in the State last month that such a large number of students have tested positive for Covid.

On Monday, as many as 42 students and one teacher of a government-run residential school for girls in Sangareddy district tested positive for Covid-19. The cases have come to light at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Gurukul School at Muthangi village in Sangareddy

district, about 50 km from Hyderabad.

This is the third incident of students testing positive in large numbers at any educational institution in Telangana during the last 10 days.

Last week, Mahindra University near Hyderabad was shut down after 25 students and five staff members tested positive for the virus. The State Health Department has sent the samples for Genome sequence to rule out that the infection was caused by the Omicron variant.

Earlier, 29 students of a government-run residential school and junior college for girls in Khammam district had tested positive for the Coronavirus. The cases were reported at the school and junior college in Wyra town.

'Bloody BJP' is a vulture, feeds on bodies of farmers, KCR says

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Monday announced that his government would not open paddy procurement centres for the rabi produce.

"Since the Centre refused to buy parboiled rice, we are not going to buy rabi paddy," he made it clear.

KCR said that procurement of grain in the country, distribution of procured grain to the poor through the PDS and storage of buffer stock for food security of the country is entirely the responsibility of the Union government.

He lamented that the BJP-led NDA government, ever since it came to power, was adopting starkly anti-farmer policies.

Describing the BJP as a party



Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao holds up a copy of the Global Hunger Index report to prove his point during his press conference in Hyderabad on Monday.

that has slaughtered 750 farmers, KCR said: "Was it not BJP leaders and Union Ministers who mowed down farmers under their cars and

tractors? Your party is like a vulture that looks at farmers as carrion."



'Dollar' Seshadri dies of cardiac arrest

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

P Seshadri, popularly known as 'Dollar' Seshadri, an official attached to the famous hill shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala here, died of cardiac arrest in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

His end came early this morning at the port city where he went to take part in a religious programme.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Kartik & Krishna Paksha

Tithi : Bhadashi 26:13

Nakshatram : Hada 20:34

Rahukalam : 2:50 pm - 4:13 pm

Yamagandam : 9:19 am - 10:41 am

Varjyam : 3:58 am - 5:27 am

Gulika : 12:04 pm - 1:27 pm

Amritakalam : 2:51 pm - 4:22 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:42 am - 12:26 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 27 °C

Humidity: 68%

Sunrise: 06:29 AM

Sunset: 05:40 PM

Updated NOVEMBER 29, 2021 5:00 PM

Metro logs 20.8 cr ridership in 4 years; 4.7 cr litres fuel saved

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metro Rail, which has completed four years, has so far recorded 20.8 crore cumulative ridership, thus saving about 4.70 crore litres of fuel so far and reducing carbon footprint (CO2 emission) by about 27,500 tonnes per annum.

HMRL MD NVS Reddy said on Monday, "After the lockdown was lifted, ridership is slowly picking up and about 2.40 lakh commuters – which is about 3.50 lakh passenger trips – are using it every day."

GRMB-KRMB

AP, TS didn't deposit seed fund: Centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Neither Telangana nor Andhra Pradesh have deposited the one-time seed money of Rs 200 crore each in the GRMB / KRMB bank accounts to enable the Boards discharge their functions effectively.

Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekawat on Monday told the Rajya Sabha: "GRMB Secretariat has requested the governments of both the States to deposit the one-time seed money. However, one-time seed money has not been deposited by the Governments of both

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the GRMB bank account till date". Likewise, the Governments informed KRMB that the matter was already apprised to their respective Finance departments for consideration.

Shekawat gave the Rajya Sabha the status of implementation of main clauses of the two gazette notifications issued on July 15, 2021 for administration, regulation, maintenance and operation of projects in Godavari and Krishna river basins in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

TRS MPs launch protests in RS, LS on paddy procurement

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Acting upon the directions of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, TRS MPs launched protests in both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha on Monday.

They raised slogans and rushed into the chambers of the Speaker and the Chairman in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha respectively demanding that the Centre purchase paddy and also announce a Uniform National Food Grains Procurement Policy.

The TRS MPs demanded that the Centre do justice to developing States. They displayed placards in the Central Hall after adjournment of both the Houses of Parliament.



TRS MPs hold placards in Parliament on Monday, the first day of the winter session.

Later, speaking to the media, TRS Parliamentary Party leader in the Rajya Sabha K Keshava Rao demanded a Uniform

National Food Grains Procurement Policy.

PARLIAMENT PASSES BILL TO REPEAL THREE CONTENTIOUS FARM LAWS

Parliament on Monday passed The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, to repeal the three contentious agri laws against which farmers have been protesting for over a year, with its passage in Rajya Sabha. Earlier in the day, Lok Sabha also passed the Bill within minutes of its introduction. As soon as Rajya Sabha met in the afternoon, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar introduced The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021 shortly. Before the motion was adopted for the passage of the bill, Deputy Chairman Harivansh allowed Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge to speak for two minutes.

VETERAN JOURNALIST VINOD DUA 'BEYOND CRITICAL', SAYS DAUGHTER

Veteran journalist Vinod Dua, who was hospitalised with Covid earlier this year, is in the ICU and his condition is "beyond critical", his daughter, actor-comic Mallika Dua, said on Monday. The 67-year-old journalist, a pioneer in broadcast Hindi journalism with stints in Doordarshan and NDTV, lost his wife, radiologist Padmavati 'Chinna' Dua, in June after a prolonged battle with Covid. "My Papaji is beyond critical in the ICU. His health had been deteriorating rapidly since April. He also is unable to come to terms with losing the light of his life. He has lived an extraordinary life," she wrote.

12 OPPOSITION MEMBERS SUSPENDED FROM RS FOR ENTIRE WINTER SESSION

Twelve opposition members in Rajya Sabha, including Congress MP Chhaya Verma, Shiv Sena's Priyanka Chaturvedi and TMC's Dola Sen were on Monday suspended for the remaining part of the winter session for their misconduct and unruly behaviour during the last session. Among the suspended members, six are from the Congress, two each from the TMC and Shiv Sena and one each from the CPM and the CPI. The Upper House had witnessed ugly scenes when the opposition members were protesting against the three farm bills during the Monsoon session.

OVER 5 L COS WENT OUT OF BIZ, 7 LAKH NEW ONES REGISTERED IN NEARLY 6 YRS

More than 5 lakh companies went out of business while over 7 lakh new companies were set up in the last nearly six years, according to official data. The data for the period starting from April 1, 2016, till date showed that a total of 5,00,506 companies were shut down. During the same time, 7,17,049 new companies were registered under the Companies Act, 2013. Sharing the data as part of a written reply to the Lok Sabha on Monday, Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Rao Inderjit Singh also said the ministry does not 'maintain data on event base'.

BJP will remain unique, never allow dynastic politics

Going by the conduct of national and State-level parties, one begins to doubt whether Parliamentary democracy has a place in Indian politics. Monarchy has officially left the country, but it is still practised unofficially. Kings, princes, princesses, brothers-in-law of kings, spouses of kings and other family members are continuing in power in some or the other form. Speakers describe Jawaharlal Nehru as a leader who strengthened the country and its institutions but never say that he only strengthened the institution of his family. Mahatma Gandhi never encouraged his political heirs unlike Nehru, who gave importance to his family members. While Motilal encouraged Jawaharlal, Nehru encouraged his daughter

Indira Gandhi. He made his sister Vijayalakshmi Pandit a Governor and as India's Envoy to the USA, USSR and the UK. Following the footsteps of her father, Indira initiated her sons Rajiv and Sanjay into politics. During the Emergency, many atrocities were perpetrated under the leadership of Sanjay Gandhi. After the death of Indira, the reins of administration were handed over to Rajiv Gandhi. His spouse Sonia Gandhi played a crucial role behind the scenes. After Rajiv, PV Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister. He took independent decisions and initiated reforms, which was not welcomed by Sonia Gandhi and her close aides. During his tenure as PM, Manmohan Singh became a puppet in the hands of Sonia Gandhi. Congress was washed

Dynastic rule gives scope for heirs to loot the public. Efficient leaders are forced to be subservient. Those who see power as their birthright would have scant respect for the law and judiciary. In one way, dictatorship in the garb of democracy is perpetrated.

away in the country under the Modi wave, but Sonia Gandhi thrust Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Vadra onto the party. Congress leaders dismiss Rahul Gandhi as inefficient but he is still allowed to call the shots in the party. Several regional parties emulate the Congress in perpetuating family rule. People got the message that the regional parties are synonymous with family rule. The Abdullah family is exercising authority in J&K, Mulayam Singh's family in UP, Veerabhadra Singh family in

Himachal Pradesh, Deve Gowda family in Karnataka, Biju Patnaik family in Odisha, Sharad Pawar family and also that of Bal Thackeray in Maharashtra, Karunanidhi family in Tamil Nadu. There is no end to atrocities perpetrated by Jaganmohan Reddy, who came to power in Andhra Pradesh using the image of his father YS Rajasekhara Reddy. He encouraged YV Subba Reddy, Balineni Srinivas Reddy, Ravindranath Reddy and even Avinash Reddy. Opposition leader



Chandrababu Naidu is no different in promoting family members in politics. When he was in power, he made his son a Minister. In Telangana, KCR encouraged son, daughter, nephew and relatives and others and they have been wielding power indiscriminately. What is the harm in families exercising power? Even if

they resort to corruption and irregularities, there is no real alternative for the people to elect. Dynastic rule gives scope for heirs to loot the public. Efficient leaders are forced to be subservient. Those who see power as their birthright would have scant respect for the law and judiciary. In one way, dictatorship in the garb of democracy is perpetrated. Sons will not be accountable for the corruption of the father, and the grandson would not be held accountable for the son's misdeeds. Whenever an opportunity arises, Prime Minister Narendra Modi explains to the people the adverse impact of hereditary politics. He says that dynastic politics is a threat to democracy. He never said that the political

heirs should not take part in politics but condemned the culture of the same family controlling both the party and the government. Speaking at the National Youth Parliament in January, Modi welcomed youth to plunge into politics and end dynastic politics. In connection with the National Constitution Day on November 26, he expressed concern over the disappearance of a healthy democracy due to dynastic politics. He said that there is no scope for dynastic politics in the BJP. There is no culture of a single family ruling the country and the party. Anyone who is committed to the party policies and ideology will be able to rise to the top, he said. That is why a school teacher like Vajpayee, and Advani who

left his property in Karachi and worked as an ordinary activist of BJP, Venkaiah Naidu who hails from a farmer's family and chawala Modi reached top positions in the party. In spite of holding top positions in the party and government and their family members being in active politics, they gave positions to the efficient. On several occasions, the BJP gave opportunities to heirs, after the parents stepped down, purely on merit. BJP is the only party that keeps aloof from practising dynastic politics and gives importance to efficiency. That is why, a majority of the youth in the country lean towards the BJP. When people choose between ruined families and the BJP that worked for promoting the country's culture and to strengthen the economy, they are inclined towards the BJP.

Fresh grave on premises of OU creates tension

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The sight of a fresh grave on the College of Engineering of Osmania University campus triggered mild panic among students on Monday. The students who had gone for a walk behind their hostel on Sunday noticed the grave in a secluded spot. Seeing that, the students ran back to their hostel and informed the university officials about the grave. The chief warden and officials concerned enquired about it dug up the grave with the help of police and recovered the body of a pet dog buried beneath. The burying of a dog near the hostel created a flutter among the students staying at the engineering college hostel.

Court asks TS, Centre to respond on paddy logjam

Continued from page 1
Abhinav, counsel for the petitioner, contended that the farmers were losing out as the government was not buying. He said the crop was damaged and farmers were committing suicide. The petitioner wanted the court to order the authorities to pay the Minimum Support Price and make the purchase. The petitioner sought directions to the State government as well as the FCI. The High Court directed the Union and State governments as well as the FCI to provide details immediately and adjourned the hearing to December 6.

Metro logs...

Continued from page 1
He said that the daily ridership is growing fast and before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Metro had crossed the 4 lakh passengers per day mark. On November 29, 2017, the Hyderabad Metro Rail started its operations in the first 30 km stretch from Miyapur to Nagole via Ameerpet. It may be mentioned here that recently L&THMRL had recently sent SOS to the State government as it was incurring a net loss of Rs 5 crore with each passing day.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹210
Without Skin	₹230
Broiler at Farm	₹113
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	426
VIJAYAWADA	463
VISAKHAPATNAM	402
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.26

GST COMPENSATION Centre owes TS Rs 615 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The Centre on Monday told the Lok Sabha that it owes Telangana Rs 615 crore in GST compensation, until September 2021. "So far, Rs 6,927 crore has been released to Telangana as GST compensation. While Rs 4,569 crore has been given as back-to-back loans in Financial Year (FY) 2021-2022, another Rs 2,380 crore was given in FY 2020-2021. GST compensation for Financial Years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 has already been paid to the States," declared Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary in



the Lok Sabha. Responding to a question raised by MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Chaudhary said that Rs 51,798 crore in GST compensation was due to the States as of September 2021. Of this Rs 1,583 crore is due to Andhra Pradesh. Under the GST law, States are compensated for any loss of revenue arising on account of implementation of GST for five years. This period will end

'Bloody BJP' is a vulture, feeds...

Continued from page 1
"Eventually you found yourself humiliated and apologised," the Chief Minister said. Stating that the Centre was relinquishing its social responsibility, KCR said, "Now it's meddling with the established procurement policy of paddy. The BJP-led government is 100 percent going to deceive farmers of Telangana." He said the decisions taken by the Centre would burden ordinary middle-class people. "The Centre is adopting similar policies in many sectors, not just one sector. The 'useless' government is trying to push farmers into penury," the Chief Minister said. "Despite a budget of Rs 1 lakh-crore, the Centre is behaving like a grocery store owner. That's not right on its part. It is not right to talk about profit and loss at every instance," he said. KCR pointed out that the Centre has the power to come up with alternatives where needed. "In case of loss, it should not be pushed onto the States. I have

never seen such a vile Union government. I don't even expect to see it any more. The Centre is behaving badly and is a habitual liar," he said. The Chief Minister said that his party will fight for the MSP Bill to be passed. KCR said that Telangana government suffered a loss of about Rs 10,000 crore in disposal of maize and jawar procured from farmers at MSP since formation of the State. "We would go to any extent to fight the 'bloody' BJP to stop it from destroying the economy of the State," the Chief Minister said. He launched a no-holds-barred attack on Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy, going to the extent of using expletives during his diatribe. Describing Kishan Reddy as "an incompetent minister who represents the State" KCR said that nobody even cares about him in Delhi. "The BJP, which is not capable of management, is blaming us. Even with the presence of a Union Minister, there is no benefit to the State. If Kishan Reddy has the guts, he should fight with the

Centre for procurement of the paddy. He should put forth an argument to the Centre that the climate in Telangana is favourable for boiled rice," said KCR. Stating that India ranks lower than Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan at No. 101 among 116 countries in the Global Hunger Index, KCR said that Union Minister Piyush Goyal speaks without any shame. "If the stocks at the centre are huge, why is India lagging behind in the Global Hunger Index? Centre has social responsibility; it should collect grain and distribute it to the hungry. The Centre needs to wake up," the Chief Minister said. Power sector 'reforms' target farmers and middle class The Chief Minister said that the Centre was trying to bring 'reforms' in the power sector to put farmers and middle class people in trouble. "They are looking to put a meter and are stabbing the farmer in the neck. A letter came from the Union Minister to talk about electricity reforms," the Chief Minister said.

TS sanctions Rs 22.5 cr for ryots who died protesting 3 farm laws

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
The Telangana Cabinet on Monday sanctioned Rs 22.5 crore for financial assistance to the families of farmers killed during the nation-wide agitation against the three controversial, now withdrawn farm laws of the Centre. Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao announced this at a news conference at the Cabinet meeting presided over by him. As announced earlier, the

state government will pay Rs 3 lakh each to the kin of 750 farmers killed during the year-long agitation. The Chief Minister said he or his cabinet colleagues will hand over the cheques to the families of the deceased farmers. KCR demanded that the Centre pay Rs 25 lakh each to the families of these farmers. He alleged that the farmers were killed by the Narendra Modi government by bringing the three legislations.

Revanth moves adjournment motion in LS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
As announced during the 'Hari Deeksha' held in Hyderabad, TPCC president A Revanth Reddy on Monday launched the battle for Telangana's paddy farmers in the Lok Sabha. Seshadri was 73. In 1978, he entered TTD as a clerk and served in various capacities till his superannuation 14 years ago. Even after retirement, Seshadri could continue his services as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at the cash-rich hill temple as TTD had to extend his term many a time due to his sincerity, the official said, adding that he was the only TTD employee, excluding priests, working at the shrine in the same capacity for a lengthy period of three decades. He had a wide circle of contacts and acquaintances with several political bigwigs, entrepreneurs, and religious leaders across the country, the official added.

'Dollar' Seshadri...

Continued from page 1
Seshadri was in Vizag to take part in 'Karthika Deepotsavam', organised by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) that governs the hill shrine, a senior temple official said. Seshadri was 73. In 1978, he entered TTD as a clerk and served in various capacities till his superannuation 14 years ago. Even after retirement, Seshadri could continue his services as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at the cash-rich hill temple as TTD had to extend his term many a time due to his sincerity, the official said, adding that he was the only TTD employee, excluding priests, working at the shrine in the same capacity for a lengthy period of three decades. He had a wide circle of contacts and acquaintances with several political bigwigs, entrepreneurs, and religious leaders across the country, the official added.

Raja Singh demands ban on Bigg Boss show

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
When the Bigg Boss-5 Telugu reality show began on TV, the CPI's Secretary, Dr K Narayana, had demanded that the show should be banned as it was likely to affect family traditions. He had also criticised the State and the Centre for permitting the airing of the show. Dr Narayana had warned that the producers of Bigg Boss would approach courts as he had already approached the court. However, the petitions didn't help in stopping the show. After the elimination of Anchor Ravi from the Big Boss house in the 12th week another politician has raised his voice. This politician is not from the CPI but the BJP. The BJP MLA representing Goshamahala, T. Raja Singh, demanded that the Big Boss show should be banned immediately. He alleged that a conspiracy had been hatched to create differences between AP and Telangana states through

the Bigg Boss show. Raja Singh had urged Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao and Home Minister Mahamood Ali to examine the programme. He said that it was impossible to watch the show with family. He said Salman Khan had insulted Hindus in the Hindi version of Bigg Boss. However, in the Telugu Bigg Boss show, the producers are trying to create regional rivalries in the guise of business. Raja Singh had alleged that officials concerned were giving permissions after taking commissions. Bigg Boss Season-5 became the focal point of controversies for eliminating Anchor Ravi from the show in the 12th week. Anchor Ravi was eliminated from the show amidst dramatic developments in the Sunday episode. Anchor Ravi's fans entered the scene and staged a dharna before Annapurna Studios on Sunday night itself. They demanded that the show's producers should give details of the votes of the contestants.

TS on tenterhooks as Covid...

Continued from page 1
The school authorities conducted tests on all 550 students after a couple of students displayed symptoms. Though educational institutions in TS were to reopen from September 1, residential schools were reopened in the last week of October after the State Education Department gave an assurance to the HC that all preventive measures would be taken. On Monday, Education Minister Sabita Indra Reddy said that it had been brought to her notice that some educational institutions were not complying with the Covid-19 regulations and warned that action should be taken against them. She said that in the wake of Covid cases coming to light in some educational institutions in the State, screening should be done for all students in these institutions. The Minister, who chaired a meeting with officials on Monday, suggested that steps be taken to ensure that everyone in educational institutions adheres to the rules, including wearing of face masks, physical distancing, and others.

42 students at TS residential school test +ve

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
As many as 42 students and one teacher of a residential school for girls in Sangareddy have tested positive for Covid. The cases have come to light at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Gurukul school at Muthangi. Of the 491 students at the school, Covid test was conducted on Sunday on 261 students. A total of 42 students and a teacher were found infected. Health authorities were conducting tests on remaining students on Monday. The samples of the students who tested positive were sent to Hyderabad for genome sequencing. The official said the infected students were kept in isolation at the hostel in school premises and they were all stable. A student had taken ill three days ago. Since she was showing suspected symptoms of Covid, the school authorities decided to conduct tests on all students.

New Covid variant stokes concern

Continued from page 1
The mutations R203K and G204R are being considered to be associated with higher infectivity. Similarly, there are deletions at NSP6, which could result in immune escape, Lahariya, also a physician and epidemiologist, told PTI. A mutation means a change in a nucleic acid base or amino acid molecule. Mutations eventually accumulate to generate variants that differ from the original virus more and more. According to Lahariya, any emergence of variants should be treated as an important starting point and with utmost caution but not with panic or exaggerated knee jerk responses of border closures at the drop of the hat. Immunologist Satyajit Rath added that the emergence of the new variant suggests that we need to stop treating the Covid pandemic as a short-term crisis that needed short-term measures but has already passed. We need sustained, long-term policies and investments in public health at all levels. According to Rath, a scien-

Countries start shutting down borders

It could take "days to several weeks" to understand the level of severity of the variant, says the WHO, which flagged Omicron as a "variant of concern". As a precaution to avert a worst-case scenario, Japan will close its borders to all foreigners from midnight on Tuesday, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said. "Japan will first of all ban the entry of foreigners," he told reporters, adding that Japanese returning from specified nations would face quarantine in designated facilities. tist with the National Institute of Immunology (NII) in New Delhi, very little is known about this variant, but it carries a lot of mutations and is associated with a spurt of case numbers in Gauteng province in South Africa. I would guess that it will probably turn out to be very good at spreading, it will likely not cause more severe disease, current vaccines will probably show some reduction in their potency against it but will not be 'ineffective', and current drugs will quite likely

'No case of new 'Omicron' variant of Covid detected

The Centre also issued a slew of directions to the states for ramping up testing-surveillance measures and health facilities. It also decided to review the resumption of international flights. The countries designated as 'at-risk' (updated as of November 26, 2021) include European countries, the UK, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel. work well against it, Rath said. Upasana Ray, a senior scientist at Kolkata's CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology (IICB), agreed. The most important tool against this variant is to follow COVID-19 appropriate health guidelines and getting vaccinated. Vaccines should provide at least partial protection against progression of the infection to severe COVID, Ray told PTI. Virologist Gagandeep Kang said India may have a small advantage.

AP, TS didn't...

Continued from page 1
Responding to question raised by BJP MP GVL Narasimha Rao, he said that the implementation of said notifications was subject to timely action and cooperation of the State Governments. After notification of the gazette, Detailed Project Report of six projects have been submitted by Telangana for appraisal. No DPR has been submitted by the Water Resources Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh. As per the notification, the governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have to completely hand over the jurisdiction of the operational projects or components (barrages, dams, reservoirs, regulating structures), part of canal network and transmission lines specified in Schedule 2. As per the GRMB "Jurisdiction of the projects/components has not been handed over by the governments of both the States in respect of any project under Schedule 2".

Now, Internet of Things to tackle mosquito breeding in twin cities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has introduced a new technology - Internet of Things (IoT) - to solve the mosquito menace in the twin cities. Hitherto, the civic body has been using drones to check the menace. It also employs fogging operations to solve the problem.

The officials of the GHMC's Entomology wing, in a latest move, adopted the IoT in addition to checking the menace using drones.

Mosquitoes play predominant role in spreading diseases like dengue, chikungunya and others. Annually, the GHMC spends lot of funds to check the menace employing different techniques to prevent breeding of the mosquitoes. During the rainy season, many cases of viral fevers and dehydration are reported from various parts of the city due to pre-



ailed unhygienic conditions. The city has the highest dengue mosquito index of 16, which means the dengue is present in 16 out of every 100 homes in the city.

In the post-Covid scenario, out of 1,184 cases of dengue reported in September this year, Hyderabad accounts for 594.

The areas like Nampally, Asif Nagar, Mehdiapatnam, Tolichowki and Golkonda are facing the problem. Some areas of the posh Jubilee Hills and Banjara Hills localities are also affected by the menace.

Under the Telangana Mosquito Eradication Digital Solution programme, the IoT is being employed as a pilot

project under the limits of GHMC. As part of implementation of urban malaria eradication programme, the IoT equipment has been fixed to fogging equipment.

As part of the pilot project, 10 portable fogging machines and 64 vehicle-mounted machines — total of 74 machines — have been fixed with smart

trackers. The equipment has been given access to the officials through mobile applications and were linked to the dash board.

The zonal commissioners and deputy commissioners and chief of the entomology department of the GHMC have been monitoring the fogging operations at the field level.

The new technology enables the officials to track down how long did the fogging machines travelled and to regulate fogging operations. In case of any irregularities, the officials can control the operations in case of any hurdles and irregularities.

Chief Entomologist of the GHMC Dr Rambabu said that the new method would enable the GHMC to check the mosquito menace in all area of the city. The GHMC has been adopting new methods, besides employing manual force and application of technology, in checking the menace.

ED nabs absconding Hyd-based jeweller in Maha in PMLA case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The ED has arrested promoter of Hyderabad-based Ghanshyamdas Gems & Jewels Sanjay Kumar Agarwal, an absconding accused wanted in a money laundering case linked to smuggling and 'diversion' of duty-free gold imported by agencies like the Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation (MMTC) and some others.

Sanjay Agarwal, the agency said in a statement on Monday, was arrested on Sunday from Aamby Valley in Maharashtra's Lonavala while he was attending a wedding there.

He had been on the run for more than six months after a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in Kolkata issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against him in April in connection with this case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said.

Even his anticipatory bail application was rejected by the Calcutta High Court earlier this month, it said. After his arrest, Agarwal was produced before



the same special PMLA court which sent him to seven days of ED custody. "Agarwal is involved in smuggling and diversion of duty-free gold, imported through nominated agencies like MMTC and Diamond India Limited."

"Such imported gold was originally meant for export purposes," the ED said.

It alleged that the "smuggled" gold was "diverted" by Agarwal along with his associates in the domestic territory and sold illegally to generate proceeds of crime which were then laundered and projected as untainted property and used for purchasing immovable

properties in the name of others. The money laundering case was filed against Agarwal and others after taking cognisance of an investigation conducted by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI). The ED had earlier arrested a Sanjay Kumar Agarwal's son Preet Kumar Agarwal in this case and filed a charge sheet before the special PMLA court in Kolkata.

It had attached 54 kg gold and three immovable properties worth more than Rs 25 crore while bank deposits of Rs 56 lakh were taken possession by it under the provisions of the PMLA.

‘Lock-up death’ of Mariamma fit for SIT probe, not CBI: HC

G RAVI KIRAN ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court has ordered to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to inquire into the alleged lock-up death of Mariamma.

Delivering its order on Monday, the HC ruled out a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry in the case.

Earlier, the High Court had said that the case is fit for CBI probe on November 11, and summoned CBI officials on November 22.

But, after the Advocate General's appeal to the court, it ordered a probe by SIT.

The victim Mariamma, 45, a resident of Chintakani in Khammam district, used to work as a maid at a pastor's house at Addagur in Yadadri district. She, her son and his friend were brought to the police station for questioning



in connection with a theft case on June 15, 2021. Later, she died in police custody allegedly due to torture by the police officials.

The police tried to portray the death as a heart attack. After a petition was filed by the People's Union of Civil Liberties, the HC ordered a judicial probe and another post-mortem examination.

During the second post-mortem examination, doctors found injuries on Mariamma's body. The judicial

Commission also submitted a report confirming the same.

After the Advocate General made a request to allow the police to probe the case, the HC ordered the constitution of a SIT.

The SIT should inquire into the case based on the report of the Judicial Commission, the HC said. It may be remembered here that a sub-inspector V Maheswar, two constables MA Rasheed Patel and P Janaiah involved in this case were suspended.

Auto driver, friends rob, assault man

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A man was robbed by an auto-rickshaw driver and his friends on Sunday midnight at Rajendra Nagar.

The complainant identified as Nagarjuna, a native of Nalgonda, hired an auto from Lakdikapool to Rajendra Nagar at 11 pm on Sunday.

After going some distance the auto-rickshaw driver allowed two of his friends to board the vehicle. Nagarjuna didn't object as they seemed to be friends of the auto driver. After reaching Mehdiapatnam, the driver diverted the auto-rickshaw. Suspecting the driver, Nagarjuna objected and asked him to go the other way.

The gang stopped the auto and assaulted him. They took Nagarjuna's cash and mobile phone and fled. Nagarjuna complained at the Rajendra Nagar Police Station. The police are investigating.

48 including BJP corporators questioned

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP corporators attended the inquiry held at the Saifabad Police Station in connection with the case filed against them for damaging property at the GHMC office.

The police had issued notices to 72 suspects in this case and 48 of them came to the police station on Monday. Among the suspects summoned 33 are BJP corporators.

The police questioned them and collected their details including their version. The BJP corporators alleged that the TRS pressured the police and framed false charges against them while they were protesting peacefully for jus-



tice.

On November 24, the BJP had called a protest at the GHMC office demanding funds from the Government of Telangana. The BJP corpora-

tors and party workers staged a dharna.

The protest turned violent, after they entered the GHMC office, the Mayor's chamber and other areas. Despite

attempts by the police they entered the GHMC office and damaged furniture.

The police arrested them and released them on bail. But on November 26, Minister KTR posted the BJP's protest photo on his Twitter account and asked the Police Commissioner to take action.

After that the police issued notices to persons who had participated in the dharna.

"We issued notices to 72 people whom we had identified. Of them, 48 attended the inquiry including 33 corporators of the BJP. We have recorded their details. We will submit their version and evidence in court," Inspector Ch. Saidi Reddy said.

Blood donors can travel free on RTC buses today: MD

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) managing director VC Sajjanar has offered free travel facility on November 30 for blood donors across the State.

Sajjanar said blood donors can travel free on TSRTC buses after donating blood at TSRTC's mega blood donation camps being held at 65 centres for thalassemia patients across the State.

The TSRTC is conducting a mega blood donation camp in association with the Indian Red Cross Society.

"To Promote #Blood Donation #TSRTC is offering free transportation only on Nov. 30, 2021, to #BloodDonors on their way back Who donated blood in #Mega Blood Donation Camp for more details kindly contact Nearest depot managers," Sajjanar tweeted.

TSRTC chairman Bajireddy Goverdhan will inaugurate the mega blood donation camp at the Jubilee Bus Station at 9 am.

Cricket betting racket busted in Telangana, Rs 2.5 cr cash seized

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Police in Warangal on Monday busted an online cricket betting racket with the arrest of two organisers and seized over Rs 2 crore cash.

The organizers were running the racket mainly from Mumbai and were making customers through a website. They had received bets for the recent Twenty20 World Cup and India New Zealand Twenty20 series. Police arrested Madishetty Prasad, a native of Hanamkonda and Abhay Vilas Rao, native of Yavatmahal in Maharashtra and booked three cases.

Warangal Commissioner of Police Tarun Joshi said that Rs 2,05,14,000 in currency notes were seized from the accused.

Police also used 15 debit cards and 43 cheque books used for frequent withdrawal of money from different banks. Eight mobile phones, which were being used for betting, were also seized.

The WhatsApp group in each mobile phone had 150-200 members, said police.



Explaining the modus operandi, he said the organisers were making customers and sending them links with username and password to participate in the online betting.

"The betting was for every ball and every player and the organizers were offering big returns if the winning chances of a team were low," he said.

The accused were also using their platform for other forms of betting and games like Teen Patti. The police official pointed out that all such games are prohibited in Telangana.

He said since indulging in betting is also an offence, the customers who lost the money had not lodged a complaint with police.

The commissioner said a team will be sent to Mumbai, from where the kingpin and other main organisers were functioning. They used to keep 80 per cent of the profit with themselves and transfer 20 per cent to regional organisers like Prasad.

Police investigations revealed that Prasad was arrested in two betting cases in Hyderabad during 2019. Since he was under the police watch in Hyderabad, he shifted to Warangal a few months ago and continued his illegal activities.

Joshi said the accused had also acquired property from the money earned through betting racket.

36-year-old man gets life term for relative's murder

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Malkajgiri Court on Monday has sentenced a 36-year-old man for life imprisonment for murdering his relative in 2015.

The convict Ippala Srinivas, 36, used to live along with his wife Renuka at Kushaiguda. The victim identified as Polepaka Srinivas and his wife Meghamala, who were the relatives of Ippala Srinivas, were also residing in their neighbourhood.

Ippala Srinivas used to torture his wife expressing his doubts that she is having an affair with Polepaka Srinivas. Suspecting her fidelity, Ippala Srinivas shifted his family to another place. But, continued to torture her. Vexed over his behaviour, Renuka has moved to her mother's home.

Boring grudge on Polepaka Srinivas that he was the reason for the conflicts between Ippala Srinivas and his wife, the convict had axed Polepaka Srinivas to death at his residence on October 17, 2015.

Based on a complaint, the police have investigated the case and submitted all the evidences in the court. The court on Monday has sentenced the convict to undergo life imprisonment along with a fine of Rs 10,000.



162 newly trained S-Is report for duty in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An interactive session was held with the 2020 batch of 162 Sub-Inspectors who had completed basic and field training and have been posted to L&O police stations in Hyderabad city.

The programme was held at CAR Headquarters at the Petla Buruju Police Grounds.

The Police Commissioner, Anjani Kumar, inaugurated the session. Additional CP Shika Goel and other officials too attended the session.

A total of 203 new Sub Inspectors have been allotted to Hyderabad city police. Of them, 162 Sub-Inspectors have reported for duty and the

remaining 41 will report on December 30.

The new batch has 61 women Sub Inspectors. This is the result of the 33 per cent reservations for women in the police department.

Anjani Kumar welcomed the probationary Sub-Inspectors to the Hyderabad city police family.

Addressing the team, he said that self-discipline and conduct is very important in the department.

One must obey orders at the police station and should work as a team, he added. He said that many policemen have become martyrs in the line of duty and their tradition must be continued.

DRI seizes 2.2 kg gold from airline catering employee

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 2.2 kilograms of gold worth Rs 1.09 crore on Monday at Hyderabad.

The DRI arrested a man working for an airline in its catering service while he was trying to sell the smuggled gold.

The DRI got information that a catering employee was carrying gold from West Asia to Hyderabad and was selling it here. As a catering employee he used to travel to West Asia and back to Hyderabad regularly.

The catering employee managed to smuggle the gold in his luggage using his connections at the airport.

The DRI received information about the catering employee through its informers. They put him under watch. On Monday he tried to sell gold at Hyderabad and the DRI team arrested him.

The DRI took him into custody and questioned him about the gold he had smuggled in earlier.

65 percent of RGIA expansion work completed

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

The Union government has said that 65 per cent of the expansion work of the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad, has been completed. The deadline for completion of the project is December 2022. The expansion work began in 2019.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation General VK Singh told Parliament on Monday that on completion of the project, the passenger capacity of the airport would increase from a current level of 12 million passengers per annum



(MPPA) to 34 MPPA.

"The airside infrastructure is also being expanded to increase capacity from a current level of 32 peak hour Air Traffic Movements to 51 peak hour Air Traffic Movements. The airside expansion works related to the west apron, southeast remote apron, paral-

lel taxiway, rapid exit taxiways are completed," VK Singh said. He was responding to a question raised by MP Suresh Reddy in the Rajya Sabha.

Hyderabad is already available as a point of call to the designated carriers of more than 40 foreign countries. Responding to the question of

running direct flights to Europe, South Africa and USA, the MoS said, "The airlines operate within the ambit of bilateral agreements and provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability".

Responding to the question of setting up six new airports in Telangana, VK Singh said that the timeline for completion of airport project depends upon many factors such as land acquisition, availability of mandatory clearances, financial closure by the project proponent i.e. the Government of Telangana.

It may be mentioned here that the State government has proposed to take up development of three Greenfield airports at Jakranpally in Nizamabad district, Palvancha in Bhadrachalam district, Palvancha in Bhadrachalam district and one in Mahabubnagar district as well as three Brownfield airports at Mamnoon in Warangal district, Basanth Nagar in Peddapalli district and Adilabad in Adilabad district.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has conducted techno-feasibility studies for these six airports and has submitted the final report to the State government recently.

Tiger on prowl

Sighted near Pakala tank



PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Beware of the tiger that is on the prowl in forest areas near Kothaguda!

Three persons, including a woman, were traveling on a two-wheeler when they sighted the tiger at Pakala. They fled the place for safety deserting their motorcycle. According to reports, MPTC N Swapna of Sadireddypalli was traveling on a two-wheeler along with husband Linganna and his brother

Ramu to Konapuram, when a tiger suddenly crossed their two-wheeler near the tank in Pakala.

The frightened trio discarded the motorcycle on which they were traveling ran towards the forest for cover. Frightened to the core, Linganna and his brother Ramu managed to pick up courage and returned to the road and heaved a sigh of relief as the tiger left the place. They took their motorcycle and left for Konapuram.

Ganja worth Rs.60 lakh seized

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

A lorry smuggling 600 kg of dry ganja worth Rs 60 lakh was seized at the Kandi village in the district. Two persons, including the lorry driver Ganesh Nandkishore Poddar, were arrested in connection with the incident, the district superintendent of police Ramanakumar said on Monday. In fact, the lorry is heading for Pandaripur in Maharashtra.

The hand of Anil Reddy, kingpin, of the Narayanakhet area behind the ganja smuggling is suspected. Anil Reddy purchased Ganja at Narsipatnam and also iron scrap at a throwaway price and hid ganja bags under iron scrap to smuggle the narcotic to Maharashtra. Disclosing this to the media, he said that so far 835 kg of ganja was seized in the district. In all, 22 persons were arrested in connection with 22 cases of ganja smuggling. The police arrested 14 others for ganja cultivation.

Vaccination is the only way out

District Collector stresses for completing two doses, reviews paddy procurement

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

In order to drive out the new Covid variant fear from the people, the District Collector Hanumantha Rao asked the officials to complete the vaccination process on a war footing and also advised the people not to neglect vaccination as it was the only protection available to save themselves from the deadly virus. In a review meeting, the Collector stressed the need to create awareness among people about the necessity of completing two doses of vaccination and ordered the officials to strive for achieving the 100pc target without any procrastination.

He also ordered the officials concerned to take up the issues of paddy procurement, double bedroom houses, and vaccination on a war footing without any delay. In a review meeting held here on Monday, he laid



District Collector Hanumantha Rao in a review meeting on Monday

a road map for the officials for the completion of the said tasks.

He also inquired about the pace of paddy procurement and the construction of double-bedroom houses. He told them to take down the details of the paddy procured on daily basis and complete the tab entries immediately. He also enquired about the pace of medical college construction works and ordered them to

quicken the works.

He warned the officials to carefully undertake the paddy procurement and any dereliction of duty was found action would be taken against the responsible people. The collector ordered that paddy with specified standards should be bought in toto without any objection.

On this occasion, he announced the details of the paddy purchased so far saying

that 87pc of paddy was purchased from PAC centers and 83 percent of paddy was purchased from IKP centers. Asking the officials not to delay the sending of the purchased paddy to rice mills and pay the farmers from whom paddy was bought without any delay, the Collector stressed that the issue reviewed should be taken up immediately and further steps are taken on them. As the new wave of

Corona was causing fear among the people, the Collector advised the officials to be on alert and complete 100 pc vaccination on a war footing. At the same time, he said that a complete awareness should be created among people and the rules of Covid protocols followed without any dereliction.

He gave the details of vaccination so far and said 80 percent of people have taken the first dose and 37 percent completed their second dose. Saying that the vaccination is the only protection from the Covid new variant, the Collector cautioned the people not to be negligent regarding Covid protocols and warned them to be careful regarding their health. "Vaccination not only protects you but also your family and ultimately the society. Don't be negligent in this regard" the Collector said.

Release funds for 2BHK houses

Villagers appeal to the District Collector in Praja Vani programme

PNS ■ JAYASHANKER BHULAPALAPALLY

Residents of Empedu village in Tekumatla Mandal on Monday urged the district collector to release funds for completion of the 30 2BHK houses in the village, which progress up to the slab and walls.

Taking part in the Praja Vani, they made a representation in this regard. ZPTC of Mahadevpur Gudala Aruna urged the district collector for compensation to the farmers who sustained loss of paddy and cotton crops in 2000 acres in Chandrupalli, Maddulapalli, Palugula, Kuntlam, and Annaram villages due to back-



District Collector Bhavesh Misra speaking to the people who came to meet him to explain their problems here on Monday

waters of the Annaram barrage. Ippalapalli village sarpanch and residents of the

village urged the district collector to fix the boundaries of Akinapalli and Ippalapalli due

to lack of clear demarcation of the boundaries the people of two villages are often clashing with each other. In fact, Ippalapalli was carved out a village panchayat from Akinapalli village.

A resident of Chidenepalli village of Kataram Mandal and others urged the district collector for payment of compensation in lieu of her six acres acquired for Mukteswara LI Scheme reservoir as part of the Kaleswaram project.

District Collector Bhavesh Misra told the people that he would route their representations to concerned departments and take steps to resolve their problems.

Lift paddy and shift to mills forthwith

District Collector inspects paddy center and orders officials

PNS ■ WARANGAL

District Collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanumanthu on Monday paid a surprise visit to the paddy procurement centers at Dharmasagar, Narayanagiri, and Muppam in the district and asked the officials there to take steps to shift the weighed paddy to the rice mills without any delay to save the paddy from getting damp due to unseasonal rains. He asked the authorities to deploy a suitable number of lorries to transport paddy to the rice mills.

He sought details on the extent of procurement of paddy whether the procure-



District Collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanumanthu on a sudden inspection of a paddy procurement center

ment center has enough tarpaulins and gunny bags. The authorities there told the dis-

trict collector that there were no problems whatsoever with regard to procurement of the

paddy.

All operations are going on smoothly, they added. He asked them to explain the MSP to the farmers at which the paddy is being procured. He wanted them to take steps to keep middlemen at bay from procurement centers. He inspected the center measuring moisture in the paddy and gave necessary instructions to persons there.

Additional Collector Sandhya Rani, DRDA project director Srinivas Kumar, DSO Vasanta Lakshmi, District Manager Civil Supplies Krishnaveni, DCO Nageswara Rao and others were also present in the meeting.

BJP, TRS neglecting Tribals: Uttam Kumar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress MP from Nalgonda, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy, has said that after 7.5 years in government, the BJP and the TRS governments have once again shown their neglect of tribals in Telangana.

The Centre's reply clearly states that the delay in the allotment of land by the TRS Government is responsible for the delay in establishing a Central Tribal University in Telangana.

The reply from the Centre states that the Central Tribal University in Andhra Pradesh is already operational while work is yet to start on the site in Bhupalpally district for the Central Tribal University of Telangana, he added.

After 7.5 years in power, the BJP Government has said that a proposal has been moved for approval of the

Union Department of Expenditure. This shows that no funds had been allocated by the Centre for the tribal university in Telangana, Uttam added.

The tribals in Telangana have been cheated by KCR as he had not fulfilled the promise to provide them 12 percent reservations (which is their Constitutional right), three acres of agricultural land, double bedroom houses, etc., he said.

K Chandrasekhar Rao became Chief Minister mainly because of the support of tribals and Dalits, but he has been cheating them, Uttam declared.

N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and the BJP MP from Nizamabad, Dharmapuri Arvind, asked the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs to reveal whether the Centre has started a tribal university in Telangana.

‘Illicit relationship was the motive’

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

An illicit relationship is found to be the cause of the gruesome murder of a 35-year-old Mee Seva employee Sankar in Godavarikhani on November 25 under the limits of the NTPC police station limits. The police took the accused Poyyila Rajulu and Hemalata, spouse of the deceased, into custody and seized two motorcycles, a mobile phone used by the culprit, and two swords. The police also seized the broken pieces of beer bottles. The deceased was identified as Poyyila Raju, 28, resident of NTPC quarters.

While Raju figured as the A1 in the crime, the deceased's spouse Kampelli Hemalata, a nurse in a private hospital, figured as A2. Disclosing this to media here on Monday, Ramagundam Commissioner of Police Chandrasekhar Reddy said that the accused tried to cause the disappearance of the body in a true filmi style. But, the police acted



Police officials speaking to media explaining the cause of the murder

with tact and brought the culprits to the book.

On the basis of a complaint lodged by Kampelli Pochamma, mother of the deceased Sankar, the NTPC police registered a case and investigated it. On November 27, the police could recover the severed head and left hand of the body behind NTPC Cooling Towers and the case of Sankar as that of a missing person to a murder case.

The police investigated the case more vigorously from the

macy grew between Raju and his colleague Hemalata, wife of the deceased, leading to the crossing of emotional barriers. Sankar suspected the fidelity of Hemalata leading to often quarrel over the issue. He used to harass Hemalata physically and mentally.

Hemalata and Raju decided to eliminate Sankar so that they will be able to lead a peaceful life. As part of the scheme, Raju procured two swords and hid them in his house and waiting for an opportunity to strike.

Around 10:30 pm on November 25, having dropped his wife at the hospital called up Raju and blamed him for lack of harmony in the family. The accused asked Sankar to come to his home and made him drink liquor.

Acting as per the hatched plan, Raju hit the inebriated Shankar on his head with a beer bottle causing him to lose consciousness. Afterward, he stabbed Sankar on his head and neck killing him on the spot.

Over a period of time, inti-

Solve problems in a week, Collector tells officials

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Additional District Collector Tejas Nandlal Pawar on Monday urged the officials to dispose of the representations received as part of Praja Vaani in a week.

He along with another additional collector K Sitarama Rao received representations from people as part of the Praja Vaani programme.

He said that the representations at the district level would be very less provided the Mandal level authorities dispose of them then and there. He advised them to speak with concerned officials and resolve the problems of other government departments too. He wanted the Tahsildars and MPDOs to focus on resolving the people's representations.

He asked them to upload the applications seeking title deeds for Podu lands before Wednesday.

He asked tahsildars of all mandals to complete Bruhat

Palle Prakruti vanams. Farmers should not raise paddy in rabi as the Centre made it clear that it is not going to procure parboiled rice, he said asking the farmers to grow alternative crops in rabi. The special officers should focus on the Kharif paddy procurement, he said. Special officials on visits to mandals should inspect government schools, hostels and check the progress of students in education and find out whether they get good food or not.

He asked the people to guard themselves against Covid another variant of Omicron and speed up receiving the vaccine. Everyone should wear masks, sanitise their hands. Additional Collector Revenue K Sitarama Rao asked Tahsildars to dispose of over 133 pending applications pertaining to Dharani and complete pending registration of agricultural lands.

Sensitise farmers on alternative crops, officials told

PNS ■ SIDDIPEET

District Additional Collector Muzameel Khan on Monday asked the agriculture and horticulture officials to sensitise farmers against the cultivation of paddy in rabi as Centre made it clear to the state that it is not going to lift parboiled rice. Taking part in Praja Vani, he gave clear directions on the procurement of Kharif paddy. As the Centre and FCI made it clear their stand on parboiled rice, he asked the officials to encourage farmers to raise alternative crops in rabi by holding awareness programmes.

District officials appointed as Mandal special officers to oversee the Kharif paddy procurement should enter all information on procurement in tabs without any pendency of work. If anyone is found negligent, disciplinary action will be imminent, he warned. RDOs, Assembly constituency in charges, cluster in charges, Tahsildars, MPDOs, MAOs to step up the pace of paddy procurement during the next one



Additional Collector inspecting Muzmil Khan inspecting a paddy procurement center on Monday

week and send the paddy to rice mills from time to time. They also should pay attention to making payments to farmers on time. In case of any problems, RDOs and Mandal Special officers should take remedial measures.

The DROs and DRDOs should hold meetings with the cluster in charge and procurement center authorities and procure paddy and make payments to the farmers. Assessing the quantity of paddy that farmers are likely to

bring to the procurement center and the paddy already weighed, the authorities should keep ready gunny bags and should overcome the problem of hamalis and gunny bags. They should keep ready transport vehicles to transport the paddy to rice mills. The paddy weight should be immediately rushed to the rice mills to prevent it from getting drenched due to rains. District Revenue Officer B Chennaiah and other district officials took part in Praja Vani.

‘I will quit if my wife gets less than 230 votes’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC working president T. Jagga Reddy has said that he will resign his party position in case his wife Nirmala fails to get even one vote less than 230 votes in Medak district in the local bodies' quota MLC elections being held on December 10. He said that he had fielded his wife Nirmala after getting the consent of all party leaders. He said that he will confine himself to his MLA post in case his wife gets even one vote less than 230 votes.

Speaking to the media at the Assembly media point on Monday, Jagga Reddy said that both the TRS and the BJP were engaging in mudslinging for two months.

He said that farmers were facing a lot of trouble from cultivating paddy to selling it. The TRS leaders are transporting the farmers who are near and dear to local MLAs. The situation across the nation is the same as 60 percent of the paddy is on the roads, Jagga Reddy said.



Road expansion and official dereliction!

The road in Nalgonda is a virtual hell as officials ignore repeated appeals

A. SESHACHARYULU ■ NALGONDA

Lack of coordination between government departments leads to wasting public money. The authorities concerned have not been awakening in spite of a number of accidents happening every day. If the government department undertakes any work it should seek coordination from all the departments concerned so that the works are executed in a flawless manner. Since development works involve so many other departments, a coordinated effort is a must. But in Nalgonda, this

very coordination is strikingly lacking thereby leading to accidents and causing a lot of trouble to the people.

As the officials concerned show no concern towards the daily sufferings of the people, the situation is aggravating day by day. A road widening work of 6 km from Charlapally Bypass to Collectorate in the district headquarter has been undertaken.

The R and B Department under Nalgonda Municipality oversees the road works with funds received from the Central Urban Development Department. Road construction is currently in progress.

However, the structures that are hindering the expansion are old poles and electricity transformers now coming into the middle of the road. These should be removed by the electricity department officials and looked after without any trouble to the structure.

But due to negligence on the part of the electricity department officials, the poles have not yet been removed. The road contractor is not doing what he can to keep the poles intact and carry out road construction work.

The metalwork is already done. In the next few days, BT works are also nearing comple-

tion. But so far neither the R and B officials nor the electricity department officials have not responded to this problem. The people are angry that not a single officer is focusing on this road which is also regularly used by the district authorities.

There is an urgent need of removing those Electricity poles immediately.

In the past, the Electricity poles on Miryalaguda Road were not removed even during the road widening and the contractor also kept the poles and constructed the road. At present, those poles are still in the middle of the road.

INDIA CORNER

Veteran journalist Vinod Dua ‘beyond critical’; daughter rejects rumours

Veteran journalist Vinod Dua, who was hospitalised with Covid earlier this year, is in the ICU and his condition is “beyond critical”, his daughter, actor-comic Mallika Dua, said on Monday and asked people to not spread rumours about his death. The 67-year-old journalist, a pioneer in broadcast Hindi journalism with stints in Doordarshan and NDTV, lost his wife, radiologist Padmavati ‘Chinna’ Dua, to Covid in June. “My Papaji is beyond critical in the ICU. His health had been deteriorating rapidly since April. He also is unable to come to terms with losing the light of his life. He has lived an extraordinary life and given us the same. He deserves no pain. He is immensely loved and revered and I request you all to pray that he experiences as little pain as possible,” Mallika Dua wrote. As news of his ill-health spread, so did rumours that he had passed away and some people even posted condolence messages, prompting his daughter to request people to not spread rumours.



Nawab Malik gets bail in defamation case filed by BJP’s Mohit Bharatiya

A magistrate court here on Monday granted bail to Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik in a defamation case filed against him by former Mumbai BJP youth wing president Mohit Kamboj Bharatiya. The Mazagaon magistrate court allowed Malik’s bail on a personal bond of Rs 15,000. The court had earlier this month issued a process (notice) to Malik on the criminal defamation complaint of Bharatiya, who had alleged that the NCP leader defamed him and his brother-in-law after the NCB’s raid on a cruise ship last month. The court had then noted that prima facie Malik’s statements harmed the complainant’s (Bharatiya’s) reputation and offence under Section 500 (defamation) of the Indian Penal Code was made out against the NCP leader. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) last month raided the cruise ship off the Mumbai coast and claimed to have seized drugs onboard. The agency subsequently arrested 20 people, including Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan’s son Aryan Khan, in connection with the cruise drugs case.



Tiger deaths due to poaching reduced in last 3 years, Centre tells Lok Sabha

The number of tiger deaths due to poaching has come down significantly in the last three years while elephant deaths because of the same reason have gone up, the Lok Sabha was informed on Monday. In response to a query in the House, Minister of State for Environment Ashwini Kumar Choubey said in the last three years, 58 tigers were victims of poaching, out of which seven were killed in 2020, 17 in 2019 and 34 in 2018. Sharing the data of the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Choubey said 14 elephants died due to poaching in 2020-21, which is higher than 2019-20 (six deaths) and 2018-2019 (nine deaths). The minister shared with the Lok Sabha details of cases involving illegal trafficking of endangered animals. In the last three years, there has been a decline in the number of cases of illegal trafficking of endangered animals and consequently the number of arrests, the House was told. While in 2019, as many as 805 cases of illegal trafficking of endangered animals were recorded, in 2020 the number came down to 601.



12 parties condemn Centre for RS members suspension

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leaders of 12 opposition parties on Monday condemned the government for bringing a motion that led to the suspension of 12 members of Rajya Sabha for their unruly behaviour during the last parliamentary session.

The opposition leaders termed the suspension as “unwarranted” and “undemocratic”, and alleged that the action is in violation of all rules and procedures of the Upper House.

“The leaders of the opposition parties unitedly condemn the unwarranted and undemocratic suspension of 12 members in violation of all the Rules of Procedure of Rajya Sabha pertaining to suspension of members for the entire duration of the Winter session,” the joint statement signed by leaders of the opposition parties said. “The motion moved by the Government for suspending the members in regard to the unfortunate incident that occurred in the previous ses-



sion is unprecedented and violates the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the Council of States (Rajya Sabha),” it said. The signatories of the joint statement are

In LS, BJP members greet PM with ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’; Oppn shouts ‘Jai Kisan’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Monday greeted by members of the BJP with thumping of desks and ‘Bharat Mata Ki Jai’ slogan as he entered

Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and members of the Congress, DMK, SP, NCP, Shiv Sena, RJD, CPI(M), CPI, IUML, LJD, JDS, MDMK, TRS and AAP.

the Lok Sabha chamber on the first day of the Winter Session of Parliament. Members for the Opposition raised the ‘Jai Kisan’ slogan. The prime minister reached the Lok Sabha minutes before the House met for the day.

LS adjourned for the day amid continuous protests by Opposition

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Proceedings of the Lok Sabha were adjourned for the day on Monday amid continuous protest by Opposition members over issues pertaining to farmers. After the initial two adjournments, the House met again at 2 pm, but adjourned for the day as Opposition members continued with their protests, raising slogans and holding placards, demanding justice for farmers. Rajendra Agrawal, who was chairing the proceedings, requested members to allow the House to function but later adjourned it till Tuesday morning. Earlier, a bill to repeal the three contentious agricultural laws, against which farmers have been protesting for over a year, was passed within minutes of its introduction by Lok Sabha, without a discussion.

NC to continue fight for Article 370 restoration: Omar Abdullah

PNS ■ JAMMU

Slamming the Congress for its silence, National Conference vice president Omar Abdullah on Monday said his party will single-handedly continue its fight for the restoration of Article 370, if the grand old party is not ready to fight this battle. J&K’s future is linked to the special status guaranteed by the Constitution, he said, adding that the case for restoration of Article 370 is very strong.

The former chief minister accused the BJP of “murdering democracy” in the Union Territory, after abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019, by rendering institutions, including newspapers, feeble and said it has rendered “hollow” India’s slogan of being the biggest democracy in the world. “Our case (for restoration of Article 370 before the Supreme Court) is very strong... We expected support from opposition parties but they are silent. Our existence is linked to this article,” said Abdullah, who is currently on a tour of the Chenab valley region, while addressing a public meeting at Kishtwar town.

Farm laws repeal sans discussion is proof govt is ‘terrified’: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said that the repealing of the three farm laws without debate shows that the government is “terrified” of having a discussion and knows that it has done something wrong.

After Parliament passed ‘The Farm Laws Repeal Bill’ to rescind the three contentious agri laws against which farmers have been protesting for over a year, Gandhi told reporters his party had predicted that the government will have to take back the farm laws as it knew that the “power of three-four crony capitalists cannot withstand the strength of farmers and labourers”. He said the repeal of the laws is a success of farm-



ers and also of the country.

“What is unfortunate is how the bills have been repealed, without any discussion, without any conversation. We wanted to have a discussion about forces behind these bills because these bills do not just reflect the view of the prime minister, these bills reflect the forces behind the prime minister and that is what we wanted to discuss,” Gandhi said.

Repeal must follow dropping of cases against farmers, says Hooda

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Shortly after the repeal of three central farm laws by Parliament, former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda on Monday demanded the dropping of all cases lodged against farmers during the over year-long agitation

against the legislations. Claiming registration of more than 48,000 cases against farmers during the year-long anti farm law agitation by them, Haryana Bharatiya Kisan Union (Chaduni) president Gurnam Singh Chaduni also demanded the withdrawal of cases against farmers.

Why is govt shying away from discussion on farm laws repeal bill, asks Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday attacked the government over the passage of the farm laws repeal bill in the Lok Sabha without a discussion, charging that all parliamentary norms have been “thrown to the wind”. Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury asked why the government was shying away from a discussion on the bill, when the opposition was supporting them. A bill to repeal the three contentious farm laws, against which farmers have been protesting for over a year, was passed by the Lok Sabha within minutes of introduction on Monday. The Congress has also demanded that there should be legal guarantee for the minimum support price to farmers and that compensation should be granted to farmers who suffered during the agitation and lost their lives, Chowdhury told reporters outside Parliament.

Chaos forces RS adjournment for day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Monday after repeated disruptions amid continuous Opposition protest over issues pertaining to farmers.

The house proceedings were first adjourned for an hour as a mark of respect to sitting MP Oscar Fernandes who passed away recently. When the House reassem-

bled at 12.19 pm, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said he has not accepted various notices given by Opposition members for suspension of business and to take up their issues.

Opposition members objected to this and started raising slogans.

“Some people have come determined to disrupt the House,” Naidu said as his repeated attempts to pacify agitating members did not yield results.

Param Bir Singh appears before CID

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh appeared before the Maharashtra Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on Monday to record his statement in connection with two extortion cases registered against him, an official said.

Following a notice issued by the CID, Singh reached its

office at Belapur in neighbouring Navi Mumbai around 3.30 pm, he said.

The agency is investigating the extortion cases registered against Singh at the Marine Drive police station in south Mumbai and Kopri police station in adjoining Thane city.



The CID had earlier arrested police inspectors Nandkumar Gopale and Asha Korke in connection with the Marine Drive case.

Earlier in the day, a commission probing corruption allegations against former Maharashtra home minister

Anil Deshmukh cancelled the bailable warrant issued against Param Bir Singh after the latter appeared before the panel.

The Justice K U Chandiwal Commission was formed by the Maharashtra government in March this year to probe the allegations levelled by Singh against the then home minister and NCP leader Deshmukh.

Hari Kumar hands over charge of Western Naval Command

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Vice Admiral R Hari Kumar, who takes over as the country’s next Navy chief on November 30, handed over the charge of Western Naval Command to Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh at a ceremony held here, officials said on Monday. Kumar will take charge as the next Navy chief

in New Delhi from Admiral Karambir Singh who superannuates on November 30.

Vice Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh has a unique distinction of heading Navy’s two operational commands.

Prior to his appointment as the Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command, he was heading the Eastern Naval Command.

Ad shoot: DSGMC urges MEA to take up issue with Pak

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee on Monday wrote to Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, demanding him to take up with the Pakistan government the issue of a business promotion agency using the premises of Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib for promotion of women apparel. Guru Nanak spent his last days in the gurudwara.

Three arrested for UPTET paper leak

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

Three people have been arrested in connection with Uttar Pradesh Teacher Eligibility Test (UPTET) question paper leakage in Shamli, police said on Monday.

The UPTET examination, scheduled to be held on Sunday, was cancelled following the leakage of its question paper, Additional Director General Law and Order Prashant Kumar announced shortly before the exam was to begin. According to Superintendent of Police Sukirti Madhav Mishra, Dharmendra, Manish and Ravi were arrested and one other person, who is absconding



and is accused of being involved in the case, has been booked.

Police said a search is on to nab him.

A car, 50 photocopies of the question paper and Rs 17,000

were recovered from the three accused, they said.

During interrogation, they revealed that they had been involved in 60 such cases and received Rs 50,000 each for solving papers, police said.

SC to hear plea over Tripura violence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear a plea of an advocate seeking an independent probe into the recent “communal riots” in Tripura and the alleged complicity and inaction of the state police in it. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and AS Bopanna issued notice to the Centre and the state government and sought their response within two weeks.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for petitioner Ethesam Hashmi, said that they want an independent probe into the “recent communal riots and investigation into the alleged complicity of police in it”.

“There are several cases related to Tripura before the court. Few lawyers, who went on fact finding missions, were served with notices. UAPA charges were slapped on journalists. Police did not register a single FIR in the cases of violence. We want this to be investigated by an independent panel monitored by the court”, Bhushan said.

The bench said it is issuing notice to the parties and listed the matter after two weeks. It directed that copy be served to the central agency and standing counsel for Tripura. The north-eastern state recently witnessed incidents of arson, looting and violence after reports emerged from Bangladesh that Hindu minorities there had been attacked during ‘Durga Puja’ on allegations of blasphemy.

The plea by Hashmi has alleged that police authorities were hand in glove with the perpetrators and not a single



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The plea by Hashmi has alleged that police authorities were hand in glove with the perpetrators and not a single

arrest was made with respect to the rioters, responsible for vandalism and arson.

It said that police and state authorities instead of attempting to stop the violence kept on claiming that there was no communal tension anywhere in Tripura and further denied reports of any religious structure being set ablaze.

On November 11, the top court heard a plea of two advocates and a journalist seeking quashing of a criminal case lodged under the harsh UAPA provisions against them for allegedly bringing facts through social media about the “targeted violence” against the minority community in Tripura.

BODIES ROTTING SINCE 2020

Horror for two families struck by covid

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Nearly a year and a half after they lost their loved ones to Covid, two families in Bengaluru have received news that’s as painful as their loss - the bodies have been rotting for over a year in the hospital’s mortuary.

Durga Sumithra, 40, and Muniraju, in his 50s, died on July 2 last year, as per documents from Employees’ State Insurance Corporation and Model Hospital at Rajajinagar in Bengaluru. At the time, the second wave of the pandemic had triggered a surge in cases, putting severe strain on health infrastructure across the country. The second wave had also thrown up heart-rending

scenes of families not getting a final glimpse of the ones they lost owing to infection risks.

In Bengaluru, the civic body Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) was overseeing the hospital bed situation and had also taken control of a part of beds in private facilities to ensure people in need can get admitted.

Family members of the two patients say civic and hospital authorities did not hand over the body to them, citing infection risks, and informed them that they were cremated.

A year later, in a rude shock, the families were informed that the bodies of their loved ones were actually rotting in the hospital’s morgue after housekeeping staff chanced



upon them and alerted authorities. Hospital authorities have now come under fire for this act of negligence. An investigation has been launched to find out how this happened. As for

the bodies, a postmortem will be conducted and legal formalities completed before they are handed over to the families.

Visuals from the hospital showed the shell-shocked fam-

ily members as they reached the hospital after getting information about a development that has stoked their grief.

Sujhata, sister of Durga, said they had found the bed at ESI hospital after a frantic search last year. “She (Durga) was infected with Covid. We were searching for a bed desperately but could not find any. Eventually, we found one at ESI hospital. She died after 4 days in hospital,” said Sujhata.

“Because it was Covid, they didn’t hand over the body to us. We returned home. After a few days, we received a call from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), stating that they cremated the body. It is almost 15 months now and three days back we

received a call. When we got the call, we were scared whether it was true or false,” she added.

Muniraju’s son Satish had a similar experience to share. “When we received a call from the hospital, saying that he was no more, we asked them for the body. But BBMP authorities told us that it was cremated. Later, when we went to collect the death certificate, they reiterated it and told us to sign the relevant documents.

Meanwhile, Rajajinagar’s BJP MLA Suresh Kumar has written to Karnataka Labour Minister A Shivaram Hebbar, requesting him to raise the matter with the Union Labour Ministry, under which the hospital falls.

Iron parameters with values more than prescribed in drinking water at 414 sites

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Iron parameters were found to have values more than the prescribed standard for drinking water at 414 sites located in certain river basins for the period of August, 2018 to December, 2020, the Ministry of Jal Shakti said on Monday. Responding to a question in Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Jal Shakti, Bishweshwar Tudu said the value of nitrates was found beyond prescribed limits for drinking water (as per Bureau of Indian Standards) at eight out of 588 sites in the period of June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2020. “According to the information for the period August, 2018 to December, 2020, iron parameters were found to have values more than the prescribed standard for drinking



water (as per BIS) at 414 sites located in certain river basins falling in the states of Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Gujarat, Manipur, Delhi, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim,” he said in a written response.

Cutting loose

After centuries under the British monarch, Barbados finally cuts ties to become a Republic

Barbados, in the Caribbean, is now a Republic, the world's latest. Importantly, it cuts off its ties with the British monarchy and with it, the last link to a brutal colonial past dating back to the 17th century. Barbados is the land of pristine beaches and glorious cricket, of Everton Weekes and Gary Sobers, Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes, and Malcolm Marshall and Joel Garner. The Republic now shapes a new legacy, of democracy, and is a beacon light for the handful of countries that still remain tethered to their past colonisers. In 1627, Barbados became a British colony, dependent on a plantation economy run by slaves from Africa. Slavery was outlawed only in 1807. It became an independent State in 1966 but remained part of the Commonwealth Realm. The Realm, not to be confused with the Commonwealth of Nations, is a sovereign State with British Queen Elizabeth II as its monarch and Head of State. As of date, there are 15 such realms excluding Barbados. It severs its ties with its former coloniser on the 55th anniversary of its independence. The last Governor-General is now the first President of the country. Both are titular posts, but the latter represents the free will of the Barbadians. Its Prime Minister indicated the direction in which Barbados is moving and expects the world to move: "Barbadians want a Barbadian Head of State. This is the ultimate statement of confidence in who we are and what we are capable of achieving." Other Caribbean countries that exited the Realm are Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Dominica. The new Republic rises at a time when Britain's colonial past is coming under scrutiny from its people and the Queen's family itself. Prince Harry and Meghan Markle have urged the country to acknowledge its colonial past, however uncomfortable it might be, in order to move forward.

There are still several countries, many of them blips on the map, even today under the jurisdiction of the United States, France, Australia, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway and New Zealand apart from the UK. It is the emergence of these countries as independent republics that will conclude the clash between the colonists and colonies that spread a wave of decolonisation in the world throughout the 20th century, freeing so many colonies and restoring their independent rule, dignity and identity. Colonialism is exploitative and runs counter to the principle of equality and sovereignty, the cornerstones of the United Nations. The fact that the archaic mode of exploitative governance is still in vogue in some places even though it should not be, needs to be iterated in light of the Barbados example. The agenda of decolonisation is based on one principle alone: independence of a country from any form of external governance and independence of its people to have a free association with any form of Government. The 21st century expects the remaining countries to follow the Barbados model and embrace independence along with the human right of self-determination.



Indian Navy sailors participate in rehearsal parade for the Navy Day at Gateway of India, in Mumbai

Govt's harvest

The Government was hoping to browbeat the farmers but it got caught in its own game

The BJP-led Union Government has, as promised, passed a Bill to repeal the farm laws. But it must ask itself that one year down since the nation's farmers – especially those belonging to Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, and then their number went on rising steadily – rose virtually in revolt against the passage of the three farm laws, was all the trouble worth it? There was a siege at the Capital's entry points; there was vandalism and lawlessness on the ramparts of the Red Fort on a momentous day like the Republic Day and then, the biggest shocker proving the Centre's cavalier attitude, the Lakhimpur Kheri incident which claimed the lives of at least nine people. In the interim, several farmers committed death by suicide and a few were allegedly murdered while protesting on Delhi's borders against the "devilish" laws. Quite recently, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha leaders and Bharatiya Kisan Union chieftain Rakesh Tikait, during a rally in Lucknow, warned the Centre that their agitation would be prolonged unless their demands on issuing a guarantee on the MSP and sacking Union State Minister for Home Ajay Mishra Teni, besides doling out suitable legal punishment to his relatives, were not met.

The angry leaders had gone to West Bengal prior to the Assembly elections there and the embarrassing drubbing the Trinamool Congress handed out to the BJP is a matter of record. In the same vein, the still-unsatisfied farmers have now hinted that they would pool in their resources and might in the UP elections against the BJP. No wonder then that the Opposition parties have been overtly siding with the farmers and, now that the Centre has been forced to repeal the contentious farm laws right at the start of the winter session of Parliament ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls, are quick to jump at the chance and taunt the Government. While Congress president Sonia Gandhi and other leaders staged a protest outside Parliament on Monday before the Bill repealing the laws was passed, AIMIM supreme Asaduddin Owaisi mocked the BJP-led Government, saying it had repealed the laws now as it feared losing political capital and electoral advantage in the upcoming elections. All said and done, it now appears that the Government was indulging in upmanship and hoping to browbeat the farmers but it got caught in its own game and didn't know when to get off the ride. There is a lesson in this for all the stakeholders.

Is India working its way back in Nepal?

The black hole in India-Nepal relations remains the economic blockade of 2015 and New Delhi's grudging acceptance of the 2015 Constitution

Returning to Nepal after a 20-month COVID lockdown was not easy given the erratic flight schedules and hassles in border entry. A clear blue sky, glistening sunshine and a majestic Himalayan parade led by Machapuchere and Annapurna welcomes us back to Pokhara. The two-year long power struggle in the largest communist alliance failed to deliver the political stability it was congenitally endowed with (two thirds majority) after Prime Minister KP Oli and former Prime Minister Prachanda parted ways much to the chagrin of China, paving the way for the ruling five-party democratic alliance led by Nepali Congress Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba. The two governance issues, however, trouble the Government: the crisis in judiciary over impeachment of Chief Justice Chandra Rana; and divisions over US Millennium Challenge Corporation award.

Dominating the political landscape are ongoing and forthcoming general conventions of CPN UML (Oli), Nepali Congress (Deuba) and CPN Maoist (Prachanda). The leaders named against parties are sure to return as chairman/president. In the next elections, the NC is aiming to emerge as the single largest party as Defence Minister Minendra Rijal explained: "we have a 36 per cent vote share which, by next year, will grow to nearly 40 per cent and with PR, we will win nearly 160 seats (in 275-member house)." The UML, which is the single largest party today with 93 seats, remains the most popular and stable party with a solid electoral base and Oli's charisma all intact. According to an Indian diplomat, the UML and NC could be neck and neck. Prachanda is accused of breaking the Left alliance giving the sympathy vote to Oli. Prachanda has urged the other breakaway faction – now CPN (Unified Socialists) led by former Prime Minister Madhav Nepal – to consider a pre-poll alliance so that they can emerge as the third largest party though Maoists have always aspired for second position. Some fear they may decline to fourth position if the



Janata Samajwadi Party (Upendra Yadav and Mahanta Thakur) can re-unite. But it is early days as the election is due only at the end of 2022.

The Chinese are very disappointed with Oli for not saving the Left alliance they helped cobble up and instead turning to India for salvation. But they are still in the game, though some feel Beijing has shot its bolt. Nepal is quite scared of China, especially after ominous warnings by President Xi Jinping from Kathmandu during his first visit in 2019. He said to the effect that anyone who dares to split China will be 'crushed' and those who attempt anti-China activities will have 'their bones shattered'. Two recent books by Nepali authors – Sanjay Upadhyay's *How India Lost Nepal to China* and Amish Raj Mulmi's *All Roads Lead North* illustrate China's high stake game in Nepal. While Beijing's capacity in reconstructing the Left alliance seems limited, as it is pitted against India and the US, it will not give up. Many see the MCC as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China which is why it is unlikely to pass muster in the present Parliament.

The black hole in India-Nepal relations remains the economic blockade of 2015 and New Delhi's grudging



THE CHINESE ARE VERY DISAPPOINTED WITH OLI FOR NOT SAVING THE LEFT ALLIANCE THEY HELPED COBBLE UP AND INSTEAD TURNING TO INDIA FOR SALVATION. BUT THEY ARE STILL IN THE GAME, THOUGH SOME FEEL BEIJING HAS SHOT ITS BOLT

acceptance of the 2015 constitution. After Prime Minister Modi's 2014-15 visits and his captivating speeches, expectations from India were very high but the opposite happened. Fortunately, some of the anti-India feeling has ricocheted to China due to its unabashed interference in domestic politics while trying to rescue the Left alliance. Shortly, Nepal which in 2017 was load-shedding upto 18-hours a day, will be in a position to export power to India though only a modest 39 MW and increase its sale capacity as power transmission lines are developed southwards. A tricky Oli legacy issue is incorporation of India's Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiadhura in Nepali maps which was legislated by a full House. Nepal is consulting India on methodology for conducting its 12th national census there without trespass of territory. Oli said last Sunday at the UML convention that if returned to power, he will get the land back from India through dialogue. Some Nepalese told me that it is no longer a border issue but one of sovereignty. Like Pakistan sought J&K from India as a peace offering, Nepal also wants a grand gesture from India conceding Kalapani and other territory. They also complained about New Delhi suppressing the



GEN ASHOK MEHTA

Eminent Persons Group report. Meanwhile, Baba Ramdev was in Kathmandu last month and hosted by Nepal's cabinet. Although Deuba and Prachanda inaugurated the Patanjali TV station dedicated to yoga, Ramdev is seen as a Trojan horse for revival of Hindu rashttra. But the nationalists, Maoists and other republicans will obstruct restoration of any form of monarchy and Hindu State, even though Oli had announced last year that Ram was born in Chitwan Nepal. Many State and public buses carry bills that Buddha was born in Nepal to remind the Southern neighbour of the sanctity of ownership: be it Ram, Buddha or Kalapani. Still, strategic geography compels Kathmandu to discreetly follow an India first policy – like Maldives more openly and Sri Lanka cautiously – though China's shadow is a speed-breaker. Beijing would give its right arm to break the ruling democratic alliance and restore Left's primacy validating Upadhyay's theory that India has lost Nepal to China. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A LOOMING NEW THREAT

Sir – The Union Health Ministry revised guidelines mandating that all international passengers entering India have to submit 14-day travel details and upload a negative RT-PCR test report on the Air Suvaidha portal before the journey. The new guidelines will come into effect from December 1. The RT-PCR test has to be taken within 72 hours of starting the journey. Travelers from countries 'at-risk', including the UK, South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore have created panic among Indian citizens and the Government is acting in full swing.

There is currently no information to suggest that symptoms associated with Omicron are different from those from other variants. The RT-PCR tests continue to detect infection with Omicron – which was first detected in South Africa earlier this month – and studies are ongoing to determine whether there is any impact on rapid antigen detection tests. Until more information is available, it has become utmost important that we follow COVID protocols diligently and avoid unnecessary travel because we have just started to come out of the danger of the Delta variant and now a new one is knocking on the door.

MR Jayanthi Maniam | Ghaziabad

POLITICAL FESTIVITIES IN GOA

Sir – Midnight trysts, vocal denunciations, some detectable undercurrent of animosity and a fair amount of absurd theatrics seem to have added a splash of colour to the on-going election campaign in Goa. While such oddities tend to break the monotony of having the same set of faces staring down from election hoardings across the State term after term, the indecisive nature of all the parties with regard to the selection of its candidates is throwing up various possibilities. Moreover, with improved statistics of the 'arrivals and departures' to and from its folds, most of the parties should be pardoned for predicting their invincibility in the ensuing polls.

Yet, despite the availability of so many alternatives at its disposal, the elec-

No debate in Parliament?



What transpired in Parliament on the first day of the winter session did our democracy not proud. Rigorous debate on issues of public importance and interest on the floor of Parliament is a salient feature of a vibrant democracy. But the Modi Government thought otherwise and repealed the farm laws at breakneck speed without any debate whatsoever in both Houses of Parliament and gave it the dubious distinction of being the fastest repeal ever in the annals of India's parliamentary history. It showed its scant respect for something as

basic as debate. It took just a few minutes for the Government to get the Bill repealing the farm laws passed in the Lok Sabha by voice vote amid sloganeering by the Opposition, a record of sorts. Alas, the Government was unwilling to mend its ways!

A democratic Government that refuses to allow or countenance debate cannot be said to be worth its salt and worthy of the adjective. The 'tyranny of majority', reflected in the repeal of laws without debate and the suspension of 12 Opposition MPs, does not equal democracy. The irony of it all is that the Parliament repealed the laws without a debate in utter disregard of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assurance in his customary brief address before the start of a session that his Government was ready to discuss all issues and answer all questions. The Parliament saw the inversion of Modi's counsel on 'debate and disruption'.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

torate continues to harbour the feeling that it has so little to choose from. These sentiments seem to stem from the fact that none of the political dispensations in the State, including the ruling, are absolutely certain of their electoral chances. Depending more on the rhetoric rather than an unpretentious approach, their leaders too have failed to put it across to the body of voters that they mean business. Basically it is the wish to remain a part of the winning combination, and also have an effective say in its affairs, that is driving most of the heavyweights, their party affiliations notwithstanding, to hold their cards close to their chests.

Pachu Menon | Margao

DON'T BE SOCIAL MEDIA SLAVES

Sir – Nowadays, most of the youngsters spend a lot of time on social media due to which they have, knowingly or unknowingly, become addicted to social media. Excessive use of social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram etc affect their daily routine and studies and

causes unhappiness and dissatisfaction without any significant reason. It also aggravates mental health issues such as anxiety and depression and can give rise to inferiority complex and even suicidal thoughts. It has become an issue of concern because it hampers students from achieving their goals. How can we break out of social media slavery? Deleting social media applications is not a solution but we have to control the urge to scroll for hours. Instead, we can open a book that is as addictive but far more knowledge-giving. We should remove our phone from our morning routine, try not to post our personal information, turn off unnecessary notifications and keep the phone away as much as possible. By making these little changes in our habits, we can stop the addiction of social media and be happy for what we are.

Mitesh Rao | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Corruption in recruitment and paper leak has become the identity of the BJP Government.

Congress general secretary — Priyanka Gandhi

A very happy Chanukah to Jewish people in the UK and around the world who will be lighting the menorah this week.

UK Prime Minister — Boris Johnson

I've learnt that you cannot argue against narratives — whether or not they're true. People have a certain fixed notion.

Actor — Saif Ali Khan

We have to have faith in our spinners and know that they can really put the Kiwis under pressure.

Indian batsman — Shreyas Iyer

We should do everything possible to prevent the new Coronavirus variant from entering India.

Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

ON THE MOVE BUT REACHING WHERE?

The islands of prosperity will find it difficult to survive in a sea of deprivation and dissonance



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Globally there are several health and economic crises. They are not always stable geographically. As the health crisis of one region recedes, it could surface in another. Same with economic crises. Not enough data is available for any cogent reflection or scientific analysis. Yet, for insights, analyse we must. The bottom line is clear: health crises and economic crises are in many ways inter-linked. The economic crises reduce the resources available and the health crises impede any long-range view. In such a situation, power play becomes inevitable and unabashed. The sectors and conglomerates which have gained out of the pandemic are being increasingly identified. The pharmaceutical industry has gained like never before. Some financial investors with a flair for investment have struck it rich, again, like never before. In spite of the understandable push for vaccination, there are patches in the African sub-continent which are still relatively immune from the virus even without vaccination. The data which the media feeds is often focussed on territories where tools of analysis can be applied. The territories outside this framework of analysis are large. This would definitionally make a global pattern read-



ing a huge challenge. Add to this the normal economic need of food, shelter and clothing. They have their own logic and one could say compulsions. In the case of India, the growth rate between 2019 and 2020 has been five per cent. In the preceding five years, it was seven per cent. If the forecasts have to be believed, the likely rate will probably go down for the current year to the lowest level since 1991. This kind of situation will have a direct or ripple effect, on everyone. Even the organisations, entities and business groups who have struck it rich in the last two years are going to be affected. Putting it simply, islands of prosperity will find it difficult to survive in a sea of deprivation and dissonance. While the above is a derivation of simple logic, in the present context, logic itself appears to be a bit of a casualty.

This is so because the tools to do a logical think-through are probably inadequate. The seemingly contradictory evidence which keeps surfacing, even with reference to the virus, will take time to settle down. The implications of that kind of situation are comprehensible for policy formulation. This holds true even in relatively removed sectors, like farming. There is no apparent correlation between the virus effect and the framing of the three farming laws. The withdrawal of the farming laws and the reasons which led to it are still in the domain of speculation, debate and what can at best be called my-guess-is-better-than-yours. Evidence-based policy formulation is not always possible in times such as the present one. The scientific method further goes for a bump in the absence of any precedence of the present context. Yet, this cannot be the reason for giving up an attempt to be logical. What one does know is that in the first wave of COVID-19 in India, around April 2020, there was evidence of a two-speed economy. During that time, the rural sector was flourishing. There was technology upgradation; low ticket electronic items graduated to become essential commodities; mobile phones moved centre stage. As compared to this, the urban sector was floundering. Interestingly, the agricultural/rural sector which had no restrictions and no hindrances registered a 3.6 per cent growth in that period. Where was the disruption? The best which can be said is that that the present situation is of work-in-progress.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

Repeal of farm laws: PM Modi's volte-face



UTTAM GUPTA

The arthiyas, large farmers and traders have successfully protected their turf while small farmers, who constitute the overwhelming majority, have lost

On November 19, 2021, announcing his Government's decision to repeal the contentious three farm laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi apologized for not being able to convince a section of the farmers about the benefits that these laws would bring them. Are these laws so complex as to become incomprehensible to the farmer?

The "Situation Assessment of Agricultural Households and Land and Livestock Holdings of Households in Rural India", SAS in short, released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), covering the period July 2018 to June 2019, reveals widespread dissatisfaction among farmers with the price realized from sale of their produce. Their highest dissatisfaction is with sales in the Agricultural Produce Market Committee or APMCs mandi (marketplace notified under the State APMC Act) followed by sales 'private local market'. Nearly 83 percent farmers sell their produce in these two outlets.

The low price from sale in APMC has to do with extant State laws under which farmers can sell their produce only in the 'designated' mandi. In the mandi, the arthiyas — local term for commission agents — arrange for the auction and delivery of the produce. They and the licensed trader/buyer rule the roost. The duo ensure that the farmers get a low price and even then faces problems like rejection of crop, crop deliberately weighed less, payments delayed, etc. Levies such as market fee, arthiyas' commission and rural development cess (RDC) further add to their woes.

As for sales in the private local market, though legally it is barred, small farmers who normally don't have access to the APMC are forced to sell to the very traders who dominate the mandi and at throw-away prices. The latter have the blessings of corrupt bureaucrats and politicians and hence, do not face any action for violating the State law.

In short, under the existing State APMC laws, farmers face a raw deal. The only way they can get a fair deal is to give them a chance to sell in other outlets. In the past, States had made some moves in this direction: 20 States have allowed contract farming; 23 States allow 'direct purchase' from farmers; 22 States/UTs allow private wholesale markets, while 15 have excluded fruits and vegetables from the APMC Act. These are piecemeal efforts and are far from giving unfettered access especially to small farmers who account for over 80 per cent of the total. The three central laws fill the existing void as these legitimize sales on all non-APMC platforms without disturbing the APMC mandis.

There is nothing in these laws that farmers do not understand. Even if there was anything that was too complex, that must have been understood during the



WITH THE REPEAL OF THE THREE LAWS, AGRI-MARKET REFORMS HAVE REACHED A DEAD END. THERE IS NO HOPE OF RESURRECTING THESE IN THE NEAR TERM. MEANWHILE, IN VIEW OF FARMERS' LEADERS RAISING MORE DEMANDS AND THE GOVERNMENT BEING ON THE DEFENSIVE, THE COUNTRY COULD BE ENTERING A DANGEROUS ZONE

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



marathon talks the Union ministers had with them. The latter had even agreed to make several amendments as demanded by the former. Besides showing willingness to make more amendments, the Prime Minister went a step ahead to offer to defer implementation of the laws for a period of up to two years.

Despite so much accommodation shown by the establishment, if the farmers' leaders wanted nothing less than 'repeal', it has to do with the stony desire of a certain class of farmers (those with large land holdings) from Punjab and Haryana and the arthiyas to maintain their dominance in sale and purchase and keep potential competition from other entities at bay.

The central agencies procure 30 percent of wheat and rice produced in the country albeit at the minimum support price (MSP). Nearly 30 percent of wheat production comes from Punjab and Haryana whereas in rice, their share is 14 percent. However, in their total procurement, the agencies pick up 60 percent of wheat and 35 percent of rice from these two states alone. Furthermore, almost all of this comes from large farmers. This class of farmers apprehends, if the field is opened for all, they will lose this privilege.

As for arthiyas, they too have a vested interest in protecting their commission as well as exercising control over the small farmers. If the latter get a chance to sell at non-APMC outlets, the former will lose control over what we may term as

the golden goose (taking grains from the small farmers at throw-away price and making a windfall by selling at high rates; they also lend money to those very farmers at high rates and earn huge interest income).

The arthiyas and big farmers and traders have succeeded in protecting their turf even as the small farmers who constitute the overwhelming majority have lost. A collateral damage is in terms nipping in the bud any chance of increasing private investment in agri-infrastructure — a pre-requisite for ensuring sustainable growth of this most crucial sector. This is baffling but it has happened. Here are the plausible reasons.

First, while staying implementation of the laws in January, 2021, the Supreme Court had set up a Committee to recommend the way forward after consulting all stakeholders including farmers. In its report submitted in March, 2021, the Committee reportedly favored the three laws. But the court has kept the issue hanging.

Second, in public discourse, the farmers are projected as a homogenous entity, without recognizing the vast disparity between the large and small farmers in terms of assets, income, etc. This enables the large farmers to call the shots. The small farmers being unorganized, their voice is not even heard.

Third, the big farmer/trader lobby has also succeeded in obfuscating the issues. For instance, they aver 'a wheat farmer receives

just about half the MSP of Rs 1975 per quintal' thereby signaling that this is what the Centre's laws have delivered. The reality is that 'the laws are not even in force, courtesy the stay granted by the SC'.

Four, they have managed to distract the attention of small farmers from the 'real cause' behind their plight namely the oppressive State APMC laws and making them believe that MSP guaranteed by a Central law is a panacea for all their woes.

To conclude, with the repeal of the three laws, agri-market reforms have reached a dead end. There is no hope of resurrecting these in the near term (a Committee set up by Modi to see 'how MSP can be made more effective' is a sheer cosmetic). Meanwhile, in view of farmers' leaders raising more demands and Government being on the defensive, the country could be entering a dangerous zone.

A legal guarantee for MSP has the potential of making the national exchequer bankrupt, overstraining the handling and storage facilities, increasing wastage manifold and embarrassing India at the WTO as food subsidy (albeit trade distorting) to farmers balloons. The exemption for farmers from the Electricity (Amendment) Act will lead to bleeding power distribution companies and ever-increasing stress on State finances. Their exemption from laws on climate will not only add to pollution but also send a wrong signal to the world community.

Will Modi muster the courage to stem the slide?

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE GOVERNMENT IS WILLING TO ANSWER EVERY QUESTION. WE WANT QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT AND ALSO PEACE.
—PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI



HOLLOW WORDS, MR PRIME MINISTER. YOU RAN AWAY FROM DISCUSSING #PEGASUS AND ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DISRUPTING THE MONSOON SESSION.
—TMC LEADER DEREK O'BRIEN

India's super growth journey high on debt

Steering the country is not easy. It is true that international organisations are cautious while the Government feels that its efforts are being stymied

India joins the world aiming for a super growth on a high debt and infra push for an economic panacea.

India's heavy investment over ₹233.08 lakh crore investment in infrastructure, including ₹10,500-crore Jewar airport adjacent to Delhi, is officially expected to give a major boost to the economy.

India is not alone. The entire world is trying to do that. The result is hyper-growth in world debt to \$226 trillion. In its 2021 Fiscal Monitor report, the IMF said India's debt increased from 68.9 per cent of its GDP in 2016 to 89.6 per cent in 2020. It is projected to jump to 90.6 per cent in 2021 and then decline to 88.8 per cent in 2022, to gradually reach 85.2 per cent in 2026.



SHIVAJI SARKAR

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

Jewar has accelerated a process of development in UP with an eye on the state elections. It may make this part of the National Capital Region one of the most crowded places inviting large number of migrants that may stretch local resources.

The severe crash in the stock market has added a new concern. The nation hopes to fly on expectations but airport projects, high altitude Himalayan development, large-scale tree felling and acquisition of farm lands raise ecological concerns. But a nation striving hard to come out of the Coronavirus pandemic is looking for faster development so that there is cash flow.

The Government expanded the 'National Infrastructure



Pipeline (NIP)' to 7,400 projects. According to Department of Industry and Internal Trade, 217 projects worth Rs. 1.10 lakh crore (\$ 15.09 billion) were completed as of 2020. Through the NIP, the government invested \$ 1.4 trillion in infrastructure development as of July 2021.

However, the more investment is made in infrastructure, the more the nation's cost to deliver. Unless there is an overall growth in activities — from industry to agriculture

— the benefits become expensive to afford.

The IMF says that constraints on financing are particularly severe for poorer countries. Noting that in 2020, fiscal policy proved its worth, IMF director for fiscal affairs Vitor Gaspar says the increase in public debt in 2020 was fully justified by the need to respond to COVID-19 and its economic, social, and financial consequences. But the increase is expected to be one-off, he said. So how to bring down the debt is the question. Debt dynamics are driven by a strong contribution from nominal GDP growth, accompanied by a much more gradual reduction in the primary deficit, he said.

The IMF said risks to the fiscal outlook are elevated.

This calls for India to review its policies. Let us not forget that the 2007-08 global meltdown followed an unsustainable financial behaviour.

The results would be high inflationary tendencies that would add to costs further and create an unstable global economy leading to more conflicts. India's inflation has risen to 12.5 per cent. Prices are rising, wages too would be rising and a cycle of inflation may continue.

This is also being seen in a regime of high taxations and high penalties on cars and car uses across the country. The silliest is the clampdown on outside state registered vehicles in Bihar, and HSRP plates. These are ignored as small issues but these small things are making lives of people difficult.

User charges are being recklessly increased. At some private railway stations, parking charges are going through the roof. Ostensibly, nobody can be blamed as 'the prices are rising' but that needs a holistic review.

The IMF projects growth at 9.5 per cent in FY2021-22 and 8.5 per cent in FY2022-23. Headline inflation sees elevated price pressures. The contraction in economic activity, lower revenue, and pandemic-related support measures are estimated to have led to a widening of the fiscal deficit to 8.6 and 12.8 per cent of GDP in FY2020-21 for the central and state governments, respectively.

But the IMF is concerned that despite policy support, bank credit growth has

remained subdued, while large corporates have benefited from easier conditions in capital markets. Net inflows and improvement in the current account have supported an increase in foreign exchange reserves. The current account balance is projected to remain in deficit as oil prices rise.

The overall toned down IMF report indicates not an easy situation in the coming years.

Steering the country is not easy. It is true that international organisations are cautious while the government feels that their efforts are being stymied. India hopes that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts belie the IMF and infra push takes the country to the targeted growth.

No proposal to recognise Bitcoin as a currency: Finance Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has no proposal to recognise Bitcoin as a currency in the country, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a reply to the Lok Sabha on Monday.

She also informed the House that the government does not collect data on Bitcoin transactions.

Whether the government has any proposal to recognise Bitcoin as a currency in the country, the Finance Minister said "No, sir".

Bitcoin is a digital currency that allows people to buy goods and services and exchange money without involving banks, credit card issuers or other third parties.

It was introduced in 2008 by an unidentified group of programmers as a cryptocurrency as well as an electronic payment system. It is reportedly the first decentralised digital currency where peer-to-peer transactions take place without



any intermediary.

Meanwhile, the government plans to introduce the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill 2021 in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament. The Bill seeks to ban all but a few private cryptocurrencies to promote underlying technologies while allowing an official digital currency

by RBI.

In reply to another question, Sitharaman said, ministries and departments have spent Rs 2.29 lakh crore as capital expenditure during the April-September period of the current fiscal.

This is 41 per cent of the Budget Estimate (BE) of Rs 5.54 lakh crore for 2021-22. The actual expenditure during

Inform about introduction of bill on crypto: HC to Centre

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday directed the Union government to apprise it on January 17, 2022 about the introduction of the bill on cryptocurrency and what further action has been taken on the issue.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice M S Karnik said it cannot direct the parliamentary legislation to enact a law.

NIP is expected to improve project preparation, attract investments into infrastructure, and play pivotal role in economic growth, she said.

National Monetization Pipeline (NMP) was also launched on August 23, 2021 to unlock the value of investments in public sector assets by tap-

The court was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed by advocate Aditya Kadam, seeking directions to the central government to formulate laws to govern the use and trade of cryptocurrency within the country.

Kadam highlighted the unregulated business of cryptocurrency in the country which, he claimed, affects the rights of the investors as there is no mechanism in law to redress their grievances.

mile connectivity of infrastructure and also reduce travel time for people, she added.

On inflation, the Finance Minister said price situation of major essential commodities is being monitored by the government on a regular basis and corrective actions are taken from time to time.

Sensex advances 153 pts amid Omicron worries

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex advanced by 153 points on Monday following gains in index heavyweights Reliance Industries and TCS, even as investors remained cautious over the Omicron variant of the coronavirus spreading to more countries.

In a volatile session, the 30-share Sensex closed higher by 153.43 points or 0.27 per cent to 57,260.58. The index had tanked more than 500 points or over 1 per cent in opening trade in line with weak global cues.

The broader NSE Nifty edged higher by 27.50 points or 0.16 per cent to end at 17,053.95.

Reliance Industries rose by 1.26 per cent after its telecom arm Jio announced a hike in prepaid tariffs from the next month. Bharti Airtel also advanced on reports that the recently announced tariff hikes would boost the financials of telecom firms.

Kotak Bank rose the most among Sensex scrips, spurring



2.92 per cent amid reports that LIC will up its stake in the private lender to 10 per cent. Gains in HCL Tech, TCS, Infosys, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finance and Titan helped Sensex close in the green.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, NTPC, Axis Bank, Nestle, Bajaj Auto and SBI were among major losers.

Asian stock markets declined further after governments imposed travel controls due to the spread of the new coronavirus strain.

The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo fell 1.7 per cent after Japan

announced an entry ban on foreigners from Tuesday. The Shanghai Composite Index dropped 0.4 per cent and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong tumbled 1.2 per cent. The Kospi in Seoul declined 0.9 per cent and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 fell 0.5 per cent. Meanwhile, Brent crude jumped USD 2.82 to USD 74.41 per barrel in London.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market on Friday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 5,785.83 crore, as per exchange data.

MONEY MATTERS

Gold climbs Rs 242; silver zooms Rs 543

Gold in the national capital on Monday rallied by Rs 242 to Rs 47,242 per 10 gram in line with gain in international precious metal prices, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had settled at Rs 47,000 per 10 gram. Silver also gained Rs 543 to Rs 62,248 per kilogram from Rs 61,705 per kilogram in the previous trade. In the international market, gold trading with gains at USD 1,794 per ounce and silver flat at USD 23.34 per ounce. Gold prices traded higher with spot gold prices at COMEX firm at USD 1,794 per ounce on Monday. Gold prices traded up on Monday on growing virus worries despite of stronger dollar and rise in US bond yields, according to HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel.



Bharat Financial Inclusion top officials resign

Top executives of BFIL, a fully-owned subsidiary of IndusInd Bank, have resigned from the company last week, the bank said on Monday. The bank said it has appointed an Executive Director and another person to oversee day-to-day operations of the company. Shalabh Saxena, the Managing Director & CEO, and Ashish Damani, the Executive Director & CFO of BFIL, are to join rival microfinance lender Spandana Sphoorty, over which the two companies are apparently at loggerheads. "Shalabh Saxena and Ashish Damani, currently employed with BFIL in the capacity of the Managing Director & CEO and the Executive Director & CFO, respectively, have tendered their resignations pursuant to emails addressed to the Chairman of the board of BFIL on November 25, 2021," IndusInd Bank said in regulatory filing.



Net direct tax revenue rises 68% to Rs 6.9L-cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The net direct tax collection grew nearly 68 per cent during April 1 to November 23 to more than Rs 6.92 lakh crore, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said on Monday.

"The Net Direct Tax Collection figures for the FY-2021-22 as on 23.11.2021 are at Rs 6,92,833.6 crores showing a growth of 67.93 per cent and 27.29 per cent over the net collection figures for the corresponding period FY2020-21 and FY 2019-20," he said in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.

The net collection between April 1 - November 23 in 2020-21 and 2019-20 fiscals was over Rs 4.12 lakh crore and over Rs 5.44 lakh crore respectively.

The gross direct tax collec-

tion (before adjusting refunds) as of November 23 stood at over Rs 8.15 lakh crore, a 48.11 growth over the collections in the corresponding period in last fiscal.

Chaudhary further said that the gross GST collection in the current fiscal (April 2021-March'22) post Covid-19 outbreak is showing an increasing trend. The gross GST collection for full 2020-21 ended March 2021 was over Rs 11.36 lakh crore, while the same in the current fiscal till October stood at Rs 8.10 lakh crore.

In reply to a separate question on whether incidents of tax evasion are increasing in Delhi and other parts of the country, Chaudhary said there is no evidence to suggest that incidents of income tax evasion are increasing in Delhi and other parts of the country.

Strive to place India among top digital economy globally: Mos IT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The primary objective of the government is to make the country a trillion dollar digital economy and at least one of the top two digital economies in the world, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Monday.

He said that there will be focus to intensify digitalisation of government services and forming laws that are of global standards that will clear ambiguities and result in inclusive development.

"Primary objective is to make sure that our digital economy is a trillion dollar economy - the largest in the world. If not the largest then at least one of the top 2 digital economies in the world," Chandrasekhar said while summarising the broad objective of the government for the next 25 years.

He was speaking at week-long Azadi ka Digital Mahotsav.

The government has been aspiring to make India a USD 1 trillion digital economy by 2025.



Omicron adds uncertainties to global economic outlook

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Omicron variant of Covid-19 adds new uncertainties to the global economic outlook but much will depend on its speed of transmission, hospitalisation and death rates, and also the effectiveness of vaccines, Moody's Analytics, Chief APAC Economist, Steve Cochrane said. The new and potentially more contagious variant Omicron was first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) from South Africa on November 24. It has since been identified in about 12 more countries including Botswana, Belgium, Hong Kong, Israel, UK, Germany and Australia.

On Friday, it was designated a Variant of Concern by the WHO, which named it Omicron. A Variant of Concern is the WHO's top category of worrying Covid-19 strain.

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Rupee plunges by 23 ps, slips below 75 a \$ on Omicron worries

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee on Monday plunged by 23 paise to close at 75.12 (provisional) against the US dollar, as investors turned cautious in view of a new variant of Covid-19.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local currency opened at 74.84 and witnessed an intraday high of 74.82 and a low of 75.16 against the US dollar in a highly volatile trading session.

On Friday, the rupee had plunged by 37 paise or 0.50 per cent against the US dollar to close at a nearly month's low of 74.89, as investors resorted to risk-off sentiment.

Investor concern resurfaced about lockdowns amid a rise in COVID cases in Europe and a new variant, detected in South Africa.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.11 per cent up at 96.19.

TELANGANA STATE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES LTD.
Tender call notice for "Procurement of Distributed Denial of Service and Next Generation Intrusion Prevention System for Telangana State Data Centre, Hyderabad."
Time schedule of various tender related events:
Bid closing date: 30.11.2021
Date and time for Pre-Bid clarifications if any by Email: 06-12-2021 at 02:00 PM
Bid Opening date/time: 14.12.2021, 03:00 PM
Bid Opening date/time: 14.12.2021, 3:30 PM
Bid Document Fee: Rs. 25,000/- in favour of the M.O., TSSRL.
Email id's: kshetkar-tes@tsangsa.gov.in, mshankar@tsangsa.gov.in, mshankar@tsangsa.gov.in
Tender Reference No.: TSSR/PS/2020-21-PS-2021
For further details regarding detailed Tender Notification and specifications please visit: <http://www.tss.telangana.gov.in> or 564@www.tss.telangana.gov.in
Managing Director
T.S. Technology Services Ltd.
R.O. No.: 2368-PF/C-AGENCY/NT/11/2021-22 DATED: 11.11.2021

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
REVENUE (LAND ACQUISITION) DEPARTMENT
DISTRICT COLLECTOR, JANGAON
FORM-VII
DECLARATION
(Under Rule 25(1) Section-19(1) of the Act-30/2013)
Dist. Gazette No. LA/JN/ /2021 Dated: -10-2021
Collector, Jn. File No. 61/1628/2021 Dated: -10-2021
Spl. Dy. Collector, Jn. File. No. A1/78/2013 Dated: -10-2021
Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana, Collector, Jangaon that a total land to an extent of Ac-D-16 gts is required in the limits of Hanametta Mandal in Jangaon District for public purpose for execution of D-I-R of Barametia Left Main Canal under 'Chakras Raso Godown Left Irrigation Scheme for providing water to Agriculture lands under the Government of Telangana, Collector, Jangaon Districts per LA Act, 30/2013. Therefore the 'DECLARATION' is hereby made that a piece of land measuring, more or less Ac-D-16 gts viz., area under acquisition for the above said project in the limits of Hanametta Mandal in Jangaon District whose detailed description is as follows:
SCHEDULE-1
S.D.C. No. A1/78/2021 Canal: D-1R/BLMC
Sl. No. S.D. No. Type of Land Area under Acquisition of Ac. Gts. Name of the Employer Boundaries
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 0 03 Madhera Ramaswamy/Vadga
2 0 02 Durali Porawala/Vadga
3 0 00 Angadi Sathish/Venketesh
4 0 00 Angadi Ramu/Venketesh
5 0 08 Angadi Indragiri/Venketesh
6 0 08 Angadi Sathish/Venketesh
7 0 08 Angadi Sathish/Venketesh
8 0 02 Angadi Ramu/Venketesh
9 0 02 Angadi Indragiri/Venketesh
Total 0 16
This declaration is made after hearing of objections of persons interested in 15 of the LA Act, 30/2013 after verification of objections this declaration is issued. The number of families likely to be resettled due to Land Acquisition is NIL. Mines of Coal, Iron-ore, stone, slate or other minerals lying under the said land or any particular portion of the said land, except such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction phase of the project for the purpose of which the land is being acquired, or not needed. A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the Land Acquisition Officer & Special Deputy Collector, LA-56/L, Unit-4, Irrigation Projects, Jangaon on any working day.
Special Deputy Collector LA-56/L Additional District Unit-4, Irrigation Projects, Jangaon Collector Jangaon Collector Jangaon
DIPR R.O. No: 849/LA/P/Advt/Pub/2021-22

Economy in better shape than a year ago

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's macroeconomic situation is certainly better than what it was a year ago, eminent economist Pinaki Chakraborty said on Monday, while expressing hope that the country will be back on the path of economic growth if there is no major third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an interview with PTI, Chakraborty, who is the director of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), said that inflation may remain at an elevated level as there was a significant fiscal and monetary expansion in the last 18 months.



"The current macroeconomic situation is certainly much better

than what it was one year back. We are seeing recovery in most sectors," he said.

Chakraborty noted that COVID-19 vaccination has been going on at a very fast rate in India.

"And hopefully if there is no third wave, we will be back on a path of economic growth which will be sustainable and increasing," the eminent economist added.

According to Chakraborty, COVID-19 vaccination brings a sense of health security and should help resumption of normal economic activity, particularly in the services sector, which contributes more than 50 per cent of India's GDP.

RBI supersedes board of Reliance Capital; appoints administrator

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Monday superseded the board of Reliance Capital Ltd (RCL), promoted by Anil Ambani's Reliance Group, in view of the defaults in meeting payment obligations.

The RBI said the board has been superseded "in view of the defaults by RCL in meeting the various payment obligations to its creditors and serious governance concerns which the Board has not been able to address effectively".

It has also appointed Nageswar Rao Y (Ex-Executive

Director, Bank of Maharashtra) as the administrator of the NBFC.

"The Reserve Bank will shortly initiate the process of resolution of the company under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency and Liquidation Proceedings of Financial Service Providers and Application to Adjudicating Authority) Rules, 2019," the central bank said in a statement. The Reserve Bank will also apply to the NCLT, Mumbai, for appointing the administrator as the Insolvency Resolution Professional.

CAG flags anomalies in accounts of units under IT, telecom ministries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India on Monday reported multiple irregularities in the accounts of units under the IT and telecom ministries, including purchases of hardware and software worth Rs 890 crore by NICS in contravention of rules.

In its audit report for financial years 2017-18 and 2018-19, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has flagged anomalies in the decision taken by state-run telecom firm BSNL, C-DoT, the Department of Posts, ITI Limited and CDAC that had adverse financial implications.



The National Informatics Centre Services Inc (NICS), which provides IT infrastructure to government departments, prior to September 2015 had been making procurements using SAs (strategic alliances) based on the approval of its board but without obtaining any PACs (Proprietary Article Certificate), it said.

"This was in contravention of Rule 154 of GFR, 2005 and MeitY's subsequent instructions of June 2014," the report added. According to the rules cited by

the CAG, procurement from a single source can be resorted in cases where only a particular firm is the manufacturer of the required goods, and/ or for standardisation of machinery or spare parts based on advice of a competent technical expert and approval of the competent authority.

NICS had approached the Department of Expenditure (DoE) for inclusion of strategic alliance (SA) as a process of procurement and providing of ICT goods and services (including

solutions).

DoE while not specifically allowing incorporation of SAs in general financial rules (GFR), conveyed to NICS in August-2015 that they have no objection if it enters into strategic alliance as per rule, subject to the condition that before placement of each order it should provide PAC.

The report said from September 2015 onwards, NICS has been procuring from a single source. A test check revealed that these were being furnished and used without mentioning clear, specific and cogent reasons as per the format prescribed in GFR, for procurement through a single source.

NICS and the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) in their reply explained to the CAG their rationale and the chronology for adoption of the SA route.

According to the replies, NICS has been making such procurements on the basis of PACs and after receiving the advice of DoE. CAG said though NICS has

claimed that it was subsequently procuring goods and services from a single source only after obtaining PAC, a test check of PACs showed that due diligence was wanting both while furnishing and accepting PACs.

Further, MeitY has itself admitted (September 2019) that common items worth Rs 133.55 crore were procured under Strategic Alliance though these could have been procured through rate contracts or open bids," the report said.

The CAG has also flagged delays, shortcomings and non-establishment of laboratories by Telecommunication Engineering Centre (TEC). It recommended that a high-level Technical Committee from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) should review the status of all the nine laboratories and draw up a blueprint for their completion as early as possible. The CAG said that as a result of delays and non-establishment of required labs, TEC could not ensure creation of

a suitable testing infrastructure in a time-bound manner to support its mandate as a testing and certification agency of DoT.

In case of the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), the CAG said that autonomous body disbursed ad-hoc bonus amounting to Rs 97.70 lakh for the years 2015-16 and 2016-17, even though no orders were issued by the Ministry of Finance for payment of ad-hoc bonus.

"This resulted in irregular payment which needs to be recovered from the concerned employees or regularized," the report said.

It also observed that National e-Governance Division (NeGD) failed to ensure adherence to the government instructions regarding release of print media advertisement through the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP) which resulted in avoidable payment of Rs 1.21 crore to agencies other than DAVP.

Internet star Radhika on her dream debut

-SHIKHA DUGGAL

As a social media influencer, Radhika Seth hardly ever knew she'll get her Bollywood break so soon! She ignited her impeccable talent with *Call My Agent* alongside Soni Razdan. She hails from Lucknow and is a hardcore Bollywood fan that has always imagined herself as the central character in her favorite movies. With time, Radhika's interest in acting kept increasing. As an influencer, she is always up to date with the latest trends and knows how to score individuality online. Thanks to her charm and skills, the people's favourite internet star is now a newly-turned debutant actress, who is winning people's attention like anything. "Since the age of thirteen, I have been aspiring to be in Bollywood. Just to chase this dream of mine, I packed my bags and moved to Bombay. I guess I get to finally call myself an actor, and I have something to refer to when people see my work. I have been working hard for so many years," she says. This show-ground of filmy glitz turned out to be a different ballgame for her, she had no god-father in this industry

and for this reason she's only looking out for new erudition here onwards. "At every step, there was a new lesson to be learnt here. Nothing was seamless here. The scariest thing about entering the industry was initially the many ways to cross the threshold. I had no contacts at all! It is now after six years of hard slogging that I have finally arrived as an actress," she adds. The series is based on the French show by the same name. The reactions to her version have

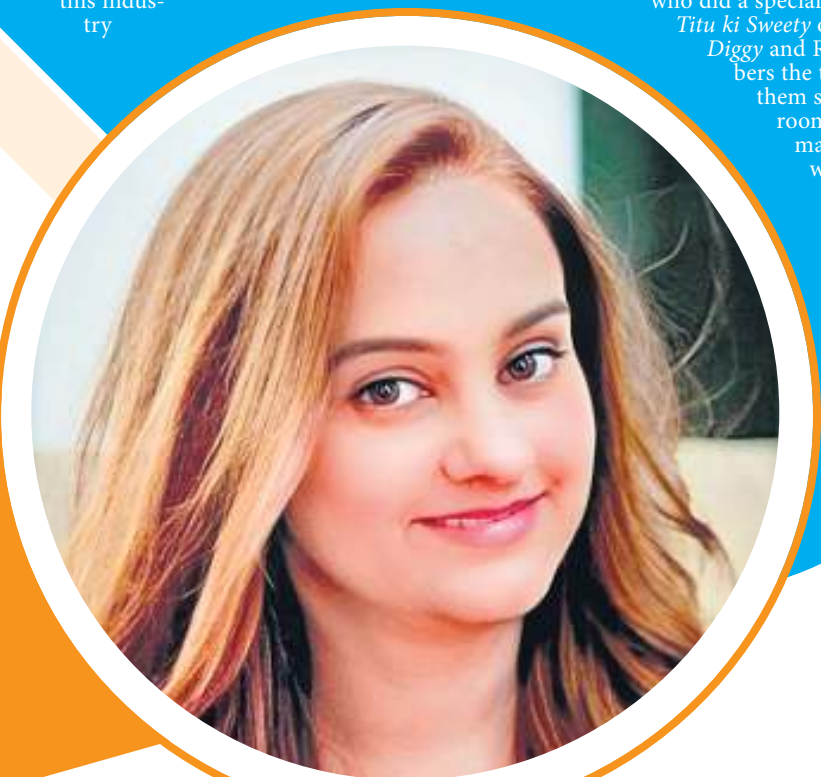
There will be somebody who likes it, somebody who doesn't; they are completely entitled to their opinion." She recalls Soni Razdan as one of the most heartfelt people she had as her company on the sets! Also, actresses like Deepika Padukone and Priyanka Chopra really inspire her. Something about

"INFLUENCERS DO HAVE THE POWER TO INFLUENCE, IT'S NOT NECESSARY FOR US TO ALWAYS PERSUADE ANYONE POLITICALLY. I BELIEVE IN INFLUENCING PEOPLE'S LIFESTYLE AND NOT THEIR POLITICAL THOUGHTS," SAYS RADHIKA SETH.

been polarizing. On that, she says, "It is a remake, so I get why people would have different opinions on it. A lot is expected out of a remake, especially something, which was as critically acclaimed as the original was. I don't think I can control the reactions.

their personality is so warm despite the stardom and success, she felt. "Influencers do have the power to influence, it's not necessary for us to always persuade anyone politically. I believe in influencing people's lifestyle and not their political thoughts," she asserts. Much before her, it was influencer Sakshi Malik, who did a special song for *Sonu ke Titu ki Sweety* on *Bom Diggy Diggy* and Radhika remembers the time when both of them shared the same room, they were room-mates. Radhika has witnessed her life change for the optimistic possibilities and wishes the same for herself too after *Call My Agent*.

How did she land up the role for Nia? Well, it was in the middle of the lockdown when she was asked to audition for the role and her room-mate recorded the video for her. When asked about what she learned from the original series, she says, "I just wanted to see the whole show because when you are shooting, you are shooting scene by scene. So I wanted to watch the whole season of it in order to get the reference. So I have a reference while doing a particular scene. But I did not want to take too much from it. I knew it was an adaptation and it was for an Indian audience and I had to bring something of my own into it. I did not want it to look like a copy paste."



Creating her own path to success

SHREYA SRIKONDA

It can be said that the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) is the most important factor in how a company appears to the world. For a company to put forward an image of being reliable, productive and trust-worthy, a CMO needs to have clear goals and gameplan. Runki Goswami, CEO at Xebia, talks to us about how she came to be in the position she is in today, and what her experience has been in the career path she chose. "I started with PR, but quickly started working in Marketing. Having a good hand in content, I started to find my niche- from technical content to learning about technology, taking on a geographical focus, the canvas kept expanding until I hit Microsoft." She went on to work with Accenture, Wipro and NIIT technologies, which she worked on to rebrand as Coforge. With her wide range of experience working in marketing in all capacities, she says, "There's

so much to do in marketing. Content and design cuts through everything, but there's content marketing, business marketing, research and so much more. It's been a rollercoaster. Different organisations have different priorities- some are change-driven, some finance-driven, and now working with so many companies- a lot of learning has come my way." She says there's never an end to all the learning. "Every other day, the dynamics change. With covid, we went from human touch to a virtual world overnight. The basics (of the profession) are in place, but the day-to-day is always changing. When covid hit, it brought some uncertainty with it mid 2020. By August, it was quite clear to us, and to the whole world, that we had to strongly move towards digitisation, which invariably demands software. It wasn't about creating revenue during the pandemic, we were focused on bringing in a digital fluency of keeping up relationships through online channels, and the digitisation that we brought in then is paying off now." She says the pandemic helped

them predict changes better. Today's CMOs are using data analytics combined with market focus, to define the next direction of channel communication and sales targeting. "The entire thought process had to change," she says. The prevalent idea that marketers never last in one organisation is refuted by Goswami- she says that it's not the job, but the environment that changes. "I would not say CMOs don't stay for long at one place, but I would say trends change. Adaptability plays a big role. We have to think out of the box constantly. It's less of hopping from one organisation to another and more of hopping from one situation to another," she shares. Before launching a new marketing initiative, Goswami says that the one person that has to be on the same page is the CSO. "The Chief Strategy/Sales Officer is a CMO's best friend. 80% of market resources are managed between them. The discussion with the CSO is the first, most difficult, and more critical step towards launching a new initiative.

The marketing team needs to be in touch with the sales team to understand where they face troubles and how they can be solved. As a marketer, my ideas might not go well with the budget that I have. To play around with ideas, challenging conversations have to be had." For budding marketers, she has some solid advice. "Think out of the box. Never think as to what the world might think. Think about how your work will impact the world and change perceptions. To be able to be composed in any changing situation is also another important strength." About her current workplace, Goswami says that "Xebia is a 'people-first' company. The beauty of this culture and the strategy that brings it about is truly beautiful. There are many Btech graduates who want to make a difference with technology, and here we work on multiple technologies that help transform lives. The messaging is very heartfelt here, compared to the other 'stoic' MNCs I've previously worked with," shares Goswami.

All about Omicron, and how to tackle it

Recently, the media is full of news about the new variant of Covid-19 infection, which was detected for the first time in South Africa. The first case was diagnosed on November 9, 2021. This variant was initially labelled as B.1.1.529, and now it is called Omicron (a Greek alphabet). This variant has also been detected in several other countries including Botswana, Israel, Hong Kong and UK.

What is different about this variant of Covid?
It has too many mutations, about 50 in total; 32 of the mutations have been noted in

the spike protein part of the virus (spike protein is responsible for virus's entry into the human cells). This could make them more infectious and more transmissible from infected to the non-infected. South Africa has reported 4-fold increase in new cases of Covid infection during the past two weeks, coinciding with the emergence of this new variant.

What is WHO's assessment of the new variant?
WHO organized a meeting of experts on 26th November to discuss the new variant. WHO designated the new variant as a "variant of concern". This means that the

Omicron variant is associated with greater risk of transmissibility. It could also mean that current diagnostics, vaccines and therapies may be less effective for this variant. Other variants of concern are alpha, beta, gamma and delta. The delta variant was first identified in India (October 2020) and was responsible for the second wave of covid 19 infections earlier this year.

Are the symptoms caused by Omicron variant different?
Health authorities in South Africa have not reported any unusual symptoms due to omicron variant. This means the symptoms caused by this variant are similar to that of

previous Covid virus infection. In addition, some cases of omicron variant infection remain asymptomatic (similar to usual covid infection).

Can routinely done RT-PCR tests detect the infection due to new variant?

As per the current data from South Africa, omicron variant has a deletion within the S gene, which allows for its rapid identification. This suggests that the sensitivity of the currently used RT-PCR kits would remain unaffected while testing for the new variant.

(The writer, Dr Sudhir Kumar, is Sr Consultant Neurologist, Apollo Hospitals)

Precautions

1. Avoid leisure travel to South Africa and other countries that have reported cases of new variant.
2. Strictly screen people arriving from the affected countries and quarantine them for 10-14 days.
3. Vaccination of the eligible people should be our topmost priority. Booster dose (third dose of the vaccine) should be given to high-risk people (Govt of India should release the guidelines for booster dose at the earliest).
4. Covid-appropriate behavior should be continued-such as wearing mask in public places, avoiding large gatherings, social distancing and hand sanitising.





● Shanthi Reddy



● Kandi Narsimlu



● Ramesh, Naresh, Ramu, Madhu and Rajesh



● Supraja Rao

EXPRESSIONS OF ETHNICITY

inaugural of 'Ethnic Impressions' — a solo show by Artist Kandi Narsimlu, took place at the Kadari Art Gallery this week. Art Patron and entrepreneur Shanthi Reddy was the chief guest at the event. The show is open for visitors till January 2, 2022.



● Sruthi & Swetha



● Shikha

SuchirIndia Foundation, celebrated Sankalp Divas 2021, with great fanfare to mark the birthday of Lion Dr. Y. Kiron. On the occasion, SuchirIndia Foundation gave away 'Sankalp Tara Awards' to organisations and individuals who did great service for the betterment of the society. Noted film actor, writer, and director Thanikella Bharani and Padmasri awardee Kanakaraju were the chief guests, who presented the awards.





● Shravya Reddy



● Punam Varma

PARTY

Photos by SV Chary



'The very definition of a bubble is now etched in my mind forever'

Created by award-winning director Ram Madhvani, *Aarya 2* co-produced by Endemol Shine India and Ram Madhvani Films brings to light Aarya Sareen's journey from being powerless to fearless. After emerging as one of the most gripping thrillers from India with an International Emmy nomination for best drama series, *Aarya* is set to hit the digital scene with Season 2. What makes it one of the most anticipated OTT series is that its trailer is rife with surprising twists. The key question its trailer raised is — 'Can Aarya Sareen escape her past, or will her own family betray her, yet again?' Ahead of the release of the second installment of *Aarya*, Sushmita Sen has opened up on her experience of shooting for the show in the midst of a pandemic. Sushmita shared, "We've become lockdown specialists now! We either release during a lockdown or shoot during it, that's our new thing! When we completed the shoot for *Aarya 2*, on our farewell, we said how blessed we were to be working during the pandemic. There were so many people who had to sit at home, but this is also a nice culmination of teamwork. We had Disney+Hotstar, Ram Madhvani film, the entire crew and the cast together. Everyone just pulled in following the rules and making it possible." Sushmita added, "My God! The very definition of a bubble is now etched in my mind forever. For any crew member to work in a PPE kit, covered from head to toe for 10 hrs a day is seriously tough! And the constant tests, making sure we lived away from our family, the quarantine for 7-10 days before starting to work, all these measures initially seemed difficult. But in the bigger picture, we were full of gratitude to be working at such a time and being able to create something that you love. I mean *Aarya season 2* is a big leap from the first season!" Lastly, "It's delightful to see the same series move with such pace and difference, when you've already taken the story miles ahead and it was always used to be a question mark! Ram Madhvani used to say what are we going to do in the rest of the season? There's already so much and then he would say, wait for it, we have a lot of content; we have a fantastic subject! So, working during the lockdown period was amazing, we had to shoot in Jaipur which is Aarya's hometown and of course patchwork was executed in Mumbai, so our schedule was executed pretty much through the lockdown." The second season of *Aarya* follows the journey of a mother combatting the dark world of crime and enemies closing in on her family and children. Will her family continue to be her strength or will her own trustworthy people turn against her? Sushmita Sen will be seen reprising the role of Aarya Sareen and she will be joined by actors Sikandar Kher, Vikas Kumar, Mayo Sarao, Ankur Bhatia, Akash Khurana, Dilnaz Irani amongst others.

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6			7	8
9			10	
12	13			14
17				18
19				

SUDOKU

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

1 A ship's right side

2 These are cut down for paper manufacture

3 Decays

4 The gas we need to live

5 Circular in shape

6 Make longer by pulling

8 Carpenters and engineers use these

11 Say again

13 A stringed musical instrument

15 Fewest

16 Twirl

DOWN

2 These are cut down for paper manufacture


3 Decays

4 The gas we need to live

5 Circular in shape

SOLUTION

F	I	G	H	T	I	N	G	
A	R	A	A	L	H			
F	L	O	R	L	A	R	G	E
F	S	D	K	S	A			
E	I	T	H	R	L	E	A	D
T	A	C	K					
I	L	O	M					
O	D	O	R	B	R	A	I	N
N	T	I	L	E				
S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	



‘Changed my mobile display picture to Balayya sir’s picture’

K RAMYA SREE

Akhanda is everywhere these days. The film will see the return of the hit combination — Nandamuri Balakrishna and director Boyapati Sreenu. Releasing on December 2, the makers of the film are too busy promoting *Akhanda* in every way possible. We caught up with actress Poorna to discuss further about the film, her role, and more.

Poorna will be playing Padmavati in this film. It was sheer luck she bagged this role as it was initially written for someone else. The actress is happy to come on board *Akhanda* as this will be her next big cinema after *Seema Tapakai*.

Poorna shares, “Female characters in Boyapati *garu*’s film are very strong. Boyapati had earlier said that my character is very dominating and that I should blurt really strong lines in front of Balakrishna sir. I was scared. But Bala sir was very supportive. He made me feel extremely comfortable.”

The actor was all praises for Balayya Babu’s energy on sets. She says, “His energy is not normal. Each fight lasted about 17 days. Everyone on sets used to look tired after the fight sequence. But Bala sir is a lion. He was very energetic throughout. I changed my mobile display picture to Bala sir’s photo just to get and feel those energies of Bala sir.”

“Seeing Balakrishna as aghora, felt like I am watching a God,” Poorna claims.

“I have three scenes in this film and they are very powerful. I am sure people will talk about my work after watching the film, thanks to the mature, dominant health minister character I play in *Akhanda*,” adds Poorna.

The actress whose lucky number is five says she will have a total of five releases in 2021 and that off-late she is being offered good characters that carry enough weightage. “Most of the offers came after the lockdown. I want my character to leave an impact even if I have just four scenes.”

The actress feels humbled to get good roles in this highly-competitive industry, despite hailing from a neighbouring state — Kerala. She credits her mother for giving her the strength to fight the competition and make a mark for herself in the film industry.


It’s not just acting. Poorna was initially known for her dancing skills and she in fact judges a dance show even now. “I can dance well. But such characters didn’t bring me this far. If you want to go on for a long time, you have to choose good films,” says Poorna thanking *Dhee* dance show, because of which she became closer to the Telugu audience.

“We are public figures. We become celebrities because of people. They make positive and negative comments. I take it all the same. I read all the comments on social media. I changed a lot after reading negative comments,” concludes Poorna who is hoping to get good characters after *Akhanda* is released in theatres.

Priya Banerjee to star in Netflix’s biggest multi-starrer!

Priya Banerjee will be starring alongside some of the biggest stars in a multi-starrer show on Netflix. The cast is absolutely humongous to say the least. Priya Banerjee, known for films like *Kiss*, *Asura*, *Joru*, is a terrific actress and it would be a project worth the wait for a powerhouse performer.

Reports are definitely rife about this. The reports suggest that the show is probably comparable to *Baahubali*. We can only imagine the scale and the infiniteness of the project with a streaming giant where the world is the audience. Priya reportedly is preparing exceptionally hard for such a project and she wants to keep no stone unturned.



Pushpa: The Rise theatrical trailer out on Dec 6

Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna-starrer *Pushpa: The Rise* is to be released soon and it is helmed by ace director Sukumar.

The makers of *Pushpa* have readied the theatrical trailer, which is expected to amplify the hype around the Allu Arjun starrer. The makers, on Monday, took to their social media to announce the release of the theatrical trailer.

As per the official announcement by the makers, the theatrical trailer of *Pushpa: The Rise* will be out on December 6. The makers also released a new poster, in which Allu Arjun is seen doing the ferocious *Thagade Le* impression.

This brand new poster also publicises the trailer’s arrival date. “The WILDEST MASS festival begins #PushpaTrailer on DEC 6th,” the makers tweeted.

Pushpa’s team is to commence the promotional activities soon, as the movie is in its final leg of making. A special song will feature Samantha Ruth Prabhu dancing alongside Allu Arjun, which is expected to be a blockbuster song from the album. Mythri Movie Makers back the two-part red sandalwood smuggling-based action thriller, while Devi Sri Prasad composed the music. ‘Pushpa’ will see its box-office release on December 17.



Mehreen is RAW agent in Ghost?

Actor Nagarjuna busy with *Bangaraju*, *Soggade Chinni Nayana*, has signed another film *Ghost* under the direction of Praveen Sattaru.

We hear that the makers of the film finalised their leading lady.

Earlier, it was reported that Kajal Agarwal will play the leading lady in *Ghost* and that she even shot a few scenes. Later the actress opted to be out of the project. The latest we hear is that the makers of the film contacted Mehreen Pirzada.

Mehreen agreed to do the role and the makers narrated her the script and story. Mehreen will be playing the role of a RAW agent and she will be undergoing training for the role. Gul Panag and Anikha Surendran are playing important roles while, Bharatt Saurabh is the music director and Mukesh G and Dharmendra Kakarala are handling the cinematography and editing departments.





Dhanush wins best actor award at BRICS

Actor Dhanush won the Best Actor award at BRICS Film Festival for his performance in action and revenge drama *Asuran*. The film *Asuran* also won three National Awards. BRICS Film Festival was held alongside the 52nd edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) that came to a close on Sunday evening. This is the 1st time that the BRICS Film Festival has been conducted alongside the IFFI.

The BRICS festival had films from India, China, Brazil, Russia, and South Africa participating in it. The Chinese Director Yan Han was awarded the Special Mention Award for his movie *A Little Red Flower* at the festival.

Based on the Vekkal

novel, Dhanush played a farmer in the film, which was produced by Kalaipuli S Thanu under the banner of under V Creations and directed by Vetrimaaran. The movie *Asuran* was also remade in Telugu titled *Narappa* by Venkatesh Daggubati and National award winning actress Priyamani.

Asuran actor Dhanush won the Best Actor for his performance in the recently concluded National Award. The action drama was also adjudged as the Best Tamil film. On the other side, Dhanush was last seen in Karthik Subbaraj’s directorial venture *Jagame Thandhiram*, which premiered directly on Netflix. Currently he is busy with the shooting of his upcoming films, *Maaran* and *Thiruchitrambalam*.

In an article headlined ‘Saaho singer weaves his magic again’ published on November 29, 2021, it was stated that Kasyap has sung for the aforementioned movie. However, it has been brought to our notice by the discussant that Kasyap was instead involved with the background score of the film. The error is regretted.

INDIA VS NEW ZEALAND



Indians defy India!

PTI ■ KANPUR

Two Indian-born cricketers, Ajaz Patel and Rachin Ravindra, showed remarkable resilience under fading light and on a deteriorating track to defy India's famous spinners, eking out a thrilling draw for New Zealand in the opening Test here on Monday.

Indian spinners, led by Ravindra Jadeja, put up one of their most persevering performances in recent times but Mumbai-born Patel (2 off 23 balls) and Karnataka-born Ravindra (18 not out off 91 balls) consumed 8.4 overs after the fall of the ninth wicket to keep New Zealand on even keel in the two-match series.

A lot of credit should also go to night-watchman Will Somerville (36 off 110 balls), who played the entire fifth morning and to first raise visions of the improbable draw.

A victory target of 284 was always out of question but the gutsy New Zealanders didn't lose any wicket in the first session of the last morning before the Indian spinners, who had saved their best for the last, finally showed their skills but couldn't end on a winning note. The result at Green Park is the first time that New Zealand has gone 10 Test matches undefeated (eight wins, two draws) with the current streak starting against India at the start of 2020.

The last half an hour was a thriller with umpires Nitin Menon and Virender Sharma checking light and Ravindra appreciating Patel for every copybook forward defensive stroke. Ashwin (30-12-35-3), Jadeja (28-10-40-4) and Axar Patel (21-12-23-1) had to really push hard but it once again showed that Indian spinners might not be completely effective on tracks that don't start cracking from at the least second day. There was low bounce for sure but the slow turn made it easy to negotiate and also the failure of the two senior pacers put immense pressure on the

spin troika who still took 17 of the 19 Kiwi wickets to fall. But they couldn't take the all-important final one. It was one of India's most hard-fought Test matches at home in recent times and no one would grudge the 'Good Men' from New Zealand again showing their wares in adversity.

Indian batter Shreyas Iyer deservedly and expectedly walked away with the Player of the Match honours for his assured debut which yielded him a century and a half century. The only thing that went in favour of India on the final day was the low bounce as defending for a very long period wasn't an option.

After this draw, there are some probing questions for the team going into the next Test. There will be serious question marks regarding stand-in captain Ajinkya Rahane's place in the playing eleven with skipper Virat Kohli coming back in the next game.

Veteran pacer Ishant Sharma (22 wicket-less overs in match) is looking completely off-colour since England and his place in the eleven ought to be questioned. Tom Latham (52 off 146 balls) scored his second fifty and, along with Somerville, became the key man to in taking the game deep into the fifth day. In the final context, even Kane Williamson's (24 off 112 balls) would mean a lot and so would Tim Blundell and Kyle Jamieson playing 30-odd balls each. These were little contributions that mattered and in the end, a little bit of luck also went their way.

However, the low bounce did him in as he dragged one back during the post lunch. With that scalp, Ashwin in his 80th Test, crossed Harbhajan Singh (417 in 103 games) to become the third highest wicket-taker for India in the five-day format.

"I would like to congratulate Ashwin on his milestone. Well done and hope he wins many more matches for India," Harbhajan told PTI.

Dravid gives ₹35,000 to groundsmen for preparing sporting pitch

He has always been different from the rest and India's new head coach Rahul Dravid proved it once again by giving Green Park's groundstaff, led by Shiv Kumar, ₹35,000 for preparing a sporting pitch for the first Test against New Zealand.

The Indian-born Ajaz Patel and Rachin Ravindra showed remarkable resilience under fading light and on a deteriorating track to defy India's famous spinners and eke out a thrilling draw for New Zealand after an engrossing fifth and final day of the opening Test here on Monday.

Scoreboard

INDIA 1ST INNINGS: 345	
NEW ZEALAND 1ST INNINGS: 296	
INDIA 2ND INNINGS: 234-7 DECLARED	
NEW ZEALAND 2ND INNINGS: (OVERNIGHT 4-1 IN 4 OVERS)	
Tom Latham b Ashwin	52
Will Young lbw b Ashwin	2
Somerville c Gill b Umesh	36
Kane Williamson lbw b Ravindra Jadeja	24
Ross Taylor lbw b Ravindra Jadeja	2
Henry Nicholls lbw b Axar	1
Tom Blundell b Ashwin	2
Rachin Ravindra	18*
Kyle Jamieson lbw b Ravindra Jadeja	5
Tim Southee lbw b Ravindra Jadeja	4
Ajaz Patel	2*
Extras: (B-12, LB-1, NB-4) 17	
Total: (For 9 wicket, 98 overs) 165	
Bowling (India)	
Ravichandran Ashwin	30-12-35-3
Axar Patel	21-12-23-1
Umesh Yadav	12-2-34-1
Ishant Sharma	7-1-20-0
Ravindra Jadeja	28-10-40-4



- The draw breaks a sequence of 14 successive result Tests in India, the longest such streak. Between 1988 and 1994, there were 13 successive results in Tests in India. India were 12-1 in those Tests, with the only defeat coming against New Zealand in Mumbai, which was the last time they won a Test in India
- Ashwin in his 80th Test, crossed Harbhajan Singh (417 in 103 games) to become the third highest wicket-taker for India in the five-day format

Feels absolutely nothing at all: Ashwin

PTI ■ KANPUR

Feels like absolutely nothing at all." With these words off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Monday played down his milestone of becoming India's third highest wicket-taker in Test cricket.

Ashwin dismissed Tom Latham to claim his 418th Test wicket and go past Harbhajan Singh on the fifth and final day of the opening Test against New Zealand here. He is now only behind Anil Kumble and Kapil Dev in the overall standings.

After India could not close out the game against New Zealand, Ashwin was asked what the milestone made him feel.

"Absolutely nothing at all. These are milestones that are constantly kept on tab, it's wonderful. Ever since Rahul bhai has taken over, he's kept saying how many wickets you take, how many runs you make in 10 years time, you won't remember them," Ashwin said.

"It's the memories that matters so I want to have some special memories going for-

ward in the next 3-4 years," he added after the drawn game.

The match lasted full five days though bad light played a part every evening. Ashwin was diplomatic while talking about the surface.

"Anytime pitches are being spoken about and I am asked a question, it turns into a controversy. So, I'll try and keep a tab on that," Mumbai-born Ajaz Patel (2 not out off 23 balls) and Karnataka-born Rachin Ravindra (18 not out off 91 balls) consumed 8.4 overs after the fall of ninth wicket to eke out a memorable draw for New Zealand in fading light.

"Getting down to the last session, last mandatory over, I think it's played its part, some wonderful Test cricket. The young boy, Ravindra, batted beautifully, showed great composure, Ajaz Patel with his defence," Ashwin said.

"It just tells you a story. Everybody hangs in there, everybody can defend well these days, so it's not as easy as it used to be once upon a time getting these tail-enders out. Great day of Test cricket, I hope people who

watched it enjoyed it." It was a close game and Ashwin was all praise for the traditional format.

"The beauty of Test cricket is that you need to want it. It's really hard, it's not one of those formats where you turn up, have a good day, have a good four-over bowl or have a good 20-overs bat.

"There is a lot of pain, there is a lot of hard work, there's a lot of tenacity you need to bring into play. Definitely I am someone who wants to play this format and I enjoy it."

He added that they bowled well on the final day though the last New Zealand pair denied them a win.

"We were actually keeping things under control. We were bowling in good areas and we knew if we had the time to go on and put some pressure on them, we could get the job done but light was always going to come in the last session.

"There has been bad light in every single day of this Test match so we did expect it, so no complaints. Couldn't get the job done but we stuck together well."

MOST WICKETS FOR INDIA IN TESTS

Bowler	M	I	Balls	Runs	Wkts	Avg	S/R	5W	10W	Best
Anil Kumble	132	236	40,850	18,355	619	29.65	65.99	35	8	10-74
Kapil Dev	131	227	27,740	12,867	434	29.64	63.91	23	2	9-83
R Ashwin	80	150	22,105	10,261	419	24.48	52.7	30	7	7-59
Harbhajan Singh	103	190	28,580	13,537	417	32.46	68.53	25	5	8-84
Zaheer Khan	92	165	18,785	10,247	311	32.94	60.40	11	1	7-87
Ishant Sharma	105	188	19,160	10,078	311	32.40	61.60	11	1	7-74

Don't think we could have done anything different: Rahane

PTI ■ KANPUR

India failed to bowl out New Zealand on a deteriorating track on day five of the first Test but skipper Ajinkya Rahane praised his players saying they tried their best and couldn't have done anything different.

Mumbai-born Ajaz Patel (2 not out off 23 balls) and Karnataka-born Rachin Ravindra (18 not out off 91 balls) consumed 8.4 overs after the fall of ninth wicket to eke

out a memorable draw for New Zealand in fading light.

"It was a very good game of cricket, they played really well. We came back really well after the first session. "We wanted to get that partnership going. We were looking to bowl 5-6 overs in the end, but we needed that partnership to carry on. I don't think we could have

done anything different," said Rahane at the post-match presentation.

He was also asked if he could have declared earlier in the final session on day four but Rahane replied in the negative.

The light metre was out after every over in the last 30 minutes of play on Monday. Rahane said the right call was

made under the circumstances. "The (frequent) chat with the umpires was about the light. They made the call and I think they were right. I thought on this wicket the spinners have to bowl long spells. It was all about rotating the bowlers."

Rahane, who has been short of runs for a while now, also praised debutant Shreyas Iyer but did not divulge who would make way for Virat Kohli in the next Test in Mumbai.

DRAVID SPEAKS

Pitch was quite unresponsive on fifth day, outside edge was out of equation: Dravid

Kanpur: India head coach Rahul Dravid on Monday commended his spinners for putting up a great show on "quite an unresponsive" fifth day track with outside edges not coming into play in the drawn first Test against New Zealand. The Indians got nine New Zealand wickets but failed to dislodge the last pair of Rachin Ravindra and Ajaz Patel as the vis-

itors managed a creditable draw after being down and out in the post-tea session. "We showed great composure and fighting spirit and worked really hard in that final session. It was quite an unresponsive pitch on the fifth day and really good effort to have taken eight wickets after lunch, three in that session and five in last session.

Phenomenal achievement: Dravid on Ashwin's feat

Kanpur: India coach Rahul Dravid on Monday drew attention to the manner in which Ravichandran Ashwin has "grown" and "evolved" into a champion off-spinner, who has now become the country's third highest wicket-taker in Tests. Ashwin dismissed Tom Latham to claim his 418th Test wicket and go past Harbhajan Singh on the fifth and final day of the opening Test against New

Zealand here. He is now only behind Anil Kumble and Kapil Dev in the overall standings. "I think it's a phenomenal achievement. I think you know Harbhajan Singh was a really fine bowler, someone I played a lot of cricket with; terrific bowler for India and what Ashwin has done, to be able to go past him in just 80 Test matches is phenomenal achievement," Dravid said.

Satwik-Chirag pairing qualifies for BWF World Tour Finals

PTI ■ BALI

World no 11 duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has become the first Indian men's doubles pair to qualify for the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals starting here on Wednesday.

Satwik and Chirag had finished at the semifinals of the Indonesia Open last week but made the cut after Japanese pairing of Akira Koga and Taichi Saito also lost in the last four at the Super 1000 tournament.

The Indian pair thus leapfrogged the Japanese pair in the Road to Bali to book the berth at the year-ending event.

Satwik and Chirag needed to beat World No. 1 pair of Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sukamuljo in the semifinals to make the cut but they ended up losing 16-21 18-21.

Akira and Taichi had lost to fellow Japanese duo of Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi 22-20 21-14 to pave the way for the Indian pair.

"Fell short in the end against Kevin/Marcus today. But nevertheless happy with the way we played this week. On the positive side we have qualified for the World Tour Finals!" Chirag wrote on his instagram page.

India A face South Africa A in 2nd unofficial Test

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

Cooped up in a bio-bubble while a new COVID-19 variant causes panic all across here, the India A cricket team will take on South Africa A in the second unofficial Test from Tuesday with some senior side aspirants hoping to make an impression.

The first four-day game ended in a draw due to inclement weather on Friday last week even as the detection of the B.1.1.529 COVID-19 variant, which was named Omicron by the WHO, forced many countries to impose international travel restrictions on South Africa. The uncertain situation also led to the Netherlands abandoning their last two ODIs against South Africa which were scheduled at Johannesburg.

However, India A have stayed put in Bloemfontein inside a bio-bubble.

The matches are being played without spectators and India senior team is also due to arrive in the country by December 9 for a nearly seven-week assignment starting December 17. If the situation deteriorates, it can jeopardise the tour which involves three Tests, three ODIs and four T20Is across four venues — Johannesburg, Centurion, Paarl, and Cape Town.

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US eliminated from Davis Cup Finals after loss to Colombia

Washington: US captain Mardy Fish hinted at a lack of passion within his team after the record 32-time champion Americans were eliminated from the Davis Cup Finals by following up a lopsided loss to host Italy with a humbling defeat to Colombia.

The Americans left Turin 0-2 when Reilly Opelka and Jack Sock retired from the decisive doubles match while trailing 3-0 in the opening set against the accomplished Colombian pair of Juan-Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah.

Pakistan closes in on victory in 1st test with Bangladesh

AP ■ CHATTOGRAM

Fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi claimed 5-32 as Pakistan closed in on victory in the first cricket test against Bangladesh on Monday.

Afridi's fourth five-wicket haul in tests wrapped up Bangladesh's second innings for 157 on Day 4, setting Pakistan a 202-run target to win. Openers Abid Ali and Abdullah Shafique then helped Pakistan reach 109-0 at stumps, leaving the team needing 93 more runs on the final day.

Ali, who scored 133 in the first innings, was on 56 and debutant Shafique was unbeaten on 53 when bad light ended play early for the fourth consecutive day.

Bangladesh had a 44-run first-innings lead after posting 330 and then bowling Pakistan out for 286.

"We just had a terrible last session yesterday which put us under a lot of pressure in the game," Bangladesh coach Russell Domingo said.

"They (Pakistan) need another 93 runs, so it will need something really special. Anything is possible in test cricket. We have to come tomorrow morning believing we still have a chance. If we can pick up one or two wickets in the first half an hour, anything is possible."

Vinicius' late strike script Real's win

AP ■ MADRID

Vinicius Junior ran to the corner and performed some samba moves by the flag before his teammates rushed in to embrace him.

The young Brazilian forward had just scored another decisive goal for Real Madrid. His beautiful late strike sealed a 2-1 comeback from behind win over Sevilla on Sunday in a match between two of the best teams in Spain at the moment.

Vinicius Junior neatly controlled the ball with his chest by the sideline before making a run past a couple of defenders.

He fired a well-placed shot into the top corner from outside the area for an 87th-minute winner which delighted Madrid fans at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium.

It was the second goal in the last three matches for Vinicius Junior, and the 11th in total in what has been his best season by far since joining Madrid.

He has already scored more



goals now than in his previous three seasons in total. Karim Benzema, another red-hot player for Madrid, also scored to give the league leaders a four-point advantage at the top over defending champion Atlético Madrid, which won 4-1 at Cádiz.

Real Sociedad dropped to third after losing 1-0 at Espanyol, while Sevilla stayed fourth, five points off the lead.

Sevilla, which had been unbeaten in six consecutive league

games, opened the scoring with a header by Rafa Mir in the 12th. Benzema equalized from close range after a blunder by Sevilla goalkeeper Bono in the 32nd.

Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois came up with a big save in stoppage time to guarantee the win for the hosts and keep Sevilla winless on the road against Madrid since 2008.

Napoli tharsh Lazio 4-0

Dries Mertens scored twice as Napoli beat Lazio 4-0 to take the outright lead of Serie A on the night it paid tribute to football great Diego Maradona.

As well as Mertens — who has taken over several of Maradona's records at Napoli — Piotr Zielinski and Fabián Ruiz also netted to help Napoli move three points clear of second-place AC Milan, which earlier lost 3-1 at home to Sassuolo.

It was a special night for Napoli fans as the match came three days after the one-year anniversary of Maradona's death. Maradona led Napoli to its only

Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990 and is considered a god-like figure in the southern city.

A statue to the former Argentina player and coach was unveiled in the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona, while the players wore special shirts.

Man Utd appoint Rangnick as interim boss

Manchester United announced on Monday they had appointed Ralf Rangnick as interim manager until the end of the season following the sacking of Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

The 63-year-old German joins from Lokomotiv Moscow, where he was manager of sports and development. At the end of the season Rangnick, whose appointment is subject to work visa requirements, will take on a consultancy role at Old Trafford for a further two years.

He takes over from first-team coach Michael Carrick, who has been in caretaker charge for two games since Solskjaer was sacked

Sevilla coach Julen Lopetegui has managed his 100th LaLiga (W55 D24 L21). Against any other team he has managed more league games without a win than against Real Madrid in the competition (G5 D1 L4 — also five against Barcelona — G5 D2 L3).

Real Madrid have won more points from losing positions than any other team in La Liga this season (10 points, two more than Atlético de Madrid).

Vinicius Júnior has scored nine goals in 14 La Liga games this season, one more than in his previous 82 games for Real Madrid in the competition.

Only Mohamed Salah (19, 11 goals and 8 assists) has been involved in more goals in Europe's five major leagues this season than Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema (18, 11 goals and 7 assists).

With his goal against Cádiz, Antoine Griezmann has now scored against 33 of the 34 teams he has faced in La Liga (159 goals), only failing to score against his current club Atletico Madrid (12).

just over a week ago following a terrible run of results for the 20-time English champions.