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## In brief

### SKM suspends Nov 29 tractor march to Parliament

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha has suspended its November 29 tractor march to Parliament and it will hold a meeting next month to decide its future course of action, farmer leaders said on Saturday. The decision to suspend the march comes two days ahead of the commencement of the Winter Session of Parliament, during which a bill to repeal three central farm laws is slated to be introduced. The SKM, an umbrella body of farmer unions protesting against the laws for the past one year, also said it wants an assurance in Parliament on their demand for a legislation guaranteeing farmers Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops.

### Dead man wins Panchayat poll in Bihar!

A dead man has won a Panchayat poll held on Wednesday riding on a sympathy wave generated by his own death. The real-life tragicomedy was detected in this impoverished district, situated about 200 kms from the state capital, when officials were handing over certificates to candidates who won the polls held on November 24. Sohan Murmu, who won ward no. 2 of Deepakhar village, falling under Khaira block, was nowhere to be found. On enquiry, we learnt that Murmu had died on November 6, more than a fortnight before voting took place. Khaira BDO Raghavendra Tripathi said with a sense of bewilderment.

### Goods train derails as Naxals uproot tracks in Dantewada

Eighteen wagons and three locomotives of a goods train derailed on the Kirandul-Visakhapatnam railway section in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district after Naxals uprooted railway tracks, a police official said on Saturday. No casualty was reported in the incident that took place in a forest area around 8.30 pm on Friday. However, the movement of trains was disrupted between Jagdalpur and Kirandul, he said. "Maoists uprooted tracks between Bhansi and Kamaloor stations, causing 18 wagons and three engines of a goods train to derail," Dantewada Superintendent of Police Abhishek Pallava said. The train, loaded with iron ore, was on its way to Visakhapatnam from Bachel, he said, adding that there was no report of any casualty in the incident.

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Kartik & Krishna Paksha

Tithi : Navami upto 05:30 AM

Nakshatram : Pune Purnima upto 10:06 PM

Time to Avoid

Rahukalam : 04:08 PM to 05:33 PM

Yamagandam : 11:55 AM to 01:20 PM

Variyam : 05:11 AM, Nov 29 to 06:45 AM

Gulika : 02:44 PM to 04:08 PM

Amritakalam : 03:36 PM to 05:13 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:33 AM to 12:18 PM

### VUJAYAWADA

#### WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny

Temp: 31 °C

Humidity: 56%

Sunrise: 06:18 AM

Sunset: 05:33 PM

Updated NOVEMBER 27, 2021 5:00 PM

## OBTUSE ANGLE



## VIVEKA MURDER CASE

# Needle of suspicion points to immediate family members

SNV SUDHIR

VIJAYAWADA

Even as the CBI has taken YSRCP leader Devireddy Siva Sankar Reddy into custody as part of the ongoing investigation into the sensational murder of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's uncle former Kadapa MP YS Vivekananda Reddy just before the 2019 polls, fingers are now being pointed at the immediate family members of the deceased.

Sankar Reddy, in his letter to CBI Director recently, had openly said that Mooli Venkata Krishna Reddy, who was acting as PA to Vivekananda Reddy during that time, was in touch with Vivekananda Reddy's daughter Dr Narreddy Sunitha, her husband Narreddy Rajasekhara Reddy and other family members through a mobile phone and informed what was going on at the scene the next day when the murder came to light in Pulivendula.

"Thummalaipalli Gangi Reddy alias Yerra Gangi Reddy being the close associate of the deceased and his family took control of the situation.

As he arrived, citing the reason a lot of people will come to see the body. We should keep it properly cleaned.

He called Inayathulla to shift the



body from the bathroom, he called Lakshmamma (cook-cum-maid) to clean blood stains. This he was doing in the presence of 200 and plus people and government officials including police.

I was standing outside during this hour. Initially, it was presumed by family members of the deceased that he had a heart attack and fell on the commode, received a serious bleeding injury.

This is confirmed by Shiva Prakash Reddy as he received the photos through Inayathulla phone WhatsApp," said Siva Sankar Reddy in his letter.

He alleged that a letter purportedly written by Vivekananda Reddy

when the incident took place and his mobile phone were handed over to the police only in the evening many hours after the murder came to light.

He also alleged that data in Vivekananda Reddy's phone was deleted by his family members before handing it over to the police.

"As and when Dr Sunitha came to know about the letter said to have been written by the deceased and mobile phone, she should have instructed Venkata Krishna Reddy to hand over those incriminating articles to the investigating agency immediately.

2

## Family feud led to the murder?

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Close associates of YS Vivekananda Reddy like Devireddy Siva Sankar Reddy, strongly suspect that family feud over properties might have led to the murder of the former Kadapa MP. There are also reports that CBI has not considered the objections raised by the then Pulivendula town CI Sankaraiah.

The then town CI was also suspended by his higher-ups for dereliction of duties.

Later, he reportedly told the CBI about the suspicious behaviour of the immediate family members of Vivekananda Reddy and how he was prevented from stalling the process of cleaning blood stains of Vivekananda Reddy that led to tampering of evidence.

The then Pulivendula DSP R Vasudevan too is believed to have echoed similar arguments before the CBI.

2



# Central team visits flood-hit Kadapa

PNS KADAPA

The Inter-Ministerial Central Team visited the flood-affected areas in the Rajampet division of the district on Saturday. The team, comprising Dr. K Manoharan, Director, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmer Welfare, Hyderabad, Shivani Sharma, Director, Ministry of Power, CEA, New Delhi, Srinivasu Bai, SE, Ministry of Water Resources, Hyderabad, was welcomed by District Collector V Vijaya Rama Raju, Joint Collector Ketan Garg and Gauthami.

Collector Vijaya Rama Raju explained to the Central team the intensity of the floods, devastation,

damage to infrastructure, crops and irrigation projects.

The Central team visited Pulaputtur village and inspected the damaged houses, roads and agriculture fields. The team also went around the photo exhibition on the devastation of floods at Pulaputtur village.

The Central team later went to upper Mandapalli village and inspected the damaged agriculture fields. They also inspected the relief operations being taken up at the village.

K Rama Murthy, a farmer at Eguva Mandapalli village, told the Central team that sand accumulated in his 4 acres of fertile land.

2

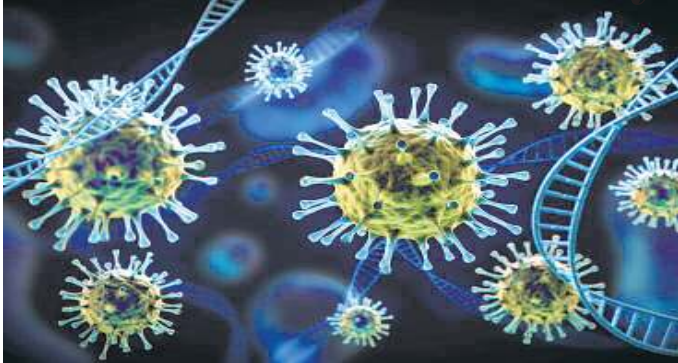
## New Covid variant 'Omicron' scary

PNS NEW DELHI

As concerns grow over a new COVID variant, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for a proactive approach and a review of plans for easing of international travel curbs and urged people to be more cautious while several states moved quickly to take precautionary measures and remain vigilant.

Two South African returnees to Bengaluru, meanwhile, tested positive for COVID-19 and their samples sent for further tests to determine the exact variant, said a Karnataka state official.

Modi, who was briefed by officials about the recently discovered variant Omicron during a comprehensive meeting here to review the public health preparedness and



COVID-19 vaccination, also highlighted the need for monitoring all international arrivals, their testing as per guidelines, with a specific focus on countries identified at risk.

Officials briefed the prime minister about the new Variant of

Concern Omicron along with its characteristics and the impact seen in various countries, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement.

2

## Transmissibility of new variant under study

PNS NEW DELHI

Genomic variations and structural changes have been reported from other countries in the new variant of coronavirus but whether these alterations would impart increased transmissibility or make vaccines ineffective is under examination, senior ICMR scientist Samiran Panda said Saturday.

"Vaccines which have been directed towards spike protein of the virus may find difficulty in mounting adequate immunity against the mutated version because of the structural changes that have been reported in the viral genome, according to WHO.

2

## Experts ask people to be cautious, not paranoid

NAVEENA GHANATE

HYDERABAD

While 2021 may be coming to an end, the pandemic isn't, if one takes into account the 'deadliest' variant of Covid-19 that has spread to five countries already.

Scientists are describing the new variant of the Coronavirus, labelled Omicron, first detected in South Africa as 'horrific'.

The variant is being considered highly contagious because of the high number of mutations. WHO says early evidence shows new Omicron variant possesses a higher risk of infection.

2

# Council to come in handy for YSRCP to control dissidence

SNCN ACHARYULU

HYDERABAD

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) entered into the AP Legislative Council with just two members five years ago and now its number has reached 32 out of the total strength of 58. Once the Council was a big headache to the YSRCP and now it has become a boon to control dissidence.

By the next Assembly elections, the main Opposition TDP will be left with only four members.

Former minister Nara Lokesh, the son of TDP supremo N

Chandrababu Naidu, will complete his term in March 2023 just before the next Assembly elections.

When the YSRCP formed the government in 2019 after the Assembly elections, it has faced several hurdles in the Council. The situation has become like while YSR Congress was the ruling party in the Assembly, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) was the ruling party in the Council.

Due to this, the Council has become a big headache to the ruling YSRCP.

Now, the same council has become a big boon to the YSR

Congress party.

So many TDP leaders joined in YSR Congress after the previous Assembly elections.

In some Assembly constituencies, there were differences between YSR Congress leaders and those who joined the party from TDP.

YSR Congress leaders are worried about their tickets in the next Assembly elections as the newcomers may take away theirs. Now, YSR Congress party leadership has got the flexibility to accommodate such leaders.

2

# Tears won't fetch votes for Naidu: Vundavalli

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Former MP Vundavalli Arun Kumar has felt that tears will not fetch votes for TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu. He felt that Naidu should not have felt so emotional over the alleged comments made by the ruling party members in the State Assembly.

He said that Naidu might have felt bad with the comments, but if he thinks his tears would evoke any sympathy from the people and fetch him any political mileage, then Naidu is mistaken as everyone thinks that Chandrababu did it just to gain sympathy.



The former MP said that Naidu himself was aware that the sympathy factor would not work in politics.

2

# Alternative crops the best bet during Rabi, says govt

C PRADEEP KUMAR

VIJAYAWADA

In an interesting move, the State government is advising the farmers to go for alternative crops in the current Rabi season. In pursuance of the directions of the government, the Krishna district officials are quick in appealing to the farming community to shun paddy during the current agricultural season due to shortage of water for irrigating paddy crop and consider raising alternative crops instead.

Sources in the Agriculture department say that paddy is normally cultivated in about 2 lakh acres during the Rabi season as against 8.5 lakh acres during the



Kharif season while 50,000 acres is being cultivated with borewell support.

Krishna District Collector J Nivas said the paddy crop was damaged due to untimely heavy rains in the

Kharif season. He further said that paddy requires a huge quantity of water for cultivation purposes and presently there is a shortage of irrigation water.

He says, "The government is

promoting alternative crops due to the shortage of irrigation water. Millets are the best bet as they require less water when compared to paddy."

He asked the farmers can also consider maize, peanuts, black gram, sorghum, sesamum, lentil and other crops.

Krishna district Joint Collector Dr. K Madhavilatha said that the officials are conducting meetings in the villages to bring about awareness on taking up alternative crops, replacing paddy in the Rabi season.

The JC said that the government is supplying seeds for several varieties of alternative crops through the Rythu Bharosa Kendras

(RBKs) and asked the farmers to make good use of the same.

On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh State Agriculture Mission Vice-Chairman MVS Nagi Reddy opined that supplying water for paddy crops during the Rabi season is a difficult proposition. Under the Krishna delta, very few farmers cultivate paddy during Rabi, he said and added that the farmer ends up with meagre earnings on paddy cultivation.

He is of the opinion that paddy takes huge manpower for sowing, weeding and harvesting and these are hard tasks to accomplish. With back-to-back cyclonic storms, most of the paddy farmers are ending up in losses, he added.



## Man booked for thrashing son

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Chatrinaka Police on Saturday booked a private employee for physically abusing his child.

In a video clip that went viral on Saturday, the man was seen hitting his child violently with a stick. Despite the child's desperate attempts to save himself and pleas for mercy, the man went on thrashing him.

Acting on a complaint, police detained the accused Ashok, 38, a private employee from Chatrinaka. According to the Police, a complaint was received from the 8-year-old victim's mother Jija Bai, who found Ashok thrashing their child black and blue with a thick stick.

# Goods train derails due to suspected act of sabotage

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Due to suspected sabotage of Railway track, a goods train carrying iron ore from Bachel to Visakhapatnam was derailed between Kamlur-Bhansi, Chhattisgarh yesterday. The accident relief train from Kirandul has rushed to the derailment spot.

Three locomotives of a goods train and nineteen wagons derailed. Relief operations to restore the train services are in full swing under the direct monitoring of Divisional Railway Manager Anup Satpathy. A total of two accident relief trains, two cranes of 120 ton capacity, one crane 140-ton capacity and five proclainer machines are being pushed into the section for



restoration. ADRM (infra) Sudhir Kumar Gupta is at a site along with concerned branch officers to monitor the restoration works.

Due to derailment, train 18551 Visakhapatnam Kirandul express leaving

Visakhapatnam November 27 was short-terminated at Koraput station. The same train will return as 18552 Koraput-Visakhapatnam express from Koraput on its schedule and there will be no service of the train between

Kirandul and Koraput on Saturday.

Train 18551 Visakhapatnam-Kirandul express leaving Visakhapatnam on November 28 will be short terminated at Koraput station. The same train will return as 18552 Koraput-Visakhapatnam express from Koraput on its schedule. Hence there will be no service of the train between Kirandul and Koraput on November 28.

Meanwhile, for the convenience of passengers, one more Vistadome coach will be attached to the Visakhapatnam-Kirandul train on November 28. It is for the first time, three vista-dome coaches are made available to passengers.

## Rahul expresses concern over new Covid variant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Saturday expressed concern over the emergence of a new coronavirus variant and asked the government to provide vaccine security to the people of the country.

His remarks come amid rising global concerns over the new strain of the deadly virus that has been named 'Omicron' by the World Health Organization and classified as a variant of concern.

"New variant is a serious threat. High time GOI (government of India) gets serious

about providing vaccine security to our countrymen," Gandhi tweeted using the hashtag #Omicron.

He also questioned the government's vaccination coverage numbers, saying, "Bad vaccination figures can't be hidden for long behind one man's photo."

The country's Covid vaccination certificates contain a photo of the prime minister.

Gandhi also shared a chart titled 'India's Vaccination Equation'. According to the chart, 31.19 percent population of the country has been fully vaccinated now.

It claimed that 6.8 million

vaccinations per day was recorded in the country during the last week against the required 23.3 million per day for the entire eligible population to be inoculated by December-end.

During the day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was briefed about the new variant of the coronavirus along with its characteristics and the impact seen in various countries, the PMO said.

The PM asked officials to review the plans to ease international travel restrictions in light of the "emerging new evidence".

## Transmissibility of new variant under study...

Continued from page 1

A World Health Organisation panel has named the new COVID-19 strain 'Omicron' and classified it as a highly transmissible variant of concern, the category that also includes the delta variant.

"Genomic variations and structural changes have been reported from other countries in the new emerging variant of coronavirus but whether these changes would impart increased transmissibility or make vaccines ineffective is under examination," he said.

Panda said mRNA vaccines are directed towards viral spike protein and host cell receptor interaction and thus may need to be tweaked as appropriate around the changes observed in the virus.

Panda, meanwhile, also stressed on strengthening of the ongoing vaccination drive as well as strict adherence to Covid-appropriate behaviour where community engagement is the key intervention approach.

Ramping up genomic surveillance in the country and for incoming international travelers will also help in forming programmatic intervention measures, he underlined.

## RT-PCR not...

Continued from page 1

"The government is pleased to clarify that children are allowed to go on Sabarimala pilgrimage without RT-PCR test. Parents or adults accompanying the children shall ensure S.M.S. (soap/sanitiser, mask and social distancing) and they are accountable for the children's health issues," the order said.

Despite COVID-19 situation, hundreds of devotees have been trekking the hills to offer prayers at the Ayyappa temple since it opened on November 16 for the two-month-long annual Mandalam-Makara Vilakku pilgrimage season. Like the previous year, the devotees are being allowed through a virtual queue system this time also as part of efforts to regulate the flow of pilgrims in view of the pandemic and heavy rains.

## New Covid variant 'Omicron' scary...

Continued from page 1

The implications of the variant for India were also discussed, it said. The Omicron variant, which scientists say has a high number of mutations, was first detected in South Africa last week. A World Health Organisation (WHO) panel has classified it as a highly transmissible variant of concern, the same category that includes the Delta variant.

During the meeting which lasted for about two hours, Prime Minister Modi spoke about the need to be proactive in the light of the new variant and urged people to be more cautious and take proper precautions like masking up and maintaining social distance, the PMO statement said. The WHO also asserted that at no cost should "we let our guard down."

Modi asked "officials to review plans for easing of international travel restrictions in light of the emerging new evidence", the statement said, even as Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urged the prime minister to stop flights coming to India from those countries which are affected by the new variant.

The prime minister's directive to officials came a day after the Civil Aviation Ministry announced the resumption of scheduled international flights to and from India from December 15 after 20 months

of coronavirus-induced suspension.

India's decision to resume scheduled international passenger flights also came at a time when various countries such as the UK, Germany, Singapore, Israel, France and Italy have restricted air travel from southern Africa where the cases of new coronavirus variant with serious health implications have been reported.

In a tweet after the meeting, Modi said, "reviewed the COVID-19 and vaccination-related situation. In light of the new variant, we remain vigilant, with a focus on containment and ensuring increased second dose coverage."

During the meeting, the prime minister was also given an overview of the sequencing efforts in the country and the variants circulating in the country, the PMO statement said.

Modi directed that genome sequencing samples be collected from international travellers and community as per norms, tested through the network of labs already established under the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) and early warning signals identified for COVID-19 management, the statement said.

Prime Minister Modi also spoke about the need to increase the sequencing efforts and make it more broad-based.

Bengaluru Rural Deputy Commissioner K Srinivas, under whose jurisdiction Kempegowda International Airport comes, told reporters that from (November) 1 to 26 a total of 94 people have come from South Africa and out of them two have tested positive for COVID-19.

Both the infected persons have been quarantined, are being monitored by authorities and their samples sent for further tests to ascertain the variant, he said.

The WHO asked countries in the southeast Asia region to scale up surveillance, strengthen public health and social measures, and enhance vaccination coverage.

The global health body said festivities and celebrations must include all precautionary measures and crowds and large gatherings must be avoided.

"At no cost should we let our guard down," said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director, WHO, South-East Asia Region, adding that countries must enhance surveillance and sequencing.

Based on updated information on circulating variants and response capacities, countries should assess the risk of importation through international travel and take measures accordingly, she said.

In a tweet, Chief Minister Kejriwal emphasised that the country had "recovered" from the COVID-19 pandemic with

"great difficulty".

"I urge Hon'ble PM to stop flights from those countries which are affected by new variant. With great difficulty, our country has recovered from Corona. We should do everything possible to prevent this new variant from entering India," Kejriwal tweeted.

Meanwhile, as much as 64 per cent of respondents in a survey conducted over the decision to allow scheduled international operations to and from India want the government to reconsider it in the wake of the emergence of the new coronavirus variant.

The survey was carried out by the online platform LocalCircles immediately after the government announced the resumption of scheduled international flight services, which remain suspended since March 2020 due to the pandemic.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi also expressed concern over the emergence of the new coronavirus variant and asked the government to provide vaccine security to the people of the country.

The Union Health Ministry on Friday said the countries in Europe, including the United Kingdom, and South Africa, Brazil, Bangladesh, Botswana, China, Mauritius, New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Hong Kong and Israel have been put in the 'at-risk' category.

## Central team visits flood-hit Kadapa district ...

Continued from page 1

He said that sand accumulated up to 1 m in height in his field and urged the team to extend financial help.

The villagers explained to the Central team about the fury of the flood stating that their houses were under 8 feet of floodwater and all household articles were washed away. The team visited the Annamayya project. The Collector explained to them that the unexpected heavy

inflows caused devastation in the region.

The Collector also informed the team that over 3 lakh cusecs of inflows caused a breach to the Annamayya project.

Later, MP YS Avinash Reddy met the Central team at the R & B guest house and explained to them that Agriculture, Horticulture, Irrigation, Panchayat Raj, Municipality and Electricity departments in YSR Kadapa district had suffered a loss of Rs 1,221 crore due to

floods.

The MP informed the team that crops including paddy, onion, tomato and cotton, were badly damaged due to rains and floods. The groundnut crop, which was raised in 80,000 hectares in Rabi, was also damaged and bridges at Kamalapuram, Jammalamadugu and Addalamarri also collapsed. The MP submitted a memorandum seeking immediate help from the Central government to the flood-ravaged areas.

## Needle of suspicion points to immediate...

Continued from page 1

But, on the other hand, she, her husband N Rajasekhara Reddy and N Sivaprakash Reddy instructed Mooli Venkata Krishna Reddy to retain the same till they arrived at Pulivendula town. Even though Sunitha, her husband Rajasekhara Reddy and Siva Prakash Reddy reached Pulivendula by 1 pm., they did not hand over the letter said to have been written by the deceased to the investigating agency till 3.30 pm and the mobile phone (lot of data deleted) of the deceased till 5.30 pm," said Siva Sankar Reddy.

"The conduct of Dr Sunitha, N Rajasekhara Reddy and N Sivaprakash Reddy is

unnatural and raises serious doubts about their attitude. There is every possibility to tamper and delete the data on the mobile phone of the deceased. All those things cumulatively indicate that all those persons were hiding something regarding the incident. Those persons are very crucial in this case to bring out the truth," he added.

Siva Sankar Reddy said that the CBI should interrogate another close aide of the deceased Inayathulla as to on whose instructions he photographed the scene of offence and recorded the same through videography and forwarded to the family members of the deceased while they were on the way to Pulivendula, to bring out the

real conspirators in the case. "CBI should interrogate Mooli Venkata Krishna Reddy as to on whose directions he prepared a complaint and submitted the same to the police as suspicious death despite knowing the cause of death duly hiding crucial material objects such as a letter of the deceased and his mobile phone," he said.

Siva Sankar Reddy further said, "The intentions of YS Sunitha and N Rajasekhara Reddy from the beginning are to mislead the investigating agency by hiding crucial facts and giving false statements and petitions, only to divert the investigating agency. In such a case, there is no possibility of proper and fair investigation due to which

real culprits may escape from the case and innocents would be implicated. In this regard, it is requested to examine N Siva Prakash Reddy and N Rajasekhara Reddy, brothers-in-law of the deceased and YS Sunitha and Y S Sowbhagyamma, daughter and wife of the deceased to elicit the truth and intentions behind hiding the crucial material objects from the investigating agencies and preferring complaint suppressing the crucial facts in the case duly misleading the police."

He also urged CBI to verify why Sunitha was constantly in touch with CBI during the course of investigation. She used to meet CBI officials thrice every week, he added.

## Family feud led to the murder?...

Continued from page 1

There appears to be some 'disturbances' and 'disputes' among the family members of Vivekananda Reddy over inheritance and properties. There were reports from Pulivendula town that family members divested cheque signing powers of Vivekananda Reddy, restricting his financial activities, a few days before the murder.

It is suspected and unconfirmed reports from Pulivendula suggested that Vivekananda Reddy was inclined towards transferring major portion of his property to a Muslim family which had triggered the disturbances among family

members and eventually led to a feud among them.

"It is said that N Sivaprakash Reddy (brother-in-law of Vivekananda Reddy) purchased 20 non-judicial stamps a few days prior to the murder of YS Vivekananda Reddy," pointed out Devireddy Siva Sankar Reddy in his letter to the CBI Director recently.

Initially, the local police who had registered an FIR, expressed doubts over the role of immediate family members of Vivekananda Reddy due to their suspicious behaviour like handing over the letter purportedly written by Vivekananda and his mobile phone allegedly deleting the

data to police many hours after the brutal murder came to light.

Vivekananda Reddy was found dead under suspicious circumstances at his Pulivendula residence on March 15, 2019. The Andhra Pradesh government had constituted three SITs to investigate the murder. The SIT examined at least 1,300 witnesses and conducted a narco analysis on three suspects. Three persons have also been arrested on the allegation of tampering the evidence.

CBI officials had also interacted with the then Pulivendula DSP R Vasudevan who initially supervised the post-murder police formalities.



"When he was attacked by Naxalites at Alipiri in 2003, he did not get any sympathy votes in the immediate assembly elections. Even NTR did not get any sympathy from the people, when he was dethroned by Naidu in August 1995. Similarly, YS Rajasekhara Reddy's death also did not bring any sympathy for Congress in the subsequent by-elections in the State.

Vundavalli said that he had not heard any gossip about NTR's family members. As he has seen NTR's children like Daggubati Purandeswari and Nandamuri Harikrishna, he said they treat others with a lot of respect.

He said the YSRCP members' comments against Naidu and his wife in the Assembly were very bad and people know that the YSRCP leaders' comments were baseless. Everybody has seen how a minister uses foul language against Chandrababu Naidu.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹160
Without Skin	₹200
Broiler at Farm	₹120
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	409
HYDERABAD	440
VISAKHAPATNAM	420
RETAIL PRICE (HYDERABAD)	₹4.09

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# Efforts to bring light in Yanadis' lives pay off

**C PRADEEP KUMAR**  
■ VIJAYAWADA

The lives of Yanadi families in Krishna district are changing for the better, thanks to the efforts of Collector J Nivas. As many as 43 Yanadi families, residing in the Prabhanagar area of Poranki on the outskirts of Vijayawada city for the past 10 years, has caught the attention of the Collector whose plight moved him.

None of them had a roof above and they were living in a miserable condition even without address or identity proof, making them ineligible for any welfare scheme being implemented by the State government. Their main occupation is rag-picking.

The Collector took the initiative to improve their living conditions a few months ago and took steps to provide a model colony by building houses for them with good infrastructure and better amenities at Vanukuru village.

School drop-out in the community were identified and they were joined in schools. Now, a good number of 21 children are going to school and transport facility has been arranged for them. They are provided with two pairs of school uniforms along with required textbooks, bags and notebooks.

Steps were taken to assure



hygienic conditions in the area. Two municipal taps have been provided for them. The last three months have witnessed a flurry of activity in the area where a slew of development activities were taken up for changing the lives of Yanadis. Now, 40 persons in the community have Aadhaar cards and the process is going on to provide the same to all of them. As many

as 31 families have rice cards and 30 others have been sanctioned house sites. Three people are getting pensions and 21 children go to school with conveyance facility.

There is one Self-Help Group (SHG) and 15 people have bank accounts. Eight persons work in the municipality. As many as 40 persons have caste certificates and 34 have income certificates

at present.

On Saturday, District collector J Nivas visited Poranki Mandal Parishad School where the children of the Yanadi families are studying. The Collector interacted with the students and later had midday meals on the school premises with the children. Later, the collector distributed Aadhaar cards, rice cards and caste certificates to some Yanadi families.

District Tribal Welfare department officer Rukmangadaya, DEO Tahera Sultana, Tadigadapa Municipal Commissioner Dr Prakash Rao, Tahsildar Bhadrui Naik, MPDO Vimadevi, Education committee chairman Parameswar Rao and others were present on the occasion.

## 'TANA will do its best to serve Telugus in America'

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Lavu Anjaiah Chowdary, president of the Telugu Association of North America (TANA) has said that the association will serve the Telugu people living in America.

Addressing media persons here on Saturday at a programme organised by TANA lifetime member Tarun Kakani, Anjaiah said that in the two years of his tenure, they would serve the Telugus through the 'TANA Square'. Many more programmes will be organised in a better manner to serve the Indians. He said that they were extending health services to the patients in various hospitals through TANA Annapurna.

He said that they are providing medical equipment to various hospitals in both Telugu States, at an estimated cost of more than Rs 25 crore. The TANA is prepared to extend financial assistance for the expected Covid third wave. They will coordinate with the Red Cross to prepare a plan for providing medical support to two States. He explained that women, children and students are getting benefitted through the services and programmes of TANA Square.

Taran Kakani explained the services being provided through the Advocates Association for Social Responsibility And Awareness (AASRAA).



## Revanth and Komatireddy bury the hatchet, share stage

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Signalling an end to the animosity, senior Congress leader Komatireddy Venkat Reddy surprised party leaders by sharing the dais with TPCC president A. Revanth Reddy at the two-day Vari Deeksha being held at Indira Park Dharna Chowk on Saturday.

Komatireddy who represents Bhongir in the Lok Sabha, not only participated in the deeksha but also sat beside fellow MP A. Revanth Reddy and spoke with him.

Congress leaders were surprised at Komatireddy's participation in the Vari Deeksha as he had made a scathing attack against Revanth immediately after the latter became the TPCC chief.

Komatireddy, who was a TPCC chief hopeful, had alleged that TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu had inter-

vened to get the TPCC chief post for Revanth. Komatireddy also alleged that Revanth had bribed Telangana Congress affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore for getting the TPCC chief post.

He had not only made these serious allegations against Revanth but had also stated that he would not enter the Gandhi Bhavan and would confine himself to his constituency.

Komatireddy continued his criticism even after the Congress debacle in the Huzurabad by-poll in which the party candidate got only 3,014 votes.

The Bhongir MP, who lodged a complaint with the party high command on the Huzurabad debacle, continued his criticism and was not participating in any TPCC programme.

Due to his scathing attacks

against Revanth, not only party leaders but even ordinary workers were confused.

Former PCC chief V. Hanumantha Rao took up the responsibility of convincing Komatireddy to participate in party activities. However, Hanumantha Rao's efforts did not meet with success for almost two weeks. In a sudden change of mind, Komatireddy himself asked VH to allow him to participate in the Vari Deeksha.

Komatireddy, who had never shared the dais with Revanth, sent a message to the media on Friday that he would be participating in the Vari Deeksha as the son of a farmer.

Most of the speakers participating in the Deeksha stated that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will get disturbed at seeing Komatireddy and Revanth on the same dais.



## HPCL's SDI bags CSR India Award 2021

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

Skill Development Institute (SDI), Visakhapatnam, run by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), has been awarded the eighth CSR India Award 2021, for outstanding achievements in the Employment Enhancing Skills category. The award, constituted by Green Tech Foundation, was given away at a function held at Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu, at the 'Greentech Eight CSR India Summit on Friday.

K Nagesh, General Manager,

HPCL Visakh Refinery and CEO Skill Development Centre received the award. This is the second time in a row, the centre has bagged the award. The centre, which recently completed five years, has trained over 13,000 unemployed youths of Andhra Pradesh in over 35 short-term vocational courses, covering more than 15 sectors. The Institute is operating from its main campus in Arilova, Visakhapatnam and extension Centres in Anakapalle, S Kota and Rajahmundry and Visakhapatnam Central Prisons.



## Five arrested for smuggling ganja

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

The Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) arrested five persons and seized 48 dry ganja and packing material to supply the banned drug online. The accused were identified as Ch. Srinivasa Rao (A1), J. Kumara Swamy, B. Krishnam Raju (Amazon pickup associates), Ch Venkateswara Rao (driver of the pick-up van) and Ch. Mohan Raju alias Rakhi (son of accused one).

Detailing the arrests on Saturday, Joint Director, SEB, S Satish Kumar said that accused one stored 48 kg dry ganja at a rented house in Kancharapalem in the city and sold it Amazon online service. During the searches, the police also found Amazon packaging material including covers, cardboard boxes, tapes and an electronic weighing machine and also seized.

During the interrogation, the accused confessed that he is acquainted with Suraj

Pawalya and Mukul Jaiswal, both from Madhya Pradesh who have registered themselves as vendors on Amazon online shopping portal. Along with the two, Rao confessed that he transported ganja from Visakhapatnam to Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan in the name of selling supernatural stevia leaves over Amazon online platform. The two pick-up associates and one van driver belonging to the Amazon Kancharapalem first mile station who aided the accused have also been arrested.

A case was registered under the NDPS Act against the arrests and the material was seized, the Joint Director, SEB, said.

Suraj Pawalya and Mukul Jaiswal registered themselves as a vendor with Amazon online shopping portal at an internet centre in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. Mukul and Suraj used to visit Visakhapatnam and procure dry ganja from Ch. Srinivasa Rao, the Joint Director added.

## TDPP wants AP floods declared 'national calamity'

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu, at the Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party (TDPP) meeting, on Saturday told the TDP MPs to expose the failure of the YSRCP government in tackling the flood situation and also demand declaration of the AP rain havoc as a 'national calamity in the Parliament session starting from Monday.

Naidu said that the TDP MPs should bring pressure for announcing a judicial inquiry into the State Government negligence that caused the recent flood devastation. The highest level of 93 percent debt-ridden families in the country were living in

Andhra Pradesh. The State rose to 2nd position in tenant farmers' suicides and 3rd position in farmers' suicides, which reflected the anti-farmer policies of the Jagan regime.

The TDPP chief presided over the TDPP meeting when he urged the party MPs to continue their struggle for a better deal to the State in the Parliament. The meeting resolved to raise various burning issues, especially skyrocketing prices of essential commodities, petrol, diesel, AP special status, 3 Capitals bill, etc. The smuggling of ganja and heroin from AP to other States in the country would be raised in the House.

The TDPP would highlight the continuing agitation against privatisation of the

Vizag steel plant, AP lagging behind in vaccination and the AP Ministers' statements asking to stop paddy cultivation. While AP has been called 'Annapurna' (food provider) for the entire country, the YSRCP Ministers were asking the farmers to discontinue paddy.

Chandrababu Naidu said the farmers were leading miserable lives due to lack of remunerative prices and support from the AP Government. Mounting debts and increased costs of cultivation were leading to suicides of farmers.

The TDP MPs, who took part in the meeting, were Galla Jayadev, Kesineni Srinivas (Nani), K Rammohan Naidu and Kanakamedala Ravindra Kumar.

## TRS Parliamentary Party meeting today

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The TRS Parliamentary Party will meet at 11 am on Sunday at Pragathi Bhavan under the leadership of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

The meet will chalk out the strategies to be adopted during Parliament's Winter Session starting November 29. Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Members of the TRS would attend the meeting.

The meeting will discuss mainly the policy of the Centre on procuring paddy.

It may be recalled that the Chief Minister had made it clear a few days ago that they will not let go the BJP and the Centre on paddy procurement.

He had also stated that TRS MPs will tear into the BJP-led Union government in Parliament.

The Chief Minister will give directions to the Members of both the Houses on how to corner the BJP.

The CM will also give directions regarding the draft Electricity Bill and water sharing between the two Telugu States.

## UP welder nabbed with 12 kg ganja

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Secunderabad Railway Police arrested a person and seized 12 kg marijuana from him on Saturday.

The arrested person, Krishan Pal Singh, 22, is a welder from Budaun in Uttar Pradesh.

Police said two police officials saw Singh waiting suspiciously on Platform No: 1 of Secunderabad Railway Station.

When they checked his bag, they found six packets of ganja kept in two of his bags.

Singh confessed that he was transporting the ganja from Palasa in Andhra Pradesh to Secunderabad Railway Station and was waiting for the Telangana Express train going to New Delhi to sell the ganja there.

## Producer Shilpa Chowdary arrested

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Telugu film producer Shilpa Chowdary was arrested by the Narsingi Police on Saturday. She was detained for questioning on Friday after a complaint of cheating was filed against her.

The police arrested her on Saturday, produced her in court and the judge granted police custody of her for 14 days.

Police said two cases of cheating were registered against her involving an amount of Rs 4 crore. Police expect more victims to come forward as news of her arrest spreads.

Shilpa was reportedly organising kitty parties for women from affluent families in Gandipet, Kokapet,

Manikonda, Puppalaguda, Jubilee Hills, Vijayawada, Kurnool and other places since some years.

She told the women that she was well connected in the film industry and began accepting money from them, sources said. She told the women that she can give good returns if they invest in a school run by her relative. Police sources said that Shilpa was first detained on Friday evening, after a victim who claimed to have invested Rs 4 crore believing Shilpa informed the police about the fraud. The victim said that many others were involved in the racket and the money involved is around Rs 100 crore.

## Navy personnel donate blood

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

As part of the Navy Week celebrations, a blood donation camp was organised by the Indian Navy at Naval Station Bheemunipatnam, on Saturday. The camp was inaugurated by Commodore Naresh Warikoo, Station Commander, Naval Station, Bheemunipatnam.

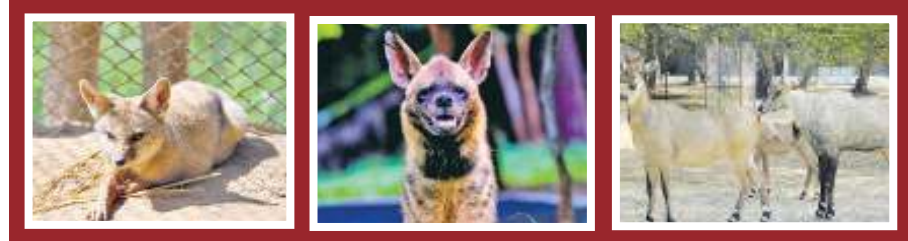
The camp witnessed an overwhelming response from among the uniformed personnel, defence civilians and families. The camp was organised as a humanitarian effort by the Indian Navy in collaboration with NTR Blood Bank, and will go a long way in ensuring the saving of precious lives. As many as 115 units of blood were donated voluntarily to the Blood Bank.

## New species of animals to woo visitors at Vizag zoo

**PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM**

Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP), Visakhapatnam, has received some new animal species for zoo lovers. As a part of Animal Exchange Programme with Indian Zoos, IGZP, planned an animal exchange with the National Zoological Park, New Delhi, for the past few months and it was approved by Central Zoo Authority in April 2021. However, due to Covid second wave, monsoons and then the frequent cyclonic rains delayed the transportation of animals.

Finally, the exchange has materialised and the IGZP received two new species - Bengal Fox and Himalayan Goral, for the first time, here Friday night. Two male Nilgais (Blue Bulls) pair with Nilgai females to ensure that



there is breeding and all basic needs of the animals are being met and it is close to its natural behaviour.

This exchange is being executed in two phases as there are more animals to be brought from Delhi Zoo to IGZP and also there is a threat of Bird flu presently.

Remaining species would be brought in the coming February after the threat of avian influenza fades away, the IGZP said in a

release. The newly brought animals would be kept in the quarantine facility of the zoo for a quarantine period as per the procedure and would be later released in their respective enclosures.

Bengal Fox, Himalayan Goral, Sangai Deer, Kalij pheasant and White ibis are the new species for the first time the IGZP is introducing to zoo visitors. Swamp Deer, Silver Pheasant were previously housed in IGZP, now are re-

introducing them again in the park, said Dr.Nandani Salaria, Curator, IGZP.

Presently, the IGZP have two Hippopotamuses, a mother-son duo, thus, for the breeding purpose would be getting one more Hippopotamus from NZP, New Delhi. The IGZP would spare the two Wild Dogs, one Striped Hyena, one Sacred Baboon and 15 Star Tortoises to NZP, New Delhi, the Curator detailed.

## Hippo Dalapathi celebrates b'day

**VISAKHAPATNAM:** The Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) celebrated a birthday party for Hippo named Jr. Dalapathi, who is the youngest Hippo in IGZP, born in the zoo on November 27, 2017. On Saturday evening, the place was decorated with its favourite food items. Some of the guests who specially arrived at the party wished Dalapathi by singing 'Happy Birthday song'. Surprisingly, Dalapathi came out of the shelter to have a glance at the guests and pose for the photos. Students from various schools, animal lovers, zoologists and IGZP staff were present.





# New pest 'Tamara Purugu' ruins chilli crop in Guntur

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A new pest called "Tamara Purugu" in local parlance is causing heavy damage to the chilli crop and chilli farmers expressing apprehensions over the loss of the produce.

Farmers in the Vinukonda constituency said that it is common for them to face pests in chilli crops. They eradicate all the pests using pesticides. But the new variety of 'Tamara Purugu' pests does not die down even after using the powerful pesticides, farmers said.

The farmers said that the new pest Tamara Purugu is rapidly eating away the leaves and flowers of chilli sapling. The Tamara Purugu pest is destroying the chilli crop which is in flowering staging now. The farmers regretted that they had to incur a Rs 50,000 loss per acre due to a new variety of pest Tamara Purugu. The Guntur district has earned a reputation for growing high-quality chillies.

The new pest is eating away the leaves of chilli plants and spreading rapidly to all chilli samplings in the field. The new pest has become a hurdle for the growth of chilli saplings. Since the chilli produce is fetching good profits, a large number of



farmers raised chilli crops but the new pest is pouring cold water on their hopes, a group of farmers said.

Most of the farmers borrowed money to raise their chilli crops and the crop has come to harvest now. The new pest Tamara Purugu is destroying the crop by sucking the juice off in leaves, the farmers deplored. The farmers guess that the incessant rains caused the originating of a new pest Tamara Purugu.

Some of the farmers in the Vinukonda region have lost 80 per cent of their chilli crop due to the Tamara Purugu pest.

Farmers said that some agriculture scientists told them that the Tamara Purugu pest has come from foreign countries. The Chilli farmers have come to the conclusion that the existing pesticides can not eradicate the Tamara Purugu pest.

In Bollapalli manal in Vinukonda constituency, the chilli farmers are getting remunerative prices for their chilli produce but this year the new pest has become a threat to the chilli farmers. The farmers demanded the government to extend help to the Tamara Purugu pest affected farmers. They also demanded the gov-

ernment to consider the Tamara Purugu pest as a national calamity and announce compensation.

Pedakurapadu former MLA Kommalapati Sridhar visited some of the Tamara Purugu pest affected chilli fields on Saturday. He saw the pest damaged crop. The farmers expressed their anguish that the new pest has destroyed their chilli crop and they were unable to save their crop from the new pest. The farmer MLA demanded the government to announce compensation to the Tamara Purugu pest affected farmers.

## MP Avinash asks Centre for Rs 1,134-crore towards relief ops

PNS ■ KADAPA

YSRCP MP from Kadapa YS Avinash Reddy has urged the visiting Central team for the release of 1,221 crore to meet the flood situation in the district.

The MP submitted a memorandum to the Inter-Ministerial Central team, which visited the flood-ravaged areas in the district on Saturday. The MP, in his memorandum, said that YSR Kadapa district suffered a loss of Rs 1,134 crore due to floods.

He said that the crops were damaged in an extent of 56,138.6 hectares and horticulture crops were damaged in 17,704 hectares. He said that 1,382 big animals and 2,532 small animals died while 9,638 poultry birds perished in the floods. The MP informed the Central team that 2,580 houses were damaged. He informed the Central team that 29 persons lost their lives in the floods while 13 persons were still missing.



## Manohar meets JSP workers to assess damage caused by floods

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Jana Sena Party (JSP) political affairs committee chairman Nadendla Manohar met party leaders and enquired about the flood damage and the condition of roads.

Nadendla Manohar participated in the Maha Padayatra, being taken out by the Amaravati farmers in Nellore district. On behalf of the JSP, he extended solidarity with the Amaravati farmers.

While going back to Guntur,

Nadendla Manohar met the Jana Sena leaders in Tangutur mandal Kondapi constituency on Saturday. The Jana Sena leaders explained to him about the major issue which the district is facing now.

The leaders informed Manohar that the roads in most of the areas are in a bad condition and there are no facilities in the government hospitals. The farmers bore the brunt of the heavy rains recently.

Manohar saw the highway

in Ponnaluru mandal and expressed anger over the government for its indifference in maintaining the roads. He said that there is no sign of development in six mandals in Kondapi constituency. The constituency was recognised as a backward area but no development has been taken up, he regretted. Jana Sena State general secretary Pedapudi Vijaya Kumar, district president Sheik Riaz and vice president Chittem Prasad were among those who met Manohar.



## Collector flags off lorry carrying ration

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector Vivek Yadav here on Saturday flagged off the lorry which was taking essential commodities to the flood affected victims in Chittoor district.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that 3000 essential commodities and 2000 bedsheets were sent to the flood victims in the Chittoor district.

He said that ITC, Chamber

of Commerce, Triple X, and spinning mills association contributed to the supply of essential commodities to the flood victims in the Chittoor district.

Joint Collector AS Dinesh Kumar, Rajakumari, state civil supplies corporation district manager T Shivarama Prasad, chamber of commerce president A Anjaneyulu and ITC vice president Veera were among those who were present.

## 779 bottles of liquor seized, 2 held

PNS ■ KADAPA

The police seized 779 liquor bottles worth over Rs 2 lakh when being brought illegally in a car near Mydukur town on Saturday and arrested two persons in this connection. Another person is at large.

CI BV Chalapati said that on a tip-off, a police team led by sub-inspector G Mohamad Rafi conducted a checking of

vehicles at Badvel road.

The police found Old Admiral Brandy, 1 ltr (20 bottles) and Silver Cup Brandy, 180 ml (759 bottles) were being transported illegally in KA04 AAA 5740

Toyota Etios Car. The police seized liquor bottles worth over Rs 2 lakh and the car worth Rs 4 lakh. The liquor bottles were being brought from Karnataka state.



## Ministers assure help to rain-hit farmers

PNS ■ ELURU

Agriculture Minister Kurasala Kanna Babu promised to extend help to farmers affected by heavy rains and asked them not to lose confidence as the government is taking steps to protect their interests.

The Agriculture Minister, along with Housing Minister Cherukuvada Sriranganadha Raju, visited some of the rain-affected fields in Tadepalligudem, Attili and Penumantra mandals on Saturday. The ministers inspected the damaged crop at B Kondepadu in Pentapadu mandal, Tanuku, Duvva, Varighedu, Kavalipuram, Somaraju Illindalaparru, Mallipudi, Juttuga, Penumantra and Alamuru villages in Tanuku constituency.

The farmers showed the

damaged crops to the ministers. Speaking on the occasion, the Agriculture Minister said that the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government is pro-farmer and giving priority to protecting their interests.

He said that the crop loss compensation is disbursed during the same season. The Gulab cyclone crop loss compensation was disbursed within 45 days. He directed the officials concerned to enumerate each acre of crop loss.

The minister asked the farmers not to be demoralised and lose confidence as steps were being taken to disburse compensation at the earliest. "It was identified that the Swarna variety of paddy suffered high damage due to incessant rains. The Chief Minister directed the officials to enumerate the crop loss precisely. The officials were asked to ensure that the farm-

ers do not incur loss," he said.

Mr.Kanna Babu told the officials concerned that the enumeration of the lost crop should be carried out in a transparent manner. The purchasing of paddy produce should be taken through the RBKs.

There is no need for the farmers to worry about selling their damaged paddy produce. The government has taken steps to purchase discoloured and soaked paddy from the farmers, he made it clear.

It was also identified that large number tenant farmers incurred losses due to crop damage. He asked the landowners not to exert pressure on the tenant farmers. MLAs K Satyanarayana, Karumuri Nageswara Rao, Joint Collector Dr.B R Ambedkar, and JDA Jagga Rao were among those who accompanied the ministers.



## Sood sends essential items to flood victims

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Film actor Sonu Sood, who demonstrated his generosity during the Coronavirus crisis, once again has come forward to extend help to the flood-affected victims.

The Sood Charity Foundation is supplying

essential commodities to about 1500 families.

The Sood Charitable Foundation despatched the essentials, Sonu Sood's friend Samir Khan said.

The Foundation is sending essentials to the flood victims in Nellore and Tirupati, Khan said.



## Police officials asked to take stern steps against ganja transport

PNS ■ ELURU

Superintendent of Police Rahul Dev Sharma has directed the district police officials to take stringent steps to check the illegal transport of ganja and the banned tobacco products like gutka and khani.

The SP held a review meeting with the DSPs, CIs and SIs here on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, the SP asked the police officials to take stern steps to curb the illegal transportation of ganja, banned tobacco products and sand.

He said that ganja is transported through the district to

other states. He asked the officials to ensure that the ganja transport is contained strictly. He asked to set up check posts at interstate borders. Round-the-clock checking of vehicles should be carried at the inter-state borders. Counselling should be given to trouble mongers and the police officials concerned should visit the respective villages and take steps to ensure that problems should be resolved when they are in a trivial stage.

He directed the officials to implement the Non-Bailable Warrants and produce the

accused in the court. The night patrolling should be augmented, he asked.

With the coordination of other departments steps should be taken to check the road accidents. He assured to give importance to the welfare of police personnel. He warned of taking strict action if police personnel indulged in corrupt practices. Additional SP A V Subba Raju, SEB additional SP C Jaya Rama Raju, SEB DSP Ramesh Reddy, DSPs Dr.Dilip Kiran, B Srinath and a host of DSPs, CIs and SIs were among those who were present.



## Mock drills conducted to curb illegal activities on NH-16

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Following the orders of Prakasam district Superintendent of Police Malika Garg, the police conducted a mock drill on National Highway-16 at various places on Saturday.

As part of this mock drill, the police personnel were deployed at Tatapudi Flyover, Martur Toll Plaza, Medarametla Growth Center, KIMS Highway Flyover, Sanghamitra Hospital, Tanguturu Toll Plaza and Thettu Junction on the National Highway.

The district SP instructed the police control room staff that the suspect persons going on bikes from Chilakaluripet towards Kavali and directed them to convey information to the highway mobiles as well as the officers of the police station within the highway limits to arrest the suspicious persons riding on the respective motorcycles.

As soon as the control room staff received the

instructions from the district SP, they promptly informed the police officers and staff of the highway mobiles and the police stations within the purview of the highway. Upon receiving the information, the police officers immediately alerted and with their staff conducted a thorough vehicle check on the highway within their purview and caught hold of suspicious persons going on a motorcycle and arrested them. This mock drill continued for about three hours.

The main purpose of this mock drill is to increase communication and coordination between police stations within the highway in case of emergencies and to safeguard public lives and money from miscreants, robbers and goons by maintaining security and to nab persons involved in illegal activities in a short period of time, the SP said and appreciated the police officers and staff for making this mock drill a success.



# Opposition unity at stake as Cong, TMC cross swords over leadership

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The opposition unity to fight the BJP seems to have run into rough weather as the TMC and the Congress are at daggers drawn over the recent instances of "poaching" by the Mamata Banerjee-led camp, with the grand old party finding itself in a tight spot.

Despite a show of bonhomie during the August 20 meeting convened by Congress president Sonia Gandhi, the camaraderie fizzed out as the TMC, which is taking long strides to expand its footprint across the country, left no chance to vilify the party for its alleged failure to take on the saffron camp.

According to sources in the TMC, party supremo Mamata Banerjee, who has emerged as the doughtiest opposition face after winning one of the toughest elections of her career, apparently seeks to take up a larger role in national politics, possibly of the leader of the opposition coalition, a position



held by the Congress since the BJP stormed to power in 2014.

Lashing out at the ruling camp in Bengal, Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha, Adhir Chowdhury, said, "I have been stating this from the very beginning that Mamata Banerjee is the trojan horse of the BJP.

TMC's activities indicate that her main aim is to weaken the Congress and help the BJP. But mind you, no one has

ever succeeded and no one will ever succeed in wiping out the Congress."

The issue of the opposition leadership and TMC's zealous efforts to establish its presence nationally, even if that happened at the expense of the Congress, seems to have thrown a spanner in the process of building a united opposition front.

According to sources in the TMC, assertions by a section of

## TMC 'disinterested' to coordinate with Cong in winter session

The Trinamool Congress on Saturday said it is "disinterested" in coordinating with the Congress during the upcoming winter session of Parliament but maintained that it would cooperate with other opposition camps on various issues concerning people's interest, a party leader said on Saturday. The TMC "most probably will not attend" the

opposition parties' meeting convened by Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge on November 29, he said. The TMC's rebuttal to the Congress came days after Kharge, the leader of opposition in the Rajya Sabha, had said the grand old party would coordinate with all opposition camps, including the TMC, during the winter session.

senior Congress leaders like Salman Khurshid that the party is still in a position to win at least 120-130 seats in the next Lok Sabha elections in a direct contest with the saffron camp did not go down well with the Banerjee camp.

Since then, gloves in the opposition camp seem to be coming off, with the two parties firing salvos at each other on multiple occasions, as BJP leaders watched the show,

probably with a chuckle on their faces.

In a deviation from the past, the TMC has decided against engaging in any form of floor coordination with the Congress during the upcoming winter session of Parliament, the sources said.

"The Congress has done nothing to fight the BJP in the last seven years. It is the TMC that put up a battle against the BJP.

## Central agencies trying to frame me: Nawab Malik

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik on Saturday claimed that some unidentified persons tried to conduct a recte of his residence in Mumbai and also tried to gather information about himself and his family members. He also alleged that some Central agencies are trying to implicate him in false cases.

Addressing a press conference here, Malik said he will file a formal complaint with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Mumbai police commissioner Hemant Nagrale in this regard.

"I have proof that my house and my family members are being watched. When I was in Dubai last week, two persons with a camera tried to conduct a recte of my residence. They were trying to collect information about my home, schools, office, grandchild-

dren. When they were stopped by some people and questioned, they fled," Malik alleged.

He also claimed that one of the two persons writes against him on Koo handle.

Malik, also a spokesperson of the Nationalist Congress Party, further claimed that some officers from Central investigating agencies were preparing a Whatsapp draft of a complaint against him to be sent through email.

"I have proof of Whatsapp chats about this. If Central agencies are planning to lodge false cases against ministers then this is a serious matter and it will not be tolerated," he said.

Malik has been targetting the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and its Mumbai zonal director Sameer Wankhede after the anti-drugs agency raided a cruise ship and claimed to have recovered some contrabands last month.

## Arrest warrant against ex-minister, two others in royal property case

PNS ■ KOTA(RAJ)

A chief judicial magistrate court issued an arrest warrant against former Union minister and Congress leader Jitendra Singh of Alwar and two others for allegedly cheating and forging a trust deed to take over the properties of Bundi's erstwhile royal family.

Police said the arrest warrant against Jitendra, his father-in-law Bijendra Singh and former zila pramukh of Bundi Shrinath Singh Hada was issued on November 18.

The court also ordered the police to arrest the trio and produce them before it on January 6, 2022.

In December 2017, the Bundi city police had registered a case against Jitendra and the two others under IPC sections 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery), 468 (forgery for the purpose of cheating), 471 (using a forged document as genuine) and 120 (B) (criminal

conspiracy) based on a complaint lodged by Avinash Kumar Chandna, who claimed to be a friend of Ranjeet Singh, son of the erstwhile royal family's last king Bahadur Singh.

Jitendra Singh was Ranjeet Singh's nephew. Chandna had alleged that the former minister, along with the two other men, had hatched a conspiracy to take over the properties belonging to Ranjeet, who did not have a child, by forging his signature on a trust deed back-dating it to May 2008.

Chandna claimed that Ranjeet was his friend and had stayed with him in his Delhi house till his last breath in 2010 and that the royal family scion had transferred all the property to him in 2009.

Chandna alleged that

Jitendra set up Kul Devi Ashapura Mataji Trust and fraudulently routed all of Ranjeet's properties to himself through the trust.

The court, while issuing the arrest warrant, said Jitendra and the two others tried to deceive the court by submitting fake trust deed to gain unfair benefit.

The court also observed that Jitendra did not provide the original copy of the trust deed to the investigating officer, instead furnished a fabricated report issued by a private forensic laboratory.

Based on this report submitted by Jitendra, the Bundi city police had filed a Final Report on the case.

Chandna, however, moved the court challenging it.



# Centre agrees to farmers' demand on stubble burning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Appealing protesting farmers to end their agitation, Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Saturday said the Centre has agreed to their demand of decriminalising stubble burning.

Tomar, in an official statement, said the other demand of farmers was to have a discussion on the minimum support price (MSP) and crop diversification. This demand will also be fulfilled with the setting up of a panel as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 19 on the day of Gurupurab.

"The farmers' demand was to decriminalise stubble burning. The Government of India has agreed to this demand," the minister said. With regard to withdrawal of cases against farmers during the agitation, Tomar said this is in the domain of the state governments.

"Looking at the severity of the cases, the state governments have to take a call and the issue of compensation is

## Govt to introduce bill in Lok Sabha to repeal contentious farm laws

**New delhi:** To repeal the three contentious farm laws, the government on Monday will introduce in Lok Sabha a new bill, which states that though "only a small group of farmers are protesting" against these legislations, the need of the hour is to take along everyone for inclusive growth. The bill has been listed for introduction and passage in Lok Sabha on the first day of the Winter Session of

Parliament on Monday. The bill was passed by the Union Cabinet after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an announcement that all three farm laws will be repealed in the Winter Session. The bill will be introduced by the Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar in the house. The ruling BJP and main opposition party Congress have issued whips to their MPs to be present on the day.

also to be decided by them," he said, adding that every state will decide as per their state legislations.

Stating that there is no justification for the continuation of the agitation after the government announced repeal of the three farm laws, Tomar said: "Therefore, I appeal to all farmers organisations to end the protest ethically and show their big heart. They should return to their respec-

tive homes."

The minister said the protesting farmers' had initially demanded repeal of the three farm laws, which the government agreed to keeping their interest in mind.

The Cabinet has approved a bill to repeal the three farm laws, which will be introduced in the beginning of the coming session of Parliament starting November 29, he said.

## BSF, BGB to check transborder crimes

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Border guarding forces of India and Bangladesh have decided to enhance cooperation to check transboundary crimes and better management of the international boundary, according to a BSF statement.

The decision was taken in a conference of IGs of the Border Security Force and Region Commanders of the Border Guard Bangladesh, it said. "Both the border guarding forces decided further to enhance sharing of information and cooperation in all fields to ensure an effective border management system to fight the menace of transborder crimes, smuggling of drugs etc," the BSF said in the statement.

The four-day border coordination programme of the BSF and the BGB concluded here on Friday.

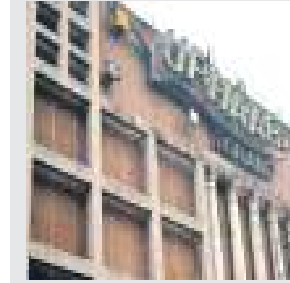
## INDIA CORNER

### Army personnel booked for drugging, raping Mathura girl



**An** Army personnel has been booked on charges of drugging and raping a 21-year-old woman, police here said on Saturday. The accused, Tejveer, was arrested on Wednesday and was booked for raping a woman he befriended through social media. On Saturday, he was slapped with a few more charges, including section 376 D (rape by more than one person) and 328 (drugging a person) of the Indian Penal Code, Superintendent of Police (SP) rural Srish Chandra said. He said a process to book them under Gangster Act has also been started. The officer said that since the initial FIR was registered by the brother of the woman, it had a few shortcomings. However, on the basis of the woman's statement the accused was charged with section 161, 164, 376D, and 328 of the IPC, he said.

### Uphaar fire: Court reserves order on Ansals' jail terms



**As** Delhi court on Saturday reserved for December 3 its order on whether to suspend the seven-year jail terms awarded to real estate barons Sushil and Gopal Ansal for tampering with evidence in the 1997 case of Uphaar cinema fire, which had claimed 59 lives. Additional Sessions Judge Anil Antil reserved the order on appeals filed by the Ansals against their conviction and jail terms by a magisterial court. Besides challenging their conviction and punishment, the Ansals had urged the sessions court to suspend their jail terms till the appeal is decided.

### NIA carries out search in mobile phone shop



**The** National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday carried out a search in a mobile phone shop here as part of its probe into a case related to a training camp conducted by the CPI (Maoists) in Nilambur forest area in Kerala five years ago, police said. A team from Kochi searched the shop near Vellalore and questioned the owner in connection with SIM cards which had been used by some people reportedly involved in the camp cases, they said. NIA had carried out searches at the residences of one Danish and Dinesh in the city and Santhosh Kumar at Angalakurichi in the rural limits a few months ago. Both are among the 19 accused against whom NIA had registered the case in connection with the seven day camp held from August 23 in 2016 at Nilambur, police said.

### Situation must be conducive to implement laws: Rijiju



**O**ne cannot be in a situation where it becomes difficult to implement laws passed by the legislature and verdicts delivered by the judiciary, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said here on Saturday. At times, in a bid to seek their rights, people forget about the rights of others as well as their own duties, he said, addressing the concluding session of the two-day Constitution Day programme organised by the Supreme Court. There is a need to find a balance between fundamental rights and fundamental duties, the minister added. He noted that bills passed by Parliament and state legislatures, and verdicts delivered by the Supreme Court are the laws of the land. "Aisi naubat hum kaise dekh sakte hain ki Supreme Court ya high court, assembly ya Parliament kanoon parit kar de, phir bhi laagu karne mein agar musibat hota hai, toh hum sab ko sochna hoga," Rijiju said.

## Free speech even if not in line with majority: HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Free speech is not to be exercised only if it falls in line with the majoritarian view and right to dissent is the essence of a vibrant democracy, the Delhi High Court has said while dismissing a plea to stop the publication, circulation and sale of Congress leader Salman Khurshid's new book.

Justice Yashwant Varma, who was dealing with the plea which claimed the book "Sunrise Over Ayodhya: Nationhood In Our Times" "impinges upon the faith of others", said that rights guaranteed by the Constitution, including free speech, cannot be restricted or denied on perceived apprehension of being unpalatable and a democracy governed by the rule of law would be placed in serious peril if creative voices were stifled or intellectual freedom is suppressed.



In his six-page order, the judge quoted Voltaire, "While I wholly disagree of what you say, I will defend to the death your right to say it" and said that free speech "must be zealously protected" unless the work conclusively falls foul of the constitutional or statutory restrictions.

"The right to dissent or to have and express a contrarian view with respect to current affairs or historical events are the essence of a

vibrant democracy. That fundamental and precious right guaranteed by our Constitution can neither be restricted nor denied merely on the perceived apprehension of the view being unpalatable or disagreeable to some. The freedom to freely express ideas and opinions cannot be permitted to be overshadowed by the ominous cloud of being non-conformist," the court said in its order passed on November

25. "The freedom to freely express ideas and opinions cannot be permitted to be overshadowed by the ominous cloud of being non-conformist," it added.

The court noted that in the present case, the book in its entirety was not even placed before the court for its consideration and the entire case rested solely on certain extracts appearing in one of the chapters.

In the petition, the petitioner had claimed that certain excerpts from the book were "agitating the Hindu community" while threatening the security, peace and harmony of the nation.

Counsel for the petitioner had contended that the book, in its chapter called 'The Saffron Sky', compared Hindutva to radical groups like ISIS and Boko Haram, which could harm public peace.

## Reduce carbon footprint: Vice-Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu expressed concern on Saturday over the deteriorating air quality in the major cities of the country, especially during winters, and urged people to reduce their carbon footprint to the extent possible.

He also emphasised the need to set up good healthcare facilities in rural areas and urged the private sector to supplement the government's efforts in this regard by opening satellite centres of their urban facilities.

Virtually addressing an event on interventional pulmonology from the Upa-Rashttrapati Nivas, Naidu pointed to climate

change and vehicular pollution as important contributing factors for the deteriorating air quality, an official statement from the Vice President's Secretariat said.

He stressed the need for a serious rethink on people's approach towards development from a sustainability standpoint. He also called upon people to evaluate their lifestyle and try to reduce their carbon footprint to the extent possible.

Observing the challenge of an increasing number of non-communicable diseases, including respiratory disorders, in the country, the vice president advised the youngsters to adopt a healthy and disciplined lifestyle.

## Mantras for positive ageing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new anthology features 50 stories of eminent people productive beyond the age of 75 from all walks of life - celebrities, doctors, artistes, lawyers, and social activists.

"Mantras for Positive Ageing" ponders upon the belief that the post-pandemic world needs the experience of these people and asks its readers: "As you grow older, would you be interested in remaining optimistic, youthful, and energetic?"

Among those featured are politicians Karan Singh, Margaret Alva and Mani Shankar Aiyar, gender economist Devaki Jain, lawyer Fali S Nariman, actor Sushma Seth and activists Syeda Hameed, Subhashini Ali, Sunderlal



Bahuguna, Kamla Bhasin and Mahatma Gandhi's granddaughter Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee.

The book, published by Pippa Rann Books & Media, has been brought out to mark NGO Guild of Service's golden jubilee and is co-edited by the organisation's founder chairperson V Mohini Giri, and executive vice-president

Meera Khanna.

It has a foreword by The Dalai Lama. He says many of the contributors to the book are "friends I have known over the years" and "we have grown older together".

He stresses that the most important thing for everyone is to live our lives meaningfully and refrain from causing harm to others.

"All the writers have been in search of change and today we celebrate their strength. Their strength in contributing immensely to society and which has helped them to prove that age is only a number. This anthology reverberates with the message that the sky's the limit and the big canvas of the earth is their playground," says Giri.

For Karan Singh, ageing involves coping with life and coping with death.

"It is our unique privilege as human beings to be aware of these challenges and to mobilise our physiological, emotional, intellectual and spiritual resources to treat ageing as a unique learning experience which helps us on our eternal spiritual quest," he writes.



# Centre, States making efforts to remove hurdles in EoDB: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre's effort along with states is to eliminate burdensome compliances, reduce the need for licensing and rationalise the renewal process with an aim to promoting ease of doing business in the country, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday.

He also suggested that the industry and the government together can engage with the judiciary on issues like fast resolution of commercial disputes and capping adjournments.

"Our effort, along with states, is to eliminate burdensome compliances, or reduce the need for licensing, reduce the regulatory burden, permissions, and rationalise the renewal process. But it only happens when we work together. Self regulation and self certification should be the way forward," Goyal said at the CII National Conference on Ease of Doing Business for Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

On fast resolution of commercial disputes, the minister said they are working on making mediation the preferred



mechanism rather than everybody rushing to courts.

He said members of industry body CII can engage some of the top lawyers and help the government understand what is feasible under the realm of India's systems.

"Some policy changes may be required, infra changes may be required, some amendment to laws may be

that, but it needs the buying by the judiciary.

"So may be what we need to do is government and industry both go together and engage with the judiciary....If both of us go together with our difficulties, I can assure you, we will not find the courts or honourable judges lacking in their support...They are in fact wishing to support us," he said.

Further, the minister appealed to the industry to visit the Regulatory Compliance Portal and industrial land bank portal and give their feedback to the government.

"We are looking at the availability of industrial land at affordable prices...Self-regulation must be the norm. I urge industries to suggest ways to move towards transparency and self-regulation," he said.

On licence renewals, the minister said he is now looking at changing the frequency of renewals and approvals.

"In many cases I am completely removing renewals so that all you need to do is update the information suo moto," he said.

## Goyal asks gem, jewellery sector to focus on design

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday asked the gem and jewellery industry to focus on areas like design, diversification of export product basket and lab grown diamonds with a view to boost outbound shipments and job creation.

He said that exports from the sector have increased to USD 23 billion during the April-October period of this fiscal.

"Focus on four points in the coming period. Good design should be patented; include new things such as pearls, platinum and fashion jewellery in the exports basket; increase collaboration with businesses of other countries for fusion jewellery; and (focus on) lab grown diamonds," he said at the inauguration ceremony of Gems & Jewellery Manufacturing Association, 2021.

## AIRCEL-MAXIS CASE

# Court summons P Chidambaram, son Karti on December 20

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court on Saturday took cognisance of the chargesheets filed by the CBI and the ED against former Union minister P Chidambaram and his son Karti in the Aircel-Maxis case and summoned them on December 20.

Special Judge MK Nagpal passed the order after noting that there was sufficient evidence to summon Chidambaram and the other accused in the corruption and money-laundering cases lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) respectively.

The CBI and ED had earlier informed the court that letters rogatory were sent to the United Kingdom and Singapore, seeking certain information regarding the probe, and there were some developments in that regard.



Letters rogatory are formal communication in writing sent by the court in which action is pending to a foreign court, requesting judicial assistance.

The most common remedies sought by letters rogatory are service of process and the taking of evidence.

While the ED was represented by Special Public Prosecutor N K Matta, advocate Noor Rampal appeared for the CBI.

The cases relate to alleged

irregularities in the grant of Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) approval in the Aircel-Maxis deal.

The approval was granted in 2006, when Chidambaram was the Union finance minister.

The CBI and the ED had alleged that as the finance minister, Chidambaram had granted approval to the deal beyond his capacity, benefiting certain persons, and received kickbacks.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Indusind Bank's Hinduja welcome RBI move on holding



The Hinduja, who had earlier applied to RBI seeking to increase their holding in Indusind Bank, on Saturday welcomed the RBI move to allow promoter holding of up to 26 per cent in private sector lenders. IHL Mauritius, the Hinduja's entity which is the promoter of Indusind Bank, had applied to RBI to increase its holding to 26 per cent from the previous cap of 15 per cent, seeking parity after promoters of rival Kotak Mahindra Bank were given the permission to have their holding at 26 per cent after dragging the RBI to courts. "We believe this measure of increased promoter holding will be of benefit to all stakeholders: the regulator, the banking institution and its clients, particularly at this time when Indian economy is poised for exponential growth," Ashok Hinduja, the chairman of IHL, said. The RBI on Friday came out with revised guidelines on private sector banks, allowing for 26 per cent promoter ownership but did not go ahead with an internal working group's recommendation to allow corporates to promote banks after protests from various quarters including former governors. Hinduja said IHL now awaits operational guidelines as it gives the promoters an opportunity to inject capital to increase stake up to 26 per cent. The increased promoter holding will lead to enhanced financial strength of the bank and its clients will be protected, he added.

### Bounce partners with Park+ for battery swap infra

Electric scooter rental startup Bounce, which is set to launch its first e-scooter Infinity early next month, announced on Saturday its collaboration with parking solution platform Park+ for setting up battery swapping infrastructure at more than 3,500 locations, spread over 10 cities. This smart framework will be available at locations like residential societies, key parking spaces, malls, corporate offices, among others, for customers to find the nearest swapping station on their Bounce App or Park+ app, the company said. The swapping stations would work on the lines of a fuel station. Bounce battery swapping stations will have charged and ready-to-go batteries that customers can easily swap with their near-empty batteries in under a minute, it said. With this infrastructure in place, customers wouldn't have to wait for the scooter to charge, be anxious about the range or remember to charge it, Bounce said. "Our objective is to have our battery swapping stations to be within one kilometre of wherever you are and to enable this we have partnered with Park+. This partnership is in line with our effort to build a battery swapping infrastructure for a million+ scooters in the next 24 months," said Vivekananda Hallakere, Co-Founder & CEO, Bounce. Bounce is set to launch its first consumer electric scooter, Bounce Infinity, on December 2 with "Battery as a service" option – the first-of-its-kind in the Indian market.



### Airtel withdraws extra data benefit on in-app coupons



Airtel has withdrawn certain data benefit coupons it was offering through its app on some of the prepaid plans, a move it said will help "avoid any confusion" among consumers about the offerings and comparisons between various plans. The telecom operator had announced 20-25 per cent tariff hikes for various prepaid offerings, including tariffed voice plans, unlimited voice bundles and data top-ups, and the new rates came into effect from Friday. However, Airtel also continued to offer extra data benefits of additional 500 MB on select packs as a promotional coupon. "It is an ongoing industry practice to run cash backs or extra data only through telco apps as coupons. However, to avoid any confusion of incorrect comparisons in the mind of our customers, these in-app coupon offers stand withdrawn," an Airtel spokesperson said in response to an email query. Earlier, while announcing revision in tariffs, Airtel in a statement had said it has always maintained that the mobile Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) needs to be at Rs 200 and ultimately at Rs 300 to provide a reasonable return on capital that allows for a financially healthy business model. "We also believe that this level of ARPU will enable the substantial investments required in networks and spectrum.

## Paytm Q2 loss widens to Rs 473 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Financial technology firm Paytm's parent One 97 Communications on Saturday reported widening of consolidated loss to about Rs 473 crore in the second quarter ended September 2021, mainly on account of increase in payment processing charges.

The company had posted a loss of Rs 436.7 crore in the same quarter a year ago, according to an exchange filing.

Its consolidated total income increased by 49.6 per cent to Rs 1,086.4 crore during the reported quarter from Rs 663.9 crore in the corresponding period of FY'21.

"We have improved our expenses, with continued and increased investments in technology and merchant base expansion. Clearly, the monetisation and focus on non UPI business is showing up in our results and costs. We are committed to innovation and continued investments in India's payment and financial services inclusion," a Paytm spokesperson said.

Paytm expense of payment processing charges increased by 36 per cent to Rs 670 crore



during the reported quarter from Rs 492.4 crore in the same period of 2020-21. The employee benefits expense was up 35 per cent to Rs 386.5 crore from Rs 286.2 crore while company's expense in software, cloud and data centre increased by 56.5 per cent to Rs 112.9 crore from Rs 72.1 crore during the period under review. "Our focus remains on continued customer and merchant expansion, and strengthening our business capabilities to cash in on the opportunities presented by the Indian internet ecosystem and rapid adoption of financial services," the spokesperson said.

Paytm's gross merchandise value (GMV) in the second quarter more than doubled to

Rs 1,95,600 crore from Rs 94,700 crore in the corresponding quarter of 2020-21.

The company's average monthly transacting users (MTU) during the reported quarter increased by 33 per cent on a year-on-year (YOY) basis to 5.74 million, Paytm said in a statement.

The revenue from payments and financial services grew 69 per cent YoY basis to Rs 8,42.6 crore while commerce and cloud services revenue grew by 47 per cent on Y-o-Y basis to Rs 2,43.8 crore, the statement said.

The company said that the number of loans disbursed grew by 714 per cent on YoY to over 28 lakh during the reported quarter.

## Govt clarifies Starlink not a licensee; be wary public told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday said Starlink Internet Services is not licensed to offer satellite-based internet services in India, and cautioned the public not to subscribe to the services that are being advertised by the Elon Musk-backed company.

The Telecom Department also asked Starlink to comply with the regulatory framework for offering satellite based communication ser-

vices, and refrain from booking/rendering the satellite internet services in India "with immediate effect".

The Telecom Department, in a statement, said it has come to notice that Starlink has started pre-selling/booking of the satellite based Starlink Internet Services in India.

The same is also evident from the website of Starlink wherein satellite based internet services can be booked by users in Indian territory, the DoT noted.

## Cash-strapped Pak to get US\$ 3 bn

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

Cash-strapped Pakistan will soon get USD 3 billion as loan from Saudi Arabia as the Cabinet led by Prime Minister Imran Khan has approved an agreement to keep the amount in the country's central bank, media reports said on Saturday.

The Saudi government had promised to maintain a reserve of USD 3 billion at the State Bank of Pakistan, Geo News reported.

According to the agreement, the aid will remain in the SBP's deposit account for a

year. "The SBP has finalised all arrangements and now everything is in place and the amount of the agreed deposit will be received within the next couple of days," official sources told The News.

The federal Cabinet approved the agreement to keep the USD 3 billion aid from Saudi Arabia in the SBP, the reports quoted an official document as saying.

Pakistan's entire liquid foreign reserves, according to the central bank, stood at USD 22.773 billion as of November



19, according to Geo News.

The numbers indicate that the SBP held USD 16.254 billion in foreign reserves, while

commercial banks kept USD 6.519 billion in net foreign reserves.

The SBP's reserves declined by USD 691 million to USD 16.254 billion during the week ended on November 19, primarily owing to external debt repayments.

According to sources, Saudi Arabia has agreed to provide USD 1.2 billion for the supply of refined Petroleum Oil Lubricants (POL) products, with the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) negotiating on behalf of the Pakistani government.

## WTO postpones ministerial meet in Geneva

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has postponed the ministerial level meet, scheduled from November 30 in Geneva, for an indefinite period due to an outbreak of a particularly transmissible strain of the COVID-19 virus.

According to a WTO statement, no date has been set for the rescheduling of the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC).

The announcement of travel restrictions and quarantine requirements in Switzerland and many other European countries led to the General Council Chair Ambassador, Dacio Castillo (Honduras) called an emergency meeting on Friday night of all WTO members to inform them of the situation.

"Given these unfortunate developments and the uncertainty that they cause, we see no alternative but to propose to postpone the Ministerial



Conference and reconvene it as soon as possible when conditions allow," Castillo told the General Council, which is the highest decision making body of the WTO after the ministerial conference.

Director-General Ngozi

Okonjo-Iweala said the travel constraints meant that many ministers and senior delegates could not have participated in face-to-face negotiations at the conference.

WTO members were unanimous in their support of the

recommendations from the Director-General and the General Council Chair, and they pledged to continue working to narrow their differences on key topics like the WTO's response to the pandemic and the negotiations to draft rules

slashing harmful fisheries subsidies, the statement said.

"The General Council agreed late Friday to postpone the imminent Ministerial Conference after an outbreak of a particularly transmissible strain of the COVID-19 virus led several governments to impose travel restrictions that would have prevented many ministers from reaching Geneva," it said.

This marks the second time that the pandemic has forced a postponement of the 12th Ministerial Conference. The meeting was originally due to take place in June 2020 in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan.

India has been a member of the WTO since 1995.

WTO is a 164-member Geneva-based multilateral organisation which frames rules for global exports and imports besides adjudicating in trade disputes between the member countries.

## Mahanadi Coalfields to set up 50-MW solar plant in Odisha

PNS ■ SAMBALPUR

Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL) will set up a 50-megawatt solar power plant in Odisha's Sambalpur district at a cost of Rs 301.92 crore as part of its goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2024.

This project will reduce carbon dioxide emission by 91,020 tonnes per annum and carbon offsets of around 24,824 tonnes per annum, the public sector unit said in a release on Saturday.

The Sambalpur-headquartered MCL has placed an order with a Chennai-based firm, which will establish this green energy project within 10 months.





# EXQUISITE PROSE POETRY

In her prose poems, *What's wrong with us Kali women?* Anita Nahal probes with the tenacity of a philosopher, existential questions of being and nothingness and of identity and subjectivity, writes SWATI PAL

You open the book to the title piece and you are hooked. In the first short passage, Anita Nahal puts together the oppositions that we live with, that we have internalised, that we resist, that we surrender to, that we challenge and in our hearts, rebel against. Be it the colour of the dark skin that is abhorred though ironically people try to tan theirs, the rapaciousness of men from which there is no reprieve, the double speak of worshipping women as goddesses and then tearing them down, all this and much more does Anita forcefully, poignantly and poetically put to the reader. And the haunting line that she repeats, 'Don't think she's not watching,' stays with you as you turn the page.

And when you turn the page, she paints in words the picture of who really a goddess is. Fiercely alone whether among strangers or with those she knows, fending for her children herself, taking on a world that would judge a divorcee, that is the human and Hindu goddess that Anita would want us to see. And to be.

The next piece on 'How easy it is for a Black life to be taken' is a slice of real life. Real, living beings, non whites whose life was extinguished. Just like that. Snuffed out. As a reader your hair will stand on end and your eyes will prick with unshed tears even as your heart will smoulder with rage. Anita makes you think of the dead. And with them. In this piece of writing as well as the next when she wonders what happens to the clothes of those who died. Especially now, of Covid. How quickly they are bundled away while their clothes hang in the cupboards, mute testimony to the existence of their wearers.

Watching, seeing, observing, gazing — the whole idea of looking, of voyeurism, takes on a new meaning as Anita focuses on the jungle in Smooth operators and questions, who is looking at whom? As a reader, I have often wondered too. We create wild life sanctuaries and zoological parks, what do animals, caged or free, think of us humans. Do they see us as caged or free? Do they know we are humans or do they see us, in our herds, as two legged animals? Anita prompts you to think along these lines. Her writing about the animals makes them so much more human than us humans. The beautiful story about consideration rather than sex, which the male sloth understands is touching indeed.

Anita probes with the tenacity of a philosopher, existential questions of being and nothingness and of identity and sub-



jectivity. Her words reveal a quest to really go into the heart of our 'self', almost particle by particle as we see in 'Hard: Us, animals and the aliens' or in 'Greatest warrior is metamorphic Mother Earth'. She has a knack of self analysis so keenly felt in some of the poems such as 'A sip of wine'. There is also a sense of being pummeled by the world, of being trapped in a space that is claustrophobic which one comes across in many images including the one just mentioned and the next entitled 'Chase away demons left behind'. A characteristic poetic device that she uses so effectively is personification as we see in the way she personifies the concept of patriarchy.

While most of the prose poems are dark and somber, there is a playful yet serious look at the way women deal with ageing in

the frothy piece 'A woman's age is kicking and alive'.

Another poem that looks at the body, at age, in a brief recall is 'Mom's shoulders'. Anita can see the flip side of things and so her look at the Corona struck situation where nature blooms even as some foolish people continue to be callous about safety measures, is an honest review of a contemporary issue. While her engagement with the pandemic can be seen in several of her pieces, she is also clear that the concern for this abnormal time can make one lose sight of the eternal wheel of time with its larger questions as we see in 'Know your wheel, Homosapiens' or in a different sense, in 'Breathe' or 'Covid 19's inverted triangle' or 'Reclaim your space'.

Anita's selfhood is clearly shaped by her

location as an Indian Immigrant and she acknowledges that in many of her pieces such as 'Spilt milk in native and foreign lands' and 'Fallacy of a single, immigrant mom'. While she is alive, as immigrants are, to the traumas of being one, and to repeat, we see that so starkly in 'How easy it is for a Black life to be taken', one does not get any nuance of self pity or even of being forlorn. In fact, one of her prose poems is 'Pity, go take a hike' — she shuns pity entirely.

Anita is alive to the choices she has made and in her writing we see a kind of acculturation; she is aware of the multicultural, pluralistic world she inhabits and is absolutely unapologetic about any aspect that shapes her multidimensional self.

In fact she points out quite assertively that we are all in a sense immigrants in her

piece, 'You are an immigrant too'. There is a sense of a kind of acceptance of cultures and thus her calm assertion that her son would cremate her in America and scatter a few ashes in the Ganges, as her repayment of debt to the two lands, America and India that she has been a part of. This we see in 'Paying my debt to two lands'. She is critical of both, especially of the way women are treated in both countries, either seen as easily available if found in miniskirts and dancing or outraging society for doing so which we see in 'Babylon, my sinful dance music'.

Nothing escapes Anita's eagle eye and pen including the discomfort faced by women during their menstrual cramps as we see in 'Feeling down, being down'. The woman reader will find every word resonat-

ing. Betrayal looms in a lot of her writing, the betrayal of democracy, the betrayal by blood relations, and the betrayal in relationships. While it is the underlying motif in many of the poems, 'Family Blood', 'Democracy in decline' and 'Koala and judases' echo the theme more sharply. It is interesting to point out as with 'Koala and judases' that some of Anita's writing is inspired from Australian art and culture. Undoubtedly then, her writing is bound to strike a chord in the hearts of people across the world.

The *Kalis*, the *Durgas*, the *Sitas*, indeed all the Hindu Goddesses whom Anita invokes in her writing are none other than Anita, you and me — the modern Indian woman, an immigrant or a persona in a multicultural world. She questions, she mocks, she laughs at, she rages, she refuses to 'fit the bill', she speaks out and will not be silenced or choked, she breathes, dances, sings, makes love, drinks and even while falling into depths of despair, never gives up on hope. And as we read Anita, we agree. There's nothing wrong with us Kali women.

The book is here to stay. You will find it unputdownable. It is powerful, poignant and of course, exquisite prose poetry.

The reviewer, Professor and Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College (DU), has been an educator since the last twenty seven years



## NEW ARRIVALS

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selected and edited by Sujatha Vijayaraghavan and Mini Krishnan

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The Greatest Tamil Stories Ever Told showcases some of the best short fiction to emerge out of Tamil Nadu, dating from the last century to the present day. Two of the earliest stories included here are Subramania Bharati's 'The Story of a Crow Learning Prosody', a satirical tale about the exaltation of language, and 'Kalki' Krishnamurthy's 'The Governor's Visit', about how bigwigs in little places pandered to the British rulers during the time of the Raj. While some stories in this volume wrestle with the idea of public justice, as in Father Mark Stephen's 'Penance', others, such as Ambai's 'Journey 4', hide secrets that could destroy lives and relationships if they are ever revealed. Featuring memorable works by, among others, Bama, Perumal Murugan, and Poornima, the 30 stories in this collection come together to paint a striking picture of the Tamil people.

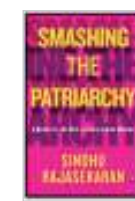


### SMASHING THE PATRIARCHY: A GUIDE FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY INDIAN WOMAN

Sindhu Rajasekaran

Aleph, ₹699

From beauty, body politics, and sexuality, to caste, power, and the paradox of choice, the book explores a wide range of women's issues and draws important connections between these. Taking its inspiration from multi-disciplinary theories, grounded and deepened by interviews with a variety of experts and numerous women, Smashing the Patriarchy is an astonishingly insightful exploration of the collective psyche of modern Indian women.



## From uncertainty to probabilities

*God or No God: Awareness Enriches Life* is a ratified statement claimed by many but understood by very few & Bharat Bhushan Padmadeo is among a few who dares to demystify the basic system of enquiry, writes PRADEEP

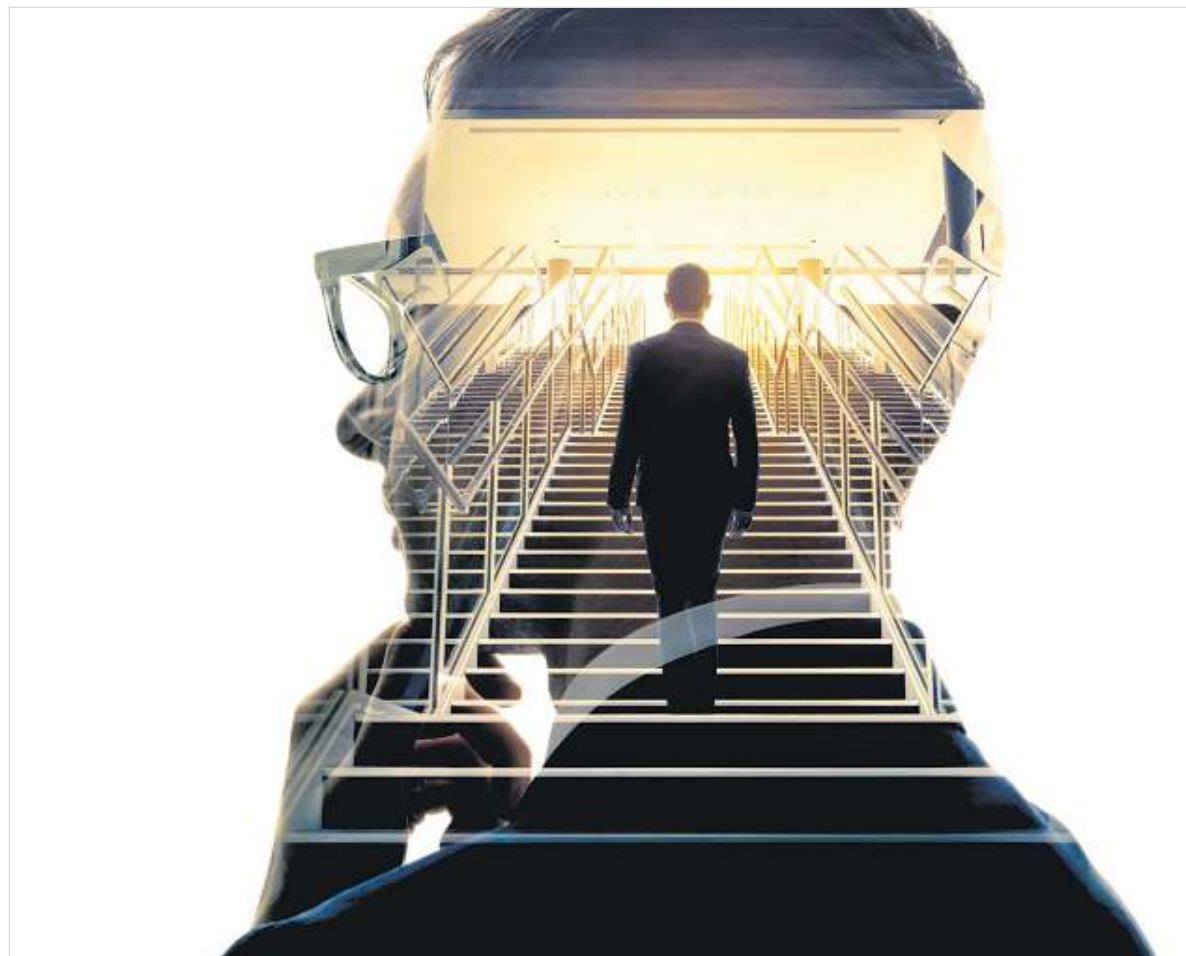
Someone asked Swami Vivekanand: "Can we become Godlike?" "First become a man," he answered. It literally implies that if full human potential (mind-power) is unfolded, one would know no limits. And it is very much achievable through conscious efforts, as did Ancient India's learned masters, to have captured subtle realities of life operative at even intangible level. So, raising human capital is more important than exploring and seeking God. That remains the real human calling, is how the book concludes, which makes the book an interesting read.

*God or No God: Awareness Enriches Life* is a ratified statement claimed by many but understood by very few. Bharat Bhushan Padmadeo is amongst those few who dared to accept the challenge and demystify the basic system of enquiry.

In modern times or precisely in this industrial age, every idea or belief demands an objective explanation. In this new framework of understanding, the concept of GOD is a most vulnerable idea. Leaning to some particular idea or school to rationalise existence is a matter of abandoned schools. Science sets up new logic and premises of rationality to support or reject conceptual realities. Whole discussion of existence is evolving around uncertainty, probability and unpredictable circumstances and tools to gauge them perfectly.

This book is remarkable because it changes the very basis of argument about existence from uncertainty to probabilities. It states that the process of understanding is far more important than the modes of happening or object itself. Writer argues that perception itself lies within the realm of being and awareness about it.

Significant character of twentieth century philosophy was departure from any faith unexplained or underexplained. It was rated as blind faith or fundamentalism to a large extent. Renowned philosopher J Krishnamurti argues, if you are free from sorrow and hate you don't require God. Whereas Gandhi's whole philosophy of non-violence is centered



around God. So the space of argument is divided between the two premises: "God or No God". Many more fell in line either rejecting or accepting the existence of a super controller as GOD.

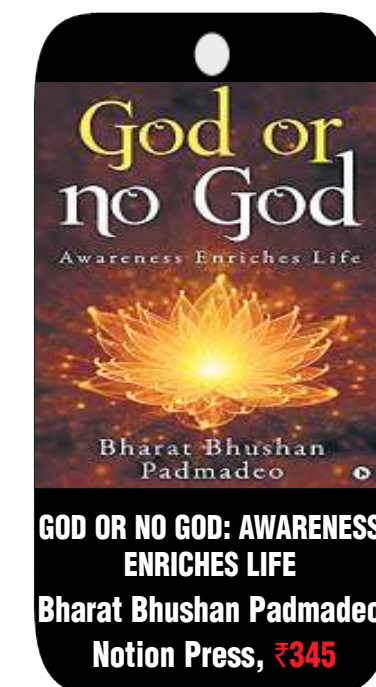
Padmadeo in this book argues that precursor to both is the same. The bearer of belief is consciousness, and understanding its existence is awareness. So, it is not important whether you believe or not, important is that you are aware or not. He wrote: "Consciousness, in fact, rightly deserves to be marked as fourth

dimension, vital to creation. It should not be seen as being in conflict with the perception of modern science, which assigns the fourth dimension to space and time. This particular fundamental element has been named as consciousness because it grants us with the power of knowing, besides granting necessary intelligence to other functional aspects of our individual and collective organism."

While frequently quoting scientists like Max Plank and excerpts from Kashmiri Shaivism, he kept on building

necessary bridges between science and theology. In other words, instead of dividing the argument into science or believing, he is indicating the science of awakening.

Explaining uncertainty and unpredictability, the book postulates that mind which itself is an area of study by itself creates most paradoxical results. It explains explicitly that consciousness is the prime mover. While exploring the construct of mind and body-mind connect, writer explains its extra cerebral



existence as an interactive phenomenon which comprehends undiscovered psycho-landscapes. Dr. Karan Singh writes precisely in the foreword of the book that writer has reinterpreted our ancient spiritual verities in the light of contemporary intellectual scene, paying attention to the infinite potentialities of human mind, which if unfolded in full would know no limits. The basic take home message of the book may be comprised as raising level of consciousness leads to the fact that "Existence is God". This process may be called as enriched awareness.

As conclusive remark this extremely engaging book demands an independent and fearless conviction to internalize the source and negating the fundamentalism of beliefs and faiths. It sets a new mode of enquiry within. This book is an invitation to quite undulating and challenging experience like awakening itself might be.







# the pioneer agenda



Learning is the most important thing, no matter how you do it, or where you do it, or who you do it with  
— Saoirse Ronan

FROM THE INSIDE

Exquisite prose poetry

Anita Nahal probes with the tenacity of a philosopher, existential questions of being & nothingness & of identity & subjectivity



Fit for sustainable future

Reduce, reuse, recylce and sustainability are no longer the buzz words. They are our present need and hold key to a better future.

The starting point of being an impact champion who sets the organisation on a socially oriented path is your own social consciousness and willingness to drive transformative innovations’ write  
PRIYA NAIR RAJEEV & SIMY JOY

# TIME TO AWAKEN CORPORATE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS?



The 2019 Global Wealth Databook from Credit Suisse reports that 73 percent of Indians have a net worth of less than \$10,000 (compared to just 19 percent in China), while 2.3 percent have a net worth of over \$1 million. India ranks fourth in the world in ultra-high-net-worth individuals (4,593), making us one of the fastest-growing yet unequal nations.

Private sector corporates often do not see addressing developmental inequities as their problem. Access to food, water, healthcare, and education is commonly understood as ‘poor people’s problems that the government and social sector organisations must solve. No doubt that the poor are the first to be hit, that too very hard, as we saw in a mass exodus of the migrant workers during the first wave of the pandemic. The middle class and above believe that they can access basic necessities by private means and from the private sector. The second wave of the pandemic showed us how false that sense of security is! With the relatively well-off scrambling for medical care, medicines, oxygen, and ventilators, it was apparent that none of us would be spared from the ill effects of our developmental shortcomings.

**IMPACT CHAMPIONS: THE FLAGBEARERS OF CHANGE**

If we were to survive together, the corporate sector organisations must enact social consciousness. This mindset understands and accepts the interconnectedness of the economic, social, and natural worlds. Socially conscious organisations do not come into existence without socially-conscious managers. We see such managers as ‘Impact Champions’ having the intent and capabilities to help their organisations positively impact the economy and society, and the environment.

Enamored by the glitz of the corporate careers in the liberalized Indian economy, MBA aspirants in the 1990s readily bought into the mantra of ‘profit maximisation’. But many Gen Z and Millennial MBA aspirants are a little more skeptical about whether that is the best way forward, as it has become apparent that their generation would bear the consequences of the social and environmental damage left by the unbridled pursuit of profits. Many of them harbor pro-social inclinations during their student days; however, they are unsure how to take it forward once they start a corporate career. In the ‘big, bad world of corporates’, beating competition and exceeding performance expectations are the basis for career advancement. Hence, they feel that there is little room for social ideals.

Time has never been more right for aspiring Impact Champions in the corporate sector to get into action. The UN has been driving Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs) to tackle the development challenges and climate change. SDGs urge the private sector to collaborate with the civic society and governments, to which influential corporates world over have

responded positively. In the global business circles, ‘Triple Bottom Line,’ with its focus on 3Ps — People, Planet and Profit, is widely discussed as a replacement for the traditional ‘bottomline,’ focusing singularly on ‘profits’. With avid support from the likes of Klaus Schwab (Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum) and Jack Welch (ex-CEO, GE), ‘shareholder capitalism’ has begun to make way for ‘stakeholder capitalism,’ which gives equal priority to the employees, customers, suppliers, and the community.

Indian corporates are slowly beginning to catch up with this global trend. However, they are in dire need of managers who can champion this transition.

**HOW TO BE AN IMPACT CHAMPION?**

● **Self-appoint yourself as an ‘Impact Champion’:** Most corporate jobs would demand you to mind only the impact on profit, not people or the planet. To be an impact champion, you have to self-appoint yourself as one and be sure that you do not leave your social consciousness at home while coming to work. When you operate with a ‘corporate mindset’ in a regular day’s work, you would accept and get on with decisions that look perfectly sensible and acceptable from the corporate and legal standpoints. It takes social consciousness to recognize when stakeholders or environmental interests are being compromised among what looks like business as usual. An impact champion not only recognises issues but also takes personal responsibility for action. New managers aspiring to impact champions may be unsure how to navigate organisational processes and culture in enacting social consciousness. They can find support in like-minded managers and mentors at the Impact Champions Forum, a seedbed for individuals who intend to transform organisations into socially conscious ones at CESI, Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode.

P P Sukumaran (ex-HR Head, Murugappa group) had to retrench 200 plant workers post-TQM implementation. A perfectly legal decision, arrived at in consultation with the Union, still left him worried about the ‘social debris’ that this decision would leave — what were the chances that 200 middle-workers in a northern Kerala village find alternate jobs; even with the severance money will their families have financial security in a social setting where alcoholism was rampant. P P Sukumaran was determined to do something about it. However, he was not required either by law or by his organisational mandate to address this.

● **Get partners:** You have to do it yourself, but you cannot do it alone. Irrespective of where you are in the organisational hierarchy, you would need partners. Partners are people inside (sometimes even outside) of the organisation committed to addressing societal or environmental problems that you seek to solve through organisational means. In addition to moral and emotional support (which you will need aplenty), partners bring in legitimacy to the cause (especially if they are higher in the hierarchy or hold formal or informal positions of influence), knowledge and skills resources to develop a deeper understanding of the issue from multiple perspectives as well as potential solutions, access to networks and organisational resources, and political backing to elicit favorable decisions.

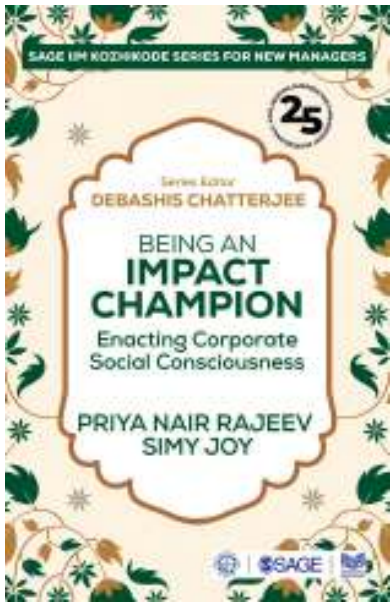
In the example, P P Sukumaran engaged in active discussions with his contacts within and outside his organisation. One of them directed him to Dr.Nalini Gangadharan, Livelihood Advancement Business School (LABS) of Dr. Reddy’s Foundation. LABS had a skilling model that Sukumaran found appropriate for retraining their redundant workers to suitably place them in alternate jobs or start their ventures. The model was later replicated in Chennai in partnership with other corporates for skilling at-risk urban youth, creating a corporate consortium model for financing such initiatives.

● **Explore Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Most corporates support CSR activities which are perhaps the easiest way to initiate action. If your company already has CSR departments and programs, you can get involved in that. If current CSR activities do not address pressing social issues close to your heart, you can always pioneer new activities. Given that CSR has been mandated by law since 2013 and many companies are struggling to identify worthwhile projects, you may not find it too hard to get buy-in for your ideas.

You can implement them through any of these four different formats:(a) as a foundation, otherwise known as a Section 8 company(e.g., Infosys Foundation); (b) in partnership with NGOs, trusts, or registered societies with a proven track record (e.g., ITC and Pratham working together in the Reach India Plus initiative); (c) in partnership with other companies (e.g., Mphasis and Uber launched Uber Assist and Uber Access that retro-fitted vehicles to help Persons with Disabilities as their joint CSR initiative); and (d) following an employee volunteer model (e.g., Calpine Technologies runs Engage — their CSR program that builds leadership skills in school children through football with the help of employee volunteers).

● **Pursue Corporate Social Innovation (CSI):** Business models can generate societal benefits by changing their perspective (e.g., including marginalized groups in the supply chain, new products for the old and disabled). As an impact champion, you can tweak the current models in innovative ways that generate social and/or environmental impact while serving corporate interests.

For example, ITC launched ‘e-Choupal,’ one of the most extensive Internet-based interventions in rural India, enhancing earnings and transforming the livelihoods of over 4 million farmers in over 35000 villages through 6100 kiosks across ten states. e-Choupal deploys information technology to virtually cluster all the value chain participants and vertically integrate various actors in the agriculture supply



ALTHOUGH THE AMOUNT OF MONEY AND ENERGY INVESTED IN CSR AND CORPORATE SOCIAL INNOVATION IS GOING UP EACH YEAR, ENSURING THAT THEY DELIVER ACTUAL SOCIAL IMPACT SOMEHOW HAS TAKEN A BACKSEAT

chain. Village internet kiosks set up to access information are managed by farmers, who get information on the weather, market prices, scientific farm practices, and risk management in their mother tongue. They can use the kiosks to purchase farm inputs and get them at their doorstep. Real-time information has made it possible for farmers to make better decisions aligned with market demand, significantly reducing transaction costs.

● **Track ‘Impact’:** Although the amount of money and energy invested in CSR and Corporate Social Innovation is going up each year, ensuring that they deliver actual social impact somehow has taken a backseat. Even after introducing mandatory reporting of impact, most companies focus on the inputs (e.g., amounts spent) or outputs (e.g., the number of rooms built in a rural hospital, pieces of equipment they bought). Some try to pass on the number of beneficiaries that they have been able to reach as impact. But this is not the same as tracking if and how the initiatives have created tangible differences in the lives of the beneficiaries. Without a robust impact tracking mechanism, attempts to make an impact may not be as effective as you would have imagined.

We conducted an impact assessment for the Vidhyadhan Scholarship program, run by the Sarojini Damodaran Foundation (SDF). Since 1995, SDF Foundation has provided scholarships to academically bright children, primarily from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families who completed high school (class 10 in India) to pursue higher education. Thus far, the program has provided 13,500 scholarships, with over 10,000 beneficiaries currently pursuing their higher studies across ten states. The basic premise of any scholarship program is that the monetary support would enable them to build human capital in academic qualifications, which will help them find employment and thus lift them out of poverty. We found that this undeniably was the case for those who were able to find jobs. However, we also found that finding a job and future career progression depended on social capital in terms of networks. It was hard for those who were low on social capital to get jobs. This led to the realisation that in addition to monetary support, the students from disadvantaged backgrounds also would need support to build their social capital through mentoring and networking.

The starting point of being an impact champion who sets the organisation on a socially oriented path is your own social consciousness and willingness to drive transformative innovations. If you ever feel shaken by the scale of what you have to achieve, take a cue from a climber scaling a peak: You need to focus on where to place your next step. Then, step by step, you would reach there.

The writers have recently published Being an Impact Champion: Enacting Corporate Social Consciousness, with SAGE Publications India, under the SAGE IIM-Kozhikode Series for New Managers





# FIT FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Reduce, reuse, recylce and sustainability are no longer the buzz words. They are our present need and hold key to a better future. One company is trying to ensure that we live in a world that is cleaner by recycling plastic and making carpets out of it. SHALINI SAKSENA brings you a report

An alarming research came to light a couple of weeks back. Plastic waste from the COVID-19 weighing 25,900 tonnes, equivalent to more than 2,000 double decker buses, has leaked into the ocean. But what is even worse is that it doesn't end here. At the COP26, there were six facts linking the plastic lifecycle to climate change that must be taken into account. The most immediate being that South Asia is one of the largest generators of plastic waste; the region discards more than 26 million tons of plastics every day! This means that there is immediate need for action and reduce, reuse and recycle is the only way forward. Hence, the under the present situation, the success of any business is dependent on its sustainable development factor. In other words resource conservation protecting the environment is the need of the hour. Manufacturers and producers have to give importance to the sustainability factor while supplying products and services.

One such company that is trying its best to follow eco-friendly model is Carpets Inter. The company that originally started doing business in the 1950s is today recycling plastic to make carpets. From manufacturing all kinds of carpets in 1974 to relocating to Thailand in 2004 and getting acquired in 2017, the company is known for its customisation and innovation.

Richard Morris, global business director, Carpets Inter tells you that since their factory in the green field zone, they have had to be very environmentally conscious from the very beginning.

"Back in the 1990s also, we had adopted measures that were environment friendly. By the 2000s we

had started suing recycled material to manufacture our carpets. Over the years, recycling and sustainability has been a necessity because of the land where we are which has today become a residential area. This means that the factory has to be self-contained and that no waste goes into the landfill. We recycle our water through catchment area. All the wastage is also treated," Morris says.

The shift to sustainable manufacturing has not been as easy task. To run initiative one has to run for long period of time and learn along the way, Morris tells you.

"When it comes to conformity, there is a lot of investment. We are in a commodity-driven market. This means that we have had to keep the prices low. What has happened over the years is that several leading brands have raised their benchmark when it comes to conformity. Ten years back carbon foot print was not a term that was being used. It was all about recycle and reuse. This means that one has to look for recycling material and make a product.

As we started recycling plastic bottles to make carpets, the question staring at us was what happens to the carpets once they are past their shelf life? There is a challenge here. Thailand doesn't allow entry of refuse from another country. We have therefore had to look for ways to repurpose and recycle the product in the countries where we export. The good part is that within the country, we have been able to take back not only our product but our competitors and recycle it to make clean energy," Morris explains.

To manufacture one square metre of carpet, the company uses 55 reused 500 ml plastic bottles. These are either sources from within Thailand or China. To make plas-



tic carpets, the used plastic bottles are melted in a machine. It is then reverted into the pellet form. From the pellets, thin strands like a fishing line is made which is then cut up. This is then needle-punched into a fine felt. This is then lamented onto the carpets forming the base. The recycle plastic is the entire packing system that forms the entire layer under the modular carpet.

"What we using to manufacture the carpet itself are carbon-neutral nylons. We don't manufacture this nylon but source it from very large companies that are themselves recycling plastic like fishing nets. They use the similar process that we do and make filament and spin it into carbon-neutral fibres," Morris tells you.

There are several benefits of

using such carpets. First, they increase the life of the product. Usually, modular carpets come with hard packing because it is cheaper to use it. Today, the idea is to look for packing made from recycled material. The tile is going to be impacted by the foot fall and whatever is placed on top of the modular carpet. But if there is a cushioning, the underfoot impact is

absorbed by what is underneath increasing the longevity. The cushion packing has other advantages as well. There is cost-saving benefits — from the installation firm to the investor to the manufacturer. There is benefit at the users' end too.

Second, the felt acts as a thermal barrier. It can withstand very high to low temperatures. In other words, if you live in a hot region it

will help to keep the room cooler reducing depending on the air conditioning. In cold climate, it prevents the heat from escaping keeping the room warm. Not only does it reduce the electricity bill but one is also reducing carbon foot print.

The felt also takes care of the accoustics. There are several organisations that are looking to reduce noise pollution. The eco-soft material acts as an accoutic barrier. It will increase the noise reduction by 150 per cent.

"A typical tile is 50x50 cm or 25cmx1m tiles. But we can customise it and manufacture up to 2 metre sq tiles that are 20 cm long. They are rolls of modular tiles. Hence there are several benfits of using ourproduct," Morris says.

In India, the company has its presence is in Gurugram. The focus here is to cater to the hotel and hospitality industry and MNCs. The good part is that the prices are competitive since there are several companies already in the industry.

"While we are aware that our product is expensive, the advantages that our modular carpet has outweigh the slight increase in the price. Our carpets are also aesthetically pleasing and colourful which gives us an edge. Till now we have sold carpets that would fit 25-30 buildings from top to bottom and we are growing steadily in the market," Morris says.

For now, the company is concentrating only on the commercial side of business in India. "Unfortunately, there is no demand at the retail level in the country. This is because of the saturation and hand-knotted carpets have been in the country for centuring. In the retail sector, the company is working through distributors in countries like Australia.

## ‘WE ARE DOING A LOT BUT UNFORTUNATELY NOT ENOUGH’

SUPRIYA RAMESH speaks with STEFANO FUNARI, an upcycling entrepreneur about climate change, how much we are doing about it and his project where women from Mumbai slums are employed to make products

What exactly is climate change? What is causing it? How is it affecting the planet right now? Climate change refers to all the long-term changes in our climate, including Earth's rising surface temperature, sea level rise, extreme weather, and ocean acidification. The cause of current climate change is largely human activity like burning fossil fuels, natural gas, oil, and coal. Burning these materials releases greenhouse gases into Earth's atmosphere.

Global warming and climate change are two terms used interchangeably in colloquial language but global warming, which refers to the Earth's rising surface temperature, is just one of the manifestations of climate change.

Climate change is posing a serious threat to human health and putting our lives at risk. The effects of climate change cause less predictable weather patterns and increase the number of natural disasters that occur worldwide, such as hurricanes and wildfires. And it goes beyond that by altering where species live, how they interact, and the timing of biological events, which could fundamentally transform current ecosystems.

While everyone around the world feels the effects of climate change, the most vulnerable are people living in the poorest conditions. "We see this every day in Mumbai, a city which is becoming warmer and facing extreme and unpredictable rainfall," Stefano Funari, an upcycling entrepreneur tells us.

What are we doing about it? "My opinion is that we are doing a lot but unfortunately not enough. This is a challenge of epochal proportions that calls for extraordinary measures from all the major stakeholders, Governments and large corporations in the first place. The long term risk of climate change is bigger than the one posed by COVID-19 but the resources invested are by far not at the same level. Financial interests are still absolutely dictating the agenda and we are running out of time," he adds.

10 years ago, Funari left his job in Europe and moved across the world to the slums of Mumbai. Because he needed purpose. Working in technology was just not cutting it for him. He never looked back and understood from the very beginning that the



only way not to be constantly lost in translation was to rely on a trusted group of local people. "The cultural gap is big and I need a constant dialogue with friends, partners and colleagues to read the situations and make my decisions. My biggest challenge has probably been to create this trusted group," says Funari.

Funari is an upcycling entrepreneur. His 'I was a Sari' project is a Mumbai-meets-Milan fashion label, making bold accessories and ready to wear from pre-loved Indian saris. They work with women from marginalised communities so that they can carve out a better future for themselves. Women and men all over the world are now dressed in saris. Saris in different avatars-re-imagined as loungewear, shoes and bags. "Inspired by the work of Bangladeshi Nobel Laureate and the founder of Grameen Bank, Prof. Yunus, I was a Sari, is implementing a sustainable, eco-friendly model which focuses on a 'triple bottom line' - constantly analysing its social, environmental and financial impact and viability, and understanding the relationship each has with the others," Funari explains.

Upcycling, also known as creative reuse, is the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, useless, or unwanted products into new materials or products perceived to be of greater quality, such as artistic value or environmental value.

"Upcycling can be compared to the Japanese technique of Wabi Sabi - turning something discarded into something valuable and desirable," says Funari. He says that through such a process their goal is to reduce the impact on our planet. But in their case they have a second important goal too. In fact, they employ women from Mumbai slums to make products. And what's beautiful is that these women get upcycled themselves as they transform their lives in so many ways. They start off as unskilled and unemployed and become talented artisans, the designers of their own future.

Talking about the environmental benefits of upcycling, Funari tells us, "In the textile field upcycling replaces the need to produce new fabric by using textile products that already exist. So we save the water and land used for growing materials like cotton. And

we save oil and water used for making synthetic fibres like polyester. All this means a huge reduction in our carbon emissions."

To create desirable and soulful products that empower people and respect our planet, and a platform for sustainable fashion brands that share social and environmental values, Funari set up a social business called 2nd Innings Handicrafts. "The very reason we exist is to empower women from not so privileged backgrounds to become the architects of their future. Business becomes more beautiful when women start thriving," says Funari.

He says that there is a beautiful transformation that takes place — from beneficiaries, these women become artisans as they learn the skill and start transforming saris into contemporary fashion pieces. They work with pre-loved or post-consumer waste and not virgin materials, which helps us reduce our carbon footprint and save gallons of water. Their aim is to work with more women so that they can make a considerable social impact, while they continue to create beautiful products that minimise waste.







## Workers' paradise? Portugal's new teleworking law takes flak

Portugal's new law on working from home makes the European Union country sound like a workers' paradise. Companies can't attempt to contact their staff outside working hours. They must help staff pay for their home gas, electric and internet bills. Bosses are forbidden from using digital software to track what

their teleworkers are doing. There's just one problem: the law might not work. Critics say the new rules are half-baked, short on detail and unfeasible. And they may even backfire by making companies reluctant to allow working from home at all. "The law is badly written and doesn't meet anybody's needs,"

says José Pedro Anacoreta, an employment attorney at PLMJ, one of Portugal's main law firms. "It's not good for anyone. ... It doesn't make any sense." In many places around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a prior trend toward the digitalization of work and more flexible work arrange-

ments. Amid such a sudden and massive shift in the employment landscape, governments are scrambling to accommodate working from home in their employment laws. Those efforts are largely still in their infancy. Many Europeans have stopped going into the

office regularly since March last year to help curb the spread of COVID-19. In Europe, unlike in the United States, worker protections are widely regarded as cherished entitlements. Laying off a staff member, for instance, can entail substantial severance pay.

# Top UK scientist says new Covid variant Omicron 'NOT A DISASTER'

The new potentially highly-transmissible variant of COVID-19, named Omicron by the WHO, is not a disaster as vaccines are still likely to protect against the serious disease from it, a UK scientist, who advises the govern-

ment, said on Saturday. Professor Calum Semple, a microbiologist from the UK government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), struck a note of caution on the worldwide headlines around the new B.1.1.529 variant detected in South Africa. The UK imposed travel restrictions on six southern

African countries - South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe and Namibia - as health authorities said that they are investigating the "most significant variant" which could be potentially more infectious and vaccine-resistant. "This is not a disaster, and the headlines from some of my colleagues saying 'this is horrendous' I think are hugely over-

stating the situation," Professor Semple told the BBC. "Immunity from vaccination is still likely to protect you from severe disease. You might get a snuffle or a headache or a filthy cold but your chance of coming into hospital, or intensive care or sadly dying are greatly diminished by the vaccine and still will be going into the future," he said.

The new Omicron variant was first reported to the World Health Organisation (WHO) from South Africa on Wednesday and has also been identified in Botswana, Belgium, Hong Kong and Israel.

Countries around the world are currently racing to introduce travel bans and restrictions on southern African countries in an effort to contain Omicron's spread.

Semple said that while it may not be possible to stop the variant coming to the UK, it is still important to delay its arrival.

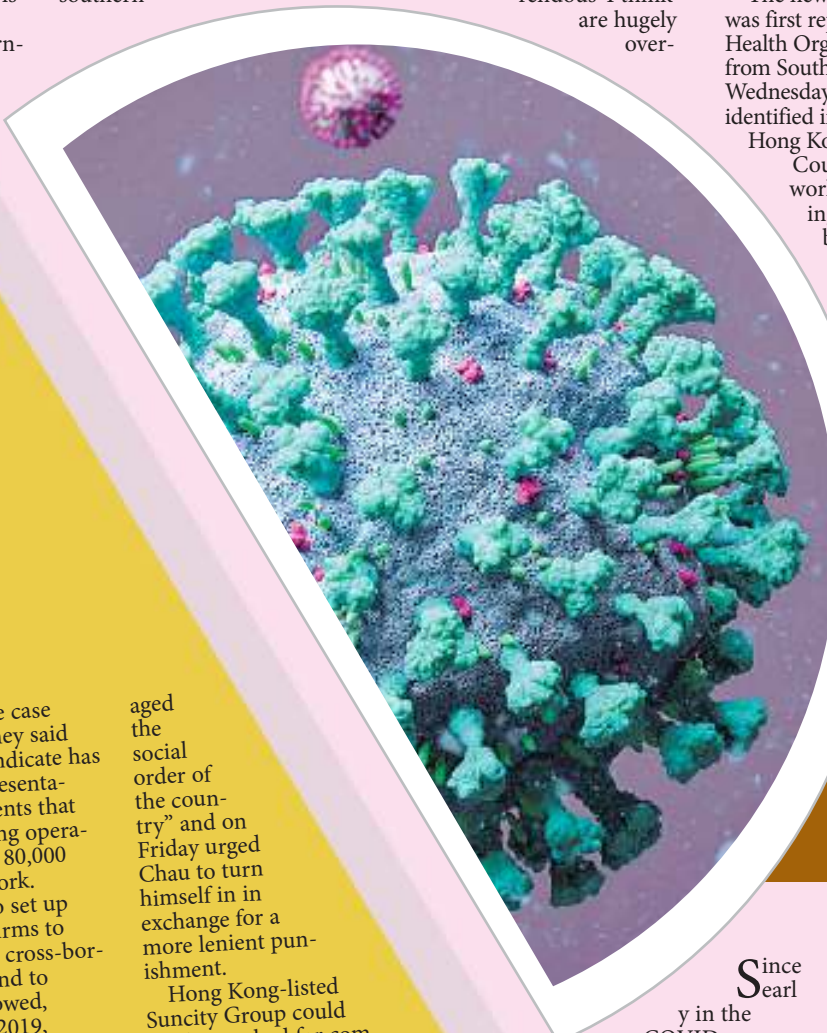
"If you can slow the virus coming into your country, it gives you more time for your booster campaign to get ahead of it. It also gives the scientists longer to understand more about the virus in case there is anything we really should be worrying about," he said.

Meanwhile, a vaccine expert believes it is "extremely unlikely" that the new Omicron variant will trigger a major new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK.

Professor Andrew Pollard, the director of the Oxford Vaccine Group, said it is "too early" to be certain whether the new variant will be able to evade current vaccinations, something unlikely to be known for up to three weeks.

But he said that most of the mutations in Omicron are in the same parts of the spike protein as those in the other variants that have emerged.

"At least from a speculative point of view, we have some optimism that the vaccine should still work against a new variant for serious disease, but really we need to wait several weeks to have that confirmed. It's extremely unlikely that a reboot of a pandemic in a vaccinated population like we saw last year is going to happen," said Professor Pollard.



## The hunt for coronavirus variants: How the new one was found and what we know so far

SARS-CoV-2 variant has been identified, known as B.1.1.529.

To help us understand more, The Conversation Africa's Ozayr Patel asked scientists to share what they know.

What's the science behind the search?

Hunting for variants requires a concerted effort. South Africa and the UK were the first big countries to implement nationwide genomic surveillance efforts for SARS-CoV-2 as early as April 2020.

Variant hunting, as exciting as that sounds, is performed through whole genome sequencing of samples that have tested positive for the virus.

This process involves checking every sequence obtained for

differences compared to what we know is circulating in South Africa and the world.

When we see multiple differences, this immediately raises a red flag and we investigate further to confirm what we've noticed.

Fortunately South Africa is well set up for this.

This is thanks to a central repository of public sector laboratory results at the National Health Laboratory Service, (NGS-SA), good linkages to private laboratories, the Provincial Health Data Centre of the Western Cape Province, and state-of-the-art modelling expertise.

In addition, South Africa has several laboratories that can grow and study the actual virus and discover how far antibodies, formed in response to vaccination or previous infection, are able to neutralise the new virus.

subjects as an Ingmar Bergman movie ('A Little Night Music'), the opening of Japan to the West ('Pacific Overtures'), French painter Georges Seurat ('Sunday in the Park With George'), Grimm's fairy tales ('Into the Woods') and even the killers of American presidents ('Assassins'), among others.

## Afghanistan's key Taliban leaders studied at Pak madrassa



## Towering musical theatre master Stephen Sondheim dies at 91

Stephen Sondheim, the songwriter who reshaped the American musical theatre in the second half of the 20th century with his intelligent, intricately rhymed lyrics, his use of evocative melodies and his willingness to tackle unusual subjects, has died. He was 91. Sondheim's death was announced by Rick Miramonte, president of DKC/O&M. Sondheim's Texas-based attorney, Rick Pappas, told The New York Times the composer died

Friday at his home in Roxbury, Connecticut. Sondheim influenced several generations of theatre songwriters, particularly with such landmark musicals as 'Company', 'Follies' and 'Sweeney Todd', which are considered among his best work. His most famous ballad, 'Send in the Clowns', has been recorded hundreds of times, including by Frank Sinatra and Judy Collins. The artist refused to repeat himself, finding inspiration for his shows in such diverse

The seminary in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has had an outside effect in Afghanistan. The seminary's alumni founded the Taliban movement and ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s.

The school has argued that the Taliban should be given the chance to show they have moved beyond their bloody ways since they first ruled Afghanistan two decades ago, The New York Times reported on Friday.

"The world has seen their capabilities to run the country through their victories on both the diplomatic front and on the battlefield," Rashidul Haq Sami, the seminary's vice-chancellor, told the NYT.

Seminary's late chancellor Samiul Haq, who was murdered at his residence in Islamabad in 2018 and was Sami's father, was known as the "father of the Taliban."

## Families stuck in SA after sudden decision to ban flights

Hundreds of foreigners on family or business trips in South Africa desperately tried to get back home on the last available flights as several nations imposed restrictions on travellers due to the discovery of the new Omicron variant of COVID-19 in this country. The UK announced on Thursday that all flights to and from South Africa and five neighbouring countries would be banned from Friday noon following an announcement that the new Omicron variant of COVID-19 had been detected in South Africa. Many other countries followed suit, most of them indicating that only their own citizens would

be allowed back, subject to a quarantine period. In New Delhi, the central government asked all states and union territories to conduct rigorous screening and testing of all international travellers coming from or transiting through South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana, where a new variant has been detected. According to the government's decision on Friday, airlines will be allowed to operate 50 per cent of their pre-COVID scheduled passenger flights between India and South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana from December 15. India does not have an air bubble arrangement -- which allows special

passenger flights between two countries amid COVID-related restrictions -- with South Africa, Hong Kong and Botswana. Also, these three countries are classified under the 'at-risk' category by India's ministry of health.



## Macao detains Suncity boss over illegal gambling

Macao police on Saturday detained the head of Macao's biggest junket organiser and others after Chinese authorities issued an arrest warrant for them over accusations that they ran an illegal cross-border gambling syndicate.

The arrests in the gambling enclave came after prosecutors in Wenzhou, in the eastern province of Zhejiang, on Friday accused Suncity Group CEO Alvin

Chau and another person, Zhang Ningning, of leading cross-border gambling operations and setting up casinos across China.

Casinos and most forms of gambling are illegal in mainland China, and Macao is the only Chinese city allowed to operate a casino. Mainland visitors are able to travel to Macao to gamble but are required to obtain a visa.

"Based on evidence obtained from previous criminal investigations, the (Macao) police brought the criminal suspect Chau and other persons involved back to the police station for investigation in accordance with the law this morning," Macao's government said in a statement on Saturday.

Authorities said they had

been investigating the case since July last year. They said that the gambling syndicate has 199 shareholder representatives, over 12,000 agents that promoted its gambling operations and more than 80,000 gamblers in its network.

The syndicate also set up asset management firms to assist gamblers with cross-border fund transfers and to recover debts they owed, authorities said. In 2019, China's official Xinhua news agency accused Suncity of targeting mainland gamblers with online gambling and proxy-betting operations based in Cambodia and the Philippines. Suncity denied the allegations.

Authorities said the syndicate "severely damaged

aged the social order of the country" and on Friday urged Chau to turn himself in in exchange for a more lenient punishment.

Hong Kong-listed Suncity Group could not be reached for comment by phone and did not immediately reply to email inquiries.



## Could we really deflect an asteroid heading for Earth?

A NASA spacecraft the size of a golf cart has been directed to smash into an asteroid, with the intention of knocking it slightly off course.

The test aims to demonstrate our technological readiness in case an actual asteroid threat is detected in the future.

The Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) lifted off aboard a SpaceX rocket from California on November 23, and will arrive at the target asteroid system in September, next year.

The mission will travel to the asteroid Didymos, a member of the Amor group of asteroids. Every 12 hours Didymos is orbited by a mini-moon, or "moonlet", Dimorphos.

This smaller half of the pair will be DART's target.

Are we facing an extinction threat from asteroids?

We've all seen disaster movies in which an asteroid hits Earth, creating an extinction event similar to the one that killed off the dinosaurs millions of years ago. Could that happen now?

Well, Earth is actually bombarded frequently by small asteroids, ranging from 1-20 metres in diameter.

Almost all asteroids of this size disintegrate in the atmosphere and are usually harmless.

There is an inverse relationship between the size of these object and the frequency of impact events. This means we get hit much more frequently by small objects than larger ones -- simply because there are many more smaller objects in space.

Asteroids with a 1km diameter strike Earth every 500,000 years, on average.

The most "recent" impact of this size is thought to have formed the Tenoumer impact crater in Mauritania, 20,000 years ago. Asteroids with an approximate 5km diameter impact Earth about once every 20 million years.

