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In brief

Staying at isolation facility not mandatory for Covid +ve foreigners

Travellers from any country arriving in India, who test Covid positive, will not mandatorily be managed at an isolation facility from Saturday, but have to quarantine themselves at home according to protocols, authorities said. In its revised 'Guidelines for International Arrivals' released on Thursday, the government said foreign arrivals, who test positive, will still have to undergo home quarantine for seven days even after they test negative, and undertake RT-PCR test on the eighth day of arrival in India. The revised guidelines came into effect from Saturday. Earlier the norm was that travellers coming from any country, including those considered 'at-risk', would be managed at an isolation facility and treated according to the standard protocols, the government said.

R-Day: Mahatma Gandhi's favourite 'Abide With Me' hymn dropped

One of Mahatma Gandhi's favourite Christian hymns 'Abide With Me' has been dropped from this year's Beating Retreat ceremony on January 29, according to a brochure released by the Indian Army on Saturday. 'Abide With Me', written by Scottish Anglican poet and hymnologist Henry Francis Lyte in 1847, has been part of the Beating Retreat ceremony since 1950. This year's ceremony will conclude with 'Sare Jahan Se Acha', the brochure stated. The Beating Retreat used to end with the 'Abide With Me' hymn. The brochure also listed 26 tunes that will be played at this year's ceremony at Vijay Chowk. The 26 tunes that will be played at this year's ceremony include 'Hey Kanchha', 'Channa Bilauri', 'Jai Janam Bhumi', 'Nritya Sarita', 'Vijay Josh', 'Kesaria Banna', 'Veer Siachen', 'Hathroi', 'Vijay Ghosh', 'Ladaakoo', 'Swadeshi', 'Amar Chhattran', 'Golden Arrows' and 'Swarn Jayanti', according to the brochure.

'IPL will start in last week of March, owners want matches in India'

The BCCI is set to conduct the 2022 IPL from last week of March to end of May and efforts would be made to host the lucrative event in India as per the wishes of team owners, Board secretary Jay Shah said on Saturday. If sources are to be believed, the tentative start date is March 27. "I am delighted to confirm that the 15th season of the IPL will start in the last week of March and will run until May end. A majority of the team owners expressed their wish that the tournament be held in India," Shah was quoted as saying in a press note issued by the BCCI. He also made it clear that the board's first preference is to hold the event in India. "The BCCI was always keen on staging the 2022 edition that will see two new teams – Ahmedabad and Lucknow – in India. I can tell you that we will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that IPL stays in India," Shah said.

Many corona suspects fight shy of tests, opt for self-medication

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

Many coronavirus suspects are not showing interest in taking coronavirus detection tests during the current third wave. Many people including political leaders prefer to self-medicate instead of approaching doctors. Some are moving freely in society without undergoing quarantine or approaching hospitals.

Many people are going to medical shops and purchasing corona medicine even if they get a common cold, cough and fever without undergoing any tests.

People are purchasing medicines like Azithromycin, Zincton/Polybion, Omage, Doxycycline, Montek LC, and Limcee tablets directly from nearby medical shops.

Some are going by the opinions of corona-affected persons to purchase medicines. Some others are going to medical shops and asking to give medicines for corona.

People are purchasing medicines like Azithromycin, Zincton/Polybion, Omage, Doxycycline, Montek LC, and Limcee tablets directly from nearby medical shops.



One drug shop owner in Vidyanagar said that it has become a regular for them and that they are giving medicines for corona without prescriptions.

Ramesh from Uppal said that he has been using corona medicine as he has been suffering from fever, cough and cold for the last two days. He said that he didn't go for the test as he has no severe problems.

Many political leaders too irrespective of party affiliations are following the common man's approach regarding corona treatment.

One Congress leader told The Pioneer that he is taking corona medicine without undergoing a test as he developed corona symptoms.

"I am afraid to go for the corona test as I may contract corona if I am not having corona as many corona affected people come for tests. During the second wave I contracted corona that way," he said.

No early Assembly elections in TS, says Minister Jagadish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dismissing speculations, Energy Minister G. Jagadish Reddy said that there is no chance for early Assembly elections in Telangana.

He said that the Congress leader N. Uttam Kumar Reddy's dreams of an early election will not come true. Uttam is dreaming about the possibility of early elections in the state, he added.

Jagadish said that the TRS will win all the 12 Assembly segments in erstwhile Nalgonda district in the next elections.

"The Congress doesn't exist in Nalgonda and people know that they are responsible for fluorosis and the drought-like situation



there," Jagadish said.

He said that while the Congress could not even get water from the Musi River near the district, the TRS government supplied even Godavari water to the district.

Dalit Bandhu to be implemented throughout Telangana state

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

Taking the sting out of the Opposition criticism that the government put the Dalit Bandhu scheme on the backburner after the Huzurabad by-election, the government has decided to implement the scheme in all the 118 constituencies by March end. Social Welfare

Minister Koppula Eshwar and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar held a video conference on Saturday with Collectors as per Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's instructions to speed up the implementation of the Dalit Bandhu scheme.

KCR had earlier announced that apart from pilot projects in Huzurabad, Vasalamarri and four other mandals in the State, the

Govt sets up committee for improving air quality **Page: 3**

Govt okays promotions for IAS officers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State government has issued orders granting promotions to several IAS officers.

Shailaja Ramaiyer, Ahmad Nadeem, N. Sridhar and M. Veerabrahmaiah have been promoted to the Above Super Time Scale (Level 15 in the pay matrix) and have been retained in the same posts and redesignated as Principal Secretaries. These IAS officers belong to the 1997 batch.

IAS officers D. Ronald Ross, B. Bharathi Naik, B. Vijendra, and K. Surendra Mohan (2006 batch) have



been promoted to Super Time Scale.

Sarfraz Ahmad, Dr N. Satyanarayana, S. Arvinder Singh and M. Prashanti (2009 batch)

It is raining promotions in Telangana as 25 IAS officers have been promoted to newer scales. These include F04 1997 batch IAS officers, four 2006 batch, four 2009, Nine 2013 batch, One 2017 batch and seven 2018 batch IAS officers.

have been promoted to Selection Grade.

IAS officers K. Shashanka, Shruti Ojha, Ch. Shivalingaiah, V. Venkateswarulu, M. Hanumantha Rao, D. Amoy Kumar, K. Hymavathi and M. Haritha have been promoted to Junior Administrative Grade scale.

Left may back Cong, big setback to Federal Front, TRS

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

In a big setback to the idea of a Federal Front at the national level and to the TRS at the state level, the Left is likely to sail with the Congress.

The statement of CPM State secretary Tammineni Veerabhadram indicates that the Left is not ready to break ties with the Congress at the national level.

Veerabhadram said that anti-BJP parties must join hands with the Congress and that only the Congress can fight the BJP at the national level.

It may be recalled that a few days ago the national leaders of Left parties including Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan met Chief

Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao at Pragati Bhavan.

It was only a courtesy call but that meeting triggered speculations that the Left may have an

alliance with the Left. Keeping this in view KCR held discussions with top leaders of the Left.

At the national level, the Left par-



alliance with the TRS to fight the BJP in the next Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

While the BJP looks like gaining strength the TRS is planning to



ties are sailing with the Congress during the Lok Sabha elections to fight the BJP. The Left strongly feels that the Congress is the only national party that can fight the BJP

LS Privileges panel serves notices to CS, DGP, others

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Lok Sabha Parliamentary Privileges Committee has served notices to Telangana Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, Home Department Principal Secretary Ravi Guptha, DGP M. Mahender Reddy, Karimnagar CP V. Sathyanarayana and others in connection with the arrest of BJP leader and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar when he sought to stage a 'Jagan deeksha' at his MP office in Karimnagar on January 2 demanding that the TS government should amend GO No: 317 immediately.

Taking a serious note of the police action against Sanjay, Privileges Committee Chairman



Sunil Kumar Singh said that the officials would have to appear before the Committee on February 3.

The Privileges Committee took the decision after examining pieces of evidence, including video clippings, showing how the police arrested Sanjay after cutting the grill of his MP office using gas cutters. The evidence was submitted by Sanjay.

Sanjay lodged a complaint and appeared before the 15-member Privileges Committee on January 21 and explained how the TS Police had behaved towards him although he is an MP.



KTR asks police to probe alleged land grab by AIG Hospital

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

KTR has asked the police to look into the alleged land encroachment by AIG Hospital. A complaint regarding this was filed via Twitter.

In a tweet activist Khalida Praveen said, "These children lost their father to covid. An illegal encroachment is taking place by AIG Hospital in Gachibowli. They are running pillar to post for justice. Unheard voices are oppressed. Please help (sic)."

As per the FIR, the complainant, Mohammed Edris,



KRMB seeks Yasangi indent from AP, TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A three-member committee of the Krishna River Management Board will meet next week to discuss the drinking water and irrigation requirements of the two Telugu States.

The Board has sent letters to the Engineers-in-Chief of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh requesting

them to give their indents mentioning water required for drinking purpose and irrigation during the Yasangi season. It wanted the States to spell out their Krishna water requirements by January 24. Upon receipt of indents from both the States, the Board would finalise the dates for further meetings.

EC extends ban on physical rallies, roadshows till January 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Saturday extended the ban on physical rallies and roadshows till January 31, but gave relaxation for physical public meetings of parties or contesting candidates for phase 1 from January 28 and for phase 2 from February 1.

The commission has also enhanced the limit of people allowed for door-to-door campaign.

Instead of five, now 10 people, excluding security personnel, will be allowed for door-to-door campaigns.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham:
Pausa, Krishna Paksha
Tithi : Pandranti, Jan 22 09:14 AM to Jan 23 09:12 AM
Sreelathi, Jan 23 09:12 AM to Jan 24 09:44 AM
Nakshatram : Uthra Phalguni, Jan 22 10:38 AM to Jan 23 11:09 AM
AM Haba, Jan 23 11:09 AM to Jan 24 11:15 AM
Rahukalam : 4:39 PM to 6:02 PM
Yamagandam : 12:28 PM to 1:51 PM
Varjyam : 07:35 PM to 09:11 PM
Gulika : 3:15 PM to 4:39 PM
Amritakalam : 05:13 AM to 06:50 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham : 12:05 PM to 12:50 PM
HYDRABAD WEATHER
Forecast: SUNNY
Temp: 31°C
Humidity: 41%
Sunrise: 6:53 AM
Sunset: 6:01 PM
Updated JANUARY 22, 2021 5:00 PM

KTR asks police to probe alleged land grab...

Continued from page 1

alleges that they suspect one Tanveer Khaleel is illegally occupying the land in Survey Number 27 of Gachibowli village.

Responding to this, KTR asked Cyberabad CP Stephen Ravindra to look into the issue.

"The case is being investigated. We will pursue and finalise it at the earliest based on evidence," Madhapur Police said.

Responding to the issue AIG said, "This is an issue between two individuals. The AIG has nothing to do with it. Secondly, the narratives are not the ones that should be believed. One has to go by facts.

The FIR that has been attached to the tweet clearly shows that the issue is between some individuals. These people are dragging in prominent companies to get mileage and public attention."

Republic Day parade to have 25 tableaux, 16 marching contingents,

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

This year's Republic Day parade will have 16 marching contingents, 17 military bands and 25 tableaux of various states, departments and armed forces, the Indian Army said in a statement on Saturday.

The Army will be represented by a mounted column of cavalry, 14 mechanised columns, six marching contingents and a flypast by advanced light helicopters of its aviation wing at the Republic Day parade-2022 (RDP-2022), it said.

The mechanised columns of the Army will show one PT-76 tank, one Centurion tank, two MBT Arjun MK-I tanks, one OT-62 TOPAS armoured personnel carrier, one BMP-I infantry fighting vehicle and two BMP-II infantry fighting vehicles, it stated.

One 75/24 Pack howitzer, two Dhanush howitzers, one PMS bridge-laying system, two Sarvatra bridge-laying systems, one HT-16 electronic warfare system, two Taran Shakti elec-



File photo

tronic warfare systems, one Tiger Cat missile system and two Akash missile systems will also be part of the mechanised columns at RDP-22.

PT-76, Centurion tank, OT-62 and 75/24 Pack howitzer played a major role in the 1971 Indo-Pak war in which India defeated Pakistan. The war led to the creation of Bangladesh.

The six marching contin-

gents of the Indian Army at RDP-2022 will be of Rajput Regiment, Assam Regiment, Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, Sikh Light Infantry, Army Ordnance Corps Regiment and Parachute Regiment, according to the statement.

One marching contingent each of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy will also

participate in RDP-2022, the statement said.

From the central paramilitary forces, five marching contingents of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Police Force (CISF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Border Security Force (BSF) will participate in RDP-2022, it stated.

‘Atmosphere of violence, hatred targeting one group’

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Saturday said an atmosphere of violence and hatred was being fostered in the country to target a section of society.

The Rajya Sabha MP, while speaking at a discussion on 'Journalism and Burning Issue' organised by Central India Press Club here, also claimed politicians should have tolerance and thick skins in a democracy, as it helped them to scale new heights.

"Many a times an instance is given that when Partition was taking place Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru went in the midst of people and an old woman grabbed him by his collar and asked what she had got out of Independence. Nehruji replied what you have got is that you had held the prime minister by his collar. This democracy is missing nowadays," he said.

Taking a swipe at the ruling dispensation, without taking names, and the prevailing times, Singh said. "Leave aside

the collar, even if you say something from far off, people get upset. Sedition cases can be registered because you have become a threat to the nation."

He said stand up comedians were now being seen as dangers to the nation, apparently a reference to some of them getting booked in the recent past, and asked how democracy would continue to be nurtured if politicians didn't have the strength to withstand criticism.

"An atmosphere of violence and hatred targeting a particular group is fascism's game plan. Identify an enemy and once your enemy is identified then declare him as anti-national and then anti-nationalism becomes nationalism of the day," he said.

He said branding one section as anti-national and then making the fight against them a symbol of nationalism can't be defined as democracy but dictatorship and fascism.

"The burning issues are what is nationalism and anti-nationalism, religion. Should

religion be used in politics? Isn't the use of religion as a weapon unlawful? These are burning issues. Can't we criticize? Critics can't be anti-national. Stand up comedians can't be anti-national," he observed.

Singh said tolerance and acceptance have been the tenets of Indian society, culture and Sanatan Dharma preached respect for all religions, and this aspect must never be forgotten, adding that the Constitution allowed all to put forth their views.

He said the National Security Act, which was used by the British to put down the Congress-led Independence struggle, was now being invoked even for "petty things" and it was unfortunate laws like NSA and sedition could not be withdrawn even after the country got freedom.

Stressing that the country's Constitutional statutory institutions were getting affected, Singh said impartial journalism had a major role to play if democracy was to remain intact.

Dalit Bandhu to be implemented...

Continued from page 1

the scheme should be grounded 100 per cent and steps should be taken to ensure that all the 100 selected beneficiaries in each constituency would start their units.

The government has allocated Rs 1,200 crore for the scheme in the current fiscal, and Rs 100 crore has already been released.

The list of beneficiaries should be finalised as per the advice of local MLAs and it should get the approval of district in-charge Ministers, he said.

Under the scheme, every beneficiary would be given a

grant of Rs 10 lakh without any bank linkage to set up a business unit as decided by the beneficiary based on his aptitude and experience. An amount of Rs 10,000 should be set aside from the Rs 10 lakh for the Dalit Bandhu Protection Fund.

The government has so far released Rs 100 crore out of the Rs 1,200 crore sanctioned for implementing the scheme in all constituencies and it would release the remaining amount in phases before March-end.

The Dalit Bandhu scheme is already under implementation in Vasalamarri and Huzurabad in saturation mode.

It may be mentioned that Vasalamarri adopted by the Chief Minister was the place where KCR announced the scheme while the formal announcement of the pilot project was made in Huzurabad ahead of the by-election.

Eshwar said that subsequently the government also started implementing Dalit Bandhu in the Chintakani mandal of Madhra constituency in Khammam, the Tirumalagiri mandal in Suryapeta, the Charagonda mandal in Nagarkurnool and the Nizamsagar mandal in Kamareddy district.

The four mandals in four corners of the State were selected for implementing the scheme to understand the requirements of Dalits in different areas and fine-tune the scheme.

On Friday, Minister Gangula Kamalakara distributed the units selected by the beneficiaries themselves in Karimnagar.

The video conference addressed by the Minister was attended by SC Corporation Chairman Srinivas, the Special Chief Secretary of Finance, Ramakrishna Rao, the Secretary of SC Development, Rahul Bojja, and the SC Corporation MD, Karunakar.

TPCC to launch week-long Land Protection Movement

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TS government should have corrected land records after conducting a land survey, the TPCC's Dharani Committee has said. But the government acted without thinking about consequences, the panel said.

The TPCC Dharani Committee's meeting was held on Saturday at the Gandhi Bhavan with TPCC chief Revanth Reddy in attendance.

Later, speaking to the media, panel member and AICC official spokesperson Dasoju Sravan said that lakhs of farmers were roaming around MRO offices like beggars carrying land records.

He said that Dharani has

been showing that ex-servicemen are not the owners of the land allotted to them. Several survey numbers were missed and lost in mutation, he said, making it clear that the Congress will launch a week-long Land Protection Movement supporting the victims of Dharani.

He said the Congress will accept complaints from farmers facing land issues at mandal offices. He said that they will bring the issues to the notice of the state and Central governments.

He alleged that the government had pulled assigned lands given to SCs and STs in the name of Dharani portal. He said that nobody knows about the data security of Dharani

portal. TPCC official spokesperson Addanki Dayakar alleged that the government was threatening farmers.

The TRS government is trying to give lands given by Congress governments to farmers to investors. He said that the Congress will stand by the victims of Dharani portal.

Another spokesperson Bellaiah Naik alleged that the government had kept assigned lands and lands given to ex-servicemen in the black list.

He alleged that the Telangana real estate mafia is running the state. Prices of lands have increased in such a manner that even the middle class is unable to purchase a house, he added.

LS Privileges panel...

Continued from page 1

He also stated that the TS High Court had also found fault with the police excesses and his arrest.

Sanjay also reminded that the police had attacked him in the same manner in the past too.

Sanjay mentioned the names of the other police officials like Huzurabad ACP K. Koti Reddy, Jammikunta Police Station Inspector K. Ramchander Rao, Huzurabad Inspector V. Srinivas, Karimnagar C. Srinivas Rao, and Karimnagar Two Town Inspector Ch. Natesh.

The Privileges Committee has issued notices to these police officials too.

Kaleshwaram Irrigation Project Corporation gets 'A' category...

Continued from page 1

Works on the distributor and field channel works are progressing briskly, according to official sources.

The KIPCL headed by Rajat Kumar, Special Chief Secretary, Irrigation, is a public company fully owned by the Telangana government.

The government has issued orders to include the Palamuru Ranga Reddy lift irrigation scheme as an additional mandate of KIPCL.

The Corporation has signed agreements for financing the project so that the project is executed fast.

This includes loans from the commercial bankers' consortium comprising the Union Bank of India consortium, the Punjab National Bank Consortium, the Bank of Baroda and financial institutions like the PFC, REC Ltd and NABARD.

The Corporation has been paying the interest and principal of the loans to banks and financial institutions promptly. The REC Ltd, New Delhi, is one of the lenders of KIPCL and it has given 'A Category' grading based on the financial and other performances.

B. Hari Ram, the Engineer-in-Chief, Gajwel, is the MD of KIPCL. The KIPCL has six directors from irrigation, TS Transco and Finance departments.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹191
Without Skin	₹211
Broiler at Farm	₹102
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	405
VIJAYAWADA	437
VISAKHAPATNAM	435
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.05

Many corona suspects fight shy of tests, opt for self-medication

Continued from page 1

One TRS leader has been moving freely among the public although he has fever, cough and cold. He said that he has been taking corona medicine but didn't go for a test.

"I have no problems and hence I am moving about freely. I think it may be an ordinary fever," he said.

Dr Kashinath said that using corona medicines is not proper without confirming corona infection as the medicines given for corona have side effects. The side effects could be serious in

persons having diabetes, hypertension and other comorbidities.

He said that it is better for people to go for corona tests if they suffer from headaches and body pains immediately. He said that the percentage of transmission is more but the percentage of deaths is very less in the third wave.

Moving freely even after developing symptoms is not civilised behaviour, he said. Moving freely with symptoms is nothing but transmitting corona. Those who transmit the virus may have immunity but others may not have it and will suffer, he added.

No early Assembly elections in TS, says...

Continued from page 1

He said the mandate in the by-elections in Huzurnagar and Nagarjuna Sagar Assembly constituencies clearly indicated the faith of the people in Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

KRMB seeks Yasangi indent...

Continued from page 1

The committee will examine the proposals of both the States and take a decision on the quantum of releases.

Telangana State has already proposed 19 tmc for drinking water and 151 tmc to meet irrigation needs. The Andhra Pradesh is yet to submit its proposals.

As part of the Gazette

notification issued by the Centre, KRMB members are likely to visit RDS, Sunkesula and Jurala between January 26 and 28. The members have already visited Nettekpadu and Srisailem projects.

The Godavari River Management Board Sub-Committee will hold a meeting at Jal Soudha on January 24 and Sub Committee con-

venor and Member-Secretary B P Pandey has written letters to the Telangana and AP governments.

The GRMB is conducting an exercise in accordance with the Gazette notification to take over three projects of Telangana and five projects of AP under its jurisdiction. These issues will be discussed in the sub-committee meeting.

Redeveloped Central Vista will have red granite walkways, stepped gardens

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Red granite walkways spreading 1.10 lakh square metre with greenery all around, 133 light poles along the Rajpath, 4,087 trees, 114 modern signages and stepped gardens will be part of the redeveloped Central Vista in the national capital, officials said on Saturday.

According to the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, there will be a total of 915 light poles, including those in gardens and along the Rajpath between the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the India gate, a move aimed at making the Central Vista more



pedestrian-friendly round the clock.

People witnessing the Republic Day parade this year will get to see major changes along the stretch in terms of the

new look of Rajpath and facilities created under the government's ambitious Central Vista redevelopment project.

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh

Puri, who visited the Central Vista Avenue, said that a full dress rehearsal parade will be held on Sunday.

"In spite of (recent) rains, etc., all the work is complete," Puri told reporters, adding that only 25 trees have been relocated and of them, 22 trees have been shifted to another location and three are here.

Although temporary bridges on water bodies along the Rajpath have been set up as part of the Republic Day parade arrangements, a total of 16 permanent ones will come up.

According to an official document, eight amenity blocks

are being constructed while four pedestrian underpasses will come up in the entire stretch.

It shows that on the developed stretch, 'Tree Avenue' has 4,087 trees, but the earlier number was 3,890. The stretch also sports 422 red granite benches.

Along the Rajpath, the new red granite walkways spreading 1,10,457 sqm have been created, replacing bajri sand that lined the ground earlier.

As many as 987 concrete bollards have been installed on the Rajpath. A total of 1,490 modern-look manholes have replaced the earlier ones.

AP adds 12,926 cases to its Covid-19 tally

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Active cases increased to 73,143 but there was a slight dip in fresh infections as Andhra Pradesh recorded 12,926 new Covid-19 cases in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday, taking the case-load to 21,66,194.

The state had reported 13,212 fresh cases on Friday.

According to the latest bulletin, there were 3,913 recoveries and six deaths during the period.

The total recoveries now is at 20,78,513 and deaths 14,538, it said.

East Godavari became the first district in the state to

register over three lakh coronavirus infections since the onset of the pandemic in March 2020.

With 756 fresh cases, the gross cases in East Godavari reached 3,00,743 on Saturday.

In 24 hours, Visakhapatnam district reported 1,959, Chittoor 1,566, Anantapuramu 1,379, Guntur 1,212 and Prakasam 1,001 new cases.

The remaining seven districts added less than 1,000 new cases each.

Visakhapatnam reported three, SPS Nellore two and East Godavari one Covid-19 death in a day.

Govt sets up committee for improving air quality

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has issued orders on Saturday constituting a State-level Monitoring and Implementation Committee for implementing the 15th Finance Commission recommendations in cities with more than one million population (in the state) for strengthening measures to improve the Air Quality Component in cities like Hyderabad.

The committee has been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. Its members are Special Chief Secretary, Environment, Secretary, State Urban Development Department (UDD), a representative of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the Chairman of the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), the Secretary of the Transport Department, a representative of the State Chamber of Commerce & Industries, the



Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration, and the GHMC Commissioner.

The committee will make a performance assessment of the 15th Finance Commission recommended City/Urban Agglomeration (UA) and the recommended release of grant to the Ministry of Environment

Forest & Climate Change as per the indicators/guidelines after ensuring compliance with the general entry-level conditions given in para-16. The Municipal Administration & Urban Development Department will function as the Secretariat and in coordination with the State Environment Department it will convene meetings of the

Monitoring and Implementing Committee as frequently as required or at least every six months. The Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department will also accept proposals from Million Plus Cities/Urban Agglomerations in the formats prescribed by the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change.

S S Chouhan visits Chinna Jeeyar Swamy ashram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan, along with his family members, met the Chinna Jeeyar Swamy on Saturday at Muchintal Ashram near Shamshabad where Sri Ramanuja Sahasrabdi celebrations will be held from February 2 to 14.

Shivaraj Singh Chouhan has visited the Ramanuja Charya statue in Chinna Jeeyar Swamy Ashram and planted saplings in the premises and offered special pujas to Ravi Chettu in the Ashram. Later, Shivaraj Singh met Chinna Jeeyar Swamy and took his blessings. On the occasion, Jeeyar Swamy explained to Shivaraj Singh about Sri Ramanuja Sahasrabdi celebrations and unveiling of the statue and the related programmes. Jeeyar Swamy invited Shivaraj Singh Chouhan to attend the Ramanuja statue unveiling programme. It may be recalled that the Prime Minister Narendra Modi will unveil the 216 feet Ramanuja statue on February 5th.



Nizam-era stepwell in Bansilalpet on its way to restoration

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nizam-era stepwell in Bansilalpet is well on its way to be restored its former glory as all the trash, silt and debris that buried the well for decades has been removed and freshwater is now flowing.

Work on the well began last year with activists contributing

significantly to the process. Kalpana Ramesh, a water warrior and the founder of The Rainwater Project said about the process. 'It's been a revelation from finding the well and water and travelling to this stage of restoration.' She said that she's happy to move on to the next stage of restoration with condition mapping and

conservation plan for the structure. Special chief secretary Arvind Kumar also shared before and after pictures of the structure.

For the cleaning process, GHMC had appointed workers and earthmovers who cleared tonnes of garbage from the site near Nalla Pochamma temple.

Pranavayu Urban Forest Park ready for opening

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Pranavayu Urban Forest Park along with a Sports park in Gajularamaram and a multipurpose function hall in Bhagat Singh Nagar, Chintal will be inaugurated this week. All these facilities are located in the Kukatpally Zone of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. The Pranavayu Urban Forest Park offers recreational facilities to people of all age groups, said GHMC officials. The sports park in the TSIC area, Gajularamaram ward, was also built by the GHMC at a



cost of Rs.198.50 lakh. The multi-purpose function hall in Bhagat Singh Nagar was built at a cost of Rs 353.65 lakh. In addition to these facilities,

a foundation stone will be laid for road widening works at Bachupally and nala works at Jeedimetla on the same day.

Customs officials seize gold worth Rs 1.36 cr at RGIA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The customs officials seized 2,715,800 grams of gold from a passenger at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Hyderabad on Saturday. According to the officials, the passenger arrived by 6E 025 from Dubai on Friday. The officials found 2,715,800 grams of gold items valued at Rs 1.36 crore from him. Gold chains and gold in paste form were concealed inside hand baggage and check-in baggage.

It may be noted that on January 11, the officials seized 1.48 kg gold valued at Rs 72.80 lakh from three women passengers who arrived from

Dubai. The gold was seized in three separate cases. Two of the passengers concealed the gold inside undergarments while the third had concealed it in rectum. On January 10, a total of 442.6 grams of gold valued at Rs 21.70 lakhs was seized from a passenger who arrived from Dubai. The gold in paste form was concealed inside specially stitched pocket of undergarment. Gold was also seized on January 7 at the Hyderabad airport. Around 330 grams of gold wires with white rhodium coating polish valued at Rs 16.18 lakh was seized from a passenger who arrived from Dubai. The gold was hidden inside the metal frame of his bag.



Raghavender Rao's remand extended

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Kothagudem Second additional judicial magistrate on Saturday extended remand of Kothagudem MLA Vanama Venkateshwara Rao's son Vanama Raghavender Rao for another 14 days. He was arrested in connection with the Naga Ramakrishna's family suicide in Paloncha in Bhadradri Kothagudem district. The police produced Raghavender Rao before the court via video conferencing.

OU's CPGET final seat allotment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Osmania University has released the final phase seat allotment for admissions into various PG, PG diploma and five-year integrated programmes through the TS Common Post Graduate Entrance Tests (CPGET)-2021. The university also released first phase seat allotments for MED and MPED courses.

A total of 52,921 seats were available under the convener quota and 19,191 candidates were admitted in the first and second phases of counselling of CPGET. While

14,355 candidates exercised web options in the final phase of counselling, 6,498 candidates were allotted seats, CPGET-2021 convenor Prof. I Pandu Ranga Reddy said.

Those who have received seat allocations, have to pay the prescribed fee of the course/college online and self-report at respective colleges by submitting the original transfer certificate on or before January 27, he said. The candidate has to submit only the original transfer certificate at the allotted college and produce other original certificates for

verification. The principals of the colleges have been instructed to verify all the original certificates and collect only the original TC.

The CPGET is conducted for admissions into PG, PG diploma and five-year integrated programmes offered by campus, constituent and affiliated colleges of the Osmania University, Kakatiya University, Telangana University, Mahatma Gandhi University, Palamuru University, Satavahana University and Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University-Hyderabad.

PD Act invoked on human trafficker

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

C.P.Rachakonda invoked PD Act against one human trafficking offender for organising prostitution in the limits of Balapur PS of Rachakonda Commissionerate and detained him in Central Prison, Cherlapally. The offender Syed Abubaker is a native of Chandrayangutta, Hyderabad. The accused, along with his wife and another associate, was running prostitution with innocent girls by taking a rental portion.

Stopping of blood donation camps by cops resented

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Alam Baig, the Joint Secretary of Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Society, organises blood donation camps for Thalassemia patients in Shamshabad. This has come to a halt as cops stopped him from conducting camps citing covid restrictions.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Alam Baig said, 'My concern is why blood donation camps for thalassemia patients have been restricted by the government. I see many marriage functions going on with huge gatherings without any restriction.'

He added that thalassemia patients need a blood transfusion every 15 to 20 days and that they are following the covid protocol at blood donation camps.



Online classes for class 8 to 10 from tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government has issued orders permitting online classes for class 8 to 10 and 50 per cent attendance for teaching and non-teaching staff from January 24.

As per the GO issued by A Devasena, Director, School Education, 'Online/distance learning shall be permitted for classes VIII, IX & X. 50 per cent of teaching and non teaching staff are instructed to attend to the schools on rotational basis from

24.01.2022". Government has issued orders extending holidays to all educational institutions - Private, Aided and Government schools- in the state of Telangana, except Medical Colleges till 30.01.2022. As per the new GO, all the Heads of the Departments, Regional joint Directors of School Education Hyderabad & Warangal, and all the District Educational Officers in the State are hereby directed to take necessary action accordingly.

Gang held, Rs19 lakh worth property seized

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

The sleuths of CCS LB Nagar team, IT Cell-Rachakonda, along with LB Nagar police of Rachakonda Police Commissionerate, apprehended four professional thieves. The offenders indulge in temple thefts and other offences. Police recovered 215 grams of gold ornaments, 2 cars and bikes all worth Rs 19,40,000 from their possession.

The offender Ponnuri Chinna Satyanandam (31), was earlier arrested by Manglagiri and Donakonda police. He was also arrested in 'Arms Act'. The offender Gandam Sammaiah (24) was earlier arrested in illegal liquor sale case by Gurajala police. The accused Jangala Prasad (27) and Mandla Nagendar hail from Guntur dist, AP. Another accused Daravath Naveen (25) of Nalgonda district is a B.Tech student and also an old offender.



Police officials displaying seized gold ornaments in Hyderabad on Saturday

Earlier he was arrested in NDPS act by Miryalguda Rural PS. All of them formed a group in Gurajala Jail and committed thefts for easy money. CP Mahesh Bhagwat said in a press conference that, 'In December the complainant Kumbhari Madhav Maharaj went to his house by locking the temple after the rituals. On next day, they found that temple's main door lock was broken and gold ornaments were missing. While vehicle checking at

LB Nagar PS limits, the offenders revealed their names and also confessed that they have committed 10 property offences - 4 belong to theft offences, 1 Bank offence, 2 Night HB offences and 3 Automobile cases. .

The gang is already in preparation for bank robbery. They procured oxygen cylinder, gas cutter to open strong rooms of cash and jewellery. They commit theft of cars and motorcycles, later change number plates.

Night temp to fall below 11 degree Celsius in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mercury dropped sharply in the city and on the outskirts in the early hours of Saturday with Serilingampally recording a low of 12.4 degree Celsius.

For the last few days, the night temperature in various parts of the city has dipping and the average minimum temperature of 15.8 degree Celsius was recorded in Hyderabad this morning. According to the forecast by India Meteorological Department-Hyderabad, the northeastern monsoon has withdrawn from the southern parts of the country. However, due to the western disturbances, the temperatures in several parts of the city are likely to dip on Sunday and Monday.

While in most parts of the city the night temperature



might range from 11 degree Celsius to 15 degree Celsius, the mercury in areas located towards the outskirts of the city might dip below 10 degree Celsius. Several districts of Telangana are again suffering from a cold wave-like situation. It is likely that night temperatures in districts Adilabad, Kumram Bheem Asifabad, Nirmal and Mancherial might dip below 10 degree Celsius in next two or three days.



‘No need to panic over Covid-19’

Health Minister Harish Rao urges people on door-to-door fever survey not to go to private hospital

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Health Minister T Harish Rao on Saturday participated in a door-to-door Covid-19 survey along with ASHA workers in the 37 th ward of Siddipet and got vaccines and booster doses administered to the needy.

He distributed the Covid kits to the needy then and there. He advised them not to be disheartened by the Covid-19 and Omicron threat as the government kept ready at least one crore home isolation kits and two crore test kits ready. He advised the affected not to go to private hospitals. He said that over one lakh diagnostic tests are being run per day.

The Minister said that door to door fever survey is being implemented to check the spread of the disease and sought cooperation of the people to the exercise. The government has kept the test and home isolation kits ready to face any eventual-ity. The minister was interact-



Minister for Health T Harish Rao interacting with people as part of door-to-door fever survey in Siddipet on Saturday

ing with the residents of Ambedkar Nagar and on Karimnagar Road in 37 th ward of the municipality. He monitored the progress of the fever survey at the field level and enquired the ASHA workers as to how many have been

through the second dose in the ward. He also enquired them when the third dose – the booster dose – is due to them. He went door to door inquiring about the people's health and their vaccination doses progress affectionately addressing the

people. At one of the houses, he spoke with resident Posavva and enquired about how many doses of the vaccine she has had. She replied to the minister that she has had only one. When seeking to know why she did not receive the second dose,

ASHA workers told the minister that she is afraid of receiving the vaccine. Wondering whether anyone would fear for receiving the vaccine shot under the prevailing circumstances, he got her second dose administered. At another house, he asked a woman – 60-year-old lady Gyodagani Renuka -- whether all members received the vaccine.

She replied to the minister that she has had two doses. The minister told her that she should have received three not two and spoke with RMO Kasinath and asked him to check her vaccine status. He got her the first booster dose administered.

At another household, he spoke with the resident Anjamma and advised her to wear mask. He gave her a spare mask available with him. He also interacted with the sanitation staff Devavva of the municipality and enquired about their vaccine and health status.



Medak District Additional Collector Pratima Singh addressing multi-disciplinary teams in Medak on Saturday

Visit 100 homes per day

Multi-disciplinary teams told to distribute isolation kits

PNS ■ MEDAK

Additional Collector Pratima Singh has asked the multi-disciplinary teams of fever survey to visit at least 100 homes per day daily and give isolation kits to the needy having symptoms like cold, cough, and fever. The people should be sensitised to use the medicines daily for

five days without fail. She was addressing the members of the multi-disciplinary teams – ASHA workers, doctors, MEPMA resource persons, Anganwadi teachers – here on Saturday. She asked the teams to take steps to administer the second dose of the vaccine or the booster dose wherever it is necessary. Teens in 15 to 17

year age group should be identified and encouraged to receive the vaccine, she said asking the teams to send her the survey report daily before evening. Municipal Commissioner Srihari, Dr Manikantha, health supervisor Pawan, ASHA workers, Anganwadi teachers, resource persons, and others took part in the event.

Rathod assures action against errant guards

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Minister for Tribal, Women and Child Welfare Satyavati Rathod on Saturday directed the Tribal Welfare Secretary and Commission to order a probe into the forest beat guards allegedly misbehaving with three Adivasi women. The incident took place at Sakivalasa village under Mulakalapalli mandal in Kothagudem district. The Minister assured that the State government would protect the Adivasi women. She warned of stringent action against anyone who



Satyavati Rathod

misbehaved with the women in the forest area. All the authorities were given strict instruction not to misbehave with women, she said.

MJR Trust to develop 5 govt schools with Rs 10 cr

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

MLA Marri Janardhan Reddy stated that five government schools in Nagarkurnool Assembly constituency would be reconstructed (developed) on par with corporate schools. The reconstruction works would be taken up by MJR Trust by spending Rs 10 crore, he said. Marri Janardhan Reddy (MJR) and District Collector Uday Kumar laid foundation for the reconstruction work of ZP school at Sirpavada on Saturday. As part of development, playing grounds and computer labs will be provided at the schools. In addition, library, dining hall, laboratories, wash rooms and rest rooms will also be constructed



A school renovated with the aid from MJR Trust in Nagarkurnool district

at the schools. District Collector Uday kumar lauded the services of Marri Janardhan Reddy who has been striving hard to improve educational and medical facilities in the constituency. The MLA has been showing

keen interest to develop the schools in all respects, said the Collector. He also appreciated the services of MJR Trust director Marri Jamuna Rani for her self-less services. The Collector said that each school would be

developed by spending Rs 2 crore and all basic facilities would be provided. Janardhan Reddy, in his address, stated that he and his younger brother got education from school at Sirpavada and he was fortunate to take up the development of the school. The works would be completed by June, he said. Similarly, reconstruction works of Tadur ZP school would also be taken up shortly. 'Chief Minister K Chan drashekar Rao has been giving top priority to health and education,' he said.

MJR Trust director Jamuna Rani, in her speech, said that they have decided to develop five government schools in Nagarkurnool constituency every year.

Be courteous with complainants



Police Commissioner N Swetha planting a sapling at Gajwel police station on Saturday

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Police Commissioner Swetha has asked the policemen and officers to behave courteously with complainants and visitors to the police station and extend immediately services to them upon knowing their problems.

She visited the Gajwel police station in the district and planted saplings on the premises of the police station. Later, she went around the police station. He held an interactive session with the personnel there to find out their problems.

She reviewed the progress of the cases under the police station limits during the past three years. She told them to monitor the CCTV cameras on daily basis and get the damaged cameras repaired.

The entry of data in the CCTNS should be monitored daily. A strict vigil should be maintained on rowdy-sheets, KDs, other suspects and anti-social elements and

keep tabs on their movements. The night patrolling officials should check lodges and movements of the old criminals. She laid emphasis on having role and goal clarity for all the personnel. She asked the VPOs should create awareness among the people on cybercrimes. With the help of the CCTNS project, the FIRs, CDF, part-1 and 2 of remand case diary, charge-sheets, court disposals should be entered online daily.

She asked the police officers and personnel to represent their problems if any, through HRMS grievances' cell.

Enforcement duties should be performed daily in the mornings and evenings.

She asked the police officers and personnel to work with coordination to reduce crime rate. Gajwel ACP Rmesh, Gajwel CI Veera Prasad, Traffic CI Ramu Naik, SIs Sridhar Reddy, Naresh, Sankar, and other police personnel took part in the programme.

National Anthem to be sung every day

PNS ■ NALGONDA

On the occasion of the 75 th anniversary of the Independence Day, the Centre is organising annual festivals under the name of 'Azadika Amrut Mahotsava'. In this context, special attention is being paid to the National Anthem. The national anthem programme was launched on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose birth anniversary on January 23 in Nalgonda. Janaganamanda Utsava Samithi has been formed under the leadership of Karnati Vijayakumar, former government employee, as president and MVR Schools chairman Kolanu paka Ravi Kumar as secretary to take forward the programme.

'Identify units for beneficiaries in week days under Dalit Bandhu'



Minister Vemula Prasanth Reddy at a review meeting in Kamareddy on Saturday

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

Minister for Roads and Buildings Vemula Prasanth Reddy here on Saturday directed the officials to identify the units under Dalit Bandhu for beneficiaries in a week days. While participating in a review meeting at the District Collectorate on Dalit Bandhu and on Covid-19, Prasanth Reddy said Chief Minister had introduced the scheme to ensure financial independence to Dalits. It

would help the Dalits living below the poverty line come up in life. The scheme would now be implemented across the State, he said. It was implemented first as pilot project in Huzurabad. District Collector Jitesh V Patil said that nodal officers were appointed in each constituency to ensure proper implementation of the scheme. A total of Rs 35 crore would be released in the first phase. He asked the officials to ensure that the beneficiaries open their bank accounts.

Mega corruption in Suryapet district, says BJP leader Sankineni

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP state vice-president Sankineni Venkateswara Rao has alleged that there is massive corruption in Suryapet district. He alleged that the huge corruption has been taking place with the blessings of Minister Jagadish Reddy.

Sankineni alleged that the Suryapet Municipal Commissioner has been behaving as he liked. False cases have been registered against BJP leaders for questioning the Municipal Commissioner, he added.

He said that the officials who hounded a Dalit for setting up a small shop before his house didn't bother when some people had set up businesses after encroach-



Sankineni Venkateswara Rao

ing a lake near the new Collectorate.

He alleged that the Municipal Commissioner had behaved rudely when BJP general secretary Saliganti Veerendra approached him regarding a Dalit's problem.

Moreover, false cases were

filed against Veerendra with the knowledge of the Minister and he was kept in jail for eight days, he said. Sankineni alleged that officials have filed cases against persons who have no connection with the irregularities and have spared the real culprits like millers and bureaucrats. He demanded the immediate dismissal of the Minister for supporting officials responsible for irregularities. He demanded that the false cases filed against BJP leaders should be dropped immediately. Alleging that corrupt deals worth hundreds of crores have taken place at the purchasing centres in Suryapet district, Sankineni demanded that the government should order a CBI inquiry into the corruption.

The Pioneer helping solve people problems

MLA Korukanti Chandar unveils the calendar

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chandar lauded the efforts of The Pioneer in highlighting the problems being faced by the people. Most of the problems highlighted were solved, he said and added that the entire media had contributed to the development of the constituency.

He was unveiling The Pioneer calendar at a function, held at S S Function hall in Godvarikhani on Saturday. The media had helped him solve several problems being faced by the people. City Deputy Mayor N Abishek Rao, corporators Datu, Srinivas,



Ramagundam MLA Korukanti Chandar unveiling The Pioneer calendar at Godavari Khani on Saturday

Pullender and Saganti Sankar and Government Recognised Schools Association leader

Mokka Rajaih, Kandi Ravinder Reddy and Ratnkar took part.

CPI demands legislation to curb fraud by chit fund firms

PNS ■ WARANGAL

CPI State executive committee member Takkallapalli Srinivas Rao here on Saturday demanded that the government bring in a new legislation to prevent cheating by chit fund and finance companies that have been mushrooming in the State. These companies, he said, have been attracting customers by promising higher interest on the deposits. The money being deposited by customer was being diverted into real estate and the management of some companies had defaulted on repayment. The cheques being issued by some of these companies had

These companies, he said, have been attracting customers by promising higher interest on the deposits.

bounced and it led to the customer going around the courts. The organisers of the chit fund companies were making "out of court" settlements by partially paying the money deposited by customers, he said. Under these circumstances, it is necessary to take a strong action to curb fraud being perpetrated by some of these companies.



Mahabubnagar District Collector S Venkat Rao interacting with people as part of door-to-door fever survey in Mahabubnagar on Saturday

Fever survey: Collector interacts with citizens

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

The door-to-door fever survey has been continuing in the district actively. As part of the programme, District Collector S Venkat Rao on Saturday went round at Subhashnaga area in the town and interacted with people. He sought information from people whether everyone in the household had been fully vaccinated and whether the adolescents in the age group of 15-17 are getting the jabs.

The survey, which began on Friday, was declared a success. The team formed to conduct a survey visited a little over

60,000 household on the first day of the survey, the officials said. The Collector said there was no need for panic over coronavirus. Those with symptoms of the virus can get relief by taking medicine in isolation kits being handed over to the patients.

Those with severe symptoms may be admitted to hospitals and the doctors would visit the households on a phone call to the control room. The phone number to the control room is 08542 241165.

The Collector urged the citizens to take all precautions to curb the surge of the virus.

Those with symptoms of the virus can get relief by taking medicine in isolation kits being handed over to the patients.

District Medical and Health Officer Krishna, Programme officer Ravi and Medical officer Pragati were present.

Road widening pose threat to saplings

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

The State government is spending huge amounts of money for Haritha Haram to enhance the forest cover, but it may prove futile to a large extent in the district because of "bad" decisions.

As part of the prestigious Haritha Haram project, the officials accomplished the task of planting 80.70 crore saplings on either side of the highways under the third phase of the

programme. The authorities had also hired men to water the saplings. Funds in crores of rupees were released and spent for the success of the project. Efforts contributed by the Roads and Buildings and Forest Department officials led to the success of the project.

The saplings may disappear at any time with the government embarking on the widening of highways, the saplings planted on

either side of the roads may be pulled down. It will lead to the wastage of public money. The Roads and Buildings Department has sent proposals to widen the Kalwakurthi-Nandyal highway into two lanes and 167 national highways. Tenders were also called for building bridges on the highways.

MP P Ramulu appealed to the Centre to recognise the highway between Nagar kurnool and Amrabad as national highways.



Haritha Haram saplings on either side of the road in Nagarkurnool district

Modi: Aspirational districts now eliminating barriers to progress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aspirational districts are now eliminating the barriers to the progress of the country and they have become accelerators for growth instead of impediments, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday as he interacted with District Magistrates (DM)

In his remarks at the virtual interaction with DMs and some chief ministers, Modi said the teamwork of Centre, states and local administration was yielding good results in aspirational districts.

"Today, aspirational districts are eliminating the barriers to the progress of the country. With the efforts of all of you, aspirational districts are becoming accelerators of growth instead of impediments," he told the DMs.

Modi said that for development in aspirational districts,



a direct connect between the administration and the public as well as an emotional connect is very important.

A sort of 'top to bottom' and 'bottom to top' flow of governance is needed, he said, adding that an important aspect of this is technology and innovation.

Officials in aspirational districts now feel a great deal of satisfaction when they see lives of people improving with their efforts, Modi said.

The prime minister told the district magistrates that every district needs to learn from the success of others and also evaluate their challenges. Aspirational districts have

proved that removing silos in the implementation process can result in one and one becoming eleven, Modi said.

Launched by the prime minister in January 2018, the aspirational districts programme aims to quickly and effectively transform 112 most under-developed districts across the country.

Chief Ministers of states such as Gujarat, Karnataka and Chhattisgarh also participated in the interaction. The interaction was aimed at taking direct feedback about the progress and status of implementation of various government schemes and programmes.

60 pc MLAs in Goa switched parties in last five years

PNS ■ PANAJI

As many as 24 legislators in Goa, which is 60 per cent of the total strength of the 40-member state Assembly, have switched parties in the last five years, a report by an organisation has said. The Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) said in its report that with this, Goa has set a unique record, which is "unparalleled" in the history of Indian democracy.

Assembly polls in Goa will be held on February 14.

"In the five year tenure of the current Assembly (2017-2022), as many as 24 MLAs have



changed their parties, which is 60 per cent of the total strength of the House. It has never happened anywhere else in India. A clear reflection of utter dis-

respect to the mandate of voters. A callous approach to ethics and discipline overborne by uncontrolled greed at its worst," the report stated.

Six dead, 23 injured in massive fire on 19th floor

PNS ■ MUMBAI

At least six persons were killed and 23 others injured in a major fire that broke out on the 19th floor of a residential building in Tardeo area of central Mumbai on Saturday morning, an official said.

The blaze erupted around 7 am in Sachinam Heights building located opposite Bhatia Hospital at Gowalia Tank, when many of its residents were still asleep, the official of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said. Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnis alleged that nearby hospitals refused to admit the injured persons, which he said resulted in "more deaths", and sought action against those responsible for the fatalities.

Talking about the incident, the civic official said, "It is a ground plus 20-storey building. The fire broke out on its 19th floor. On being alerted, the fire brigade personnel and police rushed the spot. Several persons were rescued, of them 29 were taken to different nearby hospitals as some of them were injured, while others complained of health problems, like suffocation." Seven of the injured were taken to the BMC-run Nair Hospital, where five died, while one more succumbed to injuries at the civic-run Kasturba Hospital, he said, adding 17 injured were admitted to Bhatia Hospital, where five were discharged following treatment, while three of the 12, who are currently undergoing treatment there, are in a critical condition.



Congress Aligarh candidate barred from entering district

PNS ■ ALIGARH

Congress candidate from Aligarh city Salman Imtiaz has been slapped with an order barring him from staying in the district, authorities said on Saturday. The external order which was

pasted on his house on Friday was dated January 14.

Imtiaz had filed his nomination for the Uttar Pradesh polls on Thursday. "The ban was imposed on the basis of his being charged under the Gunda Act since he posed a threat

to the peace of the city," Additional District Magistrate city Rakesh Kumar Patel said. Imtiaz, a former president of the AMU students' union, was served a ban order in March 2020 also in the wake of anti-CAA agitation in the Aligarh

Muslim University. Besides him, several other AMU student leaders were issued such a ban order. Imtiaz said he had responded to the ban order in 2020 and but there has been no official response to his plea since then.

DHANBAD JUDGE MURDER CASE HC: CBI seems to be protecting accused



PNS ■ RANCHI

Jharkhand High Court has slammed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for its "laxity" in probing the murder of Dhanbad judge Uttam Anand, and observed that it seems that the agency was trying to quit the investigation and even protect the accused.

The division bench of Chief Justice Ravi Ranjan and Justice S N Prasad, while reading the report of the narco-analysis test of the two accused, on Friday said that when the auto-driver

and his accomplice knew that Anand was a judge before hitting him, how could the CBI come up with the theory of murder for robbing a mobile phone?

Rejecting the CBI's theory, the bench said that the agency has failed to get down to the bottom of the matter. "The investigation into the case raises a question on the credibility of the CBI. It seems that the agency is now tired of the case and wants to quit the investigation, which is why it is making up stories so that the accused are not charged with murder.

Maha: Naxals torch 11 tractors, machinery

PNS ■ NAGPUR

A group Naxals allegedly set on fire 11 tractors and two JCB machines engaged in road construction work in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, police said on Saturday. The incident took place at Irpanagar village in Bhamragadh tehsil around 2 pm on Friday, during which they also torched one Poclain machine, a senior police official said. "Around 40 to 50 Naxals were involved in the incident. They are Dalam and militia members," he said. The burnt vehicles and other machinery belonged to different contractors involved in the road construction work, he added. According to the official, police have registered an offence and launched a probe.



K'taka crosses six crore COVID-19 tests

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar on Saturday congratulated healthcare workers and district authorities as the state crossed six crore COVID-19 tests.

"Testing has been one of the cornerstones of Karnataka's success in fighting Covid. We have completed crore tests since the beginning of the pandemic, third highest in the country. Congratulations to all the health workers and district administration who made this possible," the minister tweeted. Later speaking to reporters, the minister said when the pandemic started in early 2020, National Institute of Virology units were used to conduct tests and Karnataka used to send samples to NIV centres in Pune.

Karnataka gradually established labs across the state and now we have about 268 testing facilities including 99 government and 169 private labs, he added. According to him, Karnataka has tested



6,01,14,815 samples so far including 1,14,12,162 Rapid Antigen Test and 4,87,02,653 RT-PCR tests.

While 1,41,96,065 samples were tested in 2020, 4,23,91,357 samples were tested in 2021 and so far 35,27,393 tests have been conducted in 2022, he explained.

Sudhakar said, "Testing plays a vital role in this battle against pandemic. Karnataka has always been aggressive in testing and tracking and it has been one of our cornerstones in this direction against COVID. Karnataka has now

Bid to present 'new avatar', Cong fields 70% fresh faces in Uttar Pradesh polls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Making a conscious effort to shun the old baggage and present her party in a 'new avatar' in Uttar Pradesh, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has hand-picked over 70 per cent new faces among the total 166 candidates for the high-stakes state assembly election.

Besides sticking to her promise of 40 per cent women candidates, Gandhi has overwhelmingly given a chance to debutants with an aim to build a new leadership in the Hindi heartland, which had slipped from the party hands in recent years. Uttar Pradesh is scheduled to have seven-phase polls for the 403 assembly constituencies beginning from February 10. The results will be out on March 10.

Of the total 166 names declared so far by the Congress, 119 candidates will be making their electoral debut, party spokesman Anshu Awasthi told PTI.

With the candidature of Sangeeta Tyagi, wife of party leader late Rajiv Tyagi, from Sahibabad seat, Gandhi has made an earnest effort to



break the mould and create new leadership in the century-old party which has faded into political oblivion.

"Priyanka Gandhi has made an attempt to bring all those fighting on people's issues, be it regarding women, youth, farmers, backwards or dalits, to the forefront," Awasthi said.

He said the list of candidates gives a clear vision of the party's effort to give a new direction to the state politics which has been suffering from caste and religion-based politics for years. "Party tickets have been given to youth and those who are working strongly in their respective fields,"

the Congress spokesman said, adding that in the first list of 125 names, 26 candidates are those who are up to 35 years of age.

He said 55-year-old Asha Singh, mother of the Unnao rape victim; anti-CAA activist and party spokesperson Sadaf Jafar; ASHA worker and activist Poonam Pandey who fought for the rights of ASHA workers and was attacked at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's programme at Shahjahanpur; Ram Raj Gond who fought for the rights of Adivasis in Sonbhadra; are all making their debut this election.

INDIA CORNER

Covid: UP govt extends closure of schools till Jan 30



The Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday extended the closure of schools in the state till January 30 in view of rising coronavirus cases in the state. The closure of schools has been extended till January 30 and online

classes will continue, according to an order issued by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi. The government had earlier ordered closure of the educational institutions till January 23 in view of a rise in Covid cases.

Lata Mangeshkar showing signs of improvement



Singing legend Lata Mangeshkar is showing signs of improvement but remains in the ICU, her doctor said on Saturday. The 92-year-old singer tested positive for coronavirus with mild symptoms and was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Breach Candy Hospital in south Mumbai on January 8. Sharing the health update, associate professor Dr Pratit Samdani from the Breach Candy Hospital told PTI, "She is showing signs of improvement. She is in the ICU. It is difficult to say for how many days she will be in the hospital." Anusha Srinivasan Iyer, a close friend of the family, also said the veteran singer is doing well. "Lata Didi is showing signs of improvement from before and is under treatment in the ICU from the amazing team of doctors spearheaded by Dr Pratit Samdani. We are looking forward and praying for her speedy healing and coming back home," Iyer said in a statement. On Friday, rumours started doing the rounds on social media that Mangeshkar's health had deteriorated.

Bengal: Four injured in parcel bomb blast in pharmacy



At least four people have been injured in a parcel bomb blast in a pharmacy in West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur district, police said on Saturday. The incident took place at Baharail in Hemtabad on Friday afternoon, a senior police officer said. The condition of two of the injured persons is critical, while the other two are stable, he said. An electric rickshaw driver and a woman have been identified in connection with the incident, the IPS officer told PTI. "The parcel bomb was delivered to the pharmacy by the electric rickshaw driver. A preliminary probe suggested that the woman was also involved in it. A manhunt has been launched to nab the duo. The samples of the remnants of the bomb and the parcel box have been sent for forensic examination," he said. A Criminal Investigation Department (CID) team has reached the spot for probing the matter. A police team has been deployed in the area where the pharmacy is located.

Two buses gutted in separate fire incidents in Gujarat, no casualty



Two buses were gutted in separate incidents of fire that took place at Rajkot and Surat in Gujarat, in which no casualty was reported, officials said Saturday. A city bus caught fire in Rajkot's Bhaktinagar locality on Saturday morning. There was no passenger travelling in the bus when the blaze erupted, a fire department official said. "As soon as the driver started the bus, it caught fire. He tried to douse the flames with the extinguisher kept inside the bus, but could not do so. Later, a fire extinguisher from another bus was also used," the official said. By the time the fire was brought under control by a fire department team, the bus was completely destroyed, he said. In the second incident, a luxury bus caught fire at Mora village near Surat city late last night, though no casualty was reported in the bus, a fire department official said.

Driver, conductor killed after bus rams truck

PNS ■ HOSHIARPUR

A bus driver and a conductor were killed and six passengers injured when their bus rammed into a truck parked on a roadside near Tuto Mazara, about 30 kms from here, on Saturday, said police. The accident took place when the bus bearing Punjab registration number was on its way to Hoshiarpur from Delhi, they said. The deceased were identified as driver Gurnam Singh (50) and conductor Jatinder Kumar (35).

Four candidates file papers for 'auctioned' post

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

At least four candidates filed their nomination papers for the alleged "auctioned" sarpanch post of Bileisarada gram panchayat in Odisha's Bolangir district.

Apart from Susant Chhatraia, who had reportedly won the bid by promising to pay Rs 44,000 for the development of the Jagannath temple at the village under Puintala block, his nephew, Bilasini Sharma and Prabhudutta Panda have also filed their nomination papers.

Following media report of the alleged "auction" of sarpanch post at Bileisarada gram panchayat, Odisha's State



Election Commissioner AP Padhi on Thursday had asked the Bolangir Collector to ensure that no willing person is obstructed from filing nom-

ination papers for the post of sarpanch.

Chhatra claimed that he own the bidding and agreed to pay Rs 44,000 if he wins the elec-

tions uncontested. He said money would be spent for the development of the Jagannath temple at the village. The auction was done at a meeting attended by the heads of three villages - Bandanakata, Kasurpali, and Bileisarada - at the Jagannath temple where the alleged bidding took place.

Meanwhile, in Koraput district, as unanimously decided by three major political parties - BJD, BJP and Congress - consensus candidate Mamata Jani, a graduate of Thuria village has filed nomination papers for Zilla parishad member post in the election to Kotia panchayat. Jani was selected by ruling BJD and opposition BJP and

Congress for the post. She filed her papers at the sub-collector's office on the last day of filing nominations on Friday.

The three parties had decided to field a consensus candidate in order to thwart any attempt by Andhra Pradesh to meddle in the panchayat elections in Kotia gram panchayat. Though the parties had decided to select consensus candidates for different posts instead of going for elections, two other candidates, one of them being a dissident Congress leader and another person have also filed nomination for the Zilla Parishad member post as Independent candidates.

E-mobility start-up, VAAN Electric Moto, launches e-bikes in India

PNS ■ KOCHI

Indian lifestyle e-mobility start-up VAAN Electric Moto Pvt Ltd has launched its electric bicycle-Urbansport in the country.

Union Minister of State for Skill Development, Entrepreneurship, Electronics and IT, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, launched the Van Electric Moto brand in India in a virtually held event in Kochi on Friday.

The e-bike is available in two variants- Urbansport and Urbansport Pro, priced at Rs 59,999 and Rs 69,999 respectively and will initially go on sale in Kochi, before being launched in other high-potential markets like Goa, Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Delhi in the future.

According to VAAN, the vehicles offer a maximum assistance (top speed) of 25 km/h, and a pedal assisted range of 60 kilometres.

VAAN claims that a full charge would require just half a unit of electricity, costing



around Rs 4-5. The removable battery pack, with a net weight of 2.5 kg, would offer added convenience and would require 4 hours for a full charge.

Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly V D Satheesan and the Chairman and Managing Director of OilMax Energy Pvt. Ltd, Kapil Garg jointly launched the VAAN e-bikes in the Indian market.

Ernakulam MP Hibi Eden unveiled the VAAN brand logo in the event in which former

MP Chandran Pillai was also present.

Both the electric bikes get, compact 6061 aluminium uni-sex frames, saddle, rims and handlebar designed by Benelli Biciclette, the e-bike vertical of the Italian brand.

"VAAN has tied with them for engineering and supply chain and has worked closely with the Benelli team for the development of the Urbansport duo," the group said in a release.

VAAN claims that its

removable battery is a first in this segment, adding that the bicycles come with Shimano Tourney 7 speed derailleur gear system, front and rear disc brakes and Spinner USA front shocks.

"The electric pedal assist system consists of a 250W hub mounted electric motor, a 48 Volt, 7.5 Ah removable Lithium-ion battery, and a total of 5 electric 'gear levels,'" it said.

VAAN Urbansport e-bikes get a Smart LCD display serving all necessary information, that can also be used to control front and rear lights.

"The Urbansport is the most practical of the two and gets 20 inch spoke wheels, a carrier that can carry up to 15 kilograms and an exposed electric motor. Urbansport Pro is a more stylish and premium e-bike that offers alloy wheels and an electric motor that is neatly integrated into the rear hub," the release said.

The company's plant at Ernakulam has a capacity to assemble 2,000 cycles a month, and are initially targeting sales

of 8,000 to 10,000 cycles a year.

"We targeted a young crowd earlier but are now looking at even those in the age group of 40-55 years who need not be cycling enthusiasts, considering the advantages of our product that comes with three modes," Jithu Sukumaran Nair, Chief Executive Officer and founder of VAAN Electric Mobility said. He said the e-cycle has a power-assisted mode with five electric gears and a full-throttle mode ratcheting up a speed of up to 25 km per hour.

VAAN says the lithium-based removable battery weighing around 2.50 kg with a two-year warranty can be fully charged in around four hours and lasts for 50 km to 60 km depending on the mode in which the cycle is used.

KTM-owned KISKA GMBH, Austria handles branding for VAAN an Indian lifestyle e-mobility start-up.

It was globally launched at the EICMA motorcycle show in Italy. Vaan has technology partnership with the well-known motorcycle producer brand Benelli.



US blocks flights by Chinese airlines in escalating dispute

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The United States has moved to block 44 flights to the US by Chinese airlines in retaliation for China forcing the cancellation of flights by US airlines.

The Transportation Department's Friday order affecting four Chinese airlines is the latest development in a long-running dispute over COVID-19 restrictions.

China previously barred some inbound flights by Delta Air Lines, United Airlines and American

Airlines after passengers on earlier flights tested positive for the virus. The US maintains that China's actions violated a treaty over access to each country by the other country's airlines.

The Transportation Department said that China's move to block 44 flights by US carriers was "adverse to the public interest and warrant proportionate remedial action by the department".

The department said that China's regulations are unfair because passengers who test negative for the

virus before their flight but positive up to seven days later can result in future flights being cancelled.

The US order limits flights between Jan. 30 and March 29 by Air China, China Eastern Airlines, China Southern Airlines and Xiamen Airlines.

The dispute over flights goes back to 2020 and the early days of the pandemic. In 2020, the Trump administration backed down from a threat to block four Chinese airlines after China agreed to let United and Delta operate a limited number of flights.

Yes Bank Q3 profit zooms 80 pc as provisions decline

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Yes Bank on Saturday reported 80 per cent jump in consolidated net profit at Rs 265.76 crore for December quarter 2021-22, helped by a fall in the provisions for bad loans.

The bank's core net interest income declined 31 per cent to Rs 1,764 crore, despite a 0.25 per cent expansion in net interest margin to 2.4 per cent but limited by the loan growth being suppressed at 4 per cent.

On a standalone basis, the profit jumped 77 per cent to Rs 266.43 crore in the quarter under review. Given the de-bulking exercise where it has reduced high value loans and also de-leveraging exercises by corporates, the bank has reduced its FY22 loan growth guidance to 10 per cent from the earlier 15 per cent, Managing Director and CEO Prashant Kumar said.



The provisions declined 82 per cent to Rs 375 crore from the year-ago period's Rs 2,089 crore, helping the bottom line.

The share of gross non performing assets (NPAs) in the overall loan portfolio declined to 14.65 per cent from 15.36 per cent in the year-ago period and quarter ago's 14.97 per cent, as the fresh slippages got contained at Rs 978 crore.

The bank management said Rs 435 crore came from corporate loans, Rs 388 crore from retail and Rs 123 crore from small businesses.

The quantum of restructured loans increased to Rs 6,878 crore from the quarter ago's Rs 6,184 crore, which Kumar attributed to some projects facing a delay in date of commencement of commercial operations and also the COVID-2 restructuring.

Kumar said the bank's plans for floating an asset reconstruction company (ARC) to house the entire quantum of its Rs 50,000 crore in stressed advances seem to be getting delayed by a quarter due to the fresh outbreak of COVID cases.

Rs 50,000 cr investments to come to JK: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said Rs 50,000 crore investments will come to Jammu and Kashmir in the next few years and agreements have already been signed for Rs 12,000 crore.

Virtually launching the District Good Governance Index (DGGI) in Jammu Kashmir, he said all investments together will generate employment opportunities for five lakh youths.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made the best industrial policy ever for Jammu and Kashmir, under which investments of about Rs 50,000 crore is going to come in Jammu and Kashmir and that will provide employment to five lakh youths," he said.

The home minister said on one hand, investments during last 70 years was Rs 12,000 crore. However, he said, in a single year, MoUs for invest-

ments worth Rs 12,000 crore have been signed and ground breaking ceremonies worth Rs 2,000 crore have also taken place. "Today, I once again want to tell my young friends, especially the young friends of the valley that you should walk on the path of development laid by Modi. No one can stop Jammu and Kashmir from becoming the most developed region of the country," he said. The home minister urged youths of the valley to focus on the development initiatives undertaken in the Union Territory and said they should participate in the development process, the political process and in the democratic process and make their future bright. Referring to the outcomes of the DGGI, Shah said the achievements of Jammu and Kashmir will reach every state and this will lead to healthy competition of good governance in every district of the country.

World Bank approves

Rs 1,000 cr loan to West Bengal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The World Bank has approved a loan of around Rs 1,000 crore to the West Bengal government primarily to support its effort to help the poor and vulnerable groups access its social protection services.

According to a statement released by the state government on Saturday, the loan will help the administration improve services such as medical help through telemedicine, support for the elderly and differently-abled, financial inclusion of citizens with digital payments and disbursement of benefits for public schemes.

MONEY MATTERS

Energy major Shell sheds 'Royal Dutch' from name



Energy giant Shell has dropped from its name the 'Royal Dutch' part, which it had carried for 130 years, following plans of a major overhaul announced recently. It is anticipated that Euronext Amsterdam and the London Stock Exchange will reflect the change in name on January 25. New York Stock Exchange will show the changed name on January 31.

According to a statement on Friday, the board's decision to change its name to Shell plc on December 20, 2021, has now taken effect. The energy major's overhaul involves integrating its dual-share structure into a single line of shares and relocating its headquarters to London. The changes will only involve about a dozen executives, including Chief Executive Officer Ben van Beurden and Chief Financial Officer Jessica Uhl, moving to the UK capital. Despite retaining a significant presence in the Netherlands, the company said it expected that it would "no longer meet the conditions for using the honorary Royal designation", which it has carried for more than 130 years. According to the statement, shareholders should note that their shareholdings will be unaffected by the change of name and existing share certificates should be retained as they will remain valid for all purposes and no new share certificates will be issued.

Rio de Janeiro delays Carnival parades as omicron spreads

The world-famous Carnival festivities in Rio de Janeiro will be held in late April rather than the final weekend of February, as the number of coronavirus cases in Brazil spikes and the omicron variant spreads across the country. "The decision was made respecting for the current situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil and the need, at this time, to preserve lives and join forces to drive vaccination throughout the country," said a statement issued Friday jointly by the cities of Rio and Sao Paulo, which also delayed the start of its Carnival parades until April 21. Earlier in the afternoon, Rio's Mayor Eduardo Paes and his Sao Paulo counterpart Ricardo Nunes held a video call along with their respective health secretaries and each city's league of samba schools that put on the parade, according to the statement.

Jio completes 5G coverage plans for top 1,000 cities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jio has completed 5G network coverage planning for top 1,000 cities in the country and is augmenting its fibre capacity as well as running pilot across sites, a senior company official said during a presentation.

The company has created teams to focus on dedicated solutions for 5G deployment in India, Reliance Jio Infocomm President Kiran Thomas said on Friday evening.

"5G coverage planning has been completed for 1,000 top cities across the country. Jio has been doing trials on advanced use cases across healthcare and industrial automation on its 5G network," Jio said in a statement.

Thomas during the presentation said that the company is running a 5G pilot in multiple cities and network planning for the roll out of 5G using 3D maps and ray tracing technology is going on.

"We are using the most modern approaches towards network planning, especially 3D maps and ray tracing technology because 5G is pretty



unique technology, which requires very advanced network planning techniques, and we are undertaking that for all of India, so that as and when the approvals are received for us to roll out this network, we will be well geared-up to prioritise our rollout, where we can make the maximum contribution," Thomas said.

Auction for 5G spectrum is expected to be held in the first quarter of the next financial year.

Reliance Jio reported to close the third quarter which ended December 31 with net addition of 1.02 crore customers year-

on-year (YoY) at 42.1 crore.

The subscriber base, however, declined on a quarter-on-quarter basis.

"We closed the quarter at 421 million subscribers. That was a reduction of 8.4 million, but the gross addition continued to be very strong 34.6 million. And the reduction was really on account of SIM consolidation and some of the less active customers, now with tariff increases, etc. looking at consolidating uses in a single SIM," Reliance Jio head of strategy Anshuman Thakur said.

On a reported number basis,

Jio's ARPU remained almost flat but the company's average revenue per user (ARPU) increased by 8.4 per cent to Rs 151.6 on a year-on-year after making adjustments interconnection usage charges (IUC) which it had to pay to other operators.

The IUC charges have become nil from January 1, 2021.

Jio Platforms posted an 8.8 per cent increase in net profit at Rs 3,795 crore for the third quarter ended December 2021.

It had posted a net profit of Rs 3,486 crore in the same period a year ago.

Gross revenue from operations increased by 5.76 per cent to Rs 24,176 crore from Rs 22,858 crore in the October-December 2020 period.

Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd (RJIL), the telecom services arm of Jio Platforms, posted a 9.8 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 3,615 crore for the quarter, compared to Rs 3,291 crore in the year-ago period.

RJIL's revenue from operations increased 4.62 per cent to Rs 19,347 crore from Rs 18,492 crore earlier.



Investigations going on in death of four Indians, smuggling operation

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Investigations are going on into the death of a family of four Indian nationals, including an infant, along the US-Canada border and into a larger human smuggling operation, as seven other Indians, believed to be from Gujarat and illegally present in the US, have been arrested.

A criminal complaint has been filed on Thursday in the US District Court for the District of Minnesota against 47-year-old US citizen Steve Shand, who has been charged

with human smuggling.

Shand, a "suspected smuggler of undocumented foreign nationals", was arrested near the US/Canadian border on January 19 for transporting two Indian nationals, who were illegally present in the US. The two Indian nationals have been identified as 'SP' and 'YP' in the complaint.

The complaint said that five Indian nationals "illegally present in the United States were also identified and arrested" around the time of Shand's arrest.

5G coverage inside buildings to be a challenge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom regulator Trai will soon come up with recommendations that will facilitate in improving telecom connectivity, especially 5G when it is rolled out, a top official has said.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) chairman P D Vaghela during a virtual event organised by Digital Infrastructure Providers Association (DIPA) said that it will be difficult to get 5G coverage inside the building as signals will be transmitted on high frequencies which cover very small distances.

"Holistic approach will be required to ensure availability of digital infrastructure in building complexes, that also in a non-discriminate manner. There is a huge problem in getting access to the buildings by the infrastructure providers, telecom service providers and other players. We have already prepared a consultation paper and very soon we will come out with a recommendation. This will require change in by-laws and working with the states very closely," Vaghela said.

He said that a time will come when revenue will become secondary for the



states and they will push for digital connectivity.

Minister of State for

Telecom Devusinh Chauhan said that digital connectivity empowers people on the

ground and the government is committed to support telecom infrastructure compa-

nies.

He said that while data usage in the country has been rising, the prices have been declining since 2014.

The minister said that the government has taken cognisance of network roll-out issues faced by telecom companies and the Department of Telecom is working to resolve concerns of the telecom infrastructure companies. Telecom Secretary K Rajaraman said that there is a constant endeavour to bring down the cost of operations of telecom services in the country, and the recently announced telecom reforms are a step in that direction.



Dynamics of Karma & Destiny
As we create the world along with our
cravings and attachments, these are
apparently writing our destiny, through us

8



9

Blot on American rights
The infamous Guantanamo Bay
military prison completed two decades
of its operations this January 11, 2022.

I like to be in the
spotlight once in a
while, and then I like to
be in the shadows. It's
really regenerating
— Monica Bellucci



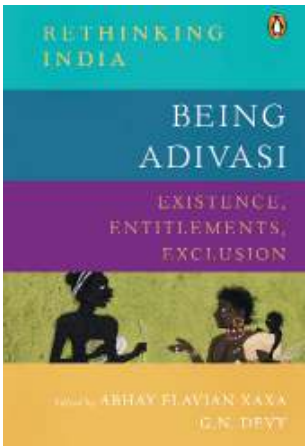
BEING ADIVASI

As G.N. DEVY, the editor of *Being Adivasi* with the late Abhay Xaxa, shares in his introduction: ‘I would like to hope that it is received not just as a publication or academic exercise but as a prelude to change that is now overdue, a change that will bring to the Denotified & Nomadic communities at least some measure of justice and human rights that they expect to get as citizens of a democratic country & to Adivasis the understanding of their distinct identity. We, the people of India, owe it to them as the indigenous people of India’. An edited excerpt:

If the awareness of Adivasis and their concerns is scant among the non-Adivasi population of India, knowledge about communities described as ‘Denotified Tribes’ is almost absent. Lest the term be misunderstood as ‘some kind of Adivasis’ or ‘officially non-recognised Adivasis’ — which is not unusual among even those who know something about Adivasis — I would like to offer the following brief description of the Denotified Tribes. During the nineteenth century, after the British had more or less secured authority over all princely states in India, they found it necessary to disarm the disbanded soldiers of the vanquished armies of Indian princes. The British also wanted to ensure safe travels in Indian states for commercial purposes. In order to accomplish the two objectives, they appointed William Henry Sleeman to detect the use of arms by unauthorised individuals. Sleeman made copious notes and listed instances of armed clashes on highways in central India. In the process, he gave rise to the idea of ‘thuggee’. The idea attracted readers of his books back in England. The list of persons and their communities came to be associated with the idea of thuggee or communities that make looting and crime their profession. The 1871 Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) was based on this notion. It listed communities as ‘criminal communities’, implying that being born in any of those communities made one automatically criminal intergenerational. The CTA provided for ‘reformatory settlement’, which were soft prisons. The listed communities were interned in these settlements, with severe restrictions placed on their free movement. Sleeman’s list had many flaws in it. Most of the communities had been traditionally nomadic in habit, an age-old social phenomenon in India. Members of the interned communities were put to hard labour, in most instances unpaid labour.

It is difficult to estimate as to how many perished due to the stress of labour. The members of these communities continued to live in the settlements for several generations spread over eight decades. In 1952, two years after India adopted the Constitution, the ‘notified’ communities were ‘denotified’. They continued to be described as Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNT), while very few of them found a place in the official lists of *jan-jatis*, the ‘indigenous peoples’ or Adivasis. The stigma of criminality continued to stick to them despite the slight change in the label. Not being included in the lists of STs and SCs, with a few exceptions, they continued to languish without land, livelihood or access to schools and healthcare. Not having fixed

addresses, their minimum rights as citizens too were not safeguarded. The stigma around their name often causes harassment from villagers and the urban population even to this day. There have been widespread incidences of mob lynching of members of the DNT communities. Governments have been generally indifferent to the plight of the DNTs as they do not form even a substantial minority, though their total population in the country is by no means insignificant. When Dr Manmohan Singh’s United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government appointed me as chairman of the Technical Advisory Group for the Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Communities, I found that the population of the DNTs could be close to seven-eight crore. That was in 2008. At present, the number may have gone up and may be close to ten crore. The Census of India has never carried out any clear counting of the DNTs. And since the numbers are not officially ascertained, the locations of these communities are not properly documented and no systematic thought has been given to their livelihood requirements and their human rights; they continue to remain in India’s imagination as the invisible nowhere people. The present volume includes an introductory essay on the DNTs. For several decades following Independence, ‘Adivasi’ was an anthropomorphic ‘type’ cast in sentiment and piety, or else dismissed as historical baggage worth leaving behind in India’s march to modernity and nationhood. Though the complexities of Adivasi society received attention in scholarships related to the theme, the popular attitude to Adivasis was severely restricted by the acronym ‘ST’. Excessive pity and excessive contempt are both equally potent instruments of ‘othering’ people. It is therefore that Archana Prasad’s analysis of the class-currents within Adivasi communities becomes important as an antidote to the ‘othering’ processes. She concludes, after presenting a nuanced analysis of the tensions and textures in Adivasi contemporary identity discourse: “... the multifarious manifestations of neoliberal policies have also created diverse forms of Adivasi politics with different social basis. It is therefore important to distinguish between identity based struggles which have been led by those who are situated within the working class and those whose motive has been to get incorporated within the current power structure. Further, the culturally exclusive character of Adivasi politics is also hegemonic and camouflages the inequalities within the Adivasi society. On the other hand, non-culturally exclusive class politics has had to come to terms with the persistence of identity-



“FOR SEVERAL DECADES FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE, ‘ADIVASI’ WAS AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC ‘TYPE’ CAST IN SENTIMENT AND PIETY, OR ELSE DISMISSED AS HISTORICAL BAGGAGE WORTH LEAVING BEHIND IN INDIA’S MARCH TO MODERNITY AND NATIONHOOD



based politics by adopting a more nuanced approach towards it. This collaboration has been facilitated by the intensifying communal polarisation and economic crisis, leading to the transformation of Adivasi politics, both class and identity based. Such a development is not only positive, but also essential to take on an authoritarian and neo-liberal government and the challenges that it poses to all progressive forces within the country.”

It needs to be mentioned that the facts of Adivasi political expression, cultural production and major social struggles over the last half century, all go to show that the general perception of Adivasis and their participation in modern India’s process of becoming falls woefully short of reality. The new-generation Adivasis are keen to create a more realistic view, one that is from the perspective of Adivasis. Abhay Xaxa states in clear words: “Apart from development issues, there was also a demand for a stringent anti-conversion law which has been used as a tool to divide the Adivasi communities on the lines of religion. The communal agenda of these organisations has gradually created a fear among people who don’t subscribe to the dominant discourse of assimilating the Adivasis in the Hindu fold. As a result, the harmonious relationship between various Adivasi and forest dependent communities have been broken and communal violence is also increasingly experienced in Adivasi areas.”

In order to obtain this view, the UPA-II government appointed the Committee headed by Virginius Xaxa. Abhay Xaxa refers to the Xaxa Committee report and points out that: “The panel recommended radical changes to the laws, regulations and rules to protect Adivasi communities from land alienation and to ensure their rights over resources are handed back and protected. The report also laid out an overhauled, expansive and detailed framework for providing better education, health and opportunities to tribal communities across the country. If the recommendations of the Xaxa committee are implemented, it will surely have an empowering effect on Adivasi communities.”

On the other hand, N.C. Saxena’s essay presents a deeply sympathetic but somewhat predictably simplified view. Dr Saxena’s historically important contribution to Adivasi development and the role he played inside government bureaucracy in favour of Adivasis are of a legendary proportion. Yet, seen from an Adivasi perspective, his overview is likely to be read as slightly less than a full view of what is happening today inside the minds of Adivasi communities

in India. Saxena states: “The oppressed tribals, unlike other disadvantaged groups, generally suffer and endure their exploitation silently. In some areas, however, they have taken to armed insurgency. The middle path of agitational politics by organising bundhs, taking out processions, and putting pressure on the politicians, so successfully adopted by other groups in India to articulate their grievances, is alien to the tribals and has historically been unknown to them. Civil society needs to play a big role here, and government too should not brand all tribal activists as Maoists.”

These comments need to be read together with fictional works by Mahasweta Devi in order to understand that the silence of Adivasi is not the absence of voice but rather a powerful statement which we have not yet begun grasping. The ‘silence’ is extremely powerfully articulated by Vikrant B.: “... stunted reading of social, economic and political realities created a host of mythologies and prejudices with respect to Adivasis and tribes in India. They were perceived to be isolated, self-sufficient, animist, under-developed and backward. Seemingly harmless, these mythologies have had serious policy and political implications. For example, tribes are seen as inter-linked with castes in India, by policymakers, academics, and even in popular perception. At one level, it is perhaps necessary to denote common subalternity, so as to emphasise the State’s obligation to their upliftment and empowerment. However, this manufactured equivalence glosses over the fact that while the Dalit question is relatively centre stage in the nation’s consciousness, the Adivasi question is not.”

The last clause of this paragraph sums up the purpose of this volume. It is, in the simplest words, to present ‘the Adivasi question’. It includes the question of Adivasis in the context of modern India, the questioning of the nation’s ideas of development by Adivasis and also the manner in which Adivasis pose their questions within the much-misunderstood framework of their understanding of what democracy means. Or, in other words, the Adivasi manner of questioning too is its concern and the questions raised by Adivasis before the Indian nation too are its paramount concern.

Extracted from *Being Adivasi: Existence, Entitlements, Exclusion* by Abhay Xaxa (Editor), Ganesh N. Devy (Editor) & run with due permissions from Samruddha Bharat Foundation and publishers Penguin Random House India

Trudeau working with US to stop smuggling

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has said that his government was doing all it can and working "very closely" with the US to stop human smuggling, a day after a family of four Indians, including a baby, died from exposure to extreme cold weather on the Canadian side of the border with America.

Terming the incident as a "mind blowing" tragedy, Trudeau on Friday said that the Canadian government is doing all it can to stop people-smuggling across the US border.

"It was an absolutely mind-blowing story. It's so tragic to see a family die like that, victims of human traffickers... and of people who took advantage of their desire to build a better life," Trudeau told a news conference. "This is why we are doing all we can to discourage people from crossing the border in an irregular or illicit manner. We know there are great risks in doing so," he said.

The prime minister said that Canada was working very closely with the United States to stop smuggling and help people "taking unacceptable risks".

According to Canadian officials, the incident was unusual as illegal migrants generally try to cross into Canada from America, rather than the other way round. Border crossings into Canada on foot increased in 2016 following the election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States.

On Thursday, the Manitoba Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said that the bodies of four people — two adults, a teen and an infant — were found on the Canadian side of the US/Canada border near the Emerson locality in south central Manitoba on Wednesday.



Close shave for Arnold Schwarzenegger

Veteran Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger escaped unhurt after he was involved in a car crash here. The four-vehicle crash happened late Friday afternoon and sent a woman to the hospital with minor injuries, Schwarzenegger's spokesperson confirmed.

According to the Los Angeles Times, the 74-year-old star and former California governor was driving his car when it was involved in a crash with another vehicle at the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Allenford Avenue, near the Riveria Country Club here.

Two other cars in the intersection were also struck as a result of the collision, the outlet reported.

Paramedics transported a woman who suffered a head abrasion to the hospital, according to a Los Angeles Police Department statement.

Schwarzenegger's spokesperson confirmed the actor was unhurt and was only concerned about the woman who was injured.

Singapore's first Omicron-related death

Singapore on Saturday reported its first Omicron-related death, a 92-year-old unvaccinated woman who caught the virus from a family member, according to a media report.

The woman, who had no known medical history, died on Jan 20, about 10 days after catching the virus from a family member, the Channel News Asia reported.

"Upon investigation, doctors have concluded that the death was due to COVID-19 infection, by the Omicron variant," the report said, quoting a health ministry statement.

The woman was unvaccinated and had no known medical history, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, Singapore on Friday reported 3,155 new COVID-19 infections, comprising 2,794 local infections and 361 imported ones, taking the nationwide tally to 307,813 since the start of the pandemic. One more person succumbed to the infection, pushing the death toll to 846.

On Friday, the government had said that Singapore is likely to see a "significant wave" of Covid-19 cases as the more infectious Omicron variant spreads through the community, which could strain its healthcare capacity.



Biden and Kishida agree to 'push back' China's games in SCS

US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida have agreed to "push back" against China's attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and highlighted the importance of the Quad grouping as a critical forum for promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

During the 80-minute virtual meeting on Friday, their first formal summit meeting, Biden said the age-old alliance between the US and Japan is the cornerstone of peace and security in the strategic Indo-Pacific region and across the world.

"It was an honour to meet with Prime Minister Kishida to further strengthen the US-Japan alliance — the cornerstone of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the world," Biden said in a tweet after the meeting.

"As Indo-Pacific powers, the United States and Japan are united in a shared purpose to sustain and enhance our commitment to the region," the White House said in a readout of the meeting.

"The two leaders resolved to push back against the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea and South China Sea," it said.

The US, India and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's aggressive military manoeuvring in the region.



Mission Impossible not until 2023 and 2024

The seventh and eighth instalment of Tom Cruise-led "Mission: Impossible" franchise have now been delayed until 2023 and 2024. In a joint statement, Paramount Pictures and Skydance said they had to further postpone the two movies due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "After thoughtful consideration, Paramount Pictures and Skydance have decided to postpone the release dates for Mission: Impossible 7 & 8 in response to delays due to the ongoing pandemic," the companies said.

"Mission: Impossible 7", in which Cruise is reprising his role of Ethan Hunt, will now open in the US on July 14, 2023, instead of September 30, 2022. Its follow-up,

"Mission: Impossible 8", has moved from July 7, 2023, to June 28, 2024, reported Variety. "We look forward to providing moviegoers with an unparalleled theatrical experience," Paramount Pictures and Skydance said. The production of "Mission: Impossible 7", directed by Christopher McQuarrie, has also been delayed due to the pandemic. The film will also feature Rebecca Ferguson, Hayley Atwell, Ving Rhames, Henry Czerny, Simon Pegg, Vanessa Kirby and Angela Bassett. Cruise has another high-profile project with Paramount -- "Top Gun: Maverick". The movie, which is a sequel to Cruise's 1986 blockbuster, also saw multiple delays. It is currently set to be released in the US on May 27, 2022.

'Legal trade' alone won't save rhinos

Demand for rhino horn in Asian markets, especially Vietnam and China, has pushed the remaining rhino populations to the brink of extinction.

In the past decade, nearly 10,000 rhinos were killed by poachers in Africa. The remaining rhino populations in Africa and Asia are steadily declining, with fewer than 30,000 animals left in 2020 from a population of 500,000 at the beginning of the 20th century.

Rhino horn is coveted for rumoured medicinal properties and as a status symbol. To stop the rhino poaching crisis, it has been suggested that horns sustainably harvested from live rhinos can be sold in a legal trade to international buyers to meet demand.

At the same time, this may generate income to fund anti-poaching activities, create jobs for local people, discourage poachers and encourage private rhino owners to conserve rhinos. In an international, legal trade, rhino horns can be micro-chipped, and a certification and permit system put in place to prevent laundering.

But whether legalising the international trade in rhino horn can contribute to conserve rhinos is a hotly debated question in conservation circles. Opponents argue that a legal trade will remove the stigma associated with using rhino horn and thus increase demand to a dangerous level.

Preference for wild rhinos

The trade in rhino horn is highly lucrative. In the black market, rhino horn prices can fetch up to US\$400,000 per kg for Asian rhino horns and US\$20,000 per kg for African rhino horns.

While rhino horn is mostly used as a traditional medicine in Vietnam to reduce hangovers, detoxify the body, and reduce high fever (despite no scientific evidence supporting these benefits), a large quantity of rhino horn is supplied to the art and antiques market in China.

Only by interviewing actual consumers of this product can we generate insights into motivations for purchase and rhino horn preferences. However, because rhino horn is so expensive, rhino horn consumers are mostly senior and very wealthy individuals who are notoriously averse to investigations of their illegal behaviours.

They generally do not want to talk to researchers they do not trust about their purchase and use of rhino horn. Nor are they motivated to participate in interviews by small gifts or abstract reasons, like conserving rhinos. This poses a major challenge for studying the impact of a legal trade on consumer demand.

To interview a large number of rhino horn consumers, we hired a team of research assistants with a winning sense of humour, colourful life experience, and true grit.

With a rented Porsche and a Rolex watch borrowed from friends, we reached out to various networks and clubs where wealthy consumers often gather, such as golf and tennis clubs, and established a network of key informants who helped introduce us to potential respondents.

In the interviews, we showed them choice cards and kindly asked them to make choices about purchasing rhino horn for medical use in different scenarios including an international, legal trade in rhino horn.

Our study shows that consumers do not want captive-bred rhinos who are perceived as "farmed", like cattle or horses. They prefer, and are willing to pay more for horns from rhinos living in the wild or semi-wild environments — like private ranches where they need to find food and water themselves but receive supplemental feeding at some times of the year.

This is because the consumers believe that wild rhino horns have better medicinal efficacy than farmed ones being exposed to naturally occurring medicinal herbs.

Consumers preferred a legal trade.



Mother: Teachers manipulated child to change gender identity

A mother who claims teachers secretly manipulated her 11-year-old daughter into changing her gender identity and name has filed a legal case against a tiny California school district.

Spreckels Union School District was responsible for "extreme and outrageous conduct" that led the student on a path toward transitioning as a boy and drove a wedge between mother and child, according to the claim filed Wednesday by a conservative legal group.

Jessica Konen said two middle school teachers who ran the school's Equality Club — later known as UBU (You Be You) — planted the seed that her daughter was bisexual in 6th grade and then introduced the idea she was transgender. The legal claim — a precursor to a lawsuit — follows a dustup in the district last fall after the author of a book widely criticized as "anti-transgender" quoted the two teachers speaking at a conference about how to run an LGBTQ+ club in a conservative community.

Spreckels is a speck of a town in the agricultural Salinas Valley, about 90 miles (144 kilometers) south of San Francisco. It was once home to the world's largest sugar refinery and was the setting for some scenes in the 1955 film based on John Steinbeck's "East of Eden."

While Konen said her daughter had revealed she was bisexual, the mother was unaware she was identifying as a boy until she was called to a meeting at the Buena Vista Middle School principal's office in December 2019 when her daughter was in 7th grade.

She wasn't told the purpose of the meeting until her daughter entered the room and sat across a table from her and teacher Lori Caldeira broke the news.

Where Ukraine's sunflowers once sprouted, fears now grow

On a warm spring day in Ukraine 26 years ago, three men smiled for cameras as they planted symbolic sunflower seedlings in freshly tilled earth where Soviet nuclear missiles had once stood ready.

That placid scene was, briefly, a launchpad for hope that the demise of the Soviet Union would bury the threat of great power war and mark the start of lasting peace in an undivided Europe.

Today Ukraine is ground zero for worry that Russia will ignite a conflict that could engulf the region.

On that early-June day in 1996, the American secretary of defense, William J. Perry, joined his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts in ceremonies marking the completion of Ukraine's nuclear disarmament.

Under Western pressure, Ukraine had agreed to give up the weapons it inherited with the breakup of the Soviet empire in exchange for a Russian and Western security guarantee. Perry likened the moment to the parting of a dark cloud of Cold War fear.

"It is altogether fitting that we plant sunflowers here at Pervomaysk to symbolize the hope we all feel at seeing the sun shine through again," he said, standing on a small concrete pad in the former missile field, where SS-19 nuclear missiles once stood in underground silos, prepared to launch toward targets in the United States. Nearby, American, Russian and Ukrainian national flags waved in a warm breeze.

That hopeful moment when American, Russian and Ukrainian officials grabbed white-handled spades to plant sunflowers has given way to today's fears of renewed conflict and a new cold war.

Today, Russian President Vladimir Putin stands accused by the West of violating that deal by targeting Ukraine with 100,000-plus troops. Now it is Russia that wants a security guarantee from the West as well as legal guarantees that Ukraine never be permitted to join the NATO alliance, even as Moscow readies for a potential invasion of a neighbor with inferior military might and none of the 170-plus nuclear-tipped missiles it once held.

Moscow wants a stop to NATO's eastward expansion, which it asserts Washington promised in the early aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 in the context of the reunification of Germany.

The U.S. and its NATO allies deny any such promise was given. The opportunity for countries to join NATO is enshrined in Article 10 of the organization's founding treaty, and this "open door" policy was reaffirmed in 2008 when alliance leaders agreed that Ukraine and Georgia "will become members of NATO" but set no timeline and offered them no formal path to membership.

