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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.

KRMB to discuss requirement of water in AP, TS next week

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A three-member committee of the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) 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. The committee will examine



the proposals of both the States and take a decision on the quantum of releases. Telangana State has already pro-

posed 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 Jurla between January 26 and 28. The members have already visited Nettekoppu and Srisaillam projects.

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

AP govt salaries to be processed by CFMS as Treasury staff join stir

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Treasury employees are unwilling to process salaries of government employees under the new PRC, so the AP government issued orders handing over the process to pay and accounts office (CFMS). The treasury employees opposing 11 PRC implementation and sought salaries under the old system. They had joined government employees protests under which they refused to process salaries under the new PRC.

The orders instructed all the DDOs to use the drop-down window at <https://payroll.herb.apcfss.in> which exhibits the list of existing Pay Scales and slabs in the RPS, 2015. The DDO shall select the

correct Pay scale & Basic Pay of the concerned employee, who are drawing the salaries in RPS, 2015, with reference to his / her life-cycle events strictly as per the Service Records for the period from 01-07-2018 to 31-12-2021. Before entering the above employee data, the DDOs are requested to update the all life cycle events i.e., pay changes data in SR up to 31-12-2021. After completion of the data entry, the DDO shall confirm the data entered with his credentials by affixing an e-signature and submit to the PAO. On confirmation of the data by the PAO, the pay fixation will be processed by the System itself. The Pay Fixation Slip is auto-generated by the system with details of Revised Pay entitled to the employee in the

RPS, 2022 from 01-07-2018 to 01-01-2022 corresponding to the pay change details of RPS 2015 confirmed by the PAO.

The system-generated Pay Fixation slips will be made available in the DDO login at <https://payroll.herb.apcfss.in>. The Revised Pay as on 01-01-2022 reflected in the system generated Pay Fixation Slip shall be utilised by the DDO for generating the pay bill for the month of January, 2022. After processing the salary bills for the month of January, 2022, the DDOs and PAO shall verify the system generated Pay Fixation Slips and after satisfying themselves about the correctness affix the same in the Service Register (SR) of the concerned employee duly attested.

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

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

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 caseload 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 dis-

trict 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.



Mekapati Goutham tests Covid +ve

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

For the second time in a row, Industries Minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy was tested positive for Covid -19 on Saturday. As the minister had symptoms of Covid, he underwent a Covid test that turned out to be positive. He stated that his health was stable and was doing well. As per the advice of the doctors, he is in home quarantine. He appealed to those who met him during the past few days to get them tested follow Covid protocol and take care.

TDP's counter-challenge to Kodali on Gudivada 'casino'

R-Day parade to have 25 tableaux

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



BJP raps AP govt's 'anti-Hindu' attitude

PNS ■ KURNOOL

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has warned the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government to change its 'anti-Hindu' attitude, found fault with the Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharta for meeting Social Democratic Party of India leaders and demanded withdrawal cases registered against B Srikanth Reddy.

The BJP organised a public meeting here on Saturday in which BJP national office in-charge Arun Singh, BJP State president Somu Veerajulu, MPs GVL Narasimha Rao, CM Ramesh, Vishnuvardhan Reddy, MLC PVN Madhav and co-incharge of AP affairs Sunil Deodhar participated.

Arun Singh warned Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to meet the fate of UP former chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav if

he continued to harass the BJP leaders and activists in the State. He demanded that the government withdraw the cases registered against the Kurnool district BJP president Budda Srikanth Reddy. He alleged that the state is stuck in corruption. The sand mafia is continuing its activities unabated in AP, he slammed. "If the PRC is implemented, the salaries of employees will go up but in AP, the salaries have come down," he ridiculed.

BJP State president Somu Veerajulu asked the State government to introspect on the Atmakuru incident which took place in Kurnool district in which BJP leader Srikanth Reddy was jailed. False cases were registered against the BJP leaders in the Atmakuru incident, he slammed.

EC extends ban on physical rallies, roadshows till Jan 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.

Many corona suspects skip tests

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,

Zincovit/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.

One drug shop owner in Vidyannagar 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.

CM takes part in PM's video conference

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Saturday participated in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's video conference with Chief Ministers of various states, Lieutenant Governors, Union Ministers, Chief Secretaries of Government, Collectors on development in backward districts.

While Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant gave a presentation on developmental progress in various fields,

Collectors of backward districts described the status of their respective districts.

Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma, Special CS Poonam Malakondiah, Principal Secretary for School Education Budithi Rajasekhar, Secretary for Health Department Anil Kumar Singhal, Special Secretary for IT, Electronics & Communications G Jayalakshmi, Secretary for Forests and Environment Vijay Kumar, Commissioner for I&Pr T Vijayakumar Reddy and other senior officials were present.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham:
Pausa, Krishna Paksha
Tithi : Panchmi, Jan 23 09:14 AM to Jan 23 09:12 AM
Shruthi, Jan 23 09:12 AM to Jan 24 09:44 AM
Nakshatram : Usha Prajapati, Jan 22 10:38 AM to Jan 23 11:09 AM
AM Hister, 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
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: PARTLY CLOUDY
Temp: 33°
Humidity: 65%
Sunrise: 6:42 AM
Sunset: 6:03 PM
Updated JANUARY 22, 2021 5:00 PM

Works of 10,000 houses to be grounded on January 28

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the mega housing mela, the groundbreaking ceremony for about 10,000 houses will be held on January 28, Housing department's district Special Officer Shivprasad has said.

As part of the ongoing house construction being carried out in the district, Special Officer Shivprasad, along with Joint Collector Nupur Ajay Kumar and Project Director Ramachandran, held a meeting with AEs, DEs, EEs and engineering assistants. On the occasion,



Shivprasad said there is good progress in the construction of houses and 13,500 houses have been constructed from base-

ment to roof level. He instructed the officials to provide construction material like steel, sand, cement sufficient

for 15 days. He said that Rs 24 lakh was deposited in the beneficiary's account across the district. The officials should ensure that there shall not be any problem in depositing cash into the beneficiaries' accounts.

Joint collector Ajay Kumar said that 81,889 beneficiaries have come forward for a one-time settlement scheme and Rs 15.15 cross has been collected.

District collector J Nivas has been monitoring the house construction works in the district through teleconference daily.

Woman attempts suicide over property row

PNS ■ KAKINADA

A woman allegedly made an attempt to commit suicide by dousing herself in petrol and setting herself ablaze in Bendamurlanka village in Konaseema region on Saturday. Property dispute is said to be the reason behind the extreme step.

However, the timely action of her husband who threw her into the adjoining field channel doused the flames and saved her from serious burns. She was shifted to a hospital with severe burns, police said. The police who registered a case identified the woman as Kotikalapudi Prasanna.

The dispute arose over sharing of 18 acres of joint landed property among six brothers and Prasanna is the wife of Pandurangarao the eldest among the brothers.

The woman had objected to conducting a survey of the lands owing to differences among family members, police added.

Many corona...

Continued from page 1

"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.

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.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹199
Without Skin	₹219
Broiler at Farm	₹107
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	435
VISAKHAPATNAM	437
HYDERABAD	405
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.35

Dalit woman thrashed for 'theft' in Chittoor police station

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a shocking incident, a Dalit woman was allegedly beaten up severely at a police station in Chittoor for alleged theft on Saturday.

According to details of the case, Uma Maheshwari worked as a domestic servant in the house of local jail Superintendent Venugopal Reddy.

She was questioned for theft of Rs 2 lakh in the house on January 18 which she denied but was handed over to the local police.

Police questioned her, took her fingerprints and sent her away that day but the next day January 19 she was summoned to the police station and subjected to

She said the local Circle Inspector summoned her and said her fingerprints did not match with the prints found at the spot and absolved her of the theft.

severe beating after her hands and legs were tied up till she fainted, Uma Maheshwari told media persons on Saturday.

Thereafter she said the

local Circle Inspector summoned her and said her fingerprints did not match with the prints found at the spot and absolved her of the theft.

He also advised her to not disclose her beating in the police station to anyone and offered her money to keep quiet about the whole incident. But she was again beaten up in the presence of CI, she said.

She has been hospitalized for serious injuries and she is alleged to have been abused by her caste name.

The TDP state representative Dr. Saptagiri Prasad has written a letter to State DGP in this connection demanding strict action against the police personnel involved in this incident



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.

R-Day parade to have...

Continued from page 1

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 contingents 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.

Overall, there will be 16 marching contingents from armed forces, central paramilitary forces, Delhi Police, National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS) along with 17 military bands, pipes and drum bands at the parade, it noted.

Two Param Vir Chakra awardees and one Ashok Chakra awardee will also participate in this year's parade.

Before the commencement of RDP-2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the nation in paying homage to the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice by laying a wreath at the National War

Memorial, the statement said. RDP-2022 will begin at 10.30 am and end at 12 noon, it said.

Twenty-five tableaux of various states, departments and armed forces will be part of RDP-2022, it said.

Two teams -- one male team of Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and one female team of Border Security Officer (BSF) -- will do the motorcycle display.

Lieutenant General Vijay Kumar Mishra, General Officer Commanding Delhi Area, will be the parade commander and Major General Alok Kacker, Chief of Staff Delhi Area, will be the second-in-command of the parade, the statement said.

RDP-2022 will march from Vijay Chowk to the National Stadium through the traditional route of Rajpath, it said.

2 held with 50 litres of illicit distilled liquor

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The police arrested two persons on the beach road on the outskirts of the city on Saturday and seized from them a gunny bag containing 50 litres of ID liquor packed in polythene bags.

A case was registered and the accused were identified as Koppiseti Suribabu (37) native of Vakalapudi and Faruquddin Ahmed (29) resident of Muralidhar Nagar in Ramanayyapeta.

Both of them were sent to judicial remand, police said.

MP seeks extension of moratorium on debts

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Local MP from YSRCP Dr. M Gurumoorthy has demanded an extension of the moratorium on loans to the hospitality industry in view of downsiding caused by the third wave of Covid.

In a letter, addressed to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Seetharaman, on Saturday he asked the Finance

Minister whether the RBI has been advised to extend the moratorium on all loans of the hospitality industry due to the continuation of the pandemic.

He said that hotels, travel agencies and private taxi service operators were badly hit and demanded that a moratorium on repayment of interest on loans should be extended further to support the hospitality and trading community.



Customs officials seize gold worth Rs 1.36 cr

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 was hidden inside the metal frame of his bag.

BJP raps AP govt's anti...

Continued from page 1

"Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy should decide whom he will support - patriots or traitors.

Home Minister Mekathotu Sucharita committed a blunder by meeting the Social Democratic Party of India leaders," he criticised.

Veerraju flayed that if YSRCP activists upload objectionable posts on social media no action was taken but the BJP leaders did the same cases were registered, he lashed out. He demanded the suspension of Circle Inspector Sridhar for thrashing a BJP activist in Guduru. In order to ruin the 'Sankranthi' culture, the

YSRCP leaders started the 'Casino' culture, he lambasted and demanded to sack the minister responsible for that. The BJP is launching its battle against the YSRCP from the meeting, he announced.

MP GVL Narasimha Rao alleged that the YSRCP-led government is adopting anti-Hindu policies and acting in favour of anti-national forces which is detrimental for national integrity. He asked why the ruling party MLA were extending support to the anti-nationals.

General secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy decried that the Home Minister had tea with the anti-nationals and ques-

tioned why those who attacked the Atmakur police station were not arrested. MP CM Ramesh deplored that the institution of police was diluted and warned of launching massive agitations in the coming days.

MLC Madhav lashed out that the Home Minister did not respond when attacks were taken place against Hindu temples. Seer Paripurnananda Swamy addressing the meeting virtually asked the BJP leaders to give 'Jail Bharo' call demanding the release of Srikanth Reddy. Former minister C Adinarayana Reddy, AP BJP affairs co in-charge Sunil Deodhar also spoke.

Night temp to fall below 11° Celsius in Hyd

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.

ONE FOR RECORD



Former president of Machilipatnam Bar Association advocate Ankishetti Balaji, and others present Krishna district SP Siddharth Kaushal with his patriot at his office on Saturday.

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, 2cars 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. 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.



Cyberabad cops arrest notorious chain-snatcher

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Due to vigorous efforts and meticulous planning, the SOT police teams of Cyberabad police commissionerate were able to arrest notorious chain snatcher on Saturday.

In this connection, it may be noted that the accused chain-snatcher had involved in five chain-snatchings between 11.am to 5.00 pm on 19th, Jan in Hyderabad.

It is to be noted that the culprit used a stolen scooter for his chain-snatchings and the scooter was stolen from Jaguda in Hyderabad, the previous day (Jan 18). Police were able to seize the scooter used by the culprit.

Special teams were formed to nab the accused. After thorough investigation and with the help of CC footage and other technical evidences, the police were able to know that the accused fled to Ahmedabad in Gujarat after chain snatching



incidents in Hyderabad.

SOTs of police personnel went to Ahmedabad and with the help of local police there, the Cyberabad SOT police teams were able to nab the culprit. The accused is identified as Umesh and he hails from Ahmedabad. The accused will be brought from Ahmedabad to Hyderabad, police said. It is also revealed that there were several theft cases registered against Umesh in Ahmedabad and Mumbai.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
E-Procurement Tender Notification
NIT No. from 206 to 247/S.E (R & B)/VSP/2021-22 Dated : 19-1-2022
The office of the Superintending Engineer R and B of Visakhapatnam district is inviting online tenders to execute works to undertake repairs to 34 special roads in the district (3rd call) at a cost of Rs 27.32 crore and for periodical removal of eight works (3rd call) at a cost of Rs 7.83 crore on e-platform. The last date for submission of the tenders is: 3.30 pm on 10-02-2022. For details contact e-procurement market place www.apereprocurement.gov.in
Sd/-Superintending Engineer,
DPR.No.279/VCL/Advt/12021-22, Dt: 20-01-2022 Roads and Buildings Department, Visakhapatnam-15

TDP's counter-challenge to Kodali on Gudivada 'casino'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a counter-attack against the minister's comments, TDP leader Bonda Umamaheswara Rao on Saturday asserted that their party was ready with full evidence to prove casino activities in Gudivada during the recent Sankranti celebrations. Bonda Uma asked whether Minister Kodali Nani would stick to his challenge that he would use a petrol bottle to set himself ablaze if illegal gambling charges were proved. There were proofs available to prove that half-naked dances were held at K Convention hall in Gudivada.

Addressing a press conference, the TDP leader said the Minister and the YSRCP lead-



ers brought in casino culture in the State which was known for cultural values and rich traditions. The ruling party leaders and Ministers were madly running after money. Videos were also available to prove illegal



casino activities. Bonda Uma said that a complaint was also made to the Krishna district SP with all the proof of gambling, dances and casino. No action has been initiated against the organisers till

now. The venue of the Gudivada casino was K Convention hall which belongs to Minister Kodali Nani.

The TDP leader issued a counter challenge, saying that he would also bring petrol and set himself ablaze if the TDP was not able to prove allegations of gambling at Kodali Nani's convention hall.

Bonda Uma said the Government gave permission to the fact-finding committee sent by Chandrababu Naidu. But, at the same time, the ruling YSRCP goondas unleashed chaos and havoc with their lawless behaviour. This only exposed the Government's desperation to save its skin in the face of public disgrace.



Governor pays rich tributes to Netaji

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabasan Harichandan on Saturday paid rich tributes to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on the occasion of his 126th birth anniversary. "The birth anniversary of Netaji is celebrated as 'Parakram Diwas'. I pay my humble tributes to the great leader and freedom fighter," he said.

On this day, the country remembers the indomitable spirit and selfless service rendered by Netaji, to the nation.

'Parakram Diwas', celebrated on Netaji's Jayanthi will be an inspiration to the people of the country, especially the youth, to act with fortitude in the face of adversity, to follow in the footsteps of Netaji and instill the spirit of patriotic fervour in all of us.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose will always be remembered by the people of the country for the sacrifices made by him to free the country from shackles of British rule."

Ayyanna slams Jagan's proposal on airports

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) politburo member Ch Ayyannapratrudu strongly criticised Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's proposal to establish an airport in each district.

Addressing the media on Saturday, Ayyannapratrudu said that though the State is facing a severe financial crisis, it is a surprising hat the Chief Minister has issued directions to set up airports in each district. The government is struggling to pay the salaries of employees and pensions to the retired personnel. All developmental projects and works have been stalled. However, the Chief Minister is taking unilateral decisions. Already,



the name of developments, Ayyannapratrudu pointed out. Ayyannapratrudu advised Jagan Mohan Reddy to consult a doctor to check his mental strength. Not even consulting with the experts and others, the Chief Minister is taking unilateral decisions. Already,

the State had borrowed huge amounts. The Finance Minister is running from pillar to post to get loans every day. But, the Chief Minister is making false statements to divert the people's attention from the real issues, Ayyannapratrudu alleged.

The Polavaram project works were stalled, he said and added that the contractors at all levels in the State are facing a tough time to get their investments. "No contractor is willing to take up State government works. What happened to the government medical college building works?. There is no progress at all in the developmental activities. It is ridiculous to propose an airport in each district," Ayyannapratrudu said.

Veerraju playing caste politics: Vellampalli

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Endowments Minister Vellampalli Srinivas came down heavily on BJP State president Somu Veerraju for playing caste politics by making false allegations against the government.

Speaking to the media here on Saturday, the Minister said that Somu Veerraju had been making provocative statements against the government to create religious hatred across the State. He said that the latter couldn't even win as corporator, yet was criticising Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy in abusive



language. He warned Somu Veerraju to watch his language while speaking about the Chief Minister and making false accusations. He questioned Somu Veerraju whether he is loyal to the country or to TDP and slammed



him for neglecting the State issues.

The minister recalled that over 40 temples were demolished during the TDP rule, while the BJP leader was serving as Endowment minister. He said

the State government had been constructing all those demolished temples and also handed over the Antarvedi chariot blaze case to CBI.

Slamming the BJP for creating unrest in the State, the Minister said that the current government has been providing transparent governance irrespective of caste, religion while ensuring that all the eligible people receive welfare initiatives. He stated that the opposition leaders have been trying to create chaos in Gudivada in the name of a casino and said that the government is already investigating the case.



GVMC begins signature campaign against VSP sale

PNS ■ VISAKHKAPATNAM

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has started a one-crore signature campaign against the Union government's strategic sale of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Demanding that the Centre drop the disinvestment in Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, the GVMC has unanimously passed a resolution and started the signature campaign on Saturday.

While signing the first signature, Mayor, GVMC GHVenkata Kumari called upon the people to support the agitation. Visakhapatnam Steel

Plant is not just an industry, it is the pulse of the Andhrithes. She strongly condemned the BJP government blindly moving towards its decision even though every citizen in Andhra Pradesh strongly opposed the proposal for the past 11 months. All the political parties, trade unions, associations and the people of the State are seriously opposing the sale of the steel plant. The government should consider the sentiments of the people and drop the proposal, the Mayor demanded.

Floor leaders from all the political parties were present and ignited the signature campaign.

'Follow Covid rules at EPDCL public hearing'

VISAKHAPATNAM: Chairman, Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC), Justice C V Nagarajuna Reddy, has instructed the APEPDCL to abide by the Covid rules at the public hearing to be held at the EPDCL corporate office on January 24, 25, and 27 to be conducted by the Commission on the power tariff proposals. It was also asked to make alternative arrangements to avoid arising any technical issues during the virtual referendum programme with customers. The APEPDCL authorities are making all arrangements. The APERC Chairman inquired the Chairman and Managing Director, APEPDCL K. Santoshrao about the details of the referendum arrangements.

Light key to 4th Industrial Revolution

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr. Chennupati Jagadish, Professor in Physics, has said that using light to sense and interface humans could be the 4th Industrial Revolution. He spoke at the 14th edition of the University Distinguished Lecture Series 'Semiconductor Nanostructures for Optoelectronics Applications' organised by SRM University on Saturday. The event was inaugurated by Prof VS Rao, Vice-Chancellor.

Dr. Jagadish has led the Semiconductor Optoelectronics and Nanotechnology Group as its head since its establishment in 1990 by him. He believes that in the fourth industrial revolution, the digital and the biological will merge and, as 90 per cent of the information is received by light, optical, and photo-electronics based trillion-dollar industries will dou-

ble in their value by 2030. He addressed the growing interest in research and analysis on key nanowires in the field of electronics and communications, which could have far-reaching benefits. He noted that the development of nanowires could address a wide range of challenges in science and technology.

He stated that the developing research in Augmented Reality, Wearable Optical Sensors, Holographic Displays, etc. and the people working on it as the students and staff at SRM University stand to enhance the market and build upon the vision of a self-reliant India.

The event was attended by over 2,300 members from different fields of science from IITs, NITs, IISERS, Universities and Institutions, CSIR, DST, DBT, DRDO, DAE, ISRO, NARL, MoES and several others from different parts of the country.

APSRTC staff want Old Pension Scheme to be continued

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The APPTD National Mazdoor Unity Association has sought extension of the Old Pension Scheme to the employees working in the AP Public Transport Department, a continuation of old service conditions, and continued HRA and CCA. APPTD MUA general secretary Y Srinivas Rao said that their association has submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy seeking resolution of their issues.

Srinivas Rao said that the revised scales of pay and allowances of APSRTC were due on April 1, 2017, and the revised scales - 2017 of APSRTC was implemented in the salary bill of March - 2019. He deplored that the APSRTC employees' wages are less than 19 per cent compared with State Government employees. He stated that they have requested to issue necessary orders to fix the Pay of APPTD employees with effect from April 1, 2021, duly merging the applicable DA as of April



1, 2021, and allowing the fitment on par with government employees to do justice

to APPTD Employees to get the wages on par with state government employees.

He said that the employees working in APPTD will get very meagre settlement amounts after their retirement on attaining the age of Superannuation by way of Gratuity and Provident Fund. He deplored that at present employees are covered under the EPS-95 pension scheme and get only Rs 2,000 to below Rs 3,000 monthly pension and further there is no social security protection to the retired

employees of APPTD. He further deplored that the retired employees APPTD are depending upon their family members for their livelihood at their old age at the end of life facing much hardship for routine life and medical aid etc., due to no financial support. He added that they requested CM Jagan to implement the Old Pension Scheme to all the employees of APPTD in view of social security protection in the old age after their retirement on attaining the superannuation.



Coins reflect history of a region: Mandali

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Deputy Speaker Dr. Mandali Buddha Prasad has said that coins reflect the real history of any region. He attended a meeting at the Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravathi and inaugurated a book titled 'Bahamani Coins' written by JVS Prasad, a Guntur-based numismatist on Saturday.

Buddha Prasad said that Prasad had collected all the coins issued by '18 Bahamani Linga' who ruled between 1347 and 1527 AD from Gulbarga and Bijapur.

Dr. E. Sivanagireddy, CEO, Pleach India Foundation, presided over the function and

said that JVS Prasad had collected almost all the coins of the 'Bahamani' in different denominations in gold, copper and silver. Dr. Movva Srinivasa Reddy, historian reviewed the book and said that the variety of coins of the Bahamani contributed to the growth of the Deccan economy.

Golla Narayanaro and Dr. Gumma Sambasivarao complimented the writer. The writer was honoured by Buddha Prasad after inaugurating a special exhibition of Bahamani coins organised on the occasion.

Students from Andhra Loyola College and PB Siddhartha College and a good number of history lovers attended the meeting.

2 juvenile offenders held, 130 g of gold recovered

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Vizianagaram police arrested two juveniles and recovered 130 grams of gold from them. Both juveniles have been involved in several property theft cases. According to the police, on January 18, the accused juveniles entered a house of D.Kiran Kumar of Vulligedda Street in Vizianagaram and decamped with gold jewellery from the house. Based on a complaint, the police started an investigation nabbed the two juveniles, and recovered the property.

During the investigation, the police identified one juvenile belonging to East Godavari and another one Vizianagaram local. They both developed friendship when they were detained at a juvenile home in East Godavari district when they were accused of various theft cases.

Two held in theft cases; valuables, cash recovered

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The city police nabbed two culprits and recovered 65 grams of gold, 5,480 grams of silver articles, Rs 29,500 and seized a motorcycle. DCP Babu Rao on Saturday told the media persons that Bharat Chauhan and P Ramesh Babu were nabbed on charges of theft at various places in the Bhavanipuram area in the city for some time.

The DCP said that the duo met in Indore Central jail, Madhya Pradesh and after being released from jail they were involved in various thefts. On receiving the complaints of theft from the victims the

clues team thoroughly examined the area.

As per the instructions of Police Commissioner Kranthi Rana Tata, the police team intensified their investigation and collected the details of the culprits and found that one Suresh helped the two culprits. The culprits used to stay in a lodge and during the daytime used to identify the houses that were locked and during the night they would break open the locks and decamp with the booty. While the culprits Chauhan and Ramesh were coming on the motorcycle they had lifted, they were caught by the police at Gollapudi Y junction.



Three accused in attempt to murder case held

PNS ■ VISAKHKAPATNAM

The Srikakulam police arrested three persons, accused of a murder attempt on Ramachandrapuram Sarpanch G.Venkataramana Murty on January 18.

Disclosing details of the case on Saturday, Superintendent of Police Amit Bardar said that the victim lived on the first floor of his house in the Madhuranagar area of Srikakulam town and the three accused made an attempt on his life. The prime accused, Salini, was very familiar to the victim. The accused is from Uttar Pradesh and settled in Srikakulam after marrying a local person.

Laying a honey trap through Salini, the trio planned to extract some money from the Sarpanch and demanded an amount of Rs 10 lakh. After negotiations, they agreed to settle for Rs 2 lakh. As a part of the agreement, they arrived at the victim's house on January 18 and asked for the money. When Salini went to the bathroom, Giri suddenly opened fire at the Sarpanch from a country-made pistol. The Sarpanch escaped with a minor injury and came running to the police station to lodge a complaint, the SP said.

The other two accused were identified as Giri and Mohit. Giri is from Uttar Pradesh while Mohit hails from Madhya Pradesh. The police registered cases under Sections 120(B), 307 R/w 34 IPC and Sec.27 of 1. Arms Act-1959. The police seized the pistol, eight rounds of live 7.65 mm cartridges and one empty cartridge.

Union Minister Teli visits NSTL, pays tributes at 'Prerna Sthal'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Rameshwar Teli, Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas and Labour and Employment, visited the Naval Science and Technological Laboratory (NSTL), on Saturday. He paid tributes at Dr. Kalam Prerana Sthal located at NSTL. Dr Y Sreenivas Rao, Director NSTL briefed the dignitary on the activities of the laboratory and the employee-friendly initiatives of the lab.

The Minister visited various work centres and was apprised of the research and development activities in the fields of



underwater weapons, batteries, hydrodynamics and warship technologies. He also visited the Lithium-Ion Battery Development Centre and appreciated the work being carried out. Dr. A Srinivas Kumar, Senior Scientist briefed the minister on military and civilian applications of battery technologies being developed by NSTL.

Govt committed to welfare of the poor: Minister

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Education inaugurated Dr.B R Ambedkar and Babu Jagjivan Ram auditorium constructed at a cost of Rs. 1.30 crore at Yerragondapalem village on Saturday. The minister also inaugurated a village secretariat constructed at a cost of Rs 40 lakh at the village. He also inaugurated the CC roads in the village. The minister got the booster dose of Coronavirus at the village.

Later, the minister attended the job mela organised in the high school by the AP Skill Development Corporation. Addressing the gathering, the minister said that opportunities should be provided to the people belonging to all sections of society.

Suresh said that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is ruling the state adopting Ambedkar's ideology. The Chief Minister aimed to make radical changes in the administrative system as well. He explained that many welfare programs were being carried out for the betterment of the poor across the castes.

The minister said that the government is implementing many welfare programs for the uplift of underprivileged sections. The government has given top priority to the SCs and the women, he claimed. Many development pro-



grammes are being taken out in the Yerragondapalem constituency for which the Chief Minister is extending support, the minister informed.

The minister informed that the government had taken the construction of Veligonda project prestigiously for the development of the backward areas in the region. He said the state government had introduced the English medium to provide higher education and foreign education opportunities to all poor children. He said the government was committed

to the development of schools. The government had taken steps to do away with differences among the SCs and strive for their overall development and welfare.

AP State SC Commission chairman Marumudi Victor Prasad said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had launched many reforms including the introduction of the English medium in school education and renovating schools under the Nadu-Nedu scheme. "If injustice is meted to the SCs or rights are

deprived the SC Commission will take strict action", he said, adding that the Jagan Reddy headed government is committed to the welfare of the SCs.

Madika Corporation chairman Kommuri Kanaka Rao, Mala Corporation chairperson P Ammaji and Joint Collector K Krishnaveni also spoke. District social welfare DD M Lakshma Naik, RDO K Lakshmi Shiva Jyoti, district Library chairperson R Susheela and AMC chairman Murthy Reddy were among those who were present.



Man stabbed in public, battling for life

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In a gruesome incident, a man was stabbed in daylight in full public glare at a shopping mall here on Saturday. Police said that the victim Kashi Rao developed illicit intimacy with Nurjahan, who is the wife of the accused Sheikh Rabbani.

Six months ago, Kashi Rao eloped with Nurjahan. When Kashi Rao went to a pan shop today, accused Sheikh Rabbani noticed him and attacked him with a knife.

He stabbed him on the stomach and neck and fled the scene. The profusely bleeding Kashi Rao fell unconscious on the road and later

He was shifted to the RIMS hospital. His condition is said to be very critical, police said.

The accused Sheikh Rabbani is running a tea stall at Sai Vena hospital and the couple has a son. A case was registered and the accused was arrested.



I&PR Commissioner inspects R-Day tableaux

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the 73rd Republic Day celebrations, I&PR Commissioner T Vijay Kumar Reddy on Saturday inspected the tableaux at Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium.

Later, speaking to the media, he said that 16 tableaux are being set up to showcase the development and welfare schemes being implemented by the State government. Various tableaux that will be showcased during the Republic Day celebrations include those related

to the Agriculture department's RBKs, 'Jagananna Pala Velluva', 'Matsakara Bharosa', Education department's 'Nadu-Nedu', 'Jagananna Vidya Deewana', 'Vasati Gruham' and other schemes.

Health department tableaux will showcase Aarogyasri, 'Nadu - Nadu', treatment on par with corporate hospitals, Covid care and guidelines to be followed and treatment to Covid patients, etc.

Housing department tableaux include the 'Jagananna Sampurna Gruha Hakku' scheme and Jagananna

Colonies. Women and Child Welfare department tableaux include 'Zero interest loan' schemes. Municipal Administration department's tableaux include CLAP - Clean Andhra Pradesh, Swachh Andhra Pradesh and Jagananna Pacha Toranam tableaux. Besides, the Industrial department's tableaux and others would also be on display.

Due to a spike in Covid infections, a limited number of guests will be allowed during the Republic Day celebrations, said the I & PR Commissioner.

Dalit Bandhu to be implemented throughout TS

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

Taking the sting out of the Opposition criticism that the government has 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 scheme would be implemented all over the State by extending assistance to 100 beneficiaries in each constituency during this financial year.

Accordingly, the Minister instructed Collectors to extend the scheme to 100 Dalit beneficiaries in each of the 118 constituencies and by the end of this financial year in March, 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 Madhira 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.

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 Bhadrachalam. The police produced Raghavender Rao before the court via video conferencing.

WG Collector inspects ZP High School

PNS ■ ELURU

West Godavari District Collector Kartikeya Mishra inspected the ZP high school at Satrampadu here on Saturday and directed the teachers to teach lessons in a way that would enhance the knowledge and self-confidence of the students.

The Collector made a surprise inspection of the ZP high school and interacted

with the 10th class students in the classrooms. He asked the students whether they could understand the lessons in the classroom. He asked the students some questions on social studies and geography.

The Collector drew an India map on the blackboard in the classroom and asked the students to identify Delhi, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Punjab, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha

states and China, Pakistan and Thailand countries. When some students could not identify them, he asked the teachers to teach lessons in a way that would improve their knowledge and self-confidence.

The Collector said that memorized studies should be stopped and the students should understand the subject completely. "The teachers should teach lessons to

the students in an easily understandable way and the memorizing of lessons for examinations should be stopped. All students should strive hard to get an A Plus grade in the examination. All students should wear uniforms and shoes," Kartikeya Mishra said.

DEO CV Renuka and ZP high school headmaster Muralikrishna were among those who were present.

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.

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.

17 Covid care centres set up in WG

PNS ■ ELURU

In the backdrop of a massive spike of Coronavirus positive cases, 17 Covid Care Centres have been set up providing 880 beds for the Coronavirus patients at various places in the WG district.

Joint Collector Dr. B R Ambedkar in a statement here on Saturday said that 60 beds in Chintalapudi TTD Kalyana Mandapam, 50 beds in Kovvur TTD Kalyana Mandapam, 50 beds in Tanuku TTD Kalyana Mandapam, 40 beds in Achanta Sri Someshwara Swamy Kalyana Mandapam, 50 beds in Narsapuram International Lace Trade Center and 50 beds in Ungutur Mandapam 60 beds in Eluru Tobacco Merchant Association,



30 beds in TTD Kalyana Mandapam in Tadepalligudem, 60 beds in TTD Kalyana Mandapam in Achanta Mandal Poduru, 40 beds in SC Boys Hostel in Undi Zone, 60 beds in Akividu TTD Kalyana Mandapam in Palakollu 40 beds in Mandapam, 40 beds in TTD Kalyana Mandapam in Narsapuram Zone, 40 beds in Bhimavaram Mandal Veeravasaram TTD Kalyana Mandapam, 80 beds in Bhimavaram Millers

Association Building were made available to treat the Covid patients across the district.

The Joint Collector said that a 1—bed CCC was set up in the Dr J. Leonard bell Memorial General Hospital, He said non-medical nodal officers have been appointed to monitor the centres. Similarly, each of the help desk managers and nine data entry operators were appointed in three shifts, Dr. Ambedkar said.

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

SNCR 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 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 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 parties 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 with the support of other anti-BJP forces.

Generally, the Left would have only an opinion at the national-level regarding political alliances and do not have state-wise alliances. If the Left decides to have an alliance with the Congress at the national-level their state units will also do the same.

CPM State Secretary Veerabhadram also suspects that KCR's strategy was to split anti-BJP votes for the benefit of the latter.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister DMK supremo MK Stalin and RJD Chief Tejaswi Yadav also are not ready to break ties with the Congress as they have been sailing with the Congress for a long time.

After the statement of the CPM State Secretary, it is clear that the Communists will go with the Congress and not with KCR. This may be a big shock for KCR.

When Left leaders met KCR a few days ago Telangana Congress leaders were worried over their proposal to form a Mahakutami to fight the TRS in the next Assembly elections. Now Congress leaders are happy with the latest political developments.



Award for Indla

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Noted psychiatrist Dr. Indla Ramasubba Reddy has been selected for the lifetime achievement award presented by the Indian Psychiatric Society for the year 2022. The lifetime achievement award is known as Dr. KJ Trivedi Jeevan Lifetime achievement award. The award will be presented for his services to the field of psychiatry in the state and country.

He is one of the most senior and reputed psychiatrists in the country and his articles, essays, and research papers are published in many medical and psychiatric journals. The award was announced in Visakhapatnam on Saturday during the national psychiatric society meeting. Dr. Indla has been creating awareness among the people on the superstitions, stigma and misconceptions on various subjects. He also wrote nine books in Telugu on psychiatry.

Nishant is GMC's new Commissioner

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Anantapur Joint Collector Nishant Kumar has been appointed as Commissioner of the Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC). Srikakulam Joint Collector Himanshu Kaushik has been appointed as the Additional Resident Commissioner of AP Bhavan while Rajampet Sub-collector Ketan Garghas been appointed as the Anantapur Joint Collector.

The government on Saturday issued orders to this effect and the officers will soon assume duties in their respective positions.

SHORT TAKE



Police frisk Aghora Sadhus on suspicion

KAKINADA: The police held four Aghora Sadhus when they were wandering in a car at Munganda village in P Gannavaram mandal on Saturday. Police said that the locals noticed that four Sadhus were wandering in a car in the area for the last three days. On suspicion, they informed the police about them. The police held the sadhus and inspected their bags. The Sadhus were speaking in Hindi. The Sadhus told the police that they were on a pilgrimage and came to the area from Varanasi. Since no objectionable material was found the police let them free asking to wear masks.

All steps taken for welfare of women police: SP Anburajan

PNS ■ KADAPA

Superintendent of Police KKN Anburajan has said that all steps have been taken for the welfare of women police personnel in the district and a special call centre was set up to provide help to the women police and their family members if contracted Coronavirus.

The SP held Disha coordinators meeting here on Saturday. Addressing them, the SP announced that a discount

would be extended to the women police personnel on the purchases in the police canteen.

He advised the women police personnel to take special care of their health in the wake of the Coronavirus third wave. "A special call centre was set up in the Disha police stations especially for the women police personnel to extend help if they or their family members were infected with the Coronavirus. Free medical

kits and other medical facilities are also being provided to the women police personnel", the SP said.

The SP announced that a special committee is being set up especially to monitor the welfare of women police personnel. The SP asked the women police personnel to know the problems of women in their police station limits and resolve them. "You should strive hard to fulfill the aspirations of Chief Minister YS

Jagan Mohan Reddy and DGP Gautam Sawang of people's foremost police.

Everyone should work for petition-friendly policing in every ward and village. Every woman in the district should be made aware to download the 'Dishaapp'. Police create awareness that if the button SOS is pressed the police would come to rescue them, Anuburajan said. Disha police station DSP Vasudevan also spoke.



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 ■ NAGPURI

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 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. Paes announced weeks ago that his city's raucous street parties, some of which draw hundreds of thousands of revellers, wouldn't proceed in the manner they did before the pandemic, but without clarifying what shape they might take. He said at the time, however, that samba schools' parades through the Sambadrome would proceed as planned, in light of the relative ease with which vaccination status and negative coronavirus tests could be checked upon entry. The parade through the Sambadrome is a major tourist draw for Rio and the central fixture of the city's pre-Lenten party. It draws tens of thousands of spectators in its bleachers and tens of millions watch from home.

Inflation skyrockets in Sri Lanka; food prices at record high



Sri Lanka's benchmark inflation rate, measured by the National Consumer Price Index, accelerated to 14 per cent in December 2021, up from 11.1 per cent, the government statistics office said on Saturday, amidst a severe foreign exchange crisis. This was for the second

consecutive month after inflation recorded double digit growth for the first time in November since the index came to be compiled from 2014. Food prices jumped 6.3 per cent while non-food prices rose 1.3 per cent in December, according to the National Consumer Price Index. "The food sub-index was up 21.5 per cent in 12 months to December 2021, while non-foods also rose 7.6 per cent in the months," the statistics office said in a statement. As soon as the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in 2020, the government imposed import restrictions to try and stop dwindling of foreign reserves. Sri Lanka currently banks on the Indian economic assistance with credit lines being made available to finance fuel and food imports. The island nation is currently facing a severe foreign exchange crisis with falling reserves. The country is grappling with a shortage of almost all essentials due to the lack of dollars to pay for the imports.

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-

the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE



Dynamics of Karma & Destiny

As we create the world along with our cravings and attachments, these are apparently writing our destiny, through us

7



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



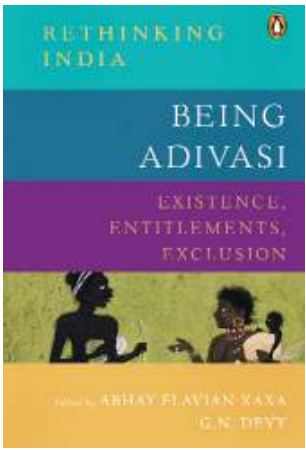
BEING ADIVASI

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 tendency. 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 Adivasis 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

(The writer is president of Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), a non-profit federation whose mission is to support the farming community in India and create a sustainable future for farmers)

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

Preference for wild 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.

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.