





### Why Tesla won't make cars in India

P 6



### Prez hails India's healthcare facilities

P 5



### Algerian dissidents: Victims of crackdown, or outlaws?

P 10

→ In brief ←

**Villagers ransack liquor outlet, destroy its entire stock**

A mob of villagers angry over the opening of a liquor shop close to a temple, a mosque and a school in their area on outskirts of the city ransacked the outlet and destroyed its entire stock on Saturday, police said. The villagers also roughed up the owner of the liquor shop in the Khari panchayat in Bishnah area, who had to be rescued by police, they said. We have been demanding the closure of the shop since its opening some time back but the government failed to take action on our repeated requests, local sarpanch R K Sharma said. He said the wine shop was set up in an area surrounded by a temple, a mosque and a school. We do not need wine shops and our protest is against the government which has turned the city of temples into a city of wine shops, he said.

**IndiGo fined Rs 5L for denying boarding to specially abled child**

Aviation regulator DGCA on Saturday said it has imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh on IndiGo airline for denying boarding to a specially abled child at Ranchi airport on May 7. IndiGo had on May 9 said the boy was denied permission to board the Ranchi-Hyderabad flight as he was visibly in panic. After the boy was prohibited from boarding, his parents also decided not to enter the plane. The regulator said in order to avoid such situations in the future, it would revisit its own regulations, making it mandatory for airlines to take the airport doctor's written opinion on the health of a passenger before making a decision to deny boarding.

**'Agri land converted to residential use not against law'**

The purchase of land after it is converted from agricultural to residential use does not contravene the provisions of the Karnataka Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prohibition of Transfer of Certain Lands) Act, the Karnataka High Court has said. It upheld as valid the purchase of three acres of land by the Tibetan Children's Village in Sheshagiri Hills village in Ramangara, which was originally a grant land, after the land had been converted for residential use. Agricultural land granted to SC/ST cannot be transferred as per the said Act.

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

**Month & Paksham:**

**Tithi:** Chaturdashi: May 28 01:09 PM to May 29 02:55 PM

**Amavasya:** May 29 02:55 PM to May 30 05:00 PM

**Nakshatram:**

**Kritika:** May 29 04:39 AM to May 30 07:12 AM

**Rahukalam:** 5:05 PM to 6:42 PM

**Yamagandam:** 12:13 PM to 1:50 PM

**Varjyam:** 05:56 PM to 07:42 PM

**Gulika:** 3:27 PM to 5:05 PM

**Amritakalam:** None

**Abhijit Muhurtham:** 11:47 AM to 12:38 PM

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

**Forecast:** Partly cloudy

**Temp:** 42°C

**Humidity:** 43%

**Sunrise:** 5:38 AM

**Sunset:** 6:38 PM

**Updated:** MAY 28, 2022 5:00 PM

OBTUSE ANGLE



# Naidu sounds the poll bugle, says people eager to send Jagan home

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Raising the battle cry, TDP national president and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday sounded the 'election bugle', asserting that all sections of people in Andhra Pradesh were eagerly waiting to send 'Jagan Reddy home'.

"A sea of people came to Mahanadu today. Jagan will go mad at this. He will not sleep tonight. His Government has lost the trust of the people. Our Mahanadu meeting is full and their Ministers bus yatra is empty", said Naidu.

In his concluding speech at Mahanadu 2022 in Ongole, the TDP chief said Jagan Reddy had amassed Rs. 1.75 Lakh Cr illegal income in the last three years of his rule.

While the family treasury of Jagan became full, the AP people got Rs. 8 Lakh Cr debt. How could



Naidu kickstarts NTR birth centenary celebrations: P3

the people of the State repay all this debt?

Naidu asserted that Jagan Reddy would go home even if the midterm elections would come at this instant. The TDP would stand by the side of the people to rescue

them from the non-stop oppression of the YSRCP leaders. The TDP leaders were ready to go to jail for the sake of the oppressed sections. Chandrababu Naidu accused Jagan of blackmailing all systems and looting all natural resources.

## Polls as per schedule in 2024: Perni Nani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister and YSRCP MLA Perni Venkataramaiah (Nani) has said that the family of TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu has no right to organise the Mahanadu conclave.

Addressing a press conference at Gannavaram after receiving the ministers on bus yatra as part of their 'Samajika Nyayabheri' on Saturday, Nani said that the ruling YSRCP will go to the polls in 2024 as per schedule.

Nani made it clear that the ruling party's bus yatra is not competing with the TDP's Mahanadu. He said that people came voluntarily to attend CM Jagan Mohan Reddy's meetings before the elections and so are they coming now during the bus yatra. He said that during the TDP regime social justice was just confined to words but not implemented anywhere. Nani said that soon after the YSRCP govern-

ment took the reins, social justice had been implemented within three months. He said that the YSRCP won with 50 percent of the votes in the last general elections.

He said that the YSRCP had won more than 60 percent of the votes in the local body elections. As part of the government programme, they are visiting the remaining 40 percent. A few are questioning the ruling party leaders on the welfare schemes though they are not eligible for them, said Nani.

The former minister Nani said that due to financial constraints the government could not give PRC as much as the employees demanded. As Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is honest, he had told the employees about the difficulties of the government in implementing it as per the demands raised by them.



### Surekha in Indian team for 2 world events

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada's woman archer and World No. 3 Vennam Jyothi Surekha has been selected to the Indian Archery Indian team which will be participating in the world games in the United States of America from July 7-17. She was also selected for the World Cup stage-3 team which will be held in Paris from June 21-26.

According to Surekha's father V Surendra, the Archery Association of India conducted selections for both World Games and World Cup Stage-3 teams at Sonipat on Saturday.

## YSRC brass ensures 'bus yatra' a success as Jagan busy at Davos

SEELAM AROZIE  
■ VIJAYAWADA

The ongoing four-day 'Samajika Nyayabheri' bus yatra undertaken by the ruling YSRCP has taken the State by storm. The bus yatra, which began in the Srikakulam district on May 26 and is scheduled to conclude in Anantapur on May 29 (Sunday) after crisscrossing the length and breadth of the State, has witnessed the supporters of the ruling party coming in droves to listen to their leaders.

The YSRCP-led government, to consolidate its vote bank of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Minorities, has embarked on the social justice mission. Seventeen of the 25 Ministers belonging to the backward communities set out to highlight the achievements and welfare schemes of the YSRCP government during the bus yatra. The Ministers include Dharmana Prasada Rao, Botcha Satyanarayana, Sidiri Appala Raju, Meruga



## Govt committed to social justice: YSRCP

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The YSRCP leaders, including the ministers, reiterated that the government is committed to providing social justice to the SCs/STs/BCs and Minorities.

The YSRCP's Samajika Nyayabheri bus yatra entered the Guntur district on Saturday. MLC Lella Appireddy, Mayor K Manohar Naidu, MLAs M Giridhar, Md. Mustafa and Mirchyard chairman

Chandragiri Yesuratnam welcomed the bus yatra at the bypass road.

Addressing a large gathering on the occasion, Minister Sidiri Appala Raju said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy was doing social justice to the SCs, STs, BCs, and minority communities by appointing them to various posts to provide equality in the social, political, and economic spheres.



Nagarjuna, and Taneti Vanita and despite the scorching sun, they continued the bus yatra during their tour of Vizianagaram.

Minister for Revenue, Stamps, and Registration Dharmana Prasada Rao addressing the crowds during the 'bus yatra', said that Jagan Mohan Reddy's flagship programs and his policies for uplifting families of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and

Minorities needed to be implemented throughout the nation.

The 'Samajika Nyayabheri' drew huge crowds at Old Gajuwaka on Friday. It also drew massive support from the people when it entered the Eluru district and Guntur district on Saturday. The Ministers explained to people the social justice being meted out by the YSRCP-led government.

## Made honest efforts in eight years: Modi

PNS ■ RAJKOT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that in the last eight years, his government made an honest attempt to build the India that Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel dreamt of, and added that it worked to protect the dignity of the poor during this period.

Modi, who completed eight years in office as prime minister on May 26, also said that he did not spare any effort in serving the country and did not indulge in anything that would make the people of the country hang their heads in shame.

He was addressing a gathering after inaugurating a 200-bed multi-specialty hospital in Atkot town of Gujarat's Rajkot district. During his speech, he gave an account of the work his government carried out in the last eight years.

### MODI GOVT ANNIVERSARY

## BJP to start outreach campaign

### ○ Service, good governance will be the theme

PNS ■ NEWDELHI

All ministers in BJP-led central and state governments and its elected representatives will take part in a massive public outreach campaign to mark the eighth anniversary of the Modi government, focusing on its priorities of the welfare of the poor and good governance, the party said on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, its national general secretary Arun Singh hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a reliable, popular, decisive, sacrificing and ascetic leader, and said that the entire nation is standing with him.

He said the BJP will be celebrat-

ing the Modi government's eighth anniversary for a fortnight starting from May 30.

From May 30 to June 14, the party will organise public outreach on the theme of the service, good governance, and poor welfare fortnight across the country, as these have been the priority of the Prime Minister Modi-led government, Singh said.

As part of this campaign, a 75-hour public outreach programme will be organised from booth to the national level in which all Union ministers, ministers in the BJP-led state governments and elected representatives will take part and visit villages, he said.

Sharing details of the campaign,

Singh said a day each has been dedicated to reaching out to farmers, women, SCs, STs, OBCs and minorities, he said.

On May 30, Prime Minister Modi will hand over cheques for the children orphaned during the COVID-19 pandemic and will also announce a scholarship for them, he said.

To a query on activities for reaching out to minorities, Singh said the Modi government works on the principle of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas aur sabka vishwas' (With all, development for all and everyone's trust) and therefore its welfare schemes don't differentiate among people".



## 4 of family die in gas cylinder blast

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Four persons of a family were killed and two others were injured when the roof of their house collapsed after a domestic gas cylinder exploded at Mulakaledu village in Settur mandal in the district in the wee hours of Saturday.

Police said that the deceased were identified as Dadu (35), Sharfana (30), Firoz (6) and Jahanbee. The roof of the house caved in under the impact of the explosion.

The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the Government General Hospital for post-mortem in Anantapur town.

## Unprecedented rush at Tirumala temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An unprecedented pilgrim rush was witnessed in Tirumala on Saturday with a sea of devotees thronging the hill town. The influx of pilgrims is higher than the pilgrim rush during Vaikunta Ekadasi and Garuda Seva days and as a result, Srivari Darshan is taking over 48 hours with all the queue lines and compartments brimming to their capacities.

As of now, it was possible to provide Srivari Darshan to only 4,500 devotees per hour. But with the heavy rush to provide Darshan to all the devotees

in queue lines it takes two days. The devotees were requested by TTD to take note of the present situation and change their pilgrimage plans accordingly to avoid any sort of inconvenience.

Inspecting the queue lines on Saturday evening, the EO directed all the department officials to step up the facilities for the devotees. He said elaborate arrangements of drinking water, milk, 'Anna Prasadam' etc, are being made and TTD Security with the coordinated efforts of the Police ensured safety measures for devotees. Officials of all departments were present during the EO inspection tour.

## Huge fire at hotel in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A huge fire broke out in a Green Bawarchi hotel in Raidurg in Hyderabad on Saturday. The fire broke out on the second floor of the building and spread to the third floor. Those in the hotel ran in panic. Some people who suffocated came down while others reached the terrace. Firefighters rushed to the scene and brought the blaze under control. Firefighters used a Bahubali sky lift crane to rescue those trapped inside the building. Bringing it in a timely manner avoided loss of life.



# Gollapudi LI scheme canal silt removal work at brisk pace

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Rural Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDO) J Suneetha inspected the silt and weed removal programme by the MGNREGA workers in the Gollapudi Lift Irrigation Scheme canal at Nunna near Vijayawada, on Saturday. The NTR District Water And Management Authority (DWAMA) took the 12 km length of the Gollapudi LI scheme canal development from Ambapuram to Nunna limits. As many as 550 workers took part in the weed and silt removal programme.

Recently, 'The Pioneer' carried a report on the canal situation following which the district authorities took up the work to unclog the canal. Vijayawada Rural MPDO Suneetha visited and inspected the canal works at several parts of Nunna. She interacted with the MGNREGS workers and enquired about the wages. Later, she said that the workers should come to the work spot in the wee hours as it would be helpful for them to get wages of Rs 220 and above per day.



Vijayawada Rural MPDO Suneetha interacting with MGNREGA workers at Gollapudi Lift Irrigation scheme canal in Nunna, near Vijayawada, on Saturday.

"Our objective is to increase wages to Rs 220 from the present Rs 205. If the workers go to the work spot before half an hour, they will get good wages," she added. "We provide tent facilities to

the workers at the workplace for taking rest," Suneetha said. The State government wants to provide work for every job cardholder and pay wages Rs 220 on an average, she said. Later, she verified the work-

ers' attendance in the app and asked the mates how they took attendance. MGNREGA engineering consultant Srinivas, technical assistant Kiranmayi and others participated.

# 50 per cent of rural households have access to tap water

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has achieved the milestone of 50 per cent of rural households having access to tap water connections, the Jal Shakti Ministry said on Saturday. In a statement, the ministry said Goa, Telangana, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu,

Puducherry and Haryana have already achieved 100 per cent household water connections. Punjab, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar have coverage of more than 90 per cent of the households and are progressing fast towards attaining the status of 'Har Ghar Jal'. The Jal Jeevan Mission aims to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions and communities by engaging them in water

supply schemes. Over 9.59 crore rural households spread across states and union territories are getting water within their premises, it said. The ministry said as on May 27, all households in 108 districts, 1,222 blocks, 71,667 gram panchayats and 1,51,171 villages have been provided with drinking water through taps.

## Police arrest Teenmar Mallanna

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Police on Saturday arrested Chintapandu Naveen alias Teenmar Mallanna at Arepally village in the district. A posse of policemen arrived at Pochamma temple at the village and took Mallanna into custody. He was present at a meeting held to press the demand for withdrawal of GO 80 issued by the government for pooling the land for outer ring road. The police whisked him away.

## Govt committed to social justice: YSRCP

Continued on Page 1

He said that the Chief Minister has benefited the downtrodden and the weaker sections like nowhere else in the country. The Minister said that their bus yatra was getting unprecedented support from the people and he thanked the people for their large-scale fan base. Rajya Sabha member Mopidevi Venkataramana said that the SCs, STs, BCs, and minorities, who were used as vote bank politics, were being looked at from a different angle and the Chief Minister was working for their betterment.

The MP said that the Chief Minister would go down in history as the Chief Minister who did full justice to the BC, SC, ST, and minority communities in the state like never before in the history of the country. He pointed out that out of 25 ministers in the state Cabinet, 17 of them were from BC, SC, ST, and minority communities. MLC Appireddy said that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is following the ideology of Ambedkar, Phule, and Jagjivan Ram. The Chief Minister is ruling the state in such a way that there is room for corruption and disparity. Mayor Manohar Naidu, MLA Md.Mustafa and Giridhar also spoke.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹293
Without Skin	₹312
Broiler at Farm	₹160
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	411
VISAKHAPATNAM	420
HYDERABAD	346
RETAIL PRICE (IN VIJAYAWADA)	₹4.11

# YSRC brass ensures 'bus...

Continued on Page 1

The initial doubts of political pundits on the success of the initiative in the absence of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who is away in Davos to attend the World Economic Forum – 2022 event, have been proved wrong what with the crowds thronging the buses and patiently listening to the ruling party leaders explaining the social justice done in the State. The YSRCP leaders are seen going full throttle to take on the Opposition TDP and its chief N Chandrababu Naidu in exposing what they call bankrupt ideology

and slanderous campaign. Coming at a time when TDP's annual jamboree Mahanadu is going on in Ongole and Naidu trying all his tricks to revive the sagging morale of TDP leaders and cadre that has been battered in all the elections (panchayat and local body results included) recently, the YSRCP's mission can be seen as a huge success. The no-holds-barred onslaught on the Jagan Mohan Reddy's rule in the State by the TDP has been negated by a series of rebuttals by his Cabinet colleagues as well as his trusted lieutenants Advisor to Government (Public Affairs),

Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy and party's national general secretary and Rajya Sabha Member V Vijayasai Reddy. Apparently, the duo has played its part well in guiding the YSRCP flock to drive home the social justice message to the public, especially in the CM's absence. In conclusion, it must be said that the Chief Minister's fiat to the ministers that the message of implementation of Dr. BR Ambedkar's philosophy of social justice is being done in letter and spirit in the State has been well-taken and successfully delivered to the people of the State.

# Naidu sounds the poll bugle...

Continued on Page 1

Naidu said the current bills doubled in May when compared to April. Prices of tomato and chicken were skyrocketing at Rs. 120 and Rs. 320 respectively. Sand rate went up from Rs. 600 per tractor during TDP rule to Rs. 6,000 under YCP. "No wonder tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, AP will follow in the footsteps of Sri Lanka." Condemning the YSRCP 'murder politics', Naidu asked whether Jagan Reddy had any right to rule the State when he tried to turn 'babai Viveka Reddy axe attack' into heart attack. Why was the CM not suspending his party MP Avinash Reddy for his role in babai murder just like how MLC Ananta Babu was suspended? Chandrababu Naidu said he developed Amaravati for AP along the lines of Hyderabad for Telangana, Bangalore for Karnataka and Chennai for Tamil Nadu. But now, Jagan had destroyed Amaravati and forced the AP people to go to Hyderabad even to do 'low paid menial works'. The golden future of AP State was totally crushed.

Even the lifeline irrigation project of Polavaram was smashed in the name of reverse tendering. Naidu warned Jagan: "Kabadadar, be careful. Each and every Telugu Desam activist is an heir to NTR legacy. They will fight till the end for self-respect, for their State. NTR removed meters on agricultural motors. Jagan is fixing meters again. Farmers should fight it out against this injustice." Naidu deplored that the roads and industries, which were symbols of development and civilisation, were also gone. The Rs 24,000-Cr worth Asian Paper Pulp factory at Ramayapatnam port in Prakasam district was driven away. Jagan Reddy's Kodi Kathi dramas had completely ruined the State. The TDP chief accused Jagan of falling at the feet of Delhi leaders, by mortgaging Polavaram, Special Status, Visakha Steel, Railway Zone and all the bifurcation benefits. The YCP goons grabbed galaxy mines with their threats and settlements. In just liquor mafia, Rs. 5,000 Cr illegal income was being made each year.

## Char Dham pilgrims found travelling with fake registration documents

PNS ■ RISHIKESH

A case under section 420 of the IPC was registered here against unidentified persons after fake registration documents for char dham yatra were recovered from some pilgrims. Fake registration documents were recovered from six pilgrims travelling by a bus at Bhadrakali checkpoint during a checking conducted in the presence of Garhwal commissioner Sushil Kumar and DIG Garhwal KS Nagnyal. Some cyber cafes are suspected of issuing fake registration documents to pilgrims, Garhwal Commissioner Sushil Kumar said. Pilgrims from whom fake registration documents were recovered were asked to return.

# World Environment Day celebrations to be grand

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao has instructed the officials concerned to take measures to celebrate World Environment Day (WED) on June 5 on a grand note and motivate the people to safeguard the environment. The collector conducted a teleconference on Saturday with the concerned officials on the arrangements for the WED. Speaking on the occasion, the collector said that the changes in the climate would lead to damage of biodiversity leading to many complications. To overcome this everyone has the responsibility to safeguard the environment and the people have to be motivated to safeguard the environment, said the collector.



He said that as part of this awareness programmes and various other programmes are planned on WED across the district and the officials have to take measures in organizing them. Spot painting, cycling rallies will be organized. The collector said that at least four to five plants should

be planted by the Tahsildars, MPDOs, village and ward secretariat offices and ensure the safeguard of the plants. Further plantation should be carried out in the premises of Kondapalli HPCL, BPCL, IOCL, AP Genco and at industries on June 5, said the collector Dilli Rao.

CAUSE OF DAMAGE TO POLAVARAM DIAPHRAGM WALL

# Ambati dares Naidu for open debate

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Terming Mahanadu as a farce, Irrigation Minister Ambati Rambabu said Chandrababu Naidu has no right to observe the centenary celebrations of TDP founder NT Rama Rao after backstabbing him and being responsible for his death. Speaking to the media at the party central office here on Saturday, the Minister said Naidu has been trying to revive the TDP after it lost ground in

the state. He asked what Naidu has done to BCs, SCs, STs, and Minorities while in power. The Minister criticised Naidu for propagating false information during Mahanadu that reverse tendering was the reason for the damage to the diaphragm wall and challenged Naidu for an open debate in this regard and ques-



tioned why Naidu couldn't complete the project before 2018 as promised. He slammed Naidu for not condemning the attack on Dalit Minister and BC MLA houses in Mahanadu and also for not passing a resolution in the event to name Konaseema after BR Ambedkar and said Naidu is anti-Dalit, anti-BCD,

and anti minorities. He said Naidu has been encouraging TDP leaders and cadre to use abusive language against ministers and added that the main agenda of Mahanadu was not to discuss ideologies and action plans but seemed to be only to get back the power to Naidu. He said TDP is on the verge of collapse in the State and Naidu couldn't become the Chief Minister irrespective of his campaigns.

## Huge fire at hotel in Hyd

Continued on Page 1

Skylift Crane played a key role in rescuing 14 people. It may be mentioned here that the Telangana Fire Department recently purchased the sky lift. This sky lift can reach up to 15 floors. Meanwhile firefighters rescued remaining people after a third floor glass of a building was smashed. First aid was given to those who had difficulty breathing due to the thick smoke. Firefighters put out the fire with 3 fire engines. A short circuit is believed to be the cause of the fire. Traffic was light at this time of night due to smoke. The Bahubali Sky Lift Crane caught everyone's attention during the rescue operation. People around were watching with interest as Sky Lift went up and smashed the building windows and rescued those trapped on the terrace.

# India sends 15k litres of kerosene to Sri Lanka

PNS ■ COLOMBO

India sent 15,000 litres of kerosene to Sri Lanka on Saturday to help 700 fisherfolk and power ferry services in the Tamil-dominated Jaffna city, days after it delivered around 40,000 metric tonnes of petrol to the debt-ridden island nation which is grappling with its worst economic crisis. India extended an additional USD 500 million credit line to Sri Lanka last month to help the neighbouring country import fuel as it has been struggling to pay for imports after its foreign exchange reserves plummeted sharply in recent times, causing a devaluation of its currency and spiralling inflation. Continuing Indian assistance to Sri Lanka. 15000 ltrs of kerosene gifted to 700 fish-

ermen of Delft, Nainativu, Eluvaitivu & Analitivu. CG Shri Raakesh Natraj with Fisheries Min Hon. Douglas Devananda initiated distribution; part of the consignment will also power ferry service between islands, the Consulate General of India in Jaffna said in a tweet. India on Friday handed over 25 tonnes of medical supplies worth over USD 700,000 to Sri Lanka as part of its ongoing efforts to help the island nation combat its worst economic crisis. India on Monday said it delivered around 40,000 metric tonnes of petrol to Sri Lanka, days after supplying 40,000 metric tonnes of diesel under the Indian credit line to help ease the acute fuel shortage in the country. Last week, India sent urgent relief supplies comprising

9,000 metric tonnes (MT) of rice, 200 MT of milk powder and 24 MT of life-saving medicines with a combined value of Rs 45 crore to Sri Lanka. On Friday, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe expressed appreciation for the support India has been extending to his country during "this difficult period". Taking to Twitter, the prime minister said he had a conversation with India's finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday. "I expressed our country's appreciation for the support India has extended during this difficult period. I look forward to further strengthening ties between our nations," he wrote. Sri Lanka is going through the worst economic crisis since independence in 1948.

# Made honest efforts in eight years: Modi

Continued on Page 1

"I have spared no effort in the service to the nation in the last eight years. I have neither allowed, nor personally not done any work that will make you or even a single person of India hang their head in shame. In the last eight years, we have made an honest attempt to build the India of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel's dream," he said. "Mahatma Gandhi wanted an India in which the poor, Dalits, adivasi and women are empowered, where cleanliness and health are part of life, where economy is based on swadeshi (local) solutions," Modi said, adding that his government

has worked for all this. In the last eight years, pucca houses were provided to over three crore families; 10 crore families were saved from the ignominy of open defecation (by way of constructing toilets), nine crore women were saved from the adverse impact of smoke (by providing LPG connections); electricity connections were provided to 2.5 crore families and tap water connections were given to six crore families; over 50 crore people are covered to get free treatment (under PMJAY insurance scheme), Modi said.

"These are not just figures, but this is a proof of our commitment to provide dig-

nity to the poor of the country. In the last eight years, my government has worked for the uplift of the poor," he said. "With the mantra of 'Sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas aur sab ka prayas' (everyone's support, everyone's development and everyone's trust), we have given new direction to the development of the country," Modi said. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government opened the food grain stocks for the poor, he said. "As the pandemic started, people faced difficulties in getting the food supplies. So we opened up the food grain stock of the country for the poor people. We provided

financial assistance into the Jan Dhan bank accounts of women during the pandemic. We opened our health services for all those who suffered," Modi said. "And when the vaccine came, we ensured that every Indian gets vaccinated and that too free," Modi said. He said he did not study poverty from books or through television as he himself went through the phase. Modi, whose visit to his home state comes around six months before the Assembly polls, said the double engine government (at Centre and state) has ensured fast-paced growth of Gujarat, which he asserted was not the case before 2014.

"Due to the double engine government, Gujarat is achieving new heights of development. Before 2014, things were different. If we sent any development project files to the Centre (UPA government), they used to reject. They could not see any development project...," he said. State assembly elections are scheduled in Gujarat in December. Modi hailed the Patidar community trust, which set up the 200-bed hospital in rural area of Rajkot, and said he wished that hospital should remain empty. "Nobody should fall sick. We have to build such a lifestyle which helps us in not getting sick," he said.

# Forests restored, Urban forests developed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the last eight years, 243 crore saplings were planted at a cost of Rs 8,511 crore in Telangana. According to official data, 9.65 lakh acres of forests have been restored. Nearly 109 urban forests have been developed in cities and towns. According to the Forest Survey of India, the green

cover in Telangana has increased by 7.7 per cent in the last four years. The Telangana government has set up a 'green budget' with the participation of all sections in an innovative manner like nowhere else in the world. At least 10 per cent of the green budget is allocated and spent exclusively on local, municipal and local

bodies. The state's 12,769 gram panchayats have set up nurseries to grow plants. Every year, before the monsoon season the Haritha Haram programme is organised as a movement. Public representatives, officials and dignitaries are planting saplings on all official occasions. The tradition of planting plants on birthdays continues in Telangana.





# Naidu kickstarts NTR birth centenary

**Calls the TDP founder champion of food security in India**

**PNS ■ AMARAVATI**

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national president and former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday paid glowing tributes to party founder N.T. Rama Rao on the occasion of the latter's 99th birthday celebrations.

Naidu called NTR a champion of food security in the whole country as his Rs 2 per kg rice scheme showed the path and marked the beginning of the end of hunger in India.

The TDP chief recalled how NTR rose to great heights with confidence and determination though he was born in a small and humble family. NTR would always live in the hearts of the people and he was the pride and guiding light for Telugu all over the world.

Chandrababu Naidu came in a motorcycle rally from Mahanadu venue and garlanded a statue of NTR in



Addanki bus stand centre in Ongole town. From today, the next one year would witness programmes by the TDP to celebrate NTR's birth centenary.

Addressing a meeting after garlanding the statue, Naidu said NTR had put Telugu people above everything else. This was why he sacrificed his 40 years of flourishing cine career

and founded the Telugu Desam Party. NTR took the plunge into politics, not for power but to fight for self-respect for the Telugu people who patronised him for four

decades.

Chandrababu Naidu called upon the people to fight with the inspiration of NTR. The people should realise they were free citizens but not slaves to the oppressive YSRCP rulers. The Government put all sorts of hurdles for TDP's Mahanadu conclave held on the occasion of NTR's birth-day.

Naidu sarcastically said that the Government did not give buses to the TDP cadres but still lakhs of people arrived and took part in Mahanadu. Whereas, the officials gave buses to the ruling party Ministers' Bus Yatra where there were only buses but not people now.

The TDP chief called NTR as a matchless and numero uno personality. NTR's hard work was evident from the fact that he acted in 300 films in 40 years. A multi-faceted personality, NTR was an actor, director, producer, writer, reformer and administrator all rolled into one.

## Nimmakuru will be developed as tourist as spot: Balayya

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Film actor-turned-politician and Hindupur MLA N Balakrishna has promised to develop Nimmakuru village which is the birthplace of Telugu Desam party founder, former Chief Minister, and his father N T Rama Rao.

Balakrishna paid rich tributes to N T Rama Rao at Nimmakuru village on Saturday on the centenary birth anniversary of the latter by garlanding his statue.

Later addressing the gathering, Balakrishna said that NT Rama Rao would remain in the hearts of Telugus forever. "NTR floated the TDP to protect the self-respect of Telugu people. The KG rice Rs 2 scheme which he launched won the accolades of all", he said.

Balakrishna said that a 35 feet statue of NTR would be installed at the tank area in the Nimmakuru area. Nimmakuru village would be developed as a tourist centre. He called upon youths to come forward to join politics and work enthusiastically. He claimed that former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu developed the state a lot. "Now all are seeing the pathetic state of AP. I will speak elaborately in the Mahanadu meeting on the present situation of AP," Balakrishna said.

In Tenali, he participated in the NTR's centenary celebrations at Pemmasani theatre on Saturday. Addressing the gathering he said that on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of NTR, one movie of NTR would be exhibit-



ed every day in Pemmasani theatres in Tenali throughout the year and the entrance would also be free. Former minister Nakka Ananda Babu, film actor Prabha, and writer Burra Sai Madhav were among the TDP leaders who were present.



## Guv to inaugurate 'Cardiac Summit'

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Ramesh Hospitals Vijayawada was the first cardiac centre in Vijayawada established in 1988, since then they have conducted about 50,000 Cardiac Surgeries & Stent Angioplasties with the highest rate of success. Ramesh hospitals have established itself as an important centre in the field of medicine in the country itself.

Commemorating the success of conducting 50,000 heart surgeries & cardiac interventions, Ramesh Hospitals is organizing a Multi-State Cardiac Update Summit, a CME Programme with the

theme of "The Role of Family Physicians to prevent sudden Cardiac Death" on Sunday, May 29 at SS Convention Centre, Vijayawada.

Governor of Andhra Pradesh Biswabhusan Harichandan will inaugurate the Summit and Dr Azad Moopen, Chairman of Aster Health Care and other medical luminaries will participate in this Summit.

The renowned Cardiologists Dr B Somaraju, Dr Dasari Prasad Rao and Dr Prasad Lal will be felicitated on this occasion, said Dr P Ramesh Babu, MD Ramesh Hospitals at a press meet here on Saturday.

## Roja terms Naidu a 'Sani'

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

During the two-day Mahanadu being held at Ongole, the Telugu Desam Party leaders and party president N Chandrababu Naidu have been needlessly attacking the YSRCP government led by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleged Tourism Minister RK Roja.

Addressing a press conference on Saturday, the Tourism Minister described Chandrababu Naidu as "Sani" that has been troubling the state for several years now.

The minister said that it is ridiculous that the man, who was responsible for the sudden death of Dr. NTR, is garlanding the latter's portraits and saluting them. She said had NTR been alive now, Naidu's political career would have gone to dogs. She further said that Naidu was also scared of Junior NTR as well and said that Naidu was feeling so much insecure that he had driven the young actor away from the party.

She dared Chandrababu Naidu to visit any of the TDP workers' homes either in



**Minister Roja asked, "You have been in power till 2019. Why didn't you get the idea of installing NTR's statue? Who stopped you from developing the village as a memorial place for NTR?"**

Kadapa or Krishna district or any other town and would question whether they had benefited during the TDP regime or the YSRCP regime.

She further stated that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy wants everyone to get the benefits of the schemes implemented by

the government irrespective of whether they voted for YSRCP or not. She also said that be it a BJP worker or a TDP worker, everyone is getting the benefits of welfare schemes. Roja also said that CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is keeping all his poll promises.

Roja also made serious comments on Naidu's brother-in-law and Hindupur MLA Nandamuri Balakrishna and said that it is very pity seeing Balakrishna's position in the party as the MLA was struggling for his identity in the party. On Balakrishna's announcement that he would erect a huge statue of NTR at Nimmakuru, his native village, the minister wondered whether Balakrishna had forgotten Nimmakuru all these years.

Minister Roja asked, "You have been in power till 2019. Why didn't you get the idea of installing NTR's statue? Who stopped you from developing the village as a memorial place for NTR? The NTR family had fallen into the trap of Naidu, who had used them to come to power," alleged Minister Roja.

## YSRCP will win 2024 polls: Jogi Ramesh

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

State Housing Minister Jogi Ramesh has said that the YSRCP will win again in the coming 2024 general elections. The ruling YSRCP's 'Samajika Nyayabheri' bus yatra reached Benz Circle in Vijayawada on Saturday afternoon. The ministers were given a grand welcome by the YSRCP leaders and party cadre.

Speaking on the occasion, Jogi Ramesh said that 'Chandrababu Kamma Bheri' was shattered by the blow of 'Samajika Nyayabheri'. He said that CM Jagan Mohan Reddy was the only person who had done social justice for the down-trodden and weaker sections. Opposition leader Chandrababu Naidu was jealous of the implementation of

the social justice initiative, so he was playing cheap tricks. Social justice was being implemented in Andhra Pradesh alone, the minister asserted.

Jogi Ramesh further said that Rs 1.4 lakh crore was credited directly into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries of various welfare schemes by CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. He said that if Chandrababu comes to power all the benefits for the poor will be canceled.

The minister said that YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will continue as the Chief Minister for the next 25 years. Even if Chandrababu Naidu joins an alliance with other political parties, he cannot defeat CM Jagan Mohan Reddy.



## 2,060 get house plots in Kondapalli layout

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

Housing plots have been allotted to 2,060 beneficiaries belonging to Vijayawada-Central constituency in the Kondapalli housing layout and the administration has started making efforts to bring about awareness among beneficiaries to start house constructions.

Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner Swapnil

Dinkar Pundkar said that 2,060 beneficiaries are allotted house sites under the 'Jagananna Sampurna Gruha Nirmana Pathakam' on 37 acres.

He along with officials inspected the Kondapalli layout on Saturday and inquired about the house sites and other works in the layout.

Swapnil Dinkar said that it is the responsibility of the Admin Secretary, Welfare

Secretary, Volunteers, VRO, and other staff to bring awareness among the beneficiaries to come forward for constructing houses. He asked the officials to take measures about completing the works of internal roads, drinking water, electricity, and other basic facilities and also instructed them to take measures for sanctioning loans from banks to the beneficiaries.



## Police arrest Teenmar Mallanna

**PNS ■ WARANGAL**

Police on Saturday arrested Chintapandu Naveen alias Teenmar Mallanna at Arepally village in the district.

A posse of policemen arrived at Pochamma temple at the village and took Mallanna into custody. He was present at a meeting held to press the demand for withdrawal of GO 80 issued by the government for pooling the land for outer ring road. The police whisked him away.

The police said he had been addressing the meeting when the police arrived there. The police had to arrest him because outsiders were not allowed to participate in the meetig.



## Rally in support of 'bus yatra'

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

In support of the ruling YSRCP's 'Samajika Nyayabheri' bus yatra, Vijayawada-Central MLA Malladi Vishnu took out a rally in support of the bus

yatra from Gayatri Convention Centre in Satyanarayanaapuram in the name of 'Chalo Benz Circle' on Saturday. They raised slogans 'Jai Jagan - Johar YSR'.

Vijayawada- West MLA

Vellampally Srinivas, MLC MD Ruhulla, City Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, Deputy Mayors Avuth Sri Shailaja Reddy, corporators and party activists took part in the rally.

## Officials told to take steps to check road accidents

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**

NTR Vijayawada District Collector S Dilli Rao has said that all departments should work in coordination and take appropriate actions to reduce the number of road accidents.

Addressing a Google conference with the officials of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), Roads and Buildings (R and B), Transport, and Police departments from his camp office in Vijayawada on Saturday, he appealed to them to make the district accident-free.

The Collector said that from January to April, 489 road accidents took place on national highways and State roads in

the district. In these accidents, 123 persons died and 457 were injured, he said.

Road Engineering department officers identified that all the accidents had taken place between 6 am & 9 am and 9 pm & midnight, he added.

He further instructed the officials to conduct a review every 15 days and discuss the technical issues to check the accidents. The Road Engineering department should submit detailed reports on accident-prone areas and take action, he said.

The Collector directed the officials concerned to arrange speed-breakers and double scripts at the adjoining approach roads of Paritala -

Kanchikacharla, Mylavaram - G.Konduru roads. NHAI authorities should plant saplings on the road dividers and protect them, he said.

Dilli Rao said that drunk and drive checks should be increased and cases registered against vehicle owners violating the rules. "Driving by minors is strictly prohibited. If the minors are found driving two-wheelers, the police will offer counselling to their parents and take action against them," he said.

Later, Dilli Rao said that wearing a seatbelt and helmet is necessary. Traffic police should register cases against persons parking their vehicles in 'no-parking zones' and

impose penalties on them, he said.

The GGH emergency ward should be ready with all facilities to treat patients sustaining injuries in road accidents, he said, and asked the Health department officials to create awareness of road accidents through pamphlets.

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner Swapnil Dinakar, Deputy Transport Commissioner (DTC) Purendra, NHAI Project Director Narayana Rao, R and B SE Srinivas Murthy, DM, and HO M Suhasini, GGH Superintendent B Sowbhagya Lakshmi and others participated.



NTR District Collector S Dilli Rao addressing the officials of various departments through a Google conference from his camp office in Vijayawada on Saturday.

## 3 electrocuted while pulling chariot in Nalgonda district

**PNS ■ NALGONDA**

Three persons were electrocuted and two others injured at Kethepally under Nampally mandal in the district when an iron chariot of a temple came in contact with live wire. The tragedy happened when a group of people were pulling the chariot which came in contact with the live wire, the police said. Three of those pulling the chariot died instantaneously and two others were injured. The deceased were Rajaboina Yadaiah (35), Pogaku Mohanaiah (40) of



Kethepally village, and Dasari Anjaneyulu (30) of Makkapally village under Gurrampode Mandal.

According to police,

rathostavam was organised in the village on the occasion of Sri Rama Navam on April 10 and chariot was left under a neem tree. The temple priests decided to move it to a safe place at Sri Rama temple in view of unseasonal rains.

A group of villagers volunteered to move the chariot to a shed at the temple. When they were pulling the chariot, it came in contact with 11 kv live wire, leading to the tragedy. The injured were ferried to Nalgonda government hospital. Police registered the case and inquiring.



# TTD chief inspects quality of cashew nuts in godown

**Directs officials to cancel contract with agency for supplying poor-quality nuts**

**PNS ■ TIRUPATI**

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam (TTD) Board Chairman YV Subba Reddy has inspected the quality of cashew nuts in the TTD marketing godown and directed the officials to cancel the contract with the supplying agency as their quality is poor.

YS Subba Reddy made a surprise visit to the TTD marketing godown on Saturday and inspected the quality of cashew nuts. He was dissatisfied with the quality of cashew nuts. He directed the officials to cancel the contract with the supplying agency since the quality of cashew nuts is poor. He also inspected the quality of ghee and cardamom. Cashew nuts, ghee, and cardamom are the important ingredients in making the famous laddu prasadam of the hill shrine.

The TTD Board Chairman said that three companies are supplying cashew nuts to the TTD. The cashew nuts supplied by one of the companies were found to be broken and dusty. He also inspected the cardamom and enquired the officials about its quality. The officials told him that the smell of cardamom is not good. He asked them to send the cardamom to the government testing centre. Subba Reddy smelled the cow ghee in the godown and expressed dissatisfaction. Later he inspected the centre where the cashew nuts are broken by Srivari Sevikas. He interacted with the Srivari Sevikas and asked them about the quality of cashew nuts.

The TTD board chairman told the media on the occasion that the TTD spends Rs 500 crore to buy cashew nuts, ghee, and cardamom to make laddu prasadam. He lamented that quality was lacking in the commodities. The quality of commodities is tested in the TTD lab also Central Good and Research Lab as well, he said. Marketing division general manager Subramanyam and Deputy EE Natesh Babu were among those who accompanied the TTD board chairman.



Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman YS Subba Reddy inspecting the quality of cashew nuts in the godown at Tirupati on Saturday.



## SP reviews arrangements for 'Samajika Nyayabheri' yatra

**PNS ■ BATAPALA**

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal here on Saturday reviewed the security arrangements for the Samajika Nyayabheri bus yatra in which ministers, MLAs and MPs would participate.

The SP directed the officials to take steps to avoid traffic on NH 16 on May 29. The Yatra would enter the Palnadu district and continue from Budampadu junction to Chikaluripet. The SP made suggestions to the police officials to take steps for the diversion of traffic. He also reviewed the security arrangements and made suggestions to the officials.

# Collector stresses need for promoting horticulture

**PNS ■ ELURU**

Eluru District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh underlined the need of expanding the horticulture crop cultivation in the district.

The Collector visited some of the fields at Lingapalem mandal and Kalarayugudem where horticulture crops are being cultivated. He also inspected the works of MGN-REGA and horticulture cultivation.

Speaking on the occasion he said that under the Amrut Sarovaram scheme irrigation tanks would be modernized. He saw the bottle gourd crop and interacted with the farmer and learned how much he invested to raise the crop.

He asked the farmer how much of the amount he got under subsidy. Later he also inspected the oil palm crop and coco crop. He told the farmers that there is high demand for horticulture products and high prices for the produce and asked the farmers to raise horticulture crops. He assured to release the subsidy amount to the horticulture farmers soon.



The Collector also inspected the MGNREGA works at Ayyappa Raju Gudem village. He interacted with the workers and knew their grievances. He also saw the Talla cheruvu tank and directed the officials to modernize the tank under Amruta Sarovaram scheme. Later the Collector inspected the construction works of RBK and secretariat buildings. He asked the secretariat staff to work more efficiently

and serve people. He went through the welfare scheme calendar and attendance register at the secretariat. He asked the officials whether the list of beneficiaries of welfare schemes is being audited.

Village sarpanch K Mounika, RDO K Rajyalakshmi, DPO N Balaji, DRDA PD K Srinivas and district horticulture officer Panduranga were among who accompanied the Collector.

## SHORT TAKES

### 25 more arrested for Amalapuram violence

**RAJAHMUNDRY:** The police arrested 25 more persons in connection with the violent incidents which took place in Amalapuram. Eluru Range DIG David Palaraju told the media on Saturday that another 25 people were arrested in connection with the Amalapuram violence. He said that the situation in the entire Konaseema district was very well under control and among the 25 arrested most of them hail from Ambajipet, Allavaram and Ainavilli areas. Meanwhile, he said prohibitory orders under section 144 were extended for another five days and the internet services remain suspended for another twenty four hours as a precautionary measure.

### 301 kg ganja seized, two held in Andhra Pradesh

**KAKINADA:** The police seized 301 kg of ganja being transported illegally in a lorry at Gandepalli on Saturday and arrested two persons. Police here on Saturday said that on a tip off they conducted checking of vehicles. They found 301 KGs of ganja being transported illegally in a lorry. Two smugglers were arrested and two cell phones used by them were also seized, In-charge DSP Appa Rao was investigating the case, police said.

### Cricket betting racket busted, five arrested

**HYDERABAD:** Sleuths of the Gopalapuram division crime team along with officers from Gopalapuram police station on Saturday busted a cricket betting racket and apprehended five persons. The police seized Rs 55,000 cash from the accused. According to the police, the accused P Santosh, who was the main betting organiser was working as a manager in a hotel. Santosh was facing financial difficulties so he approached four people from the city who were already into the business of cricket betting. All the five suspects started betting on IPL matches and making money. They would source the money through betting agents via online money transfer and place bets. After the match completion, the money would be distributed according to the ratio.



## CIVIC CHIEF INSPECTS JINDAL POWER PLANT

**PNS ■ GUNTUR**

Municipal Commissioner Keerthi Chekuri inspected the Jindal power plant at Naidupet on Saturday and reviewed the arrangements being made for the Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's visit. The Chief Minister will inaugurate the power plant on June 5.

The commissioner reviewed the arrangements with Jindal power project and discussed with municipal officials, Urban Greenery

Corporation officials and Jindal representatives on the steps to be taken. She visited the Avenue Plantation, the meeting place, parking in the premises and asked the Jindal representatives to discuss arrangements with the municipal engineering and public health officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the commissioner said that as part of reviewing the arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit, she inspected the area. She said that the Chief

Minister inaugurated the plaque at the plant.

The Chief Minister would also flag off 220 e-auto rickshaws on the day. She directed the officials to expedite the growth of greenery and avenue plantation on the premises. Jindal AP projects president MV Chari, AGM Ramakrishna, and municipal corporation SE D Srinivas and ADH Rama Rao and DEE Ramesh Babu were among those who accompanied the commissioner.

# Students exhorted to strive to reach heights

**PNS ■ ONGOLE**

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar exhorted students to strive hard to reach their goals and heights.

The Collector participated in the 'Coffee with Collector' programme held at the camp office here on Saturday in which 14 girl students and 9 boy students of ZP high school from Pathapadu, Venigandla and Moguluru participated.

On the occasion, the Collector spoke to the students. He knew their goals and targets, interests and aspirations. Awareness and continuous practice are key to reaching a higher position in society, he told them. It is suggested

to set a goal from the student stage and focus on achieving it, he said.

The Collector advised the students to study with interest. The students should be guided to increase their awareness of the society and to be aware of contemporary issues. The students told the Collector on the occasion that they wanted to settle down in the fields of engineering, teaching and medicine and attend cavils and the Collector appreciated them. The Collector assured the students to provide them an opportunity to personally meet the Superintendent of police and other top officials to draw inspiration.



# MANUU UG admissions application date extended

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The portal for submitting online applications for admission into undergraduate courses of all Central universities including the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) through the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) has reopened and will be available till 9 pm on May 31. The NTA reopened the portal after representation from candidates. MANUU is offering admissions into the undergraduate regular courses BA, BA Hons (Journalism & Mass Communication), B.Com, B.Sc. (MPC, MPCs, ZBC), B.Voc (Medical Imaging Technology and Medical Laboratory Technology), and B.Tech.

Admissions to Computer Science (direct & lateral entry into the 2nd year of B.Tech (CS) for polytechnic diploma holders) will also be done through CUET for the academic session 2022-23. The CUET conducted by NTA is a Computer Based Test (CBT).

In addition to new registrations, candidates who have already registered but were unable to submit or complete their application forms can also log in using their application number and password and complete their application process. MANUU officials said that candidates will have to fill out an online application form available on the CUET official website manuu.edu.in.

The last date for online submission of applications for entrance based regular Post Graduate, PhD and other courses at MANUU is June 1, 2022. Admissions are open for various Post Graduate, certificate and diploma courses too.



Police announcing the busting of spurious seeds racket in Hyderabad on Saturday

## Police bust spurious seed racket

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

A Special Operation Team of Balanagar zone, Dundigal police along with Agricultural Department officers on Saturday busted spurious cotton seed racket and arrested two persons.

The police seized 400 kg of seed, two vehicles and three mobile phones all worth Rs 16 lakh, from the possession of the suspects.

According to a press note, the suspects, identified as Mula Harish (39) from Manakondur in Karimnagar and Desham Hari Prasad from Medchal were arrested by Dundigal police, during the transportation of spurious seeds. Mula

Harish and Desham Hari Prasad were arrested by Dundigal police when they were transporting spurious seeds.

Dundigal police said that the suspects had been luring the innocent farmers to buy the uncertified and the prohibited cotton seed (BG-II). The cotton seed was banned by the government as it would affect the environment and weaken the soil. The suspect, Mula Harish, was earlier arrested in 2017 at Sultanabad police station in Ramagundam Police Commissionerate and sent to jail by Munugode and Chanduru police stations in Nalgonda district for spurious seed cases. As cotton is one of the commercial cash crops, it

is planted extensively by the farmers during Kharif season. The respondent Mula Harish taking an advantage came in contact with his associate Alisha (absconded) belonging to Nandiyal of Kurnool Dist, Andhra Pradesh who supplies Spurious Cotton seeds.

Meanwhile, the police registered a complaint against the accused persons under environment protection Act 1986 of Dundigal police station. However, the arrests were made under the supervision of Cyberabad CP Stephen Raveendra, DCP Balanagar zone, Special Operations Team, Cyberabad, and staff of SOT Balanagar zone and Dundigal Police Station.

## Task Force arrests chain snatcher

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

Sleuths of the South Zone Commissioner's Task Force along with Shalibanda Police apprehended a chain snatcher and recovered 120 gram of gold chains from his possession.

The complaint was filed on May 21 by Sujata, a 56-year-old school teacher stating that her chain was snatched by motorcycle-borne assailant when she was purchasing vegetables near Shamsheregunj. Based on the complaint, a case was registered at the Shalibanda police station.

The accused has been identified as Faisal Shah, aged 40,



and is a resident of Asifnagar in Hyderabad. According to the police, the accused was involved in more than 135

chain snatching cases across the three Police Commissionerates since 2006. He has also been detained twice under

the Preventive Detention Act at Langerhouse and Sultan Bazar Police Stations.

He was released from jail in April and after that he was staying with his friend Khaleel. Due to the financial crisis, both of them hatched a plan to commit chain snatching again. Since then Faisal committed 3 chain snatchings. After that, he would hand over the chains to Khaleel for further disposal.

The arrests were made under the supervision of DCP Commissioners Task Force G Chakravarthy, Inspector South Zone Raghavendra, SI Narender and staff of South Zone Task Force.

## BIRTH CENTENARY

# TRS Ministers, MLAs pay tributes to NTR

**SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD**

A rare event took place at the NTR Ghat in Hyderabad on Saturday on the occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of TDP founder former united AP chief minister and legendary actor Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao aka NTR.

In a surprise, TRS Ministers and MLAs paid tributes to NTR at the NTR Ghat for the first time.

TRS Ministers Puvvada Ajay Kumar, Ch. Mallareddy, MP Nama Nageswar Rao, MLAs Arikepudi Gandhi, Mahanti Gopinath, MLC Madhu and former minister Motkupally Narasimhulu went to NTR Ghat and paid



Political leaders paying homage to Telugu Desam Party founder and former Chief Minister N T Rama Rao on his 99th birth anniversary at NTR ghat in Hyderabad on Saturday.

their tributes to NTR. All these leaders except Puvvada Ajay were former TDP leaders and most of them are from

the same community. Telangana BJP President Bandi Sanjay Kumar also paid his tributes to NTR. It has

never happened like this earlier. Ahead of the Assembly elections suddenly NTR has become an all-party leader.

The reason is that in several Assembly constituencies in Telangana and in the former districts of Nizamabad, Nalgonda, Warangal, and Khammam and in and around Hyderabad there are a large number of Kammats.

The TRS and the BJP are trying to woo them. TRS supremo K. Chandrasekhar Rao himself is a big fan of NTR. The daughter of NTR, Daggubati Purandhreswary, is now in the BJP. She also paid tributes at the NTR Ghat.

In Warangal, Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao garlanded NTR's statue. Sources said that TRS leaders went to NTR Ghat to pay tributes only after getting the green signal from KCR.



ROLE OF RIVERS AS CONNECTORS

# ‘Focus of discussion must be on water cooperation’

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Stressing on the role of rivers as connectors, India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram Doraiswami on Saturday said all economic and political contexts of a river system along with its historical and cultural dimensions need to be taken into consideration for formulating policies surrounding it.

The focus of discussion on rivers should shift from "hydro diplomacy" to "water cooperation", he said.

"The notion of a river as a separator has been in focus for long but the role of a river as a connector is more fundamental," Doraiswami said.

He was speaking at a session on 'Rivers of the Bay of Bengal: Connecting the Blue Economy, the Mountain Economy and the Plains Economy' as part of 'NADI 3: Asian Confidence River Conclave 2022' here.

We tend to look at rivers sanguinely, rather we should



view it more comprehensively. A more holistic approach is needed rather than a mere technocratic or political approach, he said at the two-day conclave starting from Saturday.

The senior diplomat said rivers have different contexts and dimensions and "all these aspects need to be taken into

consideration for formulating policies surrounding it".

From political context to economic and historical and cultural dimensions to its role in the sustenance of human life, a single river system fulfils different roles, he said.

Doraiswami also highlighted importance of management of river systems in totality

rather than dividing them into different basins and dealing with the aspects in isolation.

Notably, India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers.

Former Bangladesh's High Commissioner to India Syed Muazzem Ali had in 2019 said the subject of water sharing during the lean season has been an important issue.

The Teesta deal was set to be signed during the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh in September 2011, but was postponed at the last minute due to objections raised by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

She opposed the pact maintaining that people in her region would "not get a single drop".

The conclave is an international ministerial-level river conference to articulate a collective vision of cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and the South-East Asian region.

# Prez Kovind: India home to world's most affordable health care facilities

PNS ■ BHOPAL

President Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday said India is providing the most affordable medical facilities in the world and people from abroad, especially the neighbouring nations, visit the hospitals in the country to avail the health care services.

He also said that India is fast emerging as a medical tourism hub.

"India has the cheapest medical facilities in the world and in the hospitals, especially in Delhi, people from neighbouring countries are found getting treatment more than the local patients," Kovind said after inaugurating 'Arogya Manthan', a conference on the topic 'One Nation, One Health System' organised by RSS-backed Arogya Bharati here.

Referring to the coronavirus pandemic, Kovind said a disease started plaguing the humanity two-and-a-half years back. "Only one or two per cent people remained unaffected by it," he said.

He praised the country's scientists and doctors for their

efforts in developing a vaccine against COVID-19 that saved the lives of people.

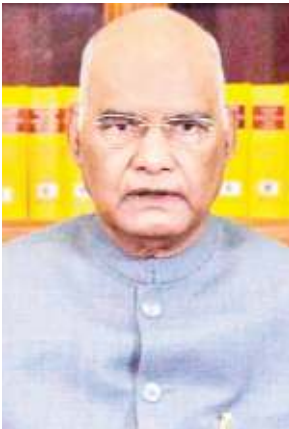
"Hundred years back, when a pandemic broke out, it killed crores of people at one go. But the situation has now changed with the development of vaccines," the president added.

He said that during his recent visit to Jamaica and Saint Vincent, he participated in eight functions wherein the leaders of those countries praised India for providing anti-coronavirus vaccines to them in the hour of need.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi provided 50,000 Covishield vaccine doses each to Jamaica and St Vincent free of cost. The top leaders of both the countries did not get tired of praising India for its humanitarian gesture," he said.

President Kovind said that while he focused on enhancing the bilateral ties between India and the countries he visited, the leaders there were more interested in knowing about India's medical facilities.

"India is fast emerging as a hub of medical tourism, where health care facilities and insti-



ment and private sector institutions is essential," Kovind added.

Praising Arogya Bharati, which was established in Kerala to provide health care services, the president said its team is active in 85 per cent districts of the country.

The thinking of Arogya Bharati is very clear and simple - when every individual is healthy, all the families will be healthy, if each family is healthy then every village and every city will be healthy and this way the whole country will be healthy, he added.

tutional treatment are available easily," he said.

Under the National Health Policy announced in 2017, the government aims to make quality health care services accessible to everyone at affordable rates, he said.

"It is also the aim of this policy to arrange health facilities for all in a comprehensive and holistic manner. To achieve these goals, cooperation of all sections of the society, especially the aware citizens, along with the participation of govern-

"In this context, Arogya Bharati has made a very positive effort by raising awareness among the people and by bringing together people from all medical systems. It is working in line with the national goal of prioritising preventive and promotive healthcare by paying special attention to prevention of modern lifestyle diseases," he said.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangubhai Patel and Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also spoke on the occasion.

HIJAB ROW

# Everyone should abide by HC and govt order, says Karnataka CM

PNS ■ BENGALURU

With the hijab issue resurfacing in Mangaluru, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday asserted that every one should abide by the High Court and the government's orders.

Stating that the issue has been closed after the syndicate meeting at Mangalore University, he asked students to focus on education instead of getting into such issues.

"There is no need to create hijab controversy (again), the court has given its order, all have to abide by the court and the government's order. Majority of them, about 99.99 per cent of them, are following it. The syndicate's resolution is also that court order has to be followed...according to me, studies should be important for students," Bommai said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said, "The matter has been closed after a meeting yesterday. There was a university syndicate meeting."

Mangalore University Vice Chancellor Prof. P Subrahmanya Yadapadithaya had said on Friday that the college will facilitate admission of Muslim girl students in other institutions if they insist on wearing hijab inside classrooms.

The Vice-Chancellor had said that students wearing hijab will be counselled and an attempt will be made to convince them regarding the need for attending the classes without the headscarf.

The hijab issue had once again come to the fore on Thursday as a group of students from the University College in Mangaluru staged a protest at the campus alleging that a few Muslim girl students are attending

classes wearing the headscarf.

The Karnataka High Court on March 15 dismissed petitions filed by a group of Muslim students, seeking permission to wear hijab inside classrooms.

The three-judge bench of the court consisting of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, Justice Krishna S Dixit and Justice JM Khazi further noted that the prescription of school uniform is only a reasonable restriction, constitutionally permissible, which the students cannot object to.

Following the High Court order, the Department of Pre-University Education has made uniforms prescribed by the College Development Committee, compulsory for Pre-

University (PU) students from the 2022-23 academic year.

It also states that in case no uniform is prescribed by the College Development Committee or management, students must wear a garment which will "maintain equality and unity, and which does not disturb public order".

To a question on demands for the sacking of textbook revision committee chairperson Rohith Chakratirtha accusing him of "safronising" school textbooks, by including a lesson regarding RSS founder Keshav Baliram Hegdegar's speech and making other changes, Bommai said he would discuss this with Primary and Secondary Education Minister B C Nagesh on the developments.

"He (Nagesh) is aware of all the developments, I will speak to him and make a decision," he added.



# ‘Working towards making coastal security impenetrable by using new technologies’

PNS ■ DWARKA (GUJARAT)

The Union government is working towards making coastal security strong and impenetrable by using new technologies, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Saturday.

He was speaking during a visit to the National Academy of Coastal Policing (NACP) in Gujarat's Devbhumi Dwarka district.

The academy, located near the coastal town of Okha and run by the Border Security Force (BSF), was conceptualised in 2018 as the country's first school to train police and paramilitary forces personnel in various aspects of coastal security.

The home minister appreciated the efforts taken by the BSF Gujarat Frontier and NACP to establish the institution in an area with adverse weather conditions and geographical challenges, the BSF said in a release.

"Under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we are working towards making coastal security strong and impenetrable by using new technologies. We are seriously assessing the challenges to coastal security to address maritime threats," Shah said during his interaction with



officials. He expressed confidence that in future the academy would provide intensive and high-level training to the marine police of various coastal states in the country and make a significant contribution to the security of coastal areas.

Gujarat BSF's Inspector General G S Malik informed the home minister that 427 personnel from nine coastal states, including Gujarat and Maharashtra, and four Union Territories along with officers of

# MCD employees to face suspension if found absent on 3 days: Order

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after coming into existence, the reunified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has issued an order saying civic employees found absent from work for three days shall be suspended.

The order issued on May 26 by the office of the deputy commissioner of the Civil Line Zone also said one day's salary would be deducted from the account of employees found absent without prior permission.

"In order to ensure that public services are delivered timely without delay, it is directed that henceforth, all officers or officials shall be present in the office from 9 am sharp," the order read.

There have been reports in a section of the media about employees coming to office late. In the past, media reports have alleged that there are several "ghost" employees in the municipal corporations.

"Further, if any employee is found absent on three occasions, the said defaulting officer/official will be suspended immediately and necessary action shall be initiated against him/her," the order said.

The Civil Lines DC Office order also states that all office employees shall mark their attendance in the NIC (MCD) Smart App. The attendance record in the app shall be taken as the "single source of truth" for verifying the presence

of officers/officials in office, it added.

The unified Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) formally came into existence on May 22 as IAS officers Ashwani Kumar and Gyanesh Bharti assumed charge as the new civic body's special officer and commissioner, respectively.

The MCD was trifurcated in 2012 during Sheila Dikshit's tenure as the chief minister. It has now been reunified by merging the three civic bodies North, South and East Municipal Corporations.

The three civic bodies have been merged into one MCD through the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022.

# ‘You’ll be voting CM, not just MLA,’ Yogi tells people

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

As Champawat goes to bypoll on May 31, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday urged the people in the assembly constituency to vote overwhelmingly in favour of Pushkar Singh Dhami, saying they were "electing a chief minister and not just an MLA".

BJP's Kailash Gehtori, who had won from this constituency in the February assembly polls, later vacated his seat to make way for Dhami after the two-term MLA lost from his stronghold Khatima.

PLACES OF WORSHIP (SPECIAL PROVISIONS) ACT, 1991

# Fresh plea in SC challenges validity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the validity of certain sections of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, alleging that they violate constitutional provisions, including those related to equality before law

and prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. The plea said that by the Act, the Centre has declared that religious character of a place of worship and pilgrimage as it existed on August 15, 1947 shall continue and barred the remedy by way of suit with respect to such matter in any court.

The petition, filed by Mathura-resident Devkinandan Thakur, has challenged the validity of sections 2, 3, 4 of the 1991 Act claiming that it takes away right of judicial remedy of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs to take back their places of worship and pilgrimage and property which belong to the deity.



my studies," Savitri told this reporter, holding her napkin shyly in her hand.

Lack of understanding of menstrual hygiene and lack of access to simple necessities

such as a sanitary pad in their villages is one of the main reasons for girls to drop out of schools in Jharkhand, where some 42.16 per cent of the population live below the poverty

line.

Seema Toppo, 12, Neeta Tigga, 15, Sani Horo, 12, Neelmani Kongari, 14, and Anju Oraon, 14, (names changed) all narrated similar horror stories of how their mothers and they used sand, ash, rags and plastic to deal with menstruation, often contracting infection.

Most of the girls said they used to prefer living in the confines of their huts during the menstrual cycle period out of embarrassment, losing out on school and normal life in the process. Most did not know of sanitary napkins, and those who did could not afford a trip

to a town chemist or the price of a napkin.

The brainchild behind the Sangini initiative, NOBA GSR (Netarhat Old Boys' Association Global Social Responsibility) advisory member Om Prakash Choudhary told PTI: "Late last year a college-going girl who still studies at BHU in Varanasi had come to NOBA GSR and requested for a donation so that she could distribute sanitary napkins in slum areas."

"She did it for three months and we supported her. Later we realised that actually, this model is neither scalable nor sustainable."

INDIA CORNER

# Maha: Woman held for cheating investors of over Rs 1 crore



The Thane police in Maharashtra have arrested a 53-year-old woman from Pune for allegedly cheating investors of over Rs 1.8 crore, an officials said on Saturday. Acting on a tip-off, the economic offences wing (EOW) of the Thane crime branch arrested Shraddha

Srikant Palande from Dehu Road of Pune earlier this week, assistant police inspector Jagdish Panhale said. An offence under section 420 (cheating) and other relevant provisions of the IPC and MPIDA was registered with the Kasarwadavali police station against Shraddha and her husband Srikant Pandurang Palande, who had been on the run for eight months, he said. The couple had set up a consultancy and lured investors by promising them lucrative returns for investing in Forex trading. The duo took money from investors and failed to pay interest and return the principal amount, the official said.

# NCB arrests 8, seizes 35 kg heroin in pan-India drug bust



New Delhi, May 28 (PTI) The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Saturday claimed to have unearthed a "major" pan-India heroin trafficking network with the arrest of eight people and seizure of about 35 kg of narcotics. The operation

began on May 24 after the federal anti-drug agency first intercepted two women passengers who landed in Bengaluru from Zimbabwe and about 7 kg of heroin was seized from them, according to an NCB statement. Their questioning led NCB officials to various other links -- a Nigerian national identified as the "kingpin" of the network and other operatives staying in Delhi and Itarsi in Madhya Pradesh. In this operation, 34.89 kg of high-grade heroin has been seized and eight people arrested, the NCB said.

# Five members of family found dead in well in Jaipur



The bodies of five members of a family, including a newborn baby, were found in a well in the Dudu area here on Saturday with the police suspecting it to be a case of suicide. They used to live in Meeno ka Mohalla. They had left home on the pretext of going to a market on May 25,

the police said. After they failed to return home, their family members put up missing posters at different locations and lodged a missing complaint with the police, they said. "The bodies have been fished out and post-mortem examination is underway, SHO, Dudu, Chetaram said. The deceased were identified as sisters Kali Devi (27), Mamta Meena (23) and Kamlesh Meena (20), and Harshit (4) and a 20-day-old baby. The three sisters were married to the same family. There are allegations that they were being harassed by their in-laws, the police said, adding that an investigation is underway.

# Nurses' strike affects Mumbai's JJ Hosp; most outfits stay away



The strike call given by a union of nurses attached to government-run hospitals in Maharashtra evoked mixed response on the first day on Saturday with most of the other outfits in the sector maintaining a distance from the stir. However, officials admitted that some hospitals did face problems, including postponement of some surgeries. While surgeries like insertion of stents were postponed in state-run JJ Hospital, which was considerably affected, there was little impact of the strike call by the Maharashtra State Nurses Association on other facilities like St George, Cama and Ables and Gokuldas Tejpal, they said. They added that most of the nurses who are part of MSNA are from JJ Hospital, due to which the premier facility in Byculla was affected much more than others. Speaking to PTI, Sumitra Tote, MSNA general secretary, said, "We had called a strike on May 27 and 28. However, there has been no concrete assurance from the state government, and, hence, we have decided to continue our strike further."



**Godfrey Phillips India Q4 profit up 9% to Rs 103.88 cr, income up 2.84%**

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Cigarette maker Godfrey Phillips India Ltd on Saturday reported a 9.07 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit to Rs 103.88 crore for the January-March quarter of 2021-22. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 95.24 crore during the January-March quarter of the previous fiscal, Godfrey Phillips India said in a regulatory filing. Its total income was up 2.84 per cent to Rs 877.77 crore during the quarter under review as against Rs 853.48 crore in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal. Godfrey Phillips' total expenses were at Rs 737.72 crore, up 1.38 per cent in Q4 FY2021-22, as against Rs 727.61 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its revenue from cigarettes, tobacco and related products was at Rs 769.10 crore, up 2.61 per cent, as compared with Rs 749.51 crore a year ago. While revenue from retail and related products was marginally down to Rs 83.20 crore as against Rs 83.52 crore in the fourth quarter last fiscal, it said. Godfrey Phillips operates the convenience store chain 24Seven.

# India is fast-tracking FTAs with UK, EU: Patel

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

India is fast-tracking negotiations for proposed free trade agreements with certain developed countries like the UK as well as with the European Union, and maybe by this year end, the government would be able to give a final shape to few of these pacts, minister of state for commerce and industry Anupriya Patel said on Friday.

She also expressed hope that the trade pact with Australia would be operationalised 'very soon'.

India has already implemented a trade agreement with the UAE, and "we are fast-tracking our FTAs (Free Trade Agreements) with lot of other developed countries like the UK, and the EU and maybe by this year end, we would be able to give a final shape to few of these," she said while launching the Indian Business Portal of exporters' body FIEO here.

The minister added that these agreements will create better opportunities for domestic businesses.

The portal is a B2B digital marketplace to empower SME (Small and Medium

**The Minister said that the portal will address issues like digitising exporters, supporting MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and encouraging greater exports of products made in India.**



Enterprise) exporters, artisans and farmers to identify new markets for their products and grow their sales globally.

The minister said that the portal will address issues like digitising exporters, supporting MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and encouraging greater exports of products made in India.

It is witnessed during the pandemic that online platforms such as e-commerce have shown immense potential

in supporting millions of businesses to sustain themselves, she said.

Speaking at the function, Santosh Kumar Sarangi, Director General of Foreign Trade, said that tech-enabled governance will play a key role in determining India's growth and competitiveness.

A Sakthivel, president, FIEO (Federation of Indian Export Organisations), said that the platform will empower SME exporters to identify new mar-

kets for their products and grow their sales with new buyers. Khalid Khan, vice president, FIEO, said that the portal would act as an international trade hub for Indian exporters and foreign buyers.

"The portal focuses on empowering MSMEs to leverage e-commerce and drive Indian exports to help us address the prime minister's vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'vocal for local'," Khan said.

## Centre to develop framework to check fake reviews on e-commerce websites

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The government on Saturday said it will develop a framework to keep a check on fake reviews posted on e-commerce websites to protect consumer interest.

The consumer affairs ministry along with the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) held a virtual meeting on Friday with stakeholders, including e-commerce entities, to discuss the magnitude of fake reviews on their platforms.

Fake reviews mislead consumers into buying online products and services.

According to an official statement, the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA) will develop these frameworks after studying the present mechanism being followed by the e-commerce entities in India and best practices available globally.

Consumer forums, law uni-



versities, lawyers, FICCI, CII and consumer rights activists, among others, participated in the meeting to discuss the magnitude of the problem and roadmap ahead for fake reviews on websites.

Since e-commerce involves a virtual shopping experience without any opportunity to physically view or examine the product, consumers heavily rely on reviews posted on platforms to see the opinion

and experience of users who have already purchased the good or service.

"Traceability by ensuring the authenticity of the reviewer and the associated liability of the platform are the two key issues here. Also e-commerce players must disclose as to how they choose the 'most relevant reviews' for display in a fair and transparent manner," Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said.

## Pradhan visits BP's Global Business Services Centre in Pune

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Union Minister for Education, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan on Saturday visited BP's Global Business Services Centre in Pune as he looked to get the first-hand experience of digitisation efforts by the UK oil major.

During his visit, Pradhan interacted with leadership and employees at the centre, bp said in a statement.

Varsha Singh, Vice-

President and Head, bp India Pune centre, said, "It was a privilege to host Minister Pradhan at our Pune centre today. We are delighted that he interacted with our employees and was present with us to see the centre we set up in the middle of the pandemic.

"The centre draws upon digital talent and skills which are critical in solving complex business problems for bp globally as it pivots itself from an international oil company to an international energy company."



## Tesla won't manufacture in India unless allowed to sell, service cars: Musk

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

American electric carmaker Tesla, which has been seeking reduction in import duties to sell its vehicles in India, will not manufacture its products locally unless it is allowed to first sell and service its cars in the country, company founder and chief executive Elon Musk has said.

In a tweet responding to a user asking about Tesla setting up a manufacturing plant in India, he said, "Tesla will not put a manufacturing plant in any location where we are not allowed first to sell & service cars."



Last month, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had said if Tesla was ready to manufacture its electric vehicles in

India then there was 'no problem' but the company must not import cars from China.

In August last year, Musk had said Tesla may set up a manufacturing unit in India if it first succeeds with imported vehicles in the country.

He had said Tesla wanted to launch its vehicles in India "but import duties are the highest in the world by far of any large country!"

Currently, India imposes 100 per cent import duty on fully imported cars with CIF (Cost, Insurance and Freight) value more than USD 40,000 and 60 per cent on those costing less than the amount.

## Venus Remedies registers 9.22 pc growth in sales

**PNS ■ CHANDIGARH**

Pharma company Venus Remedies on Saturday said it has registered a 9.22 per cent increase in annual sales in 2021-22 in comparison to sales in 2020-21.

"Aided by concerted efforts to build on its export orders, supply chain, distribution network and product portfolio, the annual sales of Venus Remedies grew from Rs 548.12 crore in FY2020-21 to Rs 598.65 crore this fiscal

(2021-22)," the company said in a statement here.

The Panchkula-based company also reported a 16.81 per cent increase in operating profit, which went up from Rs 53.78 crore last fiscal to Rs 62.82 crore in 2021-22.

Saransh Chaudhary, president, Global Critical Care, Venus Remedies Ltd, said, "Embarking on product diversification with the launch of a full-fledged consumer health-care division, we expanded the scope of our business to make

it more and more sustainable in the long run.

"We also enhanced our global presence in FY 2021-22 by entering into more territories and launching more than 30 products in our existing markets. Venus Remedies entered several new global markets like Macedonia, the UAE, Ghana, Rwanda, Turkmenistan, Moldova, Ireland, Cuba, Kurdistan, Kuwait and Turkmenistan and Cameroon in 2021-22, said the statement.

## MONEY MATTERS

### Amul makes foray into organic food industry



**D**airy major GCMMF, which markets its products under Amul brand, on Saturday announced entry into organic food market with the launch of organic wheat flour. The first product launched in this portfolio is 'Amul Organic Whole Wheat Atta', Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd (GCMMF) said in

a statement. Further, Amul will be launching products like moong daal, tur daal, chana daal and basmati rice in its organic portfolio. The production of Amul organic atta is being done at state-of-the-art processing facility, Tribhuvan Das Patel Mogar Food Complex. The product goes through a thorough procedure of lab testing multiple times to make sure that the product is as per organic standard laid down by Government of India, it said. R S Sodhi, MD, GCMMF, said the cooperative is in the process of developing a pool of organic farmers and replicate their existing milk model in the organic sourcing. This will increase the income of organic farmers and will lead to overall democratisation of the organic food industry. Currently, the major challenge for the farmers is unavailability of market linkage for organic products and high cost of organic testing facilities, the statement said. Therefore, along with creation of market linkage for organic farmers, Amul is in process of setting up organic testing laboratories at 5 locations across India.

### Sebi levies Rs 25 lakh fine on 2 entities for fraudulent trading



**M**arkets regulator Sebi on Friday imposed penalties totalling Rs 25 lakh on two entities for indulging in manipulative trading activities in the shares of Ponni Sugars Erode Ltd (PSEL). A fine of Rs 15 lakh has been imposed on Gandiv Investment Pvt Ltd and Rs 10 lakh on Pat Financial Consultants Pvt Ltd. The order came after Sebi conducted an investigation into the shares of PSEL during the period from November 2012 to October 2014. It was found that three entities -- Gandiv Investment, Pat Financial and an individual -- had indulged in manipulation of the price of the shares. The individual floated away recently. In an order, Sebi said the entities flouted the PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) regulations. Separately, the watchdog levied a fine of Rs 7 lakh on an individual -- Ajay Chauhan (proprietor of Drift Financial Services) -- for violating norms. The individual had promised high returns to investors despite being fully aware that all the investments made in the securities market are subject to market risk and such returns cannot be assured, according to the regulator. Through such acts, the individual violated the PFUTP regulations and provisions of code of conduct for investment advisers. In another order, the market regulator imposed a penalty of Rs 5.50 lakh on Sykes and Ray Equities (I) Ltd for misutilisation of client securities.

## Engineers India adopts new vision statement

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

State-owned consultancy firm Engineers India Ltd (EIL) on Saturday said it has adopted a new vision statement that aims at the company becoming a global leader offering total energy solutions.

"The energy landscape in India and across the globe is changing at a swift pace and organizations across the globe are re-strategizing their business operations focused towards sustainability, climate change and energy transition," the firm said in a statement.

EIL said since its inception it has always aligned corporate and business strategies with the energy ecosystem and aims to attain leadership position across the energy sector.



"To strengthen our resolve and commitments towards futuristic goals, we at EIL, would now be driven by our new vision statement - 'To be a Global Leader offering Total Energy Solutions for a Sustainable Future'," the statement said. This new vision would steer EIL towards a

growth and transition pathway, thus evolving the firm into a total energy consulting organisation with leadership position across all the pillars and constituents of the energy sector. "The Vision Statement would also motivate and drive us to strengthen our resolve and our aspirations to

be global leader providing a complete range of solutions to its stakeholders across the energy sector with focus on minimizing overall carbon footprints in processes and designs," it said. "We believe that this powerful vision statement, coupled with strong fundamentals, technical prowess and high skill sets that we possess, will further enthuse and motivate all of us at EIL to provide our niche and value added services across the energy landscape."

Established in 1965, EIL provides engineering consultancy and EPC services principally focused on the oil and gas and petrochemical industries. Last month, the firm set 2035 as the target year to achieve net zero carbon emission across its businesses.

## Garware Hi-Tech Films Q4 profit soars 42 pc to Rs 45 cr

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Leading specialty polyester films exporter Garware Hi-Tech Films Ltd's (GHFL) profit after tax soared by around 42 per cent to Rs 45.12 crore in January-March 2021-22.

GHFL had posted a PAT of Rs 31.80 crore in the last quarter of FY2020-21, the company said in a statement.

Its revenue on a consolidated basis rose by over 12 per cent to around Rs 324 crore in the last quarter of FY22 compared to Rs 287 crore in the year-ago period.

"Our Company has earned record revenues and profits, despite challenging external environmental factors. In the coming year, we anticipate, our new lamination facility to

commence production, and our paint protection film to see increased volume as it has been tested and approved by our major trading partners in USA and Europe, GHFL Chairperson and Managing Director S B Garware said.

For the full 2021-22 fiscal, the company reported a 33 per cent jump in PAT to Rs 167 crore compared to Rs 126 crore in FY2020-21.

Its revenue on a consolidated basis jumped by 32 per cent to Rs 1,303 crore in FY22 against Rs 989 crore in FY21.

The company also announced that its new lamination facility is nearing completion and it expects to commence commercial production by the second quarter of FY23.

## Adani group's drone division exploring two revenue models

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Adani Group's commercial drones division is exploring two revenue models -- dealer-based and service-based -- while keeping its primary focus on the agriculture sector, a top official of the conglomerate said on Saturday.

In a dealer-based model, the equipment is sold directly to the customer. In a service-based model, the equipment is provided for various services for a fee in partnership with a local entrepreneur or an institution. The tractor industry uses both these sales models.

"We are exploring both models -- dealer-based model and service-based model. Depending on the market response, we will take our decisions," Rangarajan Vijayaraghavan, Vice

President, Strategy and Chairman's Office, Adani Group, told PTI in an interview, a day after the conglomerate announced acquiring 50 per cent equity stake in drone start-up General Aeronautics.

He said the Adani Group is considering multiple areas in the commercial drone sector and "one of the primary areas of focus" is agriculture.

"This is in line with the prime minister's vision of use of drone technology to improve farmers' livelihood. With our commitment to nation building, we have been deeply inspired by the prime minister's vision and we believe there is a significant opportunity in the market," he mentioned.

In the service-based model, the Adani Group will provide drones for services such as pes-



ticide spray for a fee in partnership with a local entrepreneur or an institution, which in this case will be pesticide companies, he mentioned.

He said the agriculture sector gets a unique benefit when a drone is used -- the combination of the pesticide deploy-

ment as well as the reduction in water and labour requirements provides cost as well as convenience advantage to the farmer.

"We are hopeful that we will be able to leverage that (benefit) in the days to come," he added.

**In the service-based model, the Adani Group will provide drones for services such as pesticide spray for a fee in partnership with a local entrepreneur or an institution, which in this case will be pesticide companies, he mentioned.**

The Adani Group had announced on Friday acquiring 50 per cent equity stake in agricultural drone start-up General Aeronautics for an undisclosed amount.

The Bengaluru-based General Aeronautics specialises

in developing robotic drones to offer tech-enabled crop protection services, crop health monitoring, precision farming and yield monitoring services using artificial intelligence and data analytics.

Vijayaraghavan said General Aeronautics is into agricultural drone production and services. "Production is outright sale of the drone itself and the services are basically around charging a revenue per acre in order to do the pesticide spray," he mentioned.

With this acquisition, the Adani Group expects to help General Aeronautics scale rapidly into multiple geographies as it has technology developed over the years and a national-level market access, thereby reaching millions of farmers in the country, he noted.

## M&M Q4 profit zooms to Rs 1,192 cr



**M**ahindra & Mahindra on Saturday reported nearly five-fold jump in standalone profit at Rs 1,192 crore for quarter ended March 31, 2022. The company had posted a profit of Rs 245 crore for the year-ago period, it said in a statement. Revenue grew 28 per cent to Rs 17,124 crore in the period under review as compared with Rs 13,356 crore in March quarter 2020-21, it said. In full fiscal year 2021-22, the company logged a standalone profit of Rs 4,935 crore, a multi-fold growth from Rs 984 crore in fiscal year ended March 31, 2021. M&M said it achieved the highest ever standalone revenue for auto and farm segments at Rs 55,300 crore for FY22, which is 29 per cent higher than previous year's. It also said the company's auto business delivered highest ever quarterly UV (utility vehicle) volumes in Q4 with 42 per cent year-on-year growth while Farm Equipment Sector (FES) tractors market share for FY22 stood at 40 per cent, a growth of 1.8 per cent Y-o-Y. Auto export also saw strong performance in last fiscal year with 77 per cent growth Y-o-Y, it said, adding farm export volume at 17,500 tractors were highest in FY22 with 66 per cent growth. The semiconductor supplies improved in Q4 resulting in highest ever quarterly UV volumes, it stated. Our performance in Q4 and FY22 underscores the resilience of our business model.



# BE ALERT BUT DON'T PANIC

An outbreak of monkeypox, which is related to smallpox, in around 20 countries has alerted public health officials. The virus can, however, be contained with vaccines that are already available in some countries, doctors say, asserting that there is no need to panic. The HEALTH PIONEER profiles the disease.



With the world still reeling from the effects of the covid-19 pandemic, the rise of a different disease called Monkeypox is putting many people on edge. It has taken into its grip atleast 20 nations. Over 200 cases have been reported so far.

Thankfully, India is spared for now. “But the only policy right now is to monitor the global scenario, step up the vigil and expand testing,” Dr Nivedita Gupta, head of virology at the ICMR told a news channel.

The Centre has already issued an alert to the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the ICMR and asked them to keep a close watch on the situation evolving in relation to the monkeypox cases abroad. Among States, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have been at the forefront in asking their officials to keep a watch on airports and water borders.

ICMR scientist Gupta also made it clear that monkeypox will not spread like wildfire as had happened in the case of Coronavirus as “it’s not a new virus and has been in existence in some African regions and has caused sporadic outbreaks.”

The ICMR has designated the virus as exotic and all samples are being sent to the Pune lab for testing. “All viruses which don’t exist in India are labelled exotic and their samples are sent to the National Institute of Virology, Pune, which is a BSL4 facility,” she said.

The facility ensures there are no chances of leakage of virus in India,

leading to an outbreak here. “This communication has been sent to all airports. All samples of incoming passengers will be sent to the NIV,” Gupta told the channel.

**CAUSE:** It is caused by a virus of the same name that is closely related to smallpox, which has now been eradicated from the planet. Both are members of the Orthopoxvirus genus in the family Poxviridae.

**HISTORY:** It was first discovered in 1958 when outbreaks of a disease causing a pox were discovered in monkeys held in captivity for research. It was first seen in humans in 1970 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and it is now endemic in Central and West Africa.

In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported 4,594 suspected cases of monkeypox, including 171 deaths (case fatality ratio 3.7%).

**SYMPTOMS:** It starts with a headache and fever, the usual things that you deal with when you get a viral infection. Then, within a week or two, some people get a rash which develops into pustules. If you’re covered in these pustules, then you’d have the risk of bacterial infection and, in some cases, sepsis. That’s where the lethality can come from. Although symptoms often ease within a month, one in ten cases can be fatal. Children are particularly susceptible.

MONKEYPOX  
WHICH HAS  
ERUPTED IN  
MANY COUNTRIES  
IS NOT NEW TO  
THE WORLD.  
THOUGH NO CASE  
OF VIRUS  
INFECTION HAS  
BEEN REPORTED  
IN INDIA YET,  
STATES AND THE  
CENTRAL  
GOVERNMENT  
ARE KEEPING A  
CLOSE WATCH ON  
THE SITUATION.

## DOCTORS’ SPEAK

Health experts say that one should not let their guard down but there is no need to panic. “We need to keep a surveillance on how it is evolving, and how many people are getting affected. Fortunately, it is not as severe as smallpox,” says Dr Jugal Kishore, head of the Community Department, Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi.

“There is a need to keep a watch on borders and international travelers and ensure that those having rash-like symptoms or reporting fever are kept in quarantine as per protocol.”

Dr Kishore adds that the virus can spread through touching or using clothes or towels of someone who is infected; touching monkeypox skin blisters; coughs or sneezing. Hence, health

hygiene is a must. Also, those venturing in wildlife should stop doing so for some time.

“We encourage you all to increase the surveillance of monkeypox to see where transmission levels are and understand where it is going,” the WHO’s director for Global Infectious Hazard Preparedness, Sylvie Briand, said at a conference recently.

Dr Faheem Younus, Chief Quality Officer and Chief of Infectious Diseases at the University of Maryland, says: “Monkeypox cases are concerning but the risk of this becoming a COVID like pandemic is zero% Why? This virus is not novel; is typically not deadly; is less contagious than Covid and has been around for 5 decades. Also, it can be prevented by a smallpox vaccine.”

**WHO RECOMMENDATION:** Given that rashes are seen in many other diseases such as chickenpox and measles, WHO recommends diagnosis when identification is necessary. This has to be with PCR testing.

**TRANSMISSION:** The virus generally spreads to people from infected wild animals such as rodents and primates, found in the rainforests of Central and West Africa, but human-to-human transmission can also occur. Similar to viruses like Ebola,

transmission only happens in close proximity by contact with lesions, body fluids, respiratory droplets or contaminated materials such as bedding or clothes.

**TREATMENT:** At present, there is no specific treatment. But there are antivirals licensed to combat orthopoxviruses, such as tecovirimat. The smallpox vaccine was key to eradicating smallpox decades ago, and this vaccine can be highly effective – 85% – in preventing monkeypox.

## BEYOND THE STETHOSCOPE

When not pursuing their profession, a breed of doctors prefer to wear different hats to keep themselves fit and centered. The HEALTH PIONEER tries to catch up with them every week.



Dr. Himanshu Verma

## The Long And Short Of Beard

According to Victorian writer Thomas S Gowing, “The absence of Beard is usually a sign of physical and moral weakness.” Letting it grow is “reverencing the Creator’s laws as above the dictates of man”.

Dr. Himanshu Verma, Head of Department of Nephrology and Renal Transplant at one of the country’s premier medical institutions, Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi who wears a well-groomed beard, agrees. A beard does draw attention. Most of the popular style icons like Ben Affleck and George Clooney too had once started growing one too.

For Dr Verma, keeping a beard is a symbol of manliness and, in fact, “It’s not about just Beards, it’s about Beards With Substance,” he stresses.

“Whether it is long or short, I always have a beard. Beard is an asset that can make most men look quite suave and masculine,” the 39-year-old doctor muses his childhood memories that connect him with Rambo-like characters equated with masculinity.

Dr Verma, a gold medalist in DM (Nephrology) from prestigious RML Hospital in Delhi finds a parallel in bearded scientists like Darwin and Aristotle known for their wisdom. He feels keeping a beard has several benefits. For instance, “it protects skin from the harmful Ultraviolet rays; it can add a layer of protection to your chin and neck; Your beard and moustache works as a filter that helps to keep allergens from entering your nose and mouth, thereby reducing chance of skin infections.”

Data says, the average man spends approximately 4.5 months in shaving. Imagine all the time you would save and invest it in overall men’s health. Hence, it is also a ‘way to show support to men’s health’, Dr Verma tries to make a point.

Hence, whenever he gets an opportunity, he takes out time to participate at various fundraisers like the global No Shave November movement, aka ‘Movember’, which creates awareness about the hazards of prostate cancer and other health issues in men. It was started in Australia in 2003 and now spread across the world.

Dr. Verma, the father of two sons, laments that men do not take care of their health. “Males usually give priority to their family and in the process neglect their own health. This leads to stress in them.

“Prostate cancer, unbalanced lipid profile and depression are some of the diseases that remain undiagnosed in men and ignorance of these ailments can be fatal,” points out Dr. Verma, himself an asthmatic since childhood.

“In fact, male depression needs to be addressed. Suicidal tendencies among them are becoming common. This can be prevented by emotional counseling,” he continues.

It’s not just that he loves keeping mane to highlight health issues, this 39-year-old soft-spoken medico is also an avid bike lover, a dancer and a model who walks down fashion ramps with an equal ease.

But this first generation doctor who is also the youngest HOD in the history of Nephrology in India, amidst a huge extended family of engineers hailing from Agra, remains committed to his patients as he says my motto is: “For patient’s care, I am there.” We are sure his friends and patients will agree with him.

—As told to Archana jyoti  
(Medicos may write to us at healthp100@gmail.com)

■ **World No Tobacco Day (WNTD 22) is round the corner. You have been vocal against tobacco consumption for quite a long time.**

I have started my life from a small village in Haryana, born as a rheumatic arthritis kid. Hailing from a humble family and having a disability, everyday was a struggle for everything—physically, financially and mentally. Those were very difficult days. Doctors had dumped me, saying that I won’t survive long. But with the blessings and care of my mother and my strong will, I was able to be physically fit and played for the country. I feel bad when I see youth and kids around me addicted to smoking and chewing tobacco, unaware of its harmful impact. It pains me. We have got this precious life only for once. I want these kids and youth to not waste their life but help contribute to make India a strong nation.

■ **What is the reason that despite various efforts, we have failed to curb tobacco habits among people? Lakhs of youth continue to succumb to the hazardous items every year. Where are we faltering?**

At times political parties get influenced by the tobacco or liquor barons in anticipation of getting funds for their party activities. Also, celebrities too, do not think twice about the ill-effects their endorsement of harmful products can have on youth and kids.

The Government should take strong steps to check availability of these products while celebrities should introspect what they are promoting. So much money is spent on healthcare for people falling ill due to tobacco related diseases. It is important to implement and enforce the most effective tobacco control policies aimed at reducing the supply and demand for tobacco.

## ‘Tobacco is slow poison, killing our youth’

SANGRAM SINGH is a wrestler, actor, motivational speaker, philanthropist and health guru, who wears his heart on his sleeve. Recently in Delhi to support the anti-tobacco campaign, he shared his thoughts with ARCHANA JYOTI on the need for stringent COTPA law to protect youth and kids from falling prey to the deadly products.



It angers me that many celebrities do not think twice about the ill-effects of their endorsement of harmful tobacco products on the lives of youth and kids. They do not deserve Government awards like Padma Shri.

public celebrities, will they allow their kids to chew tobacco or cigarettes, guthka and other harmful products like liquor, junk food products etc?

■ **Activists have been seeking stringent COTPA Act such as ban on Point of Sale advertisement and on public designated smoking areas to curb tobacco consumption. What is your take on this?**

I am always on the same page on all the issues if it saves a life. The WHO data says that every year more than 8 million people die of tobacco consumption. The addiction continues to

rapidly increase among people of all age groups in India. We all know that it causes a range of deadly diseases related to the heart and respiration system and cancer.

In such a scenario, we definitely need to not only emphasize on creating awareness against tobacco hazards but also tighten the gaps in the COTPA Bill which is giving tobacco manufacturers a leverage to play around the system. I feel that to curb tobacco consumption amid kids, Point of Sale should be banned. After all, why are we allowing tobacco items to be sold amidst candies and toys meant for kids. We should also take steps to protect non-smokers by banning designated smoking zones in airports, restaurants and hotels.

■ **What is your message to youth who refuse to quit tobacco?**

My advice to them is that by consuming tobacco they are not only harming themselves but also their loved ones in their homes. Smoking kills you daily. Your lungs get damaged and stamina weakens.

We get only one life. It is upto tobacco users what type of life they want to choose: good and health life or a torturous death. They have to choose between the two. If I can, who was in a wheelchair for years, win the World Wrestling Championship, anybody can quit tobacco and lead a healthy life.



The lesson I've  
learned the most often  
in life is that you're  
always going to know  
more in the future than  
you know now  
— Taylor Swift



# A PANDORA BOX

The ongoing Gyanvapi mosque dispute has led to similar petitions being filed in other temple-mosque cases, which would have larger implications for the country, writes **BISWAJEET BANERJEE**

**O**n November 9, 2019, when the Supreme Court delivered a judgment on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Mosque dispute in Ayodhya, many thought this was the end of such contentious issue as the court in its order dwelled at length about the Places of Worship Act, 1991. But within a year, petitions were filed across the country with Gyanvapi mosque and Krishna Janmashtami- Shahi-Idgah cases hogging the limelight. Hindu organizations also filed petitions demanding they should be allowed to offer prayers at Quwwatul Islam mosque in the Qutub Minar premises in New Delhi, while another Hindu organization claimed Taj Mahal as Tajo Mahal temple of Lord Shiva and asked for the court's permission to offer prayers there

This was not limited only to Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, but in down South, too. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad volunteers demanded they should be allowed to offer prayers at the outskirts of Mangaluru after a Hindu temple-like architectural design was purportedly found there underneath the Juma Masjid on April 21 2022. The VHP claimed that the mosque was built atop Sri Ramanjaneya Bhajana Mandira. Prohibitory orders were imposed in the city after Hindu organizations said they will be organizing 'Tambula Prashne' at Sri Ramanjaneya Bhajana Mandira.

The police claim that the status quo should be maintained as the matter is already in the court and temporary injunctions have been issued to the president of the mosque as well as all the parties.

The legal battle is the latest instance of a growing phenomenon in which Hindu groups petitioning courts demanding land where mosques are located by claiming these belong to Hindus. They claim that these mosques were built after demolishing temples

A senior advocate appearing for the Varanasi mosque management committee informed the lower court that the ongoing dispute had led to "similar petitions" being filed in other temple-mosque cases, which would have "larger ramifications across the country". The statement signifies the petitions filed in different courts by Hindu plaintiffs against mosque committees across the state claiming

ownership right of land where the mosque stands now. Inevitably, such petitions claim that the said mosques were built atop Hindu temples and thus the right be restored to the rightful owner.

In the forefront is the Gyanvapi case of Varanasi. Historians claim that originally it was Lord Visweswar Temple. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a French merchant, described a cruciform structure of the temple complex with multistoried domed towers at the four ends and at the center. It was the most sacred shrine in the subcontinent after the Jagannath Temple at Puri. In September 1669, Moghul emperor Aurangzeb ordered the demolition of the temple and a mosque was constructed in place. Initially, the mosque was called Aamgir mosque – under the name of Aurangzeb but later it was called Gyan Vapi (Well of Knowledge). Scholars attribute political reasons rather than religious zealotry to be the primary motivation for Aurangzeb's demolition. Madhuri Desai — in her magnum opus on Banaras — opines that Aurangzeb's complex and often-contradictory policies can be "more accurately analyzed in the light of his personal compulsions and political agenda, rather than as expressions of religious bigotry."

Muslims, however, argue that the Gyanvapi was constructed much before Aurangzeb's reign. Syed Mohammed Yasin, Joint secretary of Anjuman Intizamia Masjid Committee, the organization responsible for the maintenance of the mosque, claims that the mosque was built in 12th Century and later Aurangzeb renovated it in the 17th century. "The mosque was not built by demolishing the temple," he said. He claims Akbar had renovated an adjacent Shiva temple as a mark of Hindu-Muslim unity. In fact, both the Kashi Vishwanath Temple and the Gyanvapi were constructed by Akbar in a true to his spirit of religious tolerance

Cut to present scenario: In August 2021, five women, belonging to Vishwa Vedic Sanatan Sangh, filed a civil suit in the Varanasi civil court on the "Right to Worship", seeking daily access to the Shringaar Gauri temple, the Swayambhu Jyotirling, the Maa Ganga temple, and the Nandi temple to offer daily prayers. Shringar Gauri is a small temple at the western side of the mosque where till 1992 Hindus

SCHOLARS ATTRIBUTE  
POLITICAL REASONS  
RATHER THAN  
RELIGIOUS ZEALOTRY  
TO BE THE PRIMARY  
MOTIVATION FOR  
AURANGZEB'S  
DEMOLITION. MADHURI  
DESAI — IN HER  
MAGNUM OPUS ON  
BANARAS — OPINES  
THAT AURANGZEB'S  
COMPLEX AND OFTEN-  
CONTRADICTORY  
POLICIES CAN BE  
"MORE ACCURATELY  
ANALYZED IN THE  
LIGHT OF HIS  
PERSONAL  
COMPULSIONS AND  
POLITICAL AGENDA,  
RATHER THAN AS  
EXPRESSIONS OF  
RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY.



were allowed to offer prayers. Ramatama Srivastava, a resident of Varanasi, said that he had gone there many times where a group of Hindu women could be seen offering prayers. But after the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992, Hindus were not allowed there and the area was sealed.

Eight suits are currently pending before the Varanasi civil court, which on April 8 passed orders for videography and survey of the area by court commissioners. The survey and videography inside the mosque were carried out for three days after which the Hindu side claimed that a "shivling" was found from 'wazookhana', which is a small reservoir used by Muslim devotees to perform ritual ablutions before offering the namaz.

The lower court ordered the sealing of the premises, but the Supreme Court ordered that Muslims should not be prevented from offering prayers.

Besides, a separate application seeking an ASI survey through Ground Penetrating Radar are pending in the Allahabad High Court. The Supreme Court in its directives of May 20 said that the district judge will hear the issue of maintainability of the Right to Worship petitions.

**Shahi Eidgah case**, in Mathura, at least 10 suits were filed in the Krishna Janmabhoomi temple and the Shahi Idgah mosque dispute in 2020, even though a compromise was reached in two sections over the title suit in 1968, and the issue was settled by the civil court.

In its new petition, Ranjana Agnihotri, who claimed herself as the "next friend" of Bhagwan Shri Krishna Virajman, said that the 1968 compromise was achieved "through fraud". She said that the Shri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sansthan, which had agreed to the compromise, was not the owner of the disputed land. Instead, Shri Krishna Janmasthan Trust was the rightful owner of the land.

The civil court of Mathura dismissed the case in September 2020, but the petitioner challenged the order and moved a review petition. The District Judge on May 19, 2022, directed the civil judge to re-hear the matter. Another case has been filed demanding the appointment of a Court Commissioner and videography be carried out to ascertain whether the mosque has

Hindu religion signs, as is done in the Gyanvapi case.

**Petitions are also filed in other places:**

**QUWWATUL MOSQUE, DELHI**

Ranjana Agnihotri, also moved Delhi civil court in October 2021 seeking the restoration of Hindu and Jain temples demolished to build the Quwwatul Islam mosque in the Qutub Minar premises in Delhi. Early this month, volunteers of VHP also held a prayer meeting at the Qutub Minar premises and recited Hanuman Chalisa there. The petitioners claim that 27 Hindu and Jain temples were demolished by Qutubuddin Aibak to construct the Quwwatul Islam mosque. They say the walls of the mosques are adorned with symbols of Hindu gods and goddesses. The plea had called for the restoration of the temples.

The petition was dismissed by the civil judge in November 2021. The verdict was challenged in the court of the district judge and is currently pending.

**TAJ MAHAL, AGRA**

In May 2022, a PIL was moved in the Allahabad High Court by Rajneesh Singh who sought a "fact-finding commission" and survey of the Taj Mahal's premises. It had argued that there are "Hindu symbols" on the premises and sought orders from the court to open the 22 locked rooms in the basement of the mausoleum. The plea was thrown out by the Allahabad High Court. Singh was pulled up for "making a mockery of the PIL system". The controversy was first stirred by Purshottam Nagesh Oak, a historian, who in his book in 1989 named "Taj Mahal: The True Story" where he claimed that the Taj Mahal initially was a Shiva temple and a Rajput palace named Tejomahalaya, which Mughal emperor Shah Jahan seized and adopted as a tomb.

The argument was debunked by a number of historians, and even the Supreme Court in 2000 rejected a petition by Oak to declare that the Taj Mahal was constructed by a Hindu king. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), in August 2017 said that Taj Mahal was not a temple but a tomb.

*The writer is Political Editor of The Pioneer, Lucknow*



# Can Quad restrain wayward China?

The May 24 face-to-face meeting of the Quad leaders is considered very crucial against the backdrop of the ongoing Ukraine war. All the four heads of the Governments — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US president Joe Biden, Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese — came together on a platform to display strength and sustainability of the group at a crucial juncture when the world is gradually emerging out of the monstrous Covid-19 pandemic and entering into nothing short of Third World War in Europe.

It must be said once again the global governance institutions, especially the UN and the US-led liberal West have miserably failed to stop the most devastating war in Ukraine. Undoubtedly, the centrality of the Quad summit was the Russian onslaught in Ukraine. The Quad summit is indicative of a new beginning as it has also witnessed the formation of two fresh initiatives: The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA).

The IPEF, launched by the US with 12 members on board now, is precisely its answer to the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and its successor, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the TPP (CPTTP) and towards the China-led 15-country grouping called, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The IPMDA is aimed at building a “faster, wider and more accurate maritime picture of near real-time activities in partner’s waters”. Basically, it will directly facilitate the tracking of “dark shipping” across the Indo-Pacific region. These all seem to be a detailed preparation by the members of the Quad for preventing China-led initiatives both in the trade and security spheres in one of the busiest sea-communication lanes in the world.

The joint statement issued after the summit addressed the concerns emerging from the war in Ukraine. The statement underlined that the member countries “discussed respective responses to the conflict in Ukraine and the ongoing tragic humanitarian crisis and assessed its implica-



Leaders of Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) from left to right, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, US President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, pose for photo at the entrance hall of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan in Tokyo on May 24

AP

tions for the Indo-Pacific region”. The Quad summit has also highlighted and discussed any possible Chinese military adventures in the Indo-Pacific after Europe experienced Russia’s bloodiest invasion of Ukraine.

How did the Quad originate? It all began as a loose partnership against the background of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004. In fact, all the four nations came together to offer humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. But today China complains that the group is intending to form an ‘Asian NATO’ simply to act against the Beijing’s interests in the region.

Is China threatened by the Quad grouping? The Quad had its first historic meeting in the year 2007. Then no one thought it would be another platform to counter China in the days to come. But afterwards, the forum went into oblivion for a decade or so. It

reemerged in November 2017. Its regrouping piqued Chinese interests. And the Communists in China seriously gauged that America was plotting a Cold War style strategic encirclement of China by taking two other Indo-Pacific nations — India and Australia — into the orbit. Initially, when then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe invited officials from India, Australia and the US to gather in Manila, the Xi Jinping regime was not much worried. Wang Yi, the Foreign Minister of China, had scoffed at the grouping: “They (the Quad nations) are like sea foam in the Pacific or Indian Ocean: They get some attention but will soon dissipate.”

Is there any urgent need to thwart China in the Indo-Pacific? Yes, of course. China’s growing expansionist policies particularly under the current President Xi Jinping is worrisome. His “China Dream” projects are nothing but to assert

Beijing’s soft and hard power around the world.

What role India must play in the group? For Delhi, multilateral forums like the Quad are of high importance. China’s growing encirclement and its recent aggressive actions against India are an immediate threat to the latter’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. Xi’s hidden agenda is all out in public now. India at the moment needs external balance. And in this regard, Quad is considered as the best alternative for the country.

How is the old Quad different from the new Quad that India joined in 2021? Yes, they are different in their own way, yet some of the concerns are almost identical. Indeed, India’s growing insecurity in the Indo-Pacific can be sensed when it joined the new Quad comprising Israel, the US and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last year. Like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue or the old

Quad among the US, Australia, Japan and India, this new economic forum also equally emphasised on trade, climate change, energy and maritime security.

Unlike the earlier group, the current one is not aimed at countering China. It is largely felt that the new one certainly lacks a shared objective, and its future trajectory seems to be uncertain. However, this grouping may facilitate India to pursue its foreign policy goals by aligning more with the UAE and Israel in the West Asian region.

And, this will offer Delhi another opportunity to engage more closely with Washington. Further, India sees West Asia strategically important. India depends heavily on its energy imports. Nearly 9 million Indian workers earn their livelihood from the Persian Gulf. Israel and the UAE can enhance India’s role in the region. What prompted the

US to ramp up ties for another Quad is the growing Chinese interest in Israel and the UAE.

But the same is not true for other members of the group. In the recent past, both Israel and the UAE amplified their commercial investments with China, particularly in the shipping sector. Therefore, Washington takes this opportunity to convince Israel and the UAE to come out of the Chinese net. Clearly America’s intention dovetails with India’s as the latter has been continuously fighting to wean off Chinese influence in a region wherein it wants to remain a potential player for long.

The Quad needs to consolidate further. The Indo-Pacific is heading for a serious crisis. China’s ever-expanding agenda accompanied by sheer aggression might destabilise the whole region. Most probably, this kind of a future scenario may drag the US for an all-out war against China.

Along these lines, Japan, Australia and India will certainly be involved in this quagmire. Though the Quad group has been formed to boost economic prosperity, geostrategic equilibrium and tranquility in the Indo-Pacific, it is clearly making an alliance that is directly targeting China today. And the latest IPEF will be an advanced economic platform again to target China-led development initiatives in the region. Hence, the Quad and its extended members are all forging together to ramp up support to stop Chinese expansion across the Indo-Pacific.

Beijing now knows it very well. Its full-blown preparations to encounter this alliance are underway. Inevitability of another global conflict in this part of the globe cannot be denied.

The road ahead for the Quad and its new avatars like the IPEF should be to minimise any possible countdown with China. Washington knows fully well that Xi is an over-ambitious leader like Russian President Vladimir Putin. Xi is going to stay in power for long and his third term, unlike his immediate predecessors, is most likely to be endorsed by the Communist Party of China in the coming months.

Moreover, he has already shuffled his cronies in such a manner that his grip on the Party and the throne will be completely safe for years from now. Looking at all these developments back home in China, the Quad group leaders and its allies in the IPEF must be cautious while dealing with Xi. Though the US-led IPEF is centrally aiming at strengthening economic ties and achieving shared goals, its anti-China tag may escalate the trade war between Washington and Beijing in future. After having a bitter experience with Putin, Biden needs to maintain more restraint, simply to avoid another catastrophe in the Indo-Pacific.

(Dr Makhan Saikia has taught political science and international relations for over a decade in institutions of national and international repute after specialisation in globalisation and governance from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He is the chief editor of the Journal of Global Studies, an international research journal)

**It’s a tightrope walk for the grouping at a time when US-China trade war has reached a peak. After having a bitter experience with Putin, Biden may need to maintain more restraint, simply to avoid another catastrophe in the Indo-Pacific**



MAKHAN SAIKIA

## PERSPECTIVE

# Down dragon’s deep-debt maze

**China’s basic criteria behind the selection of BRI projects have been to consolidate its geostrategic position, to facilitate easy access to natural resources of the host state and its market for Chinese exports. To lure vulnerable small developing nations into its debt-trap strategy, Beijing offers a hefty loan which they won’t manage otherwise**



*There are two ways to conquer and enslave a nation. One is by the sword. Other is by debt.*  
— John Adams

Sri Lanka’s economic collapse and its unsustainable debt has brought the world’s spotlight back to China — the government’s biggest bilateral lender, owing at least 10 per cent of its external debt (non-inclusive of hidden loans). A real concern exists for nations like Pakistan and Nepal, among others, who might fall prey to a similar design.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative, for which 146 nations from Indo-Pacific, Africa, Europe, Latin America and Caribbeans have signed up, has resulted in several unsustainable debt-for-infrastructure deals, which further Beijing’s political, economic and geostrategic ambitions. It is the single largest lender globally, bigger than the World Bank, IMF and the Paris Club (industrialised nations grouping that lend to the developing nations), and has over 100 ports in 63 countries.

**The debt-trap strategy**  
US-based research lab AidData has found that 42 low-to-middle income coun-

tries owe a debt bigger than 10 per cent of their GDP to China. BRI loan contract contains secrecy clauses: Amount and conditions attached are to be kept confidential from other creditors, IMF and citizens. Loans are systematically under-reported (to the tune of \$385 billion), debt-burdens kept off the nation’s balance-sheet through use of special-purpose, semi-private loans or loans to state-owned companies and banks — still enjoying government’s liability protection — amounting to 70 per cent of funding. China lent disproportionately to countries that performed poorly on conventional measures of credit worthiness, in contrast to other international lenders, but demanded far higher interest rates with shorter repayment periods and is more aggressive than its peers at positioning itself at the front of the repayment line via collateralisation. World’s 74 lowest income nations owe 37 per cent of their loans to Beijing. Many of the debtor states are in a situation where their debt is unsustainable.

Beijing’s basic criteria behind the selection of BRI projects have been to consolidate its geo-strategic position,

to facilitate easy access to natural resources of the host state and its market for Chinese exports. Some other features of BRI loan are: A hefty loan is advanced which small developing nations would not manage otherwise, use of corruption to make the leaders of borrowing nations willing and pliable, setting terms for hire of Chinese companies and workers for project execution, higher loan rates than peers with shorter (less than 10 years) loan repayment period. On loan-default, it seeks creation of equity in the project or demands new projects, thus tying the subject state into an interminable knot.

**Dragon’s advocates**  
Expectedly, Beijing has pushed back against the allegations, denying existence of any bad motive and justifying that the loans were demanded by the debtor countries and were economically beneficial for them.

An interesting phenomenon has occurred recently, some publications have stood up in defence of Beijing, upholding the Chinese narrative. Last year US’ *The Atlantic* and UK’s *Chatham House* published reports calling Chinese

debt-trap a myth. The publications attempted a systematic refutation of any intention or liability on Beijing’s part, towards saddling nations with unsustainable debts or unviable projects, or of having any geostrategic ambition behind them. Indeed, they portrayed the dragon to be innocuous and uncoordinated, making poor economic choices. A leading newspaper in India recently published a piece on Chinese lending, titled, “Entrapment” or ‘ineptitude?’ along the same lines. A Chinese think tank, CISS, has acknowledged and thanked some of these think tanks — like *The Atlantic* — and media houses for “willing to communicate” with it by joint research or joint meetings and helping them establish “a brand and reputation.”

The right questions that need to be asked here are: Why is Beijing interested in loans for projects which are unviable and have no other takers? Do the debts given under BRI have the potential to function as tools to advance China’s geostrategic interests? To argue that such was not the intention of the dragon — or steps towards acquisition of the assets due to loan default have not yet been undertaken — is foolhardy.

Why would Beijing want to spook and warn the world, especially India and the West, so well in advance?

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar quipped, “We have seen projects which are commercially unsustainable; airports where aircraft don’t come, harbours where a ship doesn’t come” (Hambantota port and international airport, Gwadar is another example). The sole motive to undertake these ‘white elephant’ projects is to secure geostrategic advantage for Beijing: Chinese submarines docks at Sri Lankan ports and Chinese warships are pressed into the security of Gwadar. The whole structure of BRI debts is such that they become unsustainable - action is the biggest indicator of intention. Whether or not it causes an economic crisis in the host nation will depend on its economic management, however, unarguably, it provides Beijing a strong foothold in the nation which is exploited for furthering dragon’s ambitions.

**Behind the scenes**  
In 2018, the *New York Times* reported the Sri Lankan officials stating that intelligence sharing was an integral part of Hambantota deal and

strategic possibility of the port location was also discussed from the beginning. It also reported about the millions of dollars that flew from the project fund to the Rajapakshas’ election campaign. It revealed an insistence on the Chinese side to hand over equity in the port and 15,000 acres of surrounding land, rather than allowing any easing of negotiating terms. Some Chinese companies have also faced ban in Bangladesh and the Philippines for engaging in corrupt practices.

Montenegro presents another example of Chinese strategy behind BRI where Beijing is funding and building an economically unviable highway — 78 per cent of Montenegro’s external debt is owed to China and in case of a default Beijing has a right to access Montenegrin land as collateral. Any arbitration would be conducted according to Chinese laws. Such strategies will be at play at all BRI sites.

Three years ago, IMF’s then Managing Director Christine Lagarde raised the same issue, stating that BRI should go only where it’s needed and where the debt it generates can be sustained.

**Alternatives to BRI**

One would have expected that BRI with 18 EU members and 20 Latin America and Caribbean nations would have sent shivers down the spine of Western world. But the Chinese, unlike the Russians, ace the art of subtle game play that the West blindly falls for. Washington’s Build Back Better World (B3W) and the EU Global Gateway, still in the launching phases, are too little too late; the analysts have already declared them incapable of competing with BRI.

Now there’s concern and debate in the BRI states about debts, however, if their common populace can continue to put consistent pressure on their governments about complete transparency over the loans, the situation can improve. International development banks and multilateral initiatives will also need to step up their game. Finally, IMF and World Bank will have to provide debt to needy nations while toning down the harsh conditions and dropping the imposition of Bretton Woods consensus, if they were to have a real choice to get out of Beijing’s deep-debt maze.

(The author is a foreign policy expert and a lawyer)



# Nasal COVID-19 vaccines are spot on

**PNS ■ CHARLOTTESVILLE (US)**

Imagine inhaling just a few drops of liquid or mist to get protected from COVID-19.

That is the idea behind nasal COVID-19 vaccines, and they have been getting a lot of attention recently as a spray or liquid.

These nasal vaccines would be based on the same technology as normal vaccines given by injection.

But as Mayuresh Abhyankar, a University of Virginia researcher who studies infectious diseases and works on nasal vaccines, explains, vaccinating someone right where the coronavirus is likely to start its attack comes with many immunological benefits.

### What are nasal vaccines?

Nasal vaccines are administered, as the name suggests, through the nose. More accurately called intranasal vaccines, these vaccines are liquids that can be given as a spray or through a dropper or syringe.

The most common nasal vaccine is FluMist, a nasal spray that uses inactivated

flu virus to protect against influenza.

An intranasal vaccine could be a weakened live virus similar to FluMist, a nucleic acid vaccine like mRNA coronavirus vaccines or a protein vaccine like Hepatitis B vaccines or the CorbeVax coronavirus vaccine.

Intranasal vaccines are best suited to protect against pathogens that enter through the nose, like the flu or the coronavirus.

By mimicking the first step of natural exposure to an airborne pathogen, these vaccines help train a person's immune system at the potential place of infection. Scientists have shown that the first immune response in the respiratory tract after a person is exposed to an airborne virus can influence how sick a person gets.

So in theory, intranasal vaccines could provide better protection than vaccines given through a shot in the arm.

### How does the coronavirus infect people?

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, usually enters the body

through the nose and lands on the mucus membrane at the back of the nasal passage and in the throat. The virus then enters the cells it touches, replicates and spreads. Just underneath these cells of the mucus membrane are many types of immune cells that form what is called the mucosal immune system. Cells of the mucosal immune system are the first to identify invading coronavirus particles and start mounting a protective response.

In an unvaccinated individual, it takes about two weeks for these immune cells to build up a protective response after encountering the coronavirus.

By that time, the virus can easily have infected other body parts, like the lungs, which can lead to severe disease.

Nasal vaccines follow a lot of the same steps. When you inhale a nasal vaccine, the particles land on the mucus membrane in your nasal cavity or the back of your throat, enter the cells in those places and trigger an immune response. This process teaches the body about the coronavirus and allows it to deal with any future real

infections.

### How are nasal and intramuscular vaccines different?

When you get a COVID-19 shot in your arm, the vaccine triggers a strong immune response in the cells near where you got the shot. It also causes your immune system to produce some coronavirus-specific antibodies and other immune cells in other locations throughout your body.

When the coronavirus begins infecting cells in a person's respiratory tract, the immune cells nearby will start mounting a defense.

Your body will also send anti-viral immune cells and antibodies from other locations to the site of infection.

But by the time enough coronavirus-specific immune cells gather around the infection site to stop the virus from replicating, the virus has likely already begun to spread throughout the body, making it difficult for the immune system to keep

up. Nasal vaccines mimic the virus in order to prepare the immune system against a virus, just like any other vaccine.

But importantly, they mimic the process of infection, too, and boost protective response within the mucosal immune system of the nose and throat. In simple terms, intranasal vaccines are like knowing there is going to be a break-in and putting your guards in the right location before the trouble

even starts.

The science bears this idea out. In a head-to-head comparison, AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine provided greater protection in hamsters that were vaccinated intranasally compared to those vaccinated intramuscularly.



## Algerian dissidents: Victims of crackdown, or outlaws?

Mohamed Benhalima looks awary and frightened as he is tied off a plane at Algiers airport, handcuffed with a security officer's arm wrapped around him. A team from Algeria's Rapid Intervention Force then puts him in their vehicle and whisks him to an unknown destination. The video was posted online on March 24.

Three days later, Algerians watched on television as the 32-year-old confessed to involvement with an organisation that authorities have listed as an Islamist terrorist group plotting against the Algerian government. Once a faithful servant of his homeland as a non-commissioned army officer, Benhalima became a supporter of Algeria's pro-democracy movement, then a deserter who fled to Europe. Spain expelled him after Algeria issued a warrant for his arrest. The confession scene

was made public by Algeria's General Directorate of National Security, in what could be seen as a warning to other soldiers or citizens. Hundreds of Algerian citizens have been jailed for trying to keep alive the Hirak movement that held weekly pro-democracy protests starting in 2019, leading to the downfall of longtime Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The marches were banned last year by the nation's army-backed government. Authorities then expanded their sweep, linking some Hirak supporters to two groups added to Algeria's terror list last year: Rachad, regarded as Islamist infiltrators whose leaders are in Europe, and MAK, a separatist movement in Kabylie, home of the Berbers. For the last two or three years, there have been thousands of legal cases against activists, said well-known lawyer Mustapha Bouchachi. Their only error is that they expressed their political opinions on social media and are fighting for a state of law. For authorities of the gas-rich North African nation, guaranteeing the stability of the state is at the heart of their actions. For human rights groups, Benhalima and others are victims of an unjust, antiquated system of

governance that views dissidents, or any critical voices, as criminals. They say that Algerian authorities use threats to national security to stifle free speech, including among journalists, and justify arrests. A campaign on social media, with the hashtag #PasUnCrime (not a crime) was launched May 19 by dozens of non-governmental organizations against repression of human rights. The U.S. State Department's 2021 report on human rights in Algeria cited a long list of problems, including arbitrary arrests and detentions and restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association. In March, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, asked Algeria to change direction to guarantee the right of its people to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. To be a human rights activist in Algeria has become very difficult, said Zaki Hannache, a Hirak militant recently temporarily released from prison. To be an activist who refuses the system is complicated. It even means sacrifices. Hannache, best known for keeping track of Hirak-related arrests, was arrested and jailed in February on a string of charges, including defending terrorist acts.



To a threatening soundtrack of air raid sirens and booming artillery, civilians are fleeing towns and cities in eastern Ukraine as Russian forces advance. Negotiating narrow apartment building staircases, volunteers carry the elderly and infirm in their arms, in stretchers or in wheelchairs to waiting minibuses, which then drive them to central staging areas and eventually to evacuation trains in other cities. The Russians are right over there, and they're closing in on this location, Mark Poppert, an American volunteer working with British charity RefugeeAid, said during an evacuation in the town of Bakhmut on Friday. Bakhmut is a high-risk area right now, he said. We're trying to get as many people out as we can in case the Ukrainians have to fall back. He and other Ukrainian and foreign volunteers working with the Ukrainian charity Vostok SOS,

## Fleeing the Russians: Evacuations are slow and arduous

which was coordinating the evacuation effort, were hoping to get about 100 people out of Bakhmut on Friday, Poppert said. A few hours earlier, the thud of artillery sounded and black smoke rose from the northern fringes of the town, which is in the Donetsk region in Ukraine's industrial east. Donetsk and the neighbouring region of Luhansk makes up the Donbas, where Moscow-backed separatists have controlled some territory for eight years. The evacuation process is painstaking, physically arduous and fraught with emotion. Many of the evacuees are elderly, ill or have serious mobility problems, meaning volunteers have to bundle them into soft stretchers and slowly negotiate their way through narrow corridors and down flights of stairs in apartment buildings. Most people have already fled Bakhmut: only around 30,000 remain from a pre-war population of 85,000. And more are leaving each day. Fighting has raged north of Bakhmut as Russian forces intensify their efforts to seize the key eastern cities of Sieverodonetsk and Lysychansk, 50 kilometers (30 miles) to the northeast. The two cities are the last areas under Ukrainian control in the Luhansk region. Northwest of Bakhmut in Donetsk, Russia-backed rebels said Friday they had taken over the town of Lyman, a large railway hub near the cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, both of which are still under Ukrainian control. On Thursday, smoke rising from the direction of Lyman could be seen clearly from Sloviansk. But even when faced with shelling, missiles and an advancing Russian army, leaving isn't easy. Svetlana Lvova, the 66-year-old manager for two apartment buildings in Bakhmut, huffed and rolled her eyes in exasperation upon hearing that yet another one of her residents was refusing to leave. I can't convince them to go, she said. I told them several times if something lands here, I will be carrying them injured to the same buses that have come to evacuate them now. She's tried to persuade the holdouts every way she can, she says, but nearly two dozen people just won't budge. They're more afraid to leave their homes and belongings for an uncertain future than to stay and face the bombs. She herself will stay in Bakhmut with her husband, she said. But not because they fear leaving their property. They are waiting for their son, who is still in Sieverodonetsk, to come home. I'm not going anywhere, she said. I have to know he is alive. That's why I'm staying here. Lvova plays the last video her son sent her, where he tells his mother that he is fine, and that they still have electricity in the city but no longer running water.

## Hindustanis have blended with Singapore's multi-racial society

The Hindustani diaspora are now recognised as highly intersectional and have increasingly blended into Singapore's multi-racial society, according to a study presented on Saturday. In revealing that experience, the Sojourners and Settlers from the Gangetic Heartland: The Hindustani Diaspora in Singapore' investigates the foundations of a

diaspora in Singapore set by sepoy and convict pioneers in the early and mid-19th century. It also traces the growth of the diaspora led by transient circulators of the late 19th and early 20th century, including settlement patterns and aspects of their institutional development. The National University of Singapore (NUS) study in the form of a book notes



## A lost era of cinema halls through eyes of lensmen

Two eminent photographers have come together to showcase human emotions attached to watching cinema in single-screen theatres, in most of which the curtains have been drawn forever. 'Curtain Closes', an ongoing exhibition of 29 photographs clicked by photojournalist Amit Dhar and commercial cameraperson Satyaki Ghosh, captures various cinema halls, their ambience, now faded-away analog projectors and the viewpoint of the audience. Photographs range from cine-goers' rush to buy tickets at the counters, standing up for the National Anthem to close-ups of elderly women watching films together and a tired daily wage taking a puff from his 'bidi' during intermission. The exhibition in Ballygunge area of Kolkata was inaugurated by auteur Satyajit Ray's filmmaker son Sandip on May 15 and it will conclude on May 29. Dhar's colour photographs, clicked over a period of time, are mostly of now shut single-screen theatres such as Rupbani, Bhabani, Mitra, Chaya names associated with icons such as Rabindranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose among others. Ghosh's black-and-white photographs revolve around one particular cinema hall New Roshan Talkies in Kamathipura red-light area of Mumbai. He has captured the various moods of cine-goers, the ambience of the projection room, rejected film spools, old film prints among other aspects.