

ANALYSIS 7
POOR HYGIENE BRINGS THE
ECONOMY DOWN

MONEY 8
BANGLADESH TO IMPORT
DEFENCE ITEMS FROM INDIA

VIVACITY 12
38 YEARS OF
ORIENT EXPRESS

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



ALLU SIRISH TO
ANNOUNCE PAN-
INDIA FILM

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ARMY CHIEF GEN NARAVANE TAKES CHARGE AS HEAD OF CHIEFS OF STAFF

Army Chief Gen MM Naravane has assumed the charge as the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee that comprises the three service chiefs. The post fell vacant following the death of Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat in the IAF helicopter crash on December 8. Gen Naravane has been given the charge as the chairman of the committee as he is the senior-most among the three service chiefs. IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari and Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar had taken over their respective positions on September 30 and November 30.

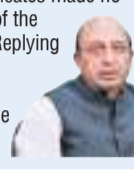


"SHE'S ALIVE!": INDRANI MUKERJEE CLAIMS OVER SHEENA BORA

Jailed former media executive Indrani Mukerjee, accused of murdering her daughter Sheena Bora in 2012, has written to the CBI claiming she is alive and has asked the agency to investigate, adding a bizarre new twist to the sensational case. Indrani Mukerjee claims she met a woman prisoner who told her she had met Sheena Bora in Kashmir, sources say, citing the letter sent directly to the CBI chief. "She wrote to the CBI, we have no details of what she wrote," said her lawyer Sana Khan today, adding that she will move a formal application for bail. Indrani Mukerjee, 49, has been in the Byculla prison in Mumbai since 2015.

NO DEATH DUE TO LACK OF OXYGEN DURING COVID SECOND WAVE: UP GOVT

The Uttar Pradesh government today told the legislative council that no death due to lack of oxygen was reported in the state during the second wave of COVID-19, a claim rejected by the opposition. The government said the death certificates made no mention of 'death due to lack of oxygen' in any of the 22,915 patients that died due to the pandemic. Replying to Congress member Deepak Singh during the Question Hour, Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh said, "No death has been reported in the state due to lack of oxygen during the second wave."



MERELY LIVING TOGETHER FOR FEW DAYS NOT ENOUGH FOR LIVE-IN TIES

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has observed that merely because two adults are living together for a few days, their claim of a live-in relationship based upon a "bald averment" may not be enough to hold that they are truly in a live-in-relationship. Justice Manoj Bajaj observed that it has to be constantly borne in mind that the length of the relationship coupled with discharge of certain duties and responsibilities towards each other makes such relationship akin to the marital relations. The court dismissed the plea of a couple of Haryana's Yamunanagar district seeking protection from the family members of the woman.

Bill on increasing marriage age of women from 18 to 21 yrs

Govt to bring a bill in the ongoing Winter Session Experts flag concern

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has decided to raise the legal age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 years, bringing it at par with that of men. Experts, however, have raised concern over the decision, saying the move is akin to treating symptoms instead of the underlying causes.

The Union Cabinet had on Wednesday cleared a proposal to bring in uniformity in the marriageable age of men and women, sources said on Thursday.

The government is likely to bring a bill in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, they said.

The proposed bill may also seek to make consequential changes to various personal laws relating to



The decision is based on the recommendation of a four-member task force led by former Samata Party chief Jaya Jaitly.

marriage of different communities to ensure a uniform marriage age, the sources said.

As of now, the legal age of women to get married is 18 while that for men is 21 years.

The decision came a year after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the government was deliberating on what should be the minimum

age for marriage of women.

The decision is based on the recommendation of a four-member task force led by former Samata Party chief Jaya Jaitly. Speaking about the recommendation, Jaitly said there were two main reasons that were focussed on.

Genpact to set up tech centre in Warangal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major boost to growth of the IT sector in tier-II cities, Genpact has announced setting up of their facility in Warangal. This announcement was made by the leadership team of Genpact after a meeting with IT Minister K T Rama Rao in Hyderabad.

Expressing happiness over the announcement, Minister KTR stated that this investment would provide a huge boost to the IT sector in Warangal.

During the meeting with the Genpact team, the Minister highlighted the advantages of setting up the campus in Warangal. He explained how the State Government was having plans to develop urban infrastructure in Warangal and ease the commute in the city. Warangal also has a very good connectivity with Hyderabad and the corridor is fast developing.

Winter is here!

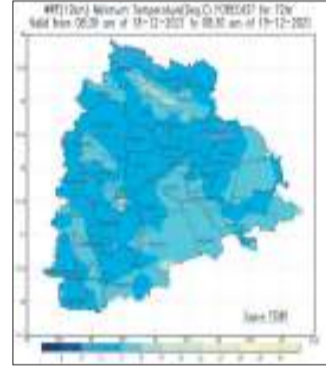
Lowest temperature recorded was 8.9°C in Kohir

NAVEENA GHANATE
HYDERABAD

The night temperatures have shown a drop in the State recording the lowest minimum temperatures of this season, signaling the arrival of winter. According to the Telangana State Development Planning Authority (TSDDS), the lowest temperature recorded in the State was 8.9°C in Kohir in Sangareddy district. In GHMC, the lowest temperature recorded was 11.8°C in Rajendranagar, Rangareddy district.

Across the State, the minimum temperatures were below 17°C. In isolated pockets of Sangareddy, Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem, Vikarabad and Rangareddy, the minimum temperatures recorded were below 10°C.

According to TSDDS, minimum temperatures are observed 2° to 3°C below normal over many districts of the State and the falling trend is expected to continue for next five days over north and central districts of the State. "With cold wave conditions prevailing in iso-



lated pockets of Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem, Jayashankar, Nirmal, Kamareddy, Medak, Siddipet and Sangareddy districts, the minimum temperatures are expected to continue in the range of 6-10°C from December 18 to 21," it said.

IMD has predicted that the minimum temperatures are likely to be below normal by 2-3°C in many pockets of Telangana until December 21.

CM to tour Janagaon district on Dec 20

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrababoo Naidu will be visiting Janagaon district on December 20 as part of his district tours and to speed up the developmental works, considering that the Model Code of Conduct, in vogue for the MLC elections, has ended.

Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao held a meeting at his residence in Ministers' quarters with Minister Satyavathi Rathod, State Farmers' Coordination Committee Chairman and MLC Palla Rajeshwar Reddy, MLCs Kadiyam Srihari, Pochampally Srinivas Reddy and other district leaders to discuss arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit.

They entrusted the responsibility to various mandal in-charges for the Chief Minister's meeting to be held in the district. The meeting also finalised the action plan for the developmental and welfare programmes as well as issues to be taken to the notice of the Chief Minister.

SPARKLING NECKLACE



Minister K T Rama Rao on Thursday illuminated the entire stretch of Outer Ring Road, all intersections and important sections of service roads totalling 190.5 km with 6,340 poles & 13,009 LED fixtures set up at a cost of Rs 100.22 cr. He complimented HMDA for the superb job.

4 more test +ve for Omicron in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Four more Omicron cases have been detected at RGIA in Telangana. One international traveller from an 'at risk' country and three others from other countries tested positive for the Omicron variant of Covid-19. With this, the total number of Omicron cases in the state has gone up to 7.

Director of Public Health Dr G Srinivasa Rao said: "We got four imported Omicron positive cases on Thursday. Out of these, three are from Kenya and one person is of Indian origin. Investigation is on and we will share further details on Friday morning".

Telangana on Wednesday reported the first case of Omicron with two air passengers from Kenya and Somalia testing positive for the new variant of Covid-19. About 120 passengers arrived in the state on Thursday, no one tested positive. Further, one sample was sent for genome sequencing.

KTR inaugurates four facilities at Woxsen varsity

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Municipal Administration Minister K T Rama Rao unveiled four new facilities at Woxsen University, Kamkole in Sangareddy on Thursday. The facilities are: Bloomberg Finance Lab, said to be among the largest in India; Central Library of 70,000 sq ft area, perhaps one of the largest in India; Ten-acre Mega Sports Arena, considered amongst the best sports infrastructure in South Asia; and a 75,000 sq ft High-Tech Academic Block.

These new additions are student-centric state-of-the-art facilities. Sabitha Indra Reddy, TS Minister for Education, also attended the inauguration. Speaking on the occasion, KTR observed that Woxsen was no less than any world-class University in the west. "It is truly amazing. This is my first visit and it is truly amazing. I was told that I have to see it to believe it. What I liked the most besides many other things is its



emphasis on research. You cannot push innovation without good strides in research and produce world-class entrepreneurs. Most of the renowned private institutions have taken this step and Woxsen is treading in the right direction with its focus on research", he said. Woxsen currently houses 1,200

students at its residential campus and aims to up its strength to 15,000 soon. KTR urged the 50+ business leaders who were part of the inauguration to explore the German model of apprenticeship and support Woxsen by offering practical exposure to students while studying.

Sabitha Indra Reddy expressed her happiness at the manner in which Woxsen had been grooming its students to face the growing world with much confidence.

Praveen K. Pula, founder & president of the University, said: "We are in the process of building Asia's largest sports facility by 2026. We believe that sports and education go hand in hand building good corporate leaders. We will not rest until we make it global top 50." Woxsen is one of the first private Universities of the Telangana, spread over 200 acres. This residential campus houses 1,000 plus students from across India and abroad.

49% STUDENTS PASS IN INTER FIRST YEAR EXAMS PAGE-3

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Margashirsha & Shukla Paksha
Tithi: Chaturdashi Full Night
Nakshatram: Krittika 10:40
Rahukalam: 10:50 am - 12:12 pm
Yamagandam: 2:56 pm - 4:19 pm
Varjyam: 4:46 am - 6:34 am
Gulika: 8:05 am - 9:27 am
Amritakalam: 7:58 am - 9:46 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:50 am - 12:34 pm

HYDRABAD WEATHER

Forecast: SUNNY
Temp: 31°
Humidity: 51%
Sunrise: 6:29 AM
Sunset: 5:45 PM
Updated DECEMBER 16, 2021 5:00 PM

DS set for ghar wapsi to Congress

K VENKATESHWARLU
HYDERABAD

New Delhi in the presence of AICC leaders".

Rajya Sabha member belonging to TRS and former APCC chief Dharmapuri Srinivas (DS) is set for ghar wapsi to Congress "at any moment at the AICC office



It is understood that the AICC asked CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka over phone to come over to Delhi in this regard. The Congress party high command has directed the Telangana Congress

Affairs in charge Manickam Tagore to make arrangements in this regard.

The party had given time to DS on Friday; however, he urged the Congress high command to wait for a couple of days.

DS was member of the Congress from 1989 to 2015, occupying various positions.

Shilpa got bail in one case, waiting in another two cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Shilpa Chowdary, a socialite and the main accused in a cheating case, got bail on Thursday in one out of the three cases registered against her. The proceedings on her bail petition in 2 other cases will start on Friday.

The court granted bail after hearing Shilpa Choudary's lawyer's arguments. The court had rejected bail twice but granted it after the cops inquired her for six days.

NFWT: Nix regressive, undemocratic concepts from CBSE syllabus

Takes strong exception to attempts to create gender bias Demands unconditional apology from CBSE officials

ML MELLY MAITREYI
HYDERABAD

The National Forum for Women Teachers (NFWT) has taken strong exception to certain regressive and anti-democratic narrative that had crept into the question papers related to CBSE syllabus in 10th and 12 th standards.

"Children have been going astray in families where women do not give value to their husbands' views. There is growing lack of discipline and families are disintegrating. This is all due to excessive freedom to women."

The foregoing was a paragraph (meant for comprehension) in the latest English language question paper of 10th standard, M Sanyukta, NFWT Chairperson and STPI National Vice-President, pointed out in a statement here on Thursday.

In yet another instance, there was a question with multiple answers in Sociology question paper related to 12 th standard - Who engineered attacks against

Muslims in Gujarat in year 2002? The multiple answers provided were: BJP, Congress, Republican and Democrat.

After nation-wide protests and criticism concerning these question papers, CBSE authorities said it was a 'printing' mistake and that an inquiry would be ordered and action taken against those responsible.

The NFWT members said action should be taken against those who

had set the question papers and others connected with it. Examination papers had questions which were not related to syllabus. The syllabus of 10th and 12 th standards should be reviewed and undemocratic concepts should be removed, they demanded.

The NFWT Chairperson and other members said that those who had formulated the New Education Policy -2020 and those involved in its compilation must be those believing in 'Manuvadi' thought process.

Tolichowki containment zone now

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state health authorities on Thursday sounded alert in Toli chowki area, where two cases of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 were detected among foreigners.

Teams of health workers, along with employees of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), conducted door-to-door surveys in Paramount Colony of the area.

The GHMC is conducting door-to-door fever surveys, scaling up sanitation and spraying of sodium hypochlorite. The entomology team has reportedly asked residents to be under home quarantine. Teams have also carried out Covid testing on certain residents in the vicinity and teams of the GHMC are spraying disinfectants in the area. A total of 25 health teams have entered the field and are conducting Covid tests on people in 700 homes.

Officials said 136 people had already completed RT-PCR tests and their results would come in 36 hours.

Ready to contest against KCR, says Eatala Rajender

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

BJP MLA from Huzurabad Eatala Rajender has made it clear that he will contest against Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao if the party directs him to do so.



However, he added that didn't want to contest anywhere else as the Huzurabad people had elected him seven times in a row. Eatala claimed that the BJP would win a majority in the next elections in the State.

Reacting to KCR's third front in the national-level, Eatala asked him to solve the problems prevailing in the State first. He alleged that KCR's team was spreading a false campaign that he would join the Congress party.

stood that KCR is a big liar and he will not believe in his words anymore, "Eatala said, adding that he came to know after the Huzurabad by-poll that Finance Minister T Harish Rao behaved cheaply.

wastage in paddy. He said that the rabi season paddy purchase issue would be solved if the government gives Rs. 200 per quintal, however, KCR has been putting the blame on the Centre. The farmers are committing suicide because of KVR's attitude," he alleged.

No truck between Congress...

Continued from page 1

It is understood that some Congress leaders favoured an alliance with TRS party. However, other leaders within the party opposed it outrightly and some even threatened to quit Congress should there be an alliance with TRS party.

Winter is here!

Continued from page 1

For the next three days, the minimum temperatures across the State are expected to be in the range of 15 to 18°C, while the maximum temperatures will be in the range of 29 to 32°C.

State procures record 50 lakh tonnes of paddy in Kharif season

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD



Telangana State has created a new record in paddy procurement during the kharif season and by Thursday, around 50 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured, said State Civil Supplies Corporation Chairman Maredy Srinivas Reddy.

So far, paddy has been procured from 6,849 purchase centres. Nine lakh farmers brought paddy worth Rs.10,000 crore to the centres.

process, he said. "By this time last year, 37 lakh tonnes of paddy was procured and this year, during the same period, an additional 13 lakh tonnes could be procured. Another 20 lakh tonnes of paddy is expected to reach the centres and the corporation is prepared to purchase it.

However, the Telangana Chief Minister, despite financial burden, has been procuring paddy from farmers. He had taken up new irrigation projects to bring one crore acres of new ayacut and the Kaleswaram project was completed in record time.

DS set for ghar...

Continued from page 1

He had continued in the Congress party even after the formation of separate Telangana State, but chose to join TRS party following developments in the Congress that were distasteful to him.

Bill on increasing marriage age of women frm 18 to 21 yrs

Continued from page 1

"If we talk about gender equity and gender empowerment in every field, we cannot leave marriage out because this is a very odd message that a girl can be fit to be married at 18 that cuts away her opportunity to go to college, and the man has the opportunity to prepare himself for life and earning up to 21 years, she told PTI.

themselves. We conducted assessment calls with young people -- universities, colleges and in rural areas -- where they are still at school or getting out of school and the unanimous opinion of the stakeholders was the marriageable age to be 22 or 23 years.

women and child development, legislative department apart from academicians Najma Akhtar, Vasudha Kamat and Dipti Shah.

alone is not successful in raising the age of marriage. In upper and middle classes, girls marry much beyond the age of 21 years and this happened without the compulsion of law," he said.

Revanth Reddy to take out padayatra in Chevella

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC chief A Revanth Reddy will take out a 'padayatra' in Chevella constituency on December 18, in protest against the alleged anti-people policies of the BJP and rise in prices of essential goods across the country.

Amethi. The TPCC leaders announced that Rahul Gandhi would participate in a padayatra in Telangana in the first week of February.

Tolichowki containment zone now

Continued from page 1

The authorities are arranging to send samples for genome sequencing if the RT-PCR test is positive. All the foreign nationals living in the area and their contacts were being traced and tested under the special drive.

Kenya and 24-year-old male from Somalia had tested positive for COVID-19 on arrival at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Hyderabad on December 12.

screening, reducing out-of-pocket expenditure, having safety nets for the most vulnerable sections and early detection of TB.



Genpact to set up tech centre in Warangal

Continued from page 1

"I offer my compliments to CEO Tiger Tyagarajan and his team on supporting our endeavour to strengthen IT in tier-II towns. After Tech M, Cyient and now with Genpact's decision, Warangal is set to soar high," he added.

away. He also pointed out that Warangal had a very strong academic ecosystem with NIT-Warangal and plenty of tier-II engineering colleges where they can get a lot of quality talent for his tech center.

table development, the Telangana Government has been encouraging IT companies to set up their offices in tier-II cities.

Naidu urges legislators to be gender-sensitive

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Venkaiah Naidu on Thursday called on members of parliament and legislative assemblies and gram pradhans to take regular district and sub-district level reviews to ensure a gender-sensitive approach to TB eradication," he said.

fulfilling this mission of 'TB Mukta Bharat' by 2025. I encourage MPs, MLAs and gram pradhans to take regular district and sub-district level reviews to ensure a gender-sensitive approach to TB eradication," he said.

screening, reducing out-of-pocket expenditure, having safety nets for the most vulnerable sections and early detection of TB.

year and most of them are aged 25-55 years. "It is essential to make India TB free by 2025. Though the world goal is 2030, but our goal is 2025, and we are working progressively towards it," he said.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said nearly 4 lakh people die of TB every year and most of them are aged 25-55 years.

4 more test +ve for Omicron in...

Continued from page 1

From the random sampling of those from coming non-risk countries, three persons tested positive.

BJP asks KCR to fulfil assurances soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP State executive committee has opined that the Huzurabad election result changed the face of the State politics. A two-day meeting of the committee also demanded that the State government increase funds for fees reimbursement, development and welfare schemes.

State: Kishan Reddy However, Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy said that the Centre would purchase paddy as per the written agreement given by the State government.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹180
Without Skin	₹190
Broiler at Farm	₹112
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	475
VIJAYAWADA	494
VISAKHAPATNAM	500
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.75

NFWT: Nix regressive, undemocratic concepts from CBSE syllabus

Continued from page 1

In a democratic country like India, backed by Constitution which provided equal opportunities to all, girls and women had been proving themselves and raising their voice for their rights and questioning atrocities and injustice.

the household. However, those men who subscribed to Manuvadi doctrine were including topics in the syllabus that would sow seeds of discrimination and regressive concepts into the minds of young children.

Technology was making rapid strides, instead of including topics that would encourage scientific attitude and temperament, CBSE unfortunately included topics that would belittle women.

Beti Pado' be accomplished with this kind of thought process?" The CBSE should immediately remove from syllabus such concepts that would create misconceptions about their mothers.

the CBSE syllabus be reviewed and re-oriented with a democratic and progressive spirit enshrined in the Constitution. The board should tender an unconditional apology for hurting the sentiments of women.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work.

49% students pass in Inter first year exams

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education on Thursday announced the Inter first year (2020-21) results. A total of 4,59,242 students appeared for the exam out of which 2,24,012 passed (49 per cent). Of these, 56 per cent were girls and 42 per cent were boys.

Inter first year exams, which were canceled last year due to the covid pandemic, were conducted from October 25, 2021 to November 3, 2021. Students can view the results on the official website of



Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education. Highest pass percentage was

recorded in Medchal - Malkajgiri district with 63% while lowest 22 pass percent-

age in Medak district. 61% MPC students passed, Bipc group 55 percent, Humanities 50 percent and Vocational Engineering 39%. The students of MPC scored 467 out of 470, Bipc students secured 438 out of 440 marks, MEC students scored 494 out of 500 marks, CEC 492 out of 500 and HEC students got 488 out of 500. The district of Manicherial, Peddapalli, Rajanna sircilla, Mahabubabad, Bhoopalapally, Yadadri Bhongir, Suryapet, Gadwal, Nagarkurnool, Vikarabad, Pargi and Narayanpet districts did not reach 40%.

Chief Secretary's surprise visit to Rangareddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar made a surprise visit to Ranga Reddy collector office today and discussed the implementation of GO 317 with members of various teachers unions of Ranga Reddy district. He congratulated the district collectors of four districts and other senior officials for successfully completing the allocation process.

Members of the union expressed satisfaction and thanked the government for taking up this long-pending issue of transfers and hoped that this would pave the way for promotions and fresh recruitment of teachers.

Police are meant for public: Telangana Home Minister

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Newly constructed Police Station of Keshampet near Shadnagar was inaugurated by the Minister for Home Mr. Mohammed Ali on Thursday. Minister for Education Sabitha Indra Reddy, MLA Anjaiah Yadav, MLC's Surabhi Vani Devi, Damodara Reddy and ZP Chairperson Teegala Anitha Reddy has participated in the program.

The Commissioner of Police, Cyberabad Mr. Stephen Raveendra and other officials have organized the program in a grand manner.

The building was constructed with Rs.1 crore budget. The Minister for Home



Mr. Mohammed Ali has stated that police are meant for people and the Government of

Telangana has strengthened the Police Department by all means.

5 arrested in Jayabheri robbery case

G. RAVI KIRAN
■ HYDERABAD

5 people were arrested by the Cyberabad Police on Thursday in the Jayabheri robbery case, where thieves posed as I-T officials. Four others are absconding. Cops recovered gold and mobile phones worth Rs.1.20 crores from the accused.

Yendla Aravind (27), Nelapudi Murali Sridhar (27), Pasagada Venkatrao (28), Somani Sandeep (22) and Punmani Mohan (24) were arrested. Marupudi Jashwanth, Saibaba, Srinivas and Chalakaapati Srinivas are absconding. All the accused belong to Andhra Pradesh.

On Monday, four people claiming to be income tax officials entered victim Venkata Subramanyam's home by showing their ID cards. Other accused had pretended to be assistants. At that time, Mrs. Bhagya Lakshmi, driver



Swamy Naidu and three children were at home. Under pressure and intimidation, Mrs. Bhagyalakshmi handed over the key to the robbers and thereafter, they proceeded to take 1.35kg worth of gold and Rs. 2 lakh in cash. The accused allegedly had a friendship with Jashwanth,

who worked for Venkata Subramanyam. They hatched a plan to rob with the information provided by Jashwanth.

The police began their investigation with the help of CCTV footage and on Wednesday night, they nabbed the accused at RC Puram Railway Station.

Harassment by phone, social media up in 2021

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Online counselling for those who harassed women by phone and social media was held in the last 2 days. They were caught by SHE teams, a division of Telangana police for enhanced safety and security of women. Mrs. Swati Lakra, Addl. DGP, Mrs. Sumathi, DIG and other officials have participated in the program.

Delinquents who committed offenses like eve-teasing, harassing over phone, social media platforms etc participated in the session. A counselling session was held for 1,515 majors and 58 minor respondents from 30 police districts / commissionerates. Mrs. Swati Lakra, Addl. DGP stated that counseling is a



process of bringing about change in their behavior, who have made mistakes, and it should be utilized as an opportunity to change themselves and for ensuring that there is change in behavior of respondents.

1,573 people took part in the counseling today from Cyberabad - 689, Hyderabad

- 207, Nalgonda - 149, Rachakonda - 127, Warangal - 69 and rest from other districts. 70% of the complaints received during November 2021 are from Cyberabad, Hyderabad, Rachakonda Commissionerate. 82% (through Whatsapp (54%), Direct(28%)) of complaints are received.



One CCTV camera is equal to 100 policemen: CP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad Mr. Anjani Kumar inaugurated 60 community CCTV cameras on Thursday. These cameras are set up in important areas with the help of the community under the Nenu Saitham program. Small vendors also contributed their part for installation of CCTV cameras. The commissioner has thanked the donors for contributing in installing 60 CCTV cameras in the areas of Afzalgunj. He has stated that

the crime rate was brought under control by setting up CCTV cameras. 'Any kind of criminal case can be easily solved by CCTV cameras. Each single CCTV camera is equivalent to 100 policemen. We may get tired but the cameras are constantly working,' he has explained.

The program is also attended by Mr. Ramesh, JCP, Mr. Rakesh Jaiswal, Jambagh corporator, ACP Sultanbazar, SHOs of Afzalgunj and residents were present on the occasion.



Techie suicide case: Accused Sai Kumar arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Accused Sai Kumar was arrested in the techie suicide case on Thursday. Relatives of the victim demanded severe punishment for the accused. Swathi and Sai Kumar, who were software engineers, lived in Rajendranagar. On Saturday, she hanged her two children and then hanged herself. She left a suicide note, in which, she has stated that her husband Sai Kumar harassed her suspecting her character. Sai Kumar went missing and on Thursday, cops arrested him from a relative's house. He was sent to remain after being produced in court. They alleged that he had harassed Swathi for dowry.



Task Force Police busts fake lucky draw racket

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Task Force Police busted a fake lucky draw racket and arrested a gang of three members on Thursday. They have seized net cash Rs.2.81 lakhs and mobiles from the accused. The accused collected vast sums of money on the pretext of monthly prizes or gifts, thereby cheating innocent people.

The accused Guduru Dinesh (36), D.Shiva (32), S. Mallikarjun (42) are residents of Madannapet, Hyderabad.

It started with a fake company 'SDJ Enterprises' where 2 of the accused acted as proprietors and the 3rd one as a collection agent. They allegedly collected monthly subscriptions of Rs. 1200 from 800 customers to conduct lucky draws every month.

The draw was conducted on a monthly basis and just a few out of the 800 were allegedly named in the draw. The money that was paid by the remaining participants went into the pockets of the accused.

Telangana Police gets excellence award

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Police has bagged an award for building capacity for handling Cybercrime Investigation.

The Data Security Council of India and NASSCOM instituted excellence awards for law enforcement agencies. The scheme of excellence awards has been a great motivation for state police organizations. In 2021, to recognize and honor the best State Police Agency in overall capacity building through workforce development, the DSCI called for the nomina-



tions. Telangana State Police have trained select police personnel as cyber warriors to fight against the menace of cyber-crimes and positioned them in police Stations.

Telangana State Police have been selected as the winner and honored with the Award for Excellence Capacity Building of Police Agencies on Thursday in the virtual DSCI & NASSCOM Annual Information Security Summit by Mr. Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics, Government of India.

ISB enters into knowledge partnership with CBC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian School of Business (ISB) signed a Knowledge Partnership agreement with the Capacity Building Commission (CBC). Professor Madan Pillutla, Dean of Indian School of Business and Shri Hemang Jani, Secretary, Capacity Building Commission, signed the agreement on behalf of the respective organisations.

The Government of India has set up the Capacity Building Commission to help realise the vision to enhance the execution capacity of the Indian state by radically improving the government's human resource management practices and augmenting the capacity of India's 25 million civil servants. ISB, through its



demonstrated ability in research and training capacity, will support CBC and government departments in realising this vision. ISB will work with the Capacity Building Commission as a training and content partner

as part of the knowledge partnership. ISB would also create learning resources and teaching material, including commissioned research and a bank of case studies generated from the Indian public sector.

3i Infotech to hire 500 employees for its BPS division

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

3i Infotech Limited a global Information Technology, committed to accelerating business transformation, has announced its plans to ramp up hiring for its newly set up BPS division in HITEC City, Hyderabad.

As part of a major recruitment drive, the company plans to hire over 500 employees in the span of next two months, which will be facilitated through social, digital platforms via referral programs and other offline initiatives.

In the first phase, the company would be looking to hire local talent within Hyderabad to serve its regional and market specific clientele and would later scale its operations to include other geographies and markets.

The entire portfolio of



offerings under this division will encompass - Application, Automation &

Analytics Services (AAA) to be offered either inhouse or through engagement with

leading partners in this space. It will cater to customers across various domains to include - retail, e-commerce, telecom, BFSI, media & entertainment, manufacturing etc.

Thompson P. Gnanam, Managing Director & Global CEO, 3i Infotech said, "This marks a significant milestone in 3i Infotech's transformational journey. With the onslaught of the pandemic, we have seen a surge in organizations adopting automation & digitization. To navigate this change, 3i Infotech's BPS arm has come up with a unique technology-led solution that is poised to become a game changer and a disruptor in the outsourcing space, both domestic & international."

A first in India's outsourcing space, the company has introduced a series of

unique differentiators under its BPS division that is set to create new benchmarks within the industry. The key features include - Smart Hire - Intelligent Recruitment Platform that identifies the right skill and the agent for the role. Amitabh Vartak, Senior Vice President & Global Delivery Head, BPS, 3i Infotech said,

"We want to offer our customers the very best, and this investment into our new facility in the tech hub of Hyderabad, will open up several avenues, and will create an ecosystem where talent, innovation and newer possibilities emerge. Our new hires would largely benefit from our work culture that reflects agility, passion, empathy, openness and inventiveness and where ideas are nurtured from inception to implementation."

A surgical feat 156 kidney stones removed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Doctors at the Preeti Urology & Kidney Hospital, on Thursday, announced that they have removed 156 kidney stones through a keyhole opening from a 50-year-old patient, who came all along from Hubli. This is the highest number of kidney stones ever removed from a single patient in the country, using laparoscopy and endoscopy, instead of conducting a major surgery.

The patient, Basavaraj Madiwalara a school teacher by profession developed sudden pain near his abdomen, and screening showed the presence of a large cluster of renal stones (kidney stones). The patient is also a case of the ectopic kidney as it was located near to his abdomen, instead of its normal position in the urinary tract. Though the presence of a kidney in an abnormal location is not the cause of the problem, removing stones from the kidney located abnormally was surely a challenging task.

Commenting on the patient, the problem and the procedure, Dr. V Chandra Mohan, Urologist & Managing Director, Preeti

The patient, Basavaraj Madiwalara a school teacher by profession developed sudden pain near his abdomen, and screening showed the presence of a large cluster of renal stones (kidney stones)

Urology & Kidney Hospital said, "This patient might have been developing these stones for more than two years, but never experienced any symptoms in the past. However, the sudden occurrence of pain forced him to undergo all necessary tests which revealed the presence of a large cluster of renal stones in the kidney. After assessing his health condition, we decided to take laparoscopy and endoscopy route to extract the stones, instead of resorting to major surgery."

We-Hub selects 26 women-led tech startups

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

We-HUB on Thursday announced the launch of the third edition of its flagship incubation program. This edition will consist of 26 selected women-led urban tech start-ups that provide solutions for industries, such as SaaS, Healthtech, ConsumerTech, DeepTech, EdTech, FMCG and the sustainable sector. The start-ups will receive mentorship from leading industry experts on business growth metrics, such as revenue-building, customer acquisition, sustainability, market expansion and product development roadmap, access to funds, cross-border market connects and access to government. Close to 101 start-ups from across the country applied to participate in the program, which was evaluated by WE HUB, of the 90 percent of the application had growth potential. The startups were given orientation on the program in detail and were further shortlisted through one-on-one interview sessions by leaders at WE HUB.

Metro Rail to be extended to Sangareddy

Massive development has taken place under TRS regime: KTR

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Pointing out that towns and villages have witnessed development since TRS coming to power, Municipal Admistration Minister KTR has said the state government is forging ahead to ensure the development of towns coupled with cleanliness, providing all amenities to residents.

He said all representations given to him by local MLA Jayaprakash Reddy would be taken into the notice of the government and take steps to extend Metro Rail up to Sangareddy in near future.

Speaking in connection with laying the foundation stone for the Rs 6.70- crore integrated vegetarian and non-vegetarian market on a two-acre site in the town on Thursday, he asked authorities to complete the project as early as possible to bring it to the use of the people. In fact, the state government is developing such markets in all towns at a cost of Rs 500 crore. Under Pattana Pragati, Rs



3041 crore have been released for the development of 142 towns. Under the Pattana and Palle Pragati programmes, one can see hygienic surroundings along with development in towns and villages, he said. Besides paying salaries to safai karmacharis on the first day of every month without fail, the Chief Minister, K Chandrasekhar Rao, took

steps to increase their wages to Rs 12,000 a month. Besides saluting the safai karmacharis, the government has motivated him to the hilt to extract work from him.

In the first week of every month, Rs 15.31 crore is released to Sangareddy, Rs 7.95 crore to Sadasivapeta and Rs 16.09 crore to Zaheerabad

municipalities without fail.

In a week or ten days, Rs 50 crore will be released to Sangareddy and Sadasivapeta municipalities, he added.

In fact, 10 percent of the total allocations to the new Panchayat Raj Act and The new Municipal Act has been earmarked as the green budget for development of green cover, he said. The CM has

sanctioned medical college and a nursing college for Sangareddy with a total outlay of Rs 550 crore. The college will become

functional from the next academic year onwards. If the poor people happened to encroach government lands, the government-issued GOs 58 and 59 to regularise them, he said. Earlier, he flagged off Vaikuntha Radham vehicles provided by the Granules Corporation under the Corporate Social Responsibility.

MPs Kotla Prabhakar Reddy, BB Patil, ZP Chairperson Manjusri, protem chairman of legislative council Bhupal Reddy, MLAs of Narayanakhed, Zaheerabad, Andole, Sangareddy and Andole, Municipal Admistration Director Sat yanarayana, municipal chairmen, and vice- chairmen of Sangareddy and Sadasivapet district collector Hanumanth Rao, SP Ramana Kumar, additional collector Rajarshi Shah, DCMS chairman Siva Kumar and others were present.



Move to privatise PSU banks condemned

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

CPI state council member Goutam Govardhan has said that the people, workers, employees, and farmers have voted for BJP to implement the statute but not to amend laws to facilitate privatisation of transport, coal, iron and steel and banking sectors. Addressing the bank employees, demonstrating in front of the Union Bank branch in Vidyanagar of Godavari Khani as part of their two-day agitation, on Thursday, he alleged that it fuelled the privatisation of the PSUs after the BJP came to power at the Centre. The privatisation of the banks would cause immense loss to the economy, he said.

It would be the age of superannuation of bank employees to 55 from 60 years and the salaries of employees

will come down, he said adding that the job security would be at peril.

Entrusting banks to corporates would lead to job cuts, recruitment on a contract basis, low wages to employees, no implementation of quota for various categories. Moreover, the private banks motive would be profit rather than serving the public, he said. Moreover, implementation of state and central government schemes would be in jeopardy. Private banks will give loans to only certain categories of people excluding weaker sections and the poor-

er sections of society from the purview of the loans. Handing over the PSU banks to the private sector would mean placing the fixed deposits of the people at the disposal of the private banks.

In view of the public good, the BJP government at the Centre should stop privatisation of banks. Praja Natya Mandali teams sang songs denouncing privatisation of banks. CPI district council members T Ramesh Kumar and a number of bank employees took part in the protest programme. CPI city secretary K Kanaka Raju, AITUC RG-1 branch secretary M Yella Reddy and other leaders condemned the "anti-labor" policies of the Centre.

MLA vows to bring past glory to Janagoan village

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Ramagundam legislator Korukanti Chander has vowed to bring back the past glory to Janagoan village. Participating in the planting of the banyan, in lieu of the damaged banyan tree in a lightning attack at the trilinga Rajarajeswara Swamy temple here on Thursday, he recalled how he extended support to the village ever since he was elected to the MLA.

He said that several development works have been implemented in the village with an allocation of over Rs 60 lakh. He said that the Haritharam of the Telangana has set an example for the



whole country to emulate.

He said that the unemployed in Janagoan would be provided jobs in the OCP-5 project. State Budhdha Bhavan Chairman Mallepalli Lakshmaiah, RG-1 General

Manager Kalvala Narayana, corporators Kavita, Sarojini, Dhatu Srinivas, leaders Vegolapu Srinivas, Janagoan Narsaiah, and others were present on the occasion.

'Sub-centers should be brought into use'

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

Mahabubabad District Collector Shashanka has directed the authorities to bring the completed sub-centers into use.

On Thursday, the Collector reviewed the construction of Sub-Centers, repairs of Primary Health Centers, maintenance performance of Telangana Diagnostic Hub, vaccination, etc with Engineering Officers, Medical Officers, and PHC Doctors in the Pragna Video Conference Hall of the Collectorate.

A comprehensive review was carried out on the construction of 74 Sub-Centers under construction in the district earlier. Authorities were directed to give the required power and



mission Bhagiratha connections to the Sub-Centers immediately. Under TSMIDC Khammam, 23, Roads and Buildings Department 15, Tribal Welfare 14, EWMIDC Warangal 22, and a total of 74 Sub-Centers are expected to be completed by the end of December. Repairs to Primary Health Centers should be undertaken expeditiously to avoid problems.

Railway Week celebrations held

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Waltair division of the East Coast Railway celebrated the 66th Railway Week on Thursday.

The Railway Week is celebrated in commemoration of the maiden train run in India in 1853.

Divisional Railway Manager A Satpathy, ECoRWWO president Parjatha Satpathy, ADM (Infrastructure) Sudhir Kumar Gupta, ADM (Operations) Dr. C. Surya Lakshmi and ECoRWWO vice-president Kavita Gupta graced the occasion.



CMRF is good assurance to common man

PNS ■ MAHABUBABAD

Mahabubabad MP Maloth Kavitha has said that the Chief Minister's Relief Fund will reduce the burden of medical expenses by giving great assurance to the common man.

On Thursday, she distributed checks worth Rs 14,32,600 /- to 26 beneficiaries from various

villages under her Parliament constituency at her camp office in Mahabubabad district headquarters. MP Kavitha said that the CM stands for the common people who are suffering from various ailments which are not applicable under Arogyasree and supports the victims from under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

All religions preach service to humans: Minister

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Excise Minister Dr. V Srinivas Goud has observed that all religions preach only one thing -service to fellow human beings.

Taking part in the semi-Christmas celebrations organised at the MB Church here under the aegis of the Bible Society on Thursday, Jesus has taken birth in this world to punish the guilty, to dispel darkness, and lead people towards light. His other objective is to dispel ignorance.

All faiths have only one purpose - to do good to humanity. Christianity always strives for heralding peace in society. The new government of TRS took several steps to solve the problems of Christians since 2014, he said. These include modernisation of MB Church. During



Covid-19 period, he claims to have solved personal problems of Christians. Laying pucca road to Siluva Gutta, construction of a guest house there are some of the programmes on cards, he said.

The minister has vowed to solve the problems of poor pastors and offered to provide medical and health amenities to poor Christians. He asked

them to bring their problems to his notice. He said that he is committed to developing parched lands of Mahabubnagar district into fertile soil and to developing Mahabubnagar on a par with Hyderabad. Distribution of clothes and mass-feeding programmes has been launched only in the TRS regime, he said adding that the state

government gives equal treatment to all faiths. In the new state of Telangana, there is no land order problem, he said. Earlier, the minister cut a cake and lit candlelight. Municipal chairman KC Narasimhulu, Reverend Vara Prasad, the Bible Society president and secretaries, members, and others were present on the occasion.

Errabelli inspects CM's tour arrangements

PNS ■ JANGAON

Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Thursday inspected the integrated district collectorate complex, which the CM will inaugurate on December 20.

The minister also visited the venue for the CM's public meeting in the city. He said that the CM will inaugurate an integrated collectorate complex here and also the district TRS party office and later would address a public meeting.

He said that all efforts to make the public meeting a grand success are on. He along with fellow minister Satyavati Rathod, MPs, MLAs,



and other elected people's representatives are involved in the exercise. They will meet at 8

am at the party office to review the arrangements for the CM's tour.

Woman brutally murdered

PNS ■ MEDAK

A middle-aged woman was murdered by smashing her head with a boulder in Togata village of Haveli Ghanpur Mandal of undivided Medak district on Thursday morning. The police suspect the hand of the family members in the murder. Family disputes are stated to be the cause of the tragedy. The police have taken the woman's daughter Narsavva and her son Balu into custody for questioning. According to the Haveli Ghanpur SI Chandrasekhar Reddy, Balamani and Kishan of the village live in the village along with their daughter Narsavva. Agriculture is their mainstay. As the couple had no male child, they married off their daughter and their son-in-law also lives with them.

Dream of people comes true: MLA

GO issued to locate collectorate on Azam Zahi Mills' grounds lauded

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The dream of the people of Warangal East constituency, at last, has come true with state government issuing orders to locate integrated collectorate complex in Azam Zahi Mills' grounds on Narsampet road.

A jubilant Warangal East MLA Nannapuneni Narendar along with corporators, elected people's representatives, important leaders and activists of the TRS burst firecrackers and distributed sweets and poured milk over portraits of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao. Deputy Mayor Rizwana Shamim Masood, market committee chairman Diddi Bhagya Lakshmi Kumaraswamy, former market committee chairman T Ramesh Babu, corporators Gundeti Narendar and corporators of all divisions, important leaders, party activists and others took part in the celebrations.

With the location of the integrated collectorate complex



here, the Warangal East constituency will develop like anything. The MLA came forward and got the Azam Zahi Mills' grounds cleared of bushes. Several public meetings addressed by CM and KTR were held.

With the formation of the district, he took initiative and solved minor problems in the grounds. Many times, he had taken the Azam Zahi Mills grounds to the notice of the

rulers. Ultimately, the government issued GO to locate the collectorate complex there. The location of the integrated collectorate complex in the Warangal East constituency would lead to the development of the constituency. All around the mill, houses of the poor are located. Now, with the collectorate coming there, the business in the vicinity will develop. The street vendors will improve. The youth will get

more self-employment opportunities.

The property value of the poor will increase. Besides, transport facilities in the region will develop. The location of the collectorate here will be accessible to MLAs and other elected people's representatives. The administration of the district will become a lot easier. It would lead to the development of business and tourism in the area.



Actor Sumanth attends court in cheque bounce case

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Telugu film actor Sumanth and his sister Supriya appeared before the Markapuram court in a cheque bounce case on Thursday. Film actor Sumanth and his sister Supriya appeared before the court in Markapuram in a cheque bounce-related criminal case. Karumanchi Srinivasa Rao invested money for the Telugu movie "Naruda O Naruda" for which Supriya was the producer. They gave a cheque to Srinivasa Rao towards repaying his money. However, the cheque was bounced and Srinivasa Rao filed a criminal case against them.

Administer first dose by 18th, collector tells officials

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

District Collector Jitesh V Patil has directed revenue, health, and panchayat officials to undertake door to door visits and ensure that the eligible received their first dose of vaccination before December 18.

Addressing them through video conference from collectorate here on Thursday, he asked the authorities to ensure that those who have received the first dose should

get the second dose. By December 19, the programme to plant saplings in Bruhat Palle Prakruti Vanams should be completed. With the help of the revenue and forest officials, sites should be identified in each Mandal to develop five village parks, he said. Mandal level officials should ensure that all NREGS workers enrolled under the e-Shram insurance facility. The IKP officials should get their names registered under the scheme with the help of the VAOs. A

meeting of Shram Sakti groups should be held at the village level to ensure more and more NREGS workers turn out to execute works, he said giving directions to Mandal level authorities in this regard. Additional Collector local bodies Venkatesh Dhotre, in charge additional collector Venkata Madhava Rao, in charge DPO Rajendra Prasad, ZP CEO Saya Goud, MPDOs, Mandal level authorities took part in the programme.



INDIA CORNER

Mumbai Police dispose of seized drugs worth over Rs 14 cr

The Mumbai Police have disposed of 3,092 kg of drugs worth Rs 14.65 crore, seized by its anti-narcotics cell (ANC), after getting permission from a court, a senior official said on Thursday. These narcotics were seized by the ANC in 26 cases, which are sub-judice, he said. The procedure of destroying the narcotics was conducted on Wednesday, on the recommendation of the drug disposal committee and in the presence of the panel's members, at a closed furnace of the Mumbai Waste Management Ltd at Taloja in neighbouring Navi Mumbai, the official said. The drugs which were disposed of included 3,000 kg of ganja, 3,297 gm charas, 24 gm cocaine, 866.5 gm mephedrone, 159.5 gm heroin and 84.687 kg of amphetamine, he said. The official further said 11,271 bottles of codeine cough syrup, a banned drug, and coir (coconut fibre) weighing 124.440 kg were also destroyed.



PM Modi to lay foundation stone for Ganga Expressway in UP's Shahjahanpur

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Saturday lay the foundation stone of the Ganga Expressway in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur, his office said Thursday. The 594-km long six-lane expressway will be built at a cost of over Rs 36,200 crore, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said in a statement. The foundation stone will be laid at around 1 PM on December 18 in Shahjahanpur. The inspiration behind the expressway is the vision of the Prime Minister to provide fast paced connectivity across the country, the PMO said. Starting near the Bijauli village in Meerut, the expressway will extend till near the Judapur Dandu village in Prayagraj. It will pass through Meerut, Hapur, Bulandshahr, Amroha, Sambhal, Budaun, Shahjahanpur, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareilly, Pratapgarh and Prayagraj.



Indira Gandhi being left out of misogynist' BJP gov't's Vijay Diwas fete

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday alleged that former prime minister Indira Gandhi was being 'left out' of the 'misogynist' BJP government's Vijay Diwas celebrations and said it is about time Prime Minister Narendra Modi starts giving women their due. Vijay Diwas commemorates India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war. Bangladesh, then part of Pakistan, became an independent country after the war. 'Our first and only woman Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi is being left out of the misogynist BJP government's Vijay Diwas celebrations. This, on the 50th anniversary of the day that she led India to victory and liberated Bangladesh...', Priyanka Gandhi tweeted. '@narendramodi ji, women don't believe your platitudes. Your patronising attitude is unacceptable. It's about time you started giving women their due,' the Congress general secretary said.



Yechury urges Prez to remove J&K&L HC's chief justice for speaking against Constitution

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Thursday urged President Ram Nath Kovind to remove Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh (J&K&L) High Court's Chief Justice Pankaj Mithal for allegedly speaking "against the Indian Constitution".

While addressing a programme organised by an organisation affiliated to the RSS on December 5 at Jammu, Mithal spoke "against the Constitution of India", Yechury claimed in his letter to Kovind. "It has been widely reported in the media that Mithal addressed a seminar organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad and said the following, 'Inclusion of the terms secular and socialist in the Preamble of the Constitution had narrowed India's spiritual image,'" Yechury said.

"Mithal is further reported to have said, 'Sometimes, we bring amendments due to our adamancy,'" he noted.

Over 32,000 RTI appeals pending with CIC: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

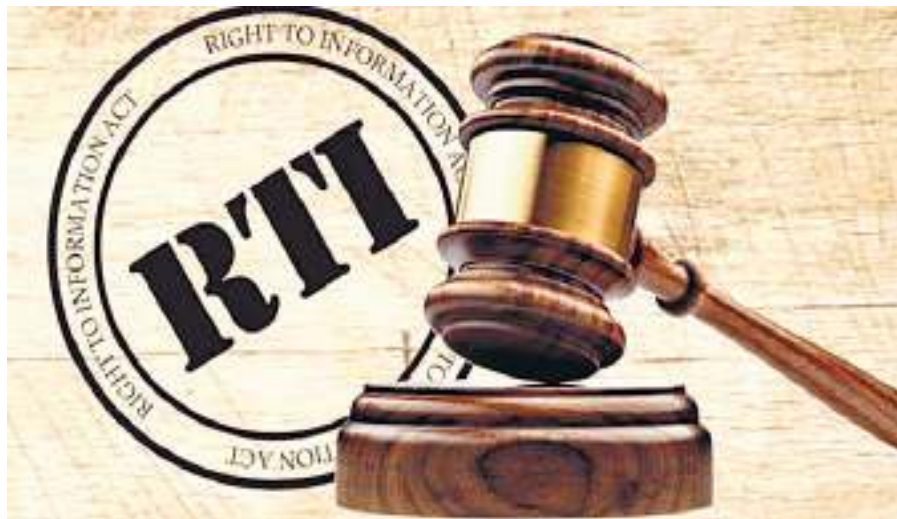
More than 32,000 RTI appeals are pending with the Central Information Commission, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply, Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said there was a pendency of 35,178 and 38,116 RTI appeals during 2019-20 and 2020-21, respectively.

A total of 32,147 RTI appeals were pending in 2021-22, as on December 6, 2021, he said.

Singh said the government has taken several steps like capacity building through training and issuance of guidelines for Public Information Officers and First Appellate Authorities, so as to enable them to supply information/dispose of first appeal effectively, resulting in less number of appeals to the information commission.

The government has also issued clarificatory orders impressing upon the public authorities to disclose maximum information proactively



so that citizens need not resort to filing of Right to Information (RTI) applications to access information available with the public authorities, he said.

The Department of Personnel and Training is implementing an annual programme 'Improving

Transparency and Accountability in Government through Effective Implementation of RTI Act' wherein state administrative training institutes (ATIs) and State Information Commissions (SICs) have been given financial assistance for awareness generation on RTI

by taking up various activities which may include 'nukkad natak' (street plays), use of local folk troupes, development of publicity material in local languages, distance learning programmes, online certificate courses in regional languages, among others, the minister added.

DEFAMATION CASE

'Rahul summoned as evidence prima facie points to offence'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A BJP worker, who had filed a defamation complaint against Rahul Gandhi over his "commander-in-thief" remark targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, told the Bombay High Court on Thursday that a local court had summoned the Congress leader after forming an opinion that the evidence prima facie points to an offence.

The Bombay High Court on Thursday posted Gandhi's petition challenging the summons for final hearing on January 18, 2022, and directed the magistrate's court to defer hearing on the defamation complaint till January 25.

Rahul Gandhi was directed by the local court to appear before it on November 25 in connection with the defamation complaint filed by Mahesh Shrishrimal, who claims to be a member of the BJP Maharashtra Pradesh



Committee since 1997. Shrishrimal filed the complaint against the Congress leader for his remark targeting PM Modi in 2018 over the Rafale fighter jet deal. Gandhi had approached the HC challenging the summons issued to him.

Last month, a single bench of Justice S K Shinde directed the local court to defer hearing on the defamation complaint, which meant the Congress leader would not be required to appear before the magistrate. Shrishrimal on Thursday filed his affidavit in the HC seeking dismissal of Gandhi's petition.

Kerala Police launches 'Operation Kaaval' to curb crimes, identify culprits

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Police has launched an initiative, termed Operation Kaaval (guard), to curb crimes like drug trafficking, smuggling and gang attacks and to find and prosecute those behind them an official release issued by the force said on Thursday.

The release issued by the State Police Media Centre said that to make the operation a success, State Police Chief (SPC) Anil Kant has issued guidelines like forming special teams to arrest absconders in criminal cases and preparation



of a database of all those persons involved in incidents of violence as well as regular offenders. If necessary, persons involved in incidents of violence will be arrested under the Kerala Anti-social Activities (Prevention) Act (KAAPA), the SPC has directed, accord-

ing to the release, and said that steps will also be taken to bring to justice those who conspire and plan such acts of violence.

The SPC has also directed that those out on bail be monitored to ascertain whether they are violating the terms of their release and if any violation is found, steps be taken to cancel their bail, the release said.

For this, the Special Branch has been directed to secretly monitor those out on bail, it said.

The Special Branch has also been directed to prepare a list of those involved in anti-social activities and to closely monitor them, the release said.

Politics of religion easy, but bad for country: Gehlot

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Thursday said those who indulge in divisive politics should think about the future of the country. He said Pakistan became a nation on the basis of religion but was divided into two countries.

He said Bangladesh was created in 1971 despite the fact that majority population was Muslim. "Doing politics in the name of religion is easy, provoking people in the name of caste is easy, spreading hate is easy but difficult to take back when it is spread.

Rahul calls Ajay Mishra 'criminal'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Thursday amid continuous protests by opposition members led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi demanding sacking of Union Minister Ajay Mishra from the government in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

Gandhi, who had a question on MSME sector listed on Thursday, dubbed Mishra as a "criminal" and demanded his ouster when Speaker Om Birla called his name during the Question Hour.

It was trouble from the word go, as opposition members trooped into the well

raising slogans and waving placards demanding removal of Mishra, whose son has been arrested in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence in October.

Trinamool Congress members, who had earlier stayed away from the opposition grouping, were also in the Well of the House raising slogans along with members of the Congress and Left parties.

"This minister should be removed from the government. He is a 'criminal', action should be taken against him," Gandhi said, adding that Mishra was "involved" in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

"The minister's involvement in Lakhimpur Kheri

killings has come to light. It has been said that there was a conspiracy. We should be allowed to speak about it," the Lok Sabha member from Wayanad said as opposition members waved placards and raised slogans in the Well of the House.

The Speaker asked Gandhi to stick to the question related to the MSME sector that was listed against his name.

"You are a senior member. You ask the question number 262. You will be given adequate time to ask the question you have listed for Question Hour. You claim that you are not allowed to speak in the House. I will give you adequate time if you stick to the

question listed by you," the Speaker said.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said Gandhi was trying to speak at a time when Congress members were in the Well of the House. "How can this be allowed. Ask him to call the members back to their seats," Joshi said. BJP members too were up on their feet as Gandhi continued to speak on the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

"Your minister here has attacked farmers. He should resign. His involvement is there. There has been a conspiracy. He should be punished for that. He should be removed from the government," Gandhi said.

'Swarnim Vijay Dwar' dedicated to 1971 war martyrs

PNS ■ JAMMU

The northern command of the India Army on Thursday commemorated the sacrifice of its forces in the 1971 war by dedicating to them 'Swarnim Vijay Dwar' in Udhampur.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the 1971 India-Pakistan war, and is being celebrated as 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh'.

On Dec 16, 1971, about 93,000 Pakistani armed soldiers surrendered to the Indian Army in a historic capitulation.

'Technology innovation key to progress'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Railways and Textiles, Darshana Jardosh on Thursday inaugurated the 14th International Railway Equipment Exhibition here and said technology innovation is the key to keep up with the pace of national development.

She also said the Indian Railways is the fourth largest network in the world, and that it is the lifeline of the country's socioeconomic growth and provides a large scale of formal and informal employment.

"Railways is in the process of identifying new dedicated freight corridors, high speed rail corridors, and assess rolling stock and locomotive require-



ments. Adapting and technology innovation is the key to keep up with the pace of national development which translates to the vision of Indian Railways as the global leader," the minister said addressing the inaugural event. The International Railway

Equipment Exhibition (IREE), 2021 will continue till December 18.

Jardosh said the National Rail Plan, developed by the ministry, projects to make railways future ready by 2030.

She said 400 stations will be developed through the PPP

(Public-Private Partnership) model under the modern concession agreement.

The minister added that the railway ministry's focus is to improve passenger experience by creating world class railway stations.

Bhopal and Gandhinagar have been developed as world class stations and more will come, she said.

"In the 75th year of independence (Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav) year), the National Rail Plan also envisages several initiatives such as capacity utilisation of existing railway assets, electrification of entire network, freight terminals, dedicated freight and high speed rail corridors," Jardosh said.



Delhi gov't to deregister all diesel vehicles that complete 10 yrs on Jan 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In compliance with the National Green Tribunal's directions, the Delhi government will deregister all diesel vehicles which will complete 10 years on January 1, 2022, and issue no objection certificate (NOC) so that they can be re-registered in other places.

However, no NOC will be issued for diesel vehicles, which have completed 15 years or more on the date of applying for it, according to an order issued earlier this week by the Delhi transport department. The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has issued directions relating to restrictions on registration and plying of diesel vehicles more than 10 years old and petrol vehicles more than 15 years old in the Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region). In an order in July 2016, the tribunal said that its direction for deregistration of diesel vehicles, which are more than 10 years old, will be complied with effectively and without default.

'Brahmins faced maximum atrocities under SP rule'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Law Minister Brajesh Pathak on Thursday dismissed the Opposition charge that Brahmins are unhappy with the BJP and alleged that the community faced maximum atrocities during the Samajwadi Party regime.

He claimed that the community is backing his party and those 'eager to grab power' are creating confusion.

"Our government is moving forward taking all sections of society along. The entire Brahmin community is with the BJP," Pathak told PTI.

"People of state know that the Brahmin community faced maximum atrocities during the previous SP regime. The SP government was anti-Brahmin," the minister said.

The statement by Pathak has come days after former minister Harishankar Tiwari's family members joined the Samajwadi Party (SP) and alleged atrocities against the community in the state's Gorakhpur, Raebareilly and

Kanpur.

Gorakhpur was the Lok Sabha constituency of Yogi Adityanath before he was sworn-in as the Uttar Pradesh chief minister after the 2017 Assembly elections.

Pathak has been tasked with wooing Brahmins voters ahead of the Assembly elections next year by the BJP.

The minister said members of the Tiwari family joining the SP will not have any impact on the elections.

When asked that the BJP never made any Brahmin its CM face in UP, Pathak

claimed his party never takes decisions on the basis of caste and religion.

The party worker who does good work is given a chance, he said, adding that it is decided at the party forum unitedly.

About Brahmin MLA Jai Chaubey joining the SP, Pathak said he was involved in "anti-party activities" and was told a year ago not to attend party meetings. He also claimed that his government acted against organised crime, breaking the "network" of members of the mafia.

Dolphin census begins in Bhitarkanika Park

PNS ■ KENDRAPARA

An annual census of dolphins began at the Bhitarkanika National Park and Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary in Odisha on Thursday, forest officials said.

Nine teams comprising about 40 wildlife experts are conducting the headcount of these mammals in a three-day exercise. Each team is equipped with binoculars, GPS set, rangefinder and data

recording sheets for fool-proof headcount of these species, officials said.

The enumerators are covering the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, Dhamra coast, and estuaries in Bhitarkanika, Hukitola, Paradip and Kujang coast.

The enumerators travelled by water to cover salt-water creeks in outer wheelers', Chinchini river mouth, Barunei river mouth, Jatadhari river mouth, Devi river mouth, Dhamra, Kajaapatia, Nalitapatia,

Khola, Kalibhanjadiha, Jamboor, Kharinasi, Hukitola areas.

Irrawaddy, humpback dolphin, bottlenose dolphins and pantropical spotted dolphins had earlier been sighted during the census of these animals in the past years.

Incidentally, 307 dolphins were spotted in 2018. It dropped down to 126 in 2019. The downslide goes unabated as the number of dolphins counted in 2020 was found to be 62.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

Coming of age

The Govt wants women to marry not before they turn 21 so they can take better hold of their lives

The Union Government proposes to raise the legal marriageable age of women from 18 to 21, the same as men, by amending the marriage Acts concerned. The Government will have to clarify whether the amended age will be applicable to personal laws of all religions. The proposal is based on the suggestions sent to NITI Aayog a year ago by a Central task force that examined "matters pertaining to the age of motherhood, imperatives of lowering Maternal Mortality Rate, improvement of nutritional levels and related issues". The task force, however, was quick to point out that empowerment of women was its primary consideration. The proposal ticks all the right boxes. It is one more way to assert that child marriages and marriages of minors are illegal. It should steer families towards adapting to changing times and encouraging young adults to take independent decisions instead of rushing them into marriages the moment they get their undergraduate degrees. The younger generation does not want to be thrust into marriage just as they leave their teens and the proposal backs their thought. It clears the path for women to become economically independent and not be dependent on anyone for their livelihood. It paves the way for women to enjoy the right of choice, in terms of factors where they feel the pressure from their families the most — marriage, sex, or motherhood.



It is not that society's attitude towards women will improve once the amendments become law. It is that the country is making a conscious decision to create circumstances for women to take hold of their lives. We must remember that till 1978, women's marriageable age was only 15, which was then raised to 18. Women have moved up on the ladder of choice and parity in the four decades since then and are consciously pursuing higher studies and professional careers like never before. If the age limit ensures women are not married off before they attain mature adulthood, it is also a caution that they are not married off the moment they attain the age of consent. The point of the exercise is to respect women's right to consent. The limit also discourages the marriage of minors, a social evil still prevalent in several parts of the country. It means women should be able to convince their families that at 21 they are mature enough to exercise their choice about all things in life, including, and especially, marriage. Empowerment is not selective. It is not conditional. An empowered woman has the right to educate herself, make adult choices vis-à-vis relationships, take up employment and choose the time to have a life partner. The right gives her the choice to not choose as well. That is the critical point that society at large needs to understand. Otherwise, empowerment has no meaning. Needless to say, the biggest responsibility of respecting everything the proposal stands for lies with the State apparatus.

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PICTALK



Artists dressed as lord Hanuman take part in a procession to mark Hanuman Jayanti, in Bengaluru

To \$ or not to \$

The Centre must not rush to ban it as cryptocurrency is the future, say experts

The winter session of Parliament is on and the Government is planning to bring a Bill on cryptocurrency. Locally, it is being dubbed a Bill to ban, or at least regulate, cryptocurrency. It had an impact on the crypto market and Bitcoin tumbled down 15 per cent before staging a recovery. For nearly 10 years now, cryptocurrency has been in news and its exponential growth has made instant billionaires, which led to a mad rush for Bitcoins. It has also opened an additional hawala route to transfer funds. Why is the Government so keen to ban it? Its alarm may have been triggered by the fact that crypto is being used for all the wrong purposes like procuring drugs and arms through the darknet, a hidden internet used by fugitives. The Enforcement Directorate has discovered that ₹4,000 crore were laundered out of India using cryptos last year. Though indeed a serious problem, crypto is not the only way to make such transactions. There are several other nefarious routes, and these continue unabated.

Cryptocurrency is not issued by any bank or Government but by anyone who wants to float his currency, just like airlines offering 'flying miles' or malls issuing their plastic money. Therefore, nobody — least of all a Government — has any control over it, which means regulating or banning it is nigh impossible, even though a number of Ministers have hinted that it may get banned. The Government can at best declare it to not be a legal tender, which it isn't in most countries barring a few South American nations such as Ecuador and Chile. No doubt the concerns are many, but would it really be possible for the Government to control or, for that matter, ban it? If yes, would it be in the nation's interest? What happens to the 'Digital India' drive as experts feel that cryptocurrency is here to stay and, in future, it would be the mainstay for online transactions. The Government would do well to wait and watch rather than jumping the gun and deciding in haste. Except China, no country has so far banned cryptocurrency. In fact, many countries with weak currencies are promoting it. Even the US, the UK and France have not tried to control it. Crypto is the future and it won't be possible for any single nation to control it; it has to be done collectively. Banning it would in fact be a setback for 'Digital India'!

The land of freedom and democracy



PRAFULL GORADIA

At Biden's 'Summit for Democracy', Modi appropriately underlined the point that the democratic spirit is integral to India's civilisational ethos

It is safe to assume that US President Joe Biden had in mind only electoral democracy when he invited many a head of Government to his December 9 'Summit for Democracy'. Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a telling point when he said that the democratic spirit is integral to India's civilisational ethos. Centuries of colonial rule could not suppress the democratic spirit of Indians. He avoided extending the proposition to a faith in the phenomenon of karma which is nothing, if not democratic, on a metaphysical scale. All humans have a fair and equal opportunity to be automatically rewarded with or denied a *bhagya* or fate commensurate with her/his karma without a divine entity, say God, having an overriding say in the *bhagya*. The belief in the operation of karma is like the law in physics that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. This is a faith as near science as yet possible.

Another symptom of Indian democracy is its history down the ages. Anyone who arrived whether via the Hindu Kush or Arabian Sea as the early Jews or other traders, the Parsees, British and many others were welcome, or at least allowed to stay and settle on Indian soil. No one was expelled regardless of being cruel or kind.

The idea behind the open welcome to one and all was that the world was one family, *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*. An advantage of this policy — call it Indic — or conduct was that the culture-cum-civilisation became resilient and, regardless of its disinclination to fight, survived against any number and kinds of invasions. Few cultures could withstand it and survive. It began with the advent of the Caliph and his successors, from Arabia, on to Egypt and the Mediterranean countries certainly up to Spain. On the eastern side were Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan *et al* but, strictly speaking, not India. If conversions of the indigenous on any scale took place, they were well after the Islamic conquest.

After the Sepoy Mutiny was



over in 1858 AD, contact with Britain was reasonably close and frequent. As a result, Indian youth, even women, learnt the British ways of education, culture and socio-politics by the early years of the 20th century. By the time we won Independence, Indian leaders were ready to adopt electoral democracy as the means to choose Governments, at the Centre and in the provinces. We also chose a parliamentary system and not the American presidential style, although it would have been more suitable for India. Every adult was straightaway entitled to vote; those with more education, property or influence could exercise the advantage in their profession but not in an election. This insistence on equality is a hallmark of true electoral democracy. With the passage of every election, the Indian nation has learnt to participate better. There have so far been general elections at the Centre while the States have also been disciplined in holding their polls. The only significant interruption was the Emergency imposed by the Indira Gandhi regime in 1975; it lasted until early 1977. It was unpopular because it was declared only



THE INSISTENCE ON EQUALITY IS A HALLMARK OF TRUE ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY. WITH THE PASSAGE OF EVERY ELECTION, THE INDIAN NATION HAS LEARNT TO PARTICIPATE BETTER

with the intent of saving Indira's hold on power. Except for those 21 months or so, India's record of electoral democracy has been commendable.

Even when dealing with Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League during Partition, India's behaviour was, if anything, overdemocratic. In anticipation of the separation, the Qaid-e-Azam and his colleagues were insistent that all Muslims should be facilitated to migrate to the new Islamic country, their homeland. They were at times so vehement as to insist that all Muslims should migrate from India. In his rabid enthusiasm, one of the League bigwigs Sir Feroz Khan Noon thundered in February 1946 in Patna that if the Hindus in India came in the way of the transfer of Muslims to Pakistan, the League would re-enact the orgies of Chengez Khan and Halaqu Khan.

Indian leaders remained calm and implied that Muslims were also their brothers and they should be allowed to decide for themselves. An Exchange of Population plan was proposed and supported by Jinnah whereby Muslims, preferably all of them, would migrate to Pakistan. And

reciprocally, all non-Muslims would move to India. Rajendra Prasad, who subsequently became the President of independent India, wrote a book entitled *India Divided* wherein he suggested that those Muslims who didn't emigrate could stay in India as aliens with visas issued by the Government of India. The same could be done by Pakistan to the non-Muslims who remained behind in that country.

Jinnah promptly agreed with Prasad. Yet, the other Congress leaders kept quiet. In the end, Pakistan, with the help of violence, loot and killing chased out most Hindus whereas Muslims were allowed to stay back in India if they wished. Some went away from East Punjab (India), UP and Bihar but compared to Pakistan, India did practically little. This is true to this day, 75 years later.

This was the practical essence of democracy. It is difficult to think of any other example of such devotion to freedom. India is indeed the land of freedom and, therefore, democracy. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the *Rajya Sabha*. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RECOGNITION FOR FEMALE ATHLETES

Sir — Hyundai Motors has struck a big blow for gender parity by signing a MoU with four Indian women cricketers. So far, it was only men who were given almost god-like status in advertisements across all media. Even on the world stage, not many women get as much attention as their male counterparts do. In Indian cricket, male sportspersons have always been given preference by companies as the face of their brands. India has produced some of the finest athletes in various sports who should have been promoted but were not. Therefore, this becomes an important and perhaps a bold step by the company.

This move will benefit not only the four players who have been signed up but also serve as an example for other brands to follow suit. It will also give an added impetus to the many budding sportswomen who are trying to make a mark in the national and international sports arena. There are many dedicated and elite women athletes in the country who need and deserve such recognition. Other brands, too, should go ahead with women brand ambassadors and promote gender equality. With more women reaching the top in various fields, it certainly seems as if happy days are on the way to the women of the nation.

Anthony Henriques | Mumbai

THE BAND OF BROTHERS, FOR EVER

Sir — The soldiers of our country have protected their land and its people forever. Their supreme sacrifice has always been the flame of example that can never be extinguished. They have never failed in winning the hearts of the people by their duty as well as gesture. Recently, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans attended the marriage ceremony of martyred Constable Shailendra Pratap Singh's sister in Uttar Pradesh. The jawans, Constable Singh's colleagues, performed all the brotherly rituals and gestures in the wedding of his sister.

Constable Shailendra Pratap Singh was martyred in a terrorist attack in Pulwama last year. This gesture by the

Sack the untenable Minister



After the Special Investigation Team's (SIT) finding that the Lakhimpur Kheri carnage was 'pre-planned', the position of Minister of State (MoS) for Home Affairs Ajay Mishra Teni has become untenable. Propriety requires that he steps aside till a court finds his son, against whom the SIT found prima facie evidence, not guilty of running over four farmers and a journalist and killing them. Circumstantial evidence suggests that his son may have been abetted in the alleged commission of the crime by

him. The fact that the killing of farmers occurred following the MoS' threat that it would take him 'two minutes to discipline the protesting farmers' if he so wished, may not be sufficient to implicate him in the crime, still it is not without its own underlying import or significance.

One thing is clear, were the killers not drunk in power, the farmers would not have lost their lives. The inclusion of sections under the Arms Act in the charge-sheet spells trouble for Ajay Mishra since it was from his burnt vehicle that empty cartridges were recovered. By venting his anger on journalists, he can assert his VVIP status, but he cannot exonerate himself from the charges. The Supreme Court deserves credit for taking suo motu cognisance of the tragic incident and ordering a credible SIT without allowing the Modi Government or the Yogi Government to pervert the course of justice.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

jawans has caught the eyes of the country and a video of them performing marriage rituals has surfaced on social media and is winning hearts. The jawans showed what brotherhood actually looks like. They not only protect our motherland but have also set benchmarks for us that brotherhood does not end with the end of one's life. It leaves a very deep message encouraging us to remember our brother and sister even after they've left the world.

Manoj Kumar Jena | Cuttack

AN EVERGREEN MAESTRO'S CENTENARY

Sir — A documentary film, *Paravaikalam*, has been made on nadaswaram maestro Karukurichi Arunachalam, whose birth centenary is being celebrated. The documentary has been titled so because the legendary artist would play the instrument effortlessly like a bird in flight. At the height of his fame, Karukurichi Arunachalam had a huge fan following which was enhanced

by his contribution to the blockbuster Tamil film *Konjum Salangai*.

The song *Singara Velane Deva*, in which playback singer S Janaki sang in tandem with Arunachalam's nadaswaram, mirroring every phrase of the song, became a runaway hit. Though Janaki has sung innumerable songs and won plenty of awards, *Singara Velane Deva* remains a watermark in her outstanding career. This song is an eternal favourite, tugging at the heartstrings of the young and old and transcending time and age boundaries. In an era when song-tracks are recorded separately and then synthesised, this immortal song was a pioneer for such an innovation more than five decades ago. It was veteran director MV Raman who directed this epic film in technicolour which reportedly cost around ₹40 lakh, something unheard of in those days.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

SOUND BITE

The Government's refusal to sack Ajay Mishra Teni is the starkest indication of its moral bankruptcy.



Congress leader —Priyanka Gandhi



At the moment, I have no plans to attend the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Japanese Prime Minister —Fumio Kishida

We gained experience by doing 60-70 films but the new actors already have that kind of experience.



Actor —Akshay Kumar



There was no offence, no hesitation and not once was I told that you should not leave T20 captaincy.

India batsman —Virat Kohli

When the AAP forms Government in Punjab, the country's biggest sports university will be set up in Jalandhar.



Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal

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FIRST COLUMN INDIA'S CONNECT: A CENTRAL ASIA POLICY

Despite a solid economic partnership with China, central Asia is well aware of its deceitful nature



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Leaders from five central Asian countries comprising of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan could be the chief guests on the next Republic Day. This comes close on the heels of the Russian president's tour to India that re-emphasized Indo-Russian strategic friendship. All this happens in the backdrop of India finding new strategic allies such as the US, and Russia's growing intimacy with China and Pakistan. It brings the focus on the big global powers trying to recalibrate their strategic, geo-political and military alliances in a post-COVID, multipolar and a more transactional world order. India, therefore, has made the right move by focusing on a specific regional cluster of nations, i.e., Central Asia, within its larger foreign strategy. If the heads of state of the five Central Asian republics attend as chief guests on January 26, 2022, it would be the second occasion after 2018 when regionally important ASEAN leaders had been the chief guests. It would



be a good optical moment for India to showcase its increased influence over the central Asian republics, specifically to China and Pakistan. The five countries share land borders with Afghanistan and some also with China, Russia and Iran. The Afghanistan situation is increasingly threatening to spill over and start impacting the rest of the landlocked neighbors and beyond. The immediate threats are a barrage of illegal Afghan immigrants spilling into these five countries and onwards to Russia and perhaps China and Iran, too. There are additional threats of drug and human trafficking, terror activities and smuggling and the whole of Eurasia starts feeling the tremors. India has a unique position in the relationship because of its historical, cultural and infrastructural linkages with these countries in the past; even though it is now isolated due to its evolving relationship with China and Pakistan. Pakistan, and by proxy China, would not spare a chance to use the Taliban-trained militia to create problems for India. China and Pakistan have significant political, economic and strategic interests in Afghanistan that serves as a key gateway into Eurasia for them. China, dictated by its expansionist foreign policy almost teetering towards colonization, steadily strengthened its economic relations with Central Asia over the years. The annual trade between them is approximately \$100bn compared to India's less than \$2bn with the same group of countries. That leaves a yawning gap for India to fill by nurturing a strong relationship with them at the earliest.

India was one of the first countries to officially recognize these Central Asian republics in the 1990s. Prior to that, India's engagement with them was through the erstwhile Soviet Union. In the past three decades, India has hardly developed meaningful partnerships with these geo-politically important countries neighboring Afghanistan. In wake of the current Afghan crisis and a gradual recalibration of the global order, lethargy of the past has to be dropped. Central Asia despite having a robust economic partnership with China is well aware of the deceitful nature of the Dragon. They are also more influenced by Russia and Iran for their security, and strategic interests. Russia, even though it has an empathetic view of China's narrative on the evolving global order, knows that India is a tried and trusted friend in the region who can be a balancing component. Therefore, Russia would also encourage these central Asian countries to expand their security, economic partnerships with India and have complementarity of policies on regional concerns such as terrorism, drug trafficking and Afghanistan. India has done well by rekindling its Central Asia connect policy (first conceived in 2012). The roads from Tashkent to Thiruvananthapuram and Samarkand to Surat need to be built. (The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Poor hygiene brings the economy down



KRITHIKA MURALI SWATI MAHAJAN

The challenges in accessing adequate water supply, sanitation facilities and poor hygiene practices lead to a rise in diseases, causing increased economic burden

Access to hygiene and sanitation facilities is a fundamental human right and one of the key determinants of health. According to the 2017 Household Survey for the Assessment of Toilet Coverage under Swachh Bharat Mission, 39.9 percent of India's rural population defecates in open and about 26 percent people do not use soap or detergent to wash their hands afterwards (National Sample Survey 2019). The challenges in accessing adequate water supply and sanitation facilities coupled with poor hygiene practices lead to a rise in diseases which can result in higher economic burden, exceeding investments in hygiene and sanitation systems.

The sixth Sustainable Development Goal is to 'Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all' by 2030. Since Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programs have a direct impact on health and socio-economic indicators, they have played a central role in improving India's overall health over the past decades. Hygiene, water and sanitation programs are a proven cost-effective investment for public health.

Ever since Independence, WASH Programs have been synonymous with the country's public health agenda. Too many lives have been lost to preventable diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, smallpox and other infectious diseases — all caused by poor hygiene, sanitation and inadequate water supply. As a result, the Government of India put emphasis on improving health indicators with a focused approach towards water supply and sanitation across the country.

In the 10th five-year plan adopted in 2002, the role of sanitation and hygiene were intrinsically linked to the objectives of reducing Infant Mortality Rate (IMR); Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR); ensuring completion of five years of schooling for all children by 2007 and providing potable drinking water in all villages. The Swachh Bharat Mission and the Jal Jeevan Mission are two recent government initiatives aimed at improving the supply of clean water and moving the country toward sustainable sanitation standards. While the Swachh Bharat Mission was aimed at achieving universal sanitation coverage, the Jal Jeevan Mission sought to ensure piped water supply for all households in the country; providing a significant boost to the rural water and sanitation industry. According to Lancet's 'The Global Burden of Disease' study, through these efforts India managed to add quality years of life expectancy to its people, indicating a substantial increase in the overall health of the country.

However, given the wide inequalities in the social and economic demographics of the population, India continues to experience mixed progress in terms of hygiene and sanitation-related outcomes.

The economic consequences caused by inadequate access to sanitation has reper-



TO OVERCOME THE ISSUES RELATED TO HYGIENE AND SANITATION AND PREVENT ITS NEGATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS, THE COMMUNITIES, GOVERNMENTS, PRIVATE SECTOR AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS MUST MAKE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TOWARDS INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

(Dr Swati Mahajan is chief of party, USAID-NISHTHA project and leads the comprehensive primary healthcare portfolio for Jhpiego. Krithika Murali is leading the communication, documentation and knowledge management portfolio for USAID-NISHTHA project, implemented by Jhpiego. The views expressed are personal.)



ussions at multiple levels. Along with loss of GDP, communities suffer due to decreased productivity and increased expenditure on healthcare. A World Bank study on the economic impacts of poor sanitation in India estimated that the country lost the equivalent of 6.4 percent of GDP due to inadequate sanitation. Over 70 percent of it (₹1.75 lakh crore) was accounted for by premature mortality and health-related costs.

While social impacts are difficult to quantify, some risks are often exacerbated, affecting the most vulnerable groups including women, children and people with disabilities. For example, poor pregnancy outcomes, maternal mortality, violence and psychological stress are some of the serious consequences of lack of access to clean water and sanitation among women and girls. Inadequate access to WASH can also lead to vulnerability, rape and attacks, and the fear of such assaults can prohibit women and children from using toilets and sanitary facilities outside their homes at night. Similarly, problems of dignity, safety and privacy to maintain good hygiene get compounded for disabled persons as they experience increasing feelings of disgust, fear of violence, injury and shame due to lack of proper hygiene services.

To overcome the issues related to hygiene and sanitation and prevent its negative socio-economic impacts, communities, governments, private sector and development partners must make collaborative efforts towards innovative solutions. Governments and supporting agencies need to foster innovation, especially from the commercial sector, to make hand hygiene a universal practice in all contexts. To tackle issues of shortage of water,

inaccessibility and unavailability of hand washing facilities and soaps, new solutions are urgently required. Multi-stakeholder collaborations in such situations assume an important role in providing market knowledge and recommendations on enhancing hand hygiene and strengthening WASH facilities.

A collaboration between the World Bank, UNICEF, Johns Hopkins University, USAID and Unilever to form a Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing in 2001 is a case in point. More notably, Unilever has been involved in tackling epidemics such as cholera and has been able to reach over 1.2 billion individuals with programs and awareness campaigns through their Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition partnerships. Through close collaborations with Government/ public enterprises, HBCC has been able to advocate for hand and surface hygiene among the vulnerable slum populations even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Interventions to promote hand hygiene should also be founded on a thorough understanding of what people care about, and should incorporate appropriate social norms to help build sustainable habits. The emphasis needs to move towards a transformative approach focusing on needs of the community, going beyond the benefits of WASH in sanitation research and programming and eliminating the less safe forms of sanitation. Projects like NISHTHA, USAID's flagship health system strengthening project being implemented by Jhpiego in partnership with Unilever, support various state governments in leveraging the Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) platform under Ayushman Bharat. One of the key

aspects of this project is the health and wellness session, where local communities are educated on the importance of healthy hygiene. Considering the local context, this project leverages on existing limited resources and funds to establish handwashing corners and appropriate social norms to strengthen handwashing behaviours.

Transformative approaches to hygiene and sanitation require stronger governance, management and increased accountability. There is a need to build capacities of health workers and sanitation workers, create mass awareness among the larger public and collaborate with the private sector and other partners for investing in the area of WASH. This would not only ensure access to sanitary facilities to households but would also empower people to take sustained action at local levels.

Overall, investments in toilet usage, hygiene promotion, increased access to potable water, and effective waste management are estimated to save India \$32.6 billion (₹1.48 trillion) or \$29 (₹1321) per capita, according to a Water and Sanitation Program report. Improved sanitation yields several economic benefits, including direct benefits such as avoiding illnesses (the sum of money saved on healthcare expenses), indirect economic benefits such as fewer sick days and a longer lifespan because these benefits permit people to work more. As estimated by WHO, every dollar invested in hygiene and sanitation provides a return on investment for the society of \$5.50 due to lower health costs, increased productivity and fewer premature deaths. Therefore, it is imperative to carefully shape policies and regulations that prioritize and adequately fund hygiene and sanitation.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I WANT TO SEE THE BJP LOSE ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN THE 2024 ELECTIONS. IT WILL BE **KHELA HOBEY** AGAIN. —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER **MAMATA BANERJEE**



MAMATA BANERJEE HAD SAID SIMILAR THINGS IN 2014 AND IN 2019, AND ALL OF US HAVE SEEN THE RESULT. —BENGAL BJP PRESIDENT **SUKANTA MAJUMDAR**

Unifier's unflinching legacy: A tribute to Sardar Patel

Adhering to the ideals of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is taking initiatives to realise his goals

December 15, marks the death anniversary of the nation's great unifier, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The right tribute will be to adopt his ideas, actions and nationalistic spirit. The people of India will forever remain indebted to him for his leadership during the freedom struggle and his vision, wisdom, and statesmanship in the post-Independence era.



ARJUN RAM MEGHWAL

Starting his public life from being a municipal councillor in Ahmedabad to becoming India's Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Patel had a very granular understanding of the various stakeholders of governance, administration, their relevance, roles and responsibilities. His steadfast approach to handling the nation's complexities made

(The writer is Union Minister of State for Culture & Parliamentary Affairs & represents Bikaner constituency in Lok Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

him a responsible and reasoned voice of the masses.

With unflinching zeal and rare boldness, he handled the task of unification of the princely states. Patel's diplomatic maneuvers secured "accession" of these states and provided shape to the nation by bringing them in line with the constitutional framework. The unsuccessful unification of Kashmir turned out to be a grave mistake of Jawahar Lal Nehru under Shaikh Abdullah's pressure. On December 23, 1947, Nehru took J&K away from Patel's charge and placed it under Gopalaswami Ayyangar. It hurt Patel deeply and in his reply to Nehru's letter, he expressed his will to resign. All three stalwarts of the constituent assembly, Bhimrao



Ambedkar, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Sardar Patel, outrightly opposed J&K's special status from the beginning. Intra-party power struggles and sheer hollowness of democratic values of Congress surfaced while choosing the Prime Minister of Independent India. Twelve out of 15 Congress Committees chose Sardar Patel for presidentship, but still Pandit Nehru was selected. Socialistic leader Jayaprakash Narayan once remarked: "If Sardar Patel, and not Pandit

Nehru, had been the first PM of India, maybe, Partition of the country could have been averted."

Sardar Patel's famous letter of November 7, 1950, highlights his vigorous criticism of Nehru's foreign policy of in the context to mishandling of Tibet, China and Kashmir. This criticism finds resonance with Ambedkar's vision of foreign affairs. These Nehruvian interventions resulted in Sino-India and Indo-Pak wars over the course of our history. The 41-year delay in posthumously awarding Bharat Ratna to the Iron Man still highlights Congress's ill-will towards him. Sardar Patel was denied his fair share in history due to a lack of the rationality of Nehruvian and leftist historians. Thus, it is

imperative to bring a rational account of his monumental legacy to the new generations.

After his task of unifying India, the Iron Man of India was instrumental in making the Steel frame of India, i.e., creating a massive administrative grid through the All-India Services. He also decided to culturally connect the shared heritage and ethos of Indians by reconstructing the demolished Somnath temple that would depict the story of India's resurgence and victory of construction over destruction. Adhering to the ideals of Sardar Patel, the government under PM Narendra Modi is taking initiatives to realise his goals. The steel frame of India is further strengthened to prepare future-ready civil servants through Mission Karam

Yogi. This capacity-building program aims to overcome the modern challenges of a technologically connected world, facilitate ease of life to citizens, provide best governance and emerge as the world's best civil service.

The repeal of Article 370 was a well-articulated move to correct a historic blunder. The government is fulfilling the dream of Sardar Patel through the overall development of the Somnath temple complex.

On his 143rd birth anniversary, the 'Statue of Unity', the tallest statue in the world, was dedicated to the nation that radiates the wisdom of Sardar Patel and enlightens the path of the present as well as future generations. From 2014 onwards, his birth anniversary is

observed as National Unity Day. The Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat initiative further strengthens the sustained and structured cultural connection between different regions.

It is worth realising that our forefathers did everything for the ambience we have inherited. They had worked hard to institutionalise the framework that empowers individuals to attain their full potential and collectively scale new heights for the nation. As part of the ongoing 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', the death anniversary of Sardar Patel is the apt moment to recall the supreme sacrifices of countless named and unnamed individuals and pay our fitting tribute by pledging to achieving the futuristic goals for building a New India.

Bangladesh to import defence items from India

PNS ■ DHAKA

Bangladesh will soon import defence related items from India under the USD 500 million Line of Credit provided by New Delhi as several identified equipment are being fast tracked, according to Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

His remarks came after President Ram Nath Kovind, who is here on his maiden state visit at the invitation of his counterpart M Abdul Hamid to attend the golden jubilee celebrations of Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan in 1971, held delegation-level talks with the country's top leadership on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called on President Kovind and the two leaders discussed several issues of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation. They reviewed the progress in the multifac-



eted and comprehensive bilateral ties.

Addressing a press briefing here on Wednesday night, Shringla said, "As far as we are concerned, India and Bangladesh are bound by ties of history, language, spirituality and culture." He said that the defence issue was dis-

Under this line of credit, several items have been identified and being fast tracked. They're in fairly advanced stages of being processed... we will see certain defence items exports from India coming to Bangladesh and this is something that we would like to see," the foreign secretary said. Shringla said that "essentially the entire gamut of cooperation, whether it is training, exchanges, joint manufacturing in the defence sector, this is something that we would like to see enhanced".

In 2019, India provided USD 500 million Line of Credit to Bangladesh for defence-related procurement in the neighbouring country.

Export Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) entered into an agreement on April 11 with Bangladesh's Armed Forces Division for making available to the latter a Government of India-supported LoC of USD 500 million.

USFDA inspection of firm's US plant completed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Torrent Pharmaceuticals Ltd on Thursday said its manufacturing facility at Levittown, Pennsylvania in the US has successfully completed inspection by the USFDA.

The plant was inspected by USFDA (United States Food and Drug Administration) between December 6 and December 15, 2021. At the end of the inspection, no 'Form 483' was issued, the company said in a regulatory filing.

As per the USFDA, Form 483 is issued to a firm's management at the conclusion of an inspection when an investigator has observed any conditions that in its judgment may constitute violations of the Food Drug and Cosmetic (FD&C) Act and related Acts.

"It is a positive development for the company and is a reflection of our commitment to consistency in quality and compliance with regulatory standards," Torrent Pharmaceuticals said.

Pvt sector invests Rs 15,164.25 crore in road construction: Nitin Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector investment in road construction till November this financial year stood at Rs 15,164.25 crore, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said private sector investment in road construction in 2020-21 and 2019-20 was Rs 12,475.53 crore and Rs 21,925.98 crore, respectively.

Gadkari said the review of Model Concession Agreement (MCA) documents of various modes of road construction under PPP (public-private partnership) is a continuous exercise, and changes are made to address the concerns of the



stakeholders, as and when required.

The minister also informed that a total length of 6,722.31 km has been completed out of

7,245.07 km of National Highway projects under build-operate-transfer (BOT-annuity) and build-operate-transfer (BOT-Toll) mode.

MONEY MATTERS

Tata Motors' bus brand Starbus crosses 1 lakh units cumulative sales



Homegrown auto major Tata Motors on Thursday said its bus brand Starbus has crossed the 1 lakh units cumulative sales milestone. The Starbus platform is available in varied configurations to suit a host of applications like staff and school transportation. It is also available as an electric bus and has been successfully running in several

cities across India, the company said in a statement.

Tata Motors Vice-President (Product Line- Buses) Rohit Srivastava said, "The Tata Starbus has proved to be the most versatile bus in the industry offering a luxury travel experience in the staff transportation application and safe and reliable travel as a school bus."

It has become one of the strongest brands in the commercial vehicle industry and an integral part of India's transportation sector, he added.

CIL plans to raise coal stock at thermal power plants to 45 mn



State-owned CIL on Thursday said it has drawn up plans to boost coal stock at thermal power plants to over 45 million tonnes (MT) from its own sources by the end of the ongoing fiscal. Coal India Ltd (CIL) is aiming for the highest-ever closing stock at power plants, the PSU said in a

statement. "The previous high was 45 MT in 2020," it said. In a workshop held on December 11 in Kolkata with senior officials of CIL and its subsidiaries, Coal Secretary Anil Kumar Jain underscored the importance of shoring up coal stocks at power plants with indigenous coal where CIL is to take lead role. The intent is to maintain steady supply of coal to power plants during summer and monsoon months to avoid disproportionate demand-despatch scenario. The focus is also to reduce coal imports in substitutable category.

Rupee rises 23 paise to 76.09 against US dollar



The rupee recovered 23 paise to close at 76.09 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, reacting to the US Federal Reserve's announcement on ending bond-buying stimulus by March.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 76.31 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 76.06 during the day's trade. On Wednesday, the rupee plunged by 44 paise to close at a 20-month low of 76.32 against the American currency. "Rupee traded positive on US Fed statement of tapering, but economic data relevance did not support the dollar index. Helping rupee to take support near 76.25. Going ahead rupee can be seen range of 75.75-76.25," Jateen Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at LKP Securities said. The US Federal Reserve signalled multiple interest rate increases next year. Forex traders said the appreciation bias in the rupee might be curtailed, amid growing concerns over the Omicron variant of coronavirus, firm crude oil prices and persistent foreign fund outflows.

LIC warns of legal action over misuse of its logo on social media



Insurance behemoth Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Thursday said it will take legal action against unscrupulous entities making unauthorised use of its logo on social media platforms to attract customers. In its caution notice, LIC has also asked the public not to fall prey to proposals of such entities which are misusing its logo on social media platforms

like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube and other social media. "It has also come to our notice that certain unscrupulous service providers and agents have created websites and Apps whereby they are attempting to provide various services such as 'Insurance and Insurance Advisory Services' to customers using our trademarks/service marks which are deceptively similar to our mark... and domain names deceptively similar to our domain name and even using and reproducing our original literary and artistic works with a view to cause confusion and deception in the minds of the public and policy holders that they are in some manner connected with or authorised by us," LIC said in a notice. It also said that certain software and app providers have created software and Apps that facilitate or enable others to gain access to LIC's portal system by way of facilitating unauthorised access with the intention of data theft.

Zydus Cadila gets orphan drug designation from USFDA for antimalarial compound

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pharmaceutical firm Zydus Cadila on Thursday said its antimalarial compound 'ZY19489', which is currently under development with Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), has received 'orphan drug designation' from the US Food and Drug Administration.

The orphan drug designation provides eligibility for certain development incentives, including tax credits for qualified clinical testing, prescription drug user fee exemptions and seven-year marketing exclusivity upon USFDA approval.

Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV) is a leading product development partnership in antimalarial drug research.

The ZY19489 is a novel antimalarial compound active against all current clinical strains of malaria-causing microorganisms 'P. falciparum' and 'P. vivax', including drug-resistant strains, Cadila Healthcare said in a regulatory filing.



In the phase-I study, the compound has demonstrated a long half-life and potential for a single-dose cure for malaria. It has also demonstrated potent anti-malarial activity following single-dose oral administration in a separate malaria challenge trial, it added.

Zydus Group Chairman Pankaj R Patel said, "As a global community facing threats from rapidly mutating malaria strains and the rise in artemisinin resistance cases, we have to be prepared with novel therapeutic drugs. ZY-19489 is a potential single-dose radical cure for P.falciparum and P. vivax malaria, which is a major global health risk

today". MMV Chief Scientific Officer Timothy Wells said, "ZY19489 is a potent, first in the class molecule, originally discovered and elaborated in India. It has tremendous potential as part of a new generation of treatments and is fully active against drug-resistant strains of malaria, which are increasingly a concern".

The company said 'ZY19489' is being developed to provide an effective alternative to the current front-line antimalarial drugs for the treatment of P. falciparum and P. vivax malaria, as artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) are under threat of resistance.

CMS Info Systems sets IPO price band at Rs 205-216/share

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cash management company CMS Info Systems on Thursday said it has fixed a price band of Rs 205-216 a share for its Rs 1,100-crore initial public offering (IPO) that opens next week.

The initial share-sale will open for public subscription on December 21 and close on December 23. The bidding for anchor investors will open on December 20. The company has cut its IPO size to Rs 1,100 crore from Rs 2,000 crore earlier.

Talking about the company's business, CMS Info Systems Executive Vice Chairman and CEO Rajiv Kaul said the company had logged a 21 per cent growth in revenue at Rs 1,383 crore in the year preceding COVID, but saw its top-line decline by 6 per cent to Rs 1,306 crore during FY21.

"...In a year of COVID, where consumption and mobility got disrupted, eco-



nomics growth went down, we were able to arrest the decline of our revenue to just 6 per cent, which is a strong testament to the diversification of our businesses, as well as the strength of our business model," he added.

Kaul said the company's revenue in the first five months of the ongoing fiscal (FY22) stood at Rs 626 crore. Of this, cash management services contributed Rs 418 crore, man-

aged services was Rs 192 crore and Rs 16 crore from others.

"...[this] is in a period where we had the COVID wave two but if you were to extrapolate this revenue over 12 months, that will still be a 15 per cent growth over FY21," he said adding that the CMS had Rs 307 crore of cash on its books at the end of FY21.

Kaul said CMS has built service lines across all elements of cash cycle and sees massive

Sensex ends 113 pts higher on firm global cues; Nifty

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex ended 113 points higher on Thursday, tracking gains in index majors Infosys, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finance amid a positive trend overseas.

The 30-share index advanced 113.11 points or 0.20 per cent to settle at 57,901.14. Similarly, the NSE Nifty rose 27 points or 0.16 per cent to 17,248.40.

Bajaj Finance was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 3 per cent, followed by Infosys, Titan, Reliance Industries and HCL Tech.

On the other hand, Maruti, Bajaj Auto and Sun Pharma were among the laggards.

"Indian markets opened on a positive note following Asian market cues as globally investors assess US Fed's decision on taper and rates," said Narendra Solanki, Head-

Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi.

The US Fed said it will aggressively unwind bond buying and sees three rate hikes in 2022 and two each in next two years.

"During the afternoon session, the markets continued to hold their head above water. However, upside remained capped on relentless FII selling in capital markets which impacted traders' sentiment. During the closing session, the markets succumbed to selling pressure," he added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended with gains.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a positive note in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude firmed up 0.97 per cent to USD 74.60 per barrel.

Trial of new oral drug against COVID-19 begins

PNS ■ JOHANNESBURG

Oravax Medical Inc, a subsidiary of US/Israeli pharmaceutical company Oramed, has started the first phase of clinical trial of its oral COVID-19 vaccine in South Africa.

South Africa has been struggling with its plans to achieve the herd immunity through vaccinations, with widespread vaccine hesitancy, largely fuelled by social media misinformation. There is also a strong anti-vaccination lobby, including some political parties.

"We expect to rapidly complete this study and hope to advance into pivotal trials for emergency use approval in countries where our oral Virus-Like Particles (VLP) vaccine would have the greatest impact," Oramed Chief Executive Officer Nadav Kidron said in a statement.

"South Africa is a great location for the Phase 1 study, as it is currently experiencing a surge in COVID cases and has struggled to obtain sufficient vaccines."

"It is our firm belief that an oral vaccine which eliminates syringes and eases distribution and administration, can significantly help increase vaccination rates for South Africa and similar countries," Kidron said.

The open-label trial involves participants who have not received either a COVID-19 vaccine or contracted the virus. Participants will be administered one dose of the oral vaccine at the beginning of the trial and a second dose three weeks later.

The trial's endpoints will include safety and tolerability as well as efficacy by measuring the presence of an immunogenic response.

Sentient Labs launches desi fuel cell bus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sentient Labs on Thursday unveiled an indigenously developed hydrogen fuel cell bus in collaboration with CSIR-NCL and CSIR-CECRI.

The hydrogen fuel cell technology has been developed in collaboration with CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research)-NCL (National Chemical Laboratory) and CSIR-CECRI (Central Electrochemical Research Institute).

Sentient Labs, an R&D innovation laboratory, building on technologies incubated by KPIT Technologies Ltd, also indigenously designed and developed from ground up other key components like balance of plant, powertrain



and battery pack, the company said in a statement.

"All of these components have been deployed on a 9-

metre, 32-seater, air-conditioned bus. This is designed to provide a range of 450 km while utilising 30 kgs of

Hydrogen," it said adding a modular architecture allows for changes in the design to suit requirements of range and

operating conditions.

Commenting on the achievement, Sentient Labs Chairman Ravi Pandit said, "We are proud to launch an indigenously developed hydrogen fuel cell power bus. A strong technical team along with CSIR-NCL worked on several technology components."

Stating that this will go a long way in powering "Hydrogen Mission, Aatmanirbhar Bharat and sustainable mobility," he said, "We envision that the solution will see wide-spread adoption powered by several partnerships. Our efforts will also be pivotal in enabling vehicle makers and suppliers to build a net-zero carbon path in India."

Gold jumps Rs 209; silver zooms Rs 617

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price in the national capital on Thursday jumped Rs 209 to Rs 47,405 per 10 gram amid gains in precious metal prices in the international market, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal settled at Rs 47,196 per 10 gram.

Silver also surged by Rs 617 to Rs 60,179 per kg from Rs 59,562 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,785 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 22.16 per ounce.

Dara Sandhu, the secret superstar

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The lead antagonist Dara Sandhu from the European film *And Tomorrow We Will Be Dead* directed by none other than the award winning Swiss filmmaker Michael Steiner, was actually once an assistant director for such famous films like *Aeh Dil Hai Mushkil* & *Secret Superstar*. It took no time for him to become the face of an international film now, turning the tables for the better.

In conversation with the actor who also featured in the recent popular web series called *Masaba Masaba*, we got to know the kind of hard work he has put in to be the leading rival for the European film. Within the film fraternity, he did have a large repertoire yet he didn't choose to go the short-cut way. The foremost notion for us to get in touch with this very versatile persona was to know how his latest film was talking primarily about the importance of the political and human crisis in Afghanistan and how it affects people from all over the world! All of us are aware of the human tragedies that took place in Afghanistan recently, it became a worldwide rage and with this unusual interview with an actor, we tried getting to know more such insights on how one is able to film sensitive concepts like this and then make it a success too. Beginning with the Pashto twist that he has given, when one sees the film, it's difficult to sit back and not applaud him for the same.

He exclusively reveals to us, "The filmmakers made sure there were not the slightest of mispronunciations in Pashto. I have a natural tendency to pick up accents and language. I travel a lot and often find myself emulating accents from the places I visit. I have been to Kashmir several times and always speak with the locals in their accent only. It's not too far from the way Pashto can sound! It's intimidating at first, learning your Pashto lines is one thing, but remembering the nuances of each pronunciation during those high crash scenes can be quite challenging. You get entirely engrossed in the scene and forget the correct tonality for some words. Sometimes I mess around on Instagram making short comedy skits in different languages but the magnitude of this project and the director's insistence on aching the Pashto like a native speaker made it challenging for me. We also had the added responsibility of nailing our performances given the fact that the survivors were watching the film too and hoped for an authentic portrayal of their story."

It was the director of the European film that drew the AD-turned-actor to grabbing the project! Dara finds Michael Steiner's body of work to be an extraordinary vocation in its own. According to Dara, Michael is one of the most popular European film-



scary and unpredictable at times and then shows a more human side all of a sudden. It really allowed him to portray a range of emotions! The number of teary-eyed

makers! The movie is a real life story leading to a shocking revelation. Dara feels that in India we mostly visualise characters like Ommara as one dimensional or a negative character but he clears the air saying that wasn't the director's apparition and treatment to the film. The actor's character is

people that walked up to him after the premiere in Zurich to tell him how much they loved his performance was a very special feeling for him indeed.

Chatting more on his long-found love for the ace director, he says, "I was nervous at first as Michael Steiner is one of the

most celebrated European filmmakers and is the only director to have opened the Zurich Film Festival twice, but Michael is as chilled out as he seems and is intelligent too. Michael and I are friends now and we have had lengthy conversations about western alternate culture and eastern philosophy. On shoot I would wake up earlier than required just out of excitement. The way the film was being made each day was an adventure for me! In general I found the Swiss to be very smart workers."

Dara Sandhu did manage to cross cultures and with that at times unfortunately one tends to face racism given the circumstances.

We were keen on knowing whether he faced subtle racism all this while and this is what he had to say, "First things first, I always wanted to play an antagonist. Playing an adversary is more accurate in the art of acting, like bad boys have all the fun. Jokes aside, even my character was critical to the story and the director flew down to do extensive readings and auditions with me after I was shortlisted. One of the primary things we worked on was ensuring that my character had such a compelling backstory that at no point did I feel like my actions were evil or incorrect! By the time I was on set I could justify my actions. It was the only way my character could survive his poverty. Coming to racial discrimination now, I travel a lot and I have been in situations where people look at a tall brown man suspiciously sometimes! It used to be the worst in America after 9/11. I went to boarding school in England and when you land up there with a thick Indian accent, you end up in some awkward situations. But otherwise my experience studying and working in England has been on equal opportunities regardless of colour. I think more than racism you tend to stack up against favouritism but that's prevalent everywhere, more so in India and Bollywood I might add."

While wrapping the conversation, we were wondering what will be the movie's impact on Swiss people who witnessed this event unfold on TV! To this he concludes and tells, "The level at which the audience was able to relate to David and Daniela's story was astounding. Everyone who spoke to me at length would remark that I have a warm personality in person but they were scared of me while watching the film. That is one of the best compliments an actor can get! The movie has gained unprecedented traction because of the developments in Afghanistan. In Switzerland they are viewing it as not only the ordeal of two Swiss hostages who spent eight months with the Taliban but also an insight into the world of Afghani people. The movie was inaugurated by the Swiss President Guy Parmelin and had the honour of opening the Zurich Film Festival amongst European film and political personalities."



Focus, find, filter, fit and flex

It is fascinating to see a company grow and achieve new heights. In any field, a company's sustenance is how the employees are in full synchrony! To learn about one such workplace, we have Piyush Raj Akhouri, who is the Co-Founder & Business Head of Bridgetech Consulting, a Technology Staffing Firm in Paris.

He tells us how the company was born, saying, "The three of us — Marc Perivier, Deepika Bora and myself, co-founded Bridgetech in 2018. We were friends even before the inception of the startup and started as soon as the idea took form over coffee. All of us brought in decades of experience in employee management, IT services and business development."

He adds that with all of them having a lot of experience in employee management, IT services and business development, it was the perfect match and an easy process. With a company that is spread over continents — with offices in France, India, the Netherlands and Germany, he shares with us the vision behind starting Bridgetech, saying, "Our mission is to enable organisations to match their growth with business demand. We want our clients to modernise and adapt new technologies for staying ahead of the curve, by improving employee-employer relations via trust-based-hiring, seamlessly merging the practises of contractual staffing, solutions delivery and recruitment into a custom-fit solution."

Every company floundered for a while when the pandemic initially hit, but some got back on their feet and some even found silver linings! The businessman tells us about how they saw a shift after the pandemic, and evolved with the times. He said that the onset of the pandemic and adoption of technology has accelerated the speed of remote work, adding, "We were able to see job contracts floating in the market, and deserving candidates having more than one offer, still fishing for better opportunities. Employers also lose a lot of time in the interim, with anticipation of the candidate joining, but that impacts the deliverables a lot. It came to us that if we can bring better opportunities to employees and share risks with the employer on employee onboarding and sourcing, it benefits everyone. We, therefore, created a niche 5F strategy framework, with Focus, Find, Filter, Fit and Flex elements that let Employers and employees choose right and fast about collaborating." Forever in the pursuit of growth and development, the company has a lot in store. "We are more comfortable working with large mid-size IT teams as well as focused Tech Start-ups with decentralised management, so that decisions can happen fast and sync better with the dynamics of the changing IT services industry. This will also help us to achieve our vision of having 250+ employees by the end of 2022."

Bridging gap between education & workforce demand

SHREYA SRIKONDA

Engineers fresh out of college usually struggle in the professional world because their theoretical studies do not cover the daily difficulties of the working world. Maybe during college, the right guidance could change how freshly trained professionals advance in their career! Bridging this gap between a student's inexperience and the demands of a workplace is a new program at BITSOM. Dr. Ranjan Banerjee, Dean of BITSOM shared that there are many things today's graduates are not aware of before they go out into the career world — The dynamics, pivots and exposure of the MNCs. "Let it be about managing work, sustaining in the competitive market, closing a deal or politics within the organization, few things aren't taught in the classroom. They can only be attained when you face the world and learn through your experiences. That's where a mentor comes to rescue." The ability to seek out mentors in your life or work is very essential, as you get to build a network and ask queries. "A lot of mentor and mentee relationships start one way but they can be two ways. There can even be a reverse mentorship to evolve. As the comfort is built, even mentors can learn from mentees. Essentially it's about having conversations about the industry, seeking guidance in the behavioural domain and being industry ready." Says the dean, "For me what stands out from this program is one on one conversation with the people who have 20-25 years of experience. For many of those who go into the industry, it'll take 5 or 6 years to find a good mentor and the right guidance. You know

nobody talks about it, but this is the basic need. By having a mentor, you're not only receiving a lot of helpful information, but you're also able to build a network of contacts through the mentor, if you go in search of more guidance than what your mentor can provide." He says that mentors also get to learn and have exposure, by connecting to the new latest generation workspace and there is a larger value of giving back. Speaking about how the program has been received by both parties, he said that when they launched the program, they did a mentor meet and a mentee meet and noticed that the overall response was quite positive. "We are a new institute, and we are setting up to become a world class Business School. Our first batch just joined in July." Saying that they're probably the first institute in India to organize comprehensive mentorship for every student in the institute, Dr. Banerjee mentions that they've roped in senior executives of whom a few are alumni of BITS Pilani, and a few are executives from organizations, to mentor students. "These people enjoy mentoring with individuals. Each student is assigned with a mentor during the programme. The program is mentee-led, which means that a mentee has to reach out to a mentor. We specify 3-4 contacts over a year, rest depends on the mentees and a mentor. Mentees interact with their mentor and schedule a suitable time with a mentor. We've already placed our first batch. People have reported that they enjoyed the interaction." He said that the students got insights of the organizations, work process, perspectives and shared experiences. Often they work on the aspects and capabilities they want to build, it could be behavioural or work-related.

Major controversies of 2021

Rewind 2021
 For millions of us, the year 2021 was a series of unforeseeable events. From coronavirus to cyclones to tension at Indian borders and economic disruptions, the entire year saw a paradigm-shift in developments. In India, the pandemic, protests and political face-offs, dominated the news space! As 2021 comes to an end, here are some of the contentious controversies that ruled the space.



• Social media criticism rose against Fortune Edible Oil brand's healthy heart advertisement campaign of which Sourav Ganguly is a brand ambassador.

The company pulled down the advertisements featuring Ganguly following the criticism and trolls only because former Indian national cricket captain suffered a mild cardiac arrest.

• A 22-year-old environmentalist from Bangalore, Disha Ravi, was arrested by the Delhi Police on sedition charges. The police alleged that she edited and circulated a document that is toolkit tweeted by Greta Thunberg relating to the 2020-2021 Indian farmers' protest.



• Raj Kundra, the spouse of Shilpa Shetty was arrested by Mumbai Police on charges of making pornographic content and publishing it through mobile application named Hotshot.

• Tata Group gets nod to acquire 100% stakes of Air India from Government of India through its subsidiary Talace Private Ltd, as part of Disinvestment of Public Sector Units in India.



• Eight people including Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was arrested by Narcotics Control Bureau following a drug bust and raid conducted on a cruise vessel na med Cordelia chartered between Mumbai and Goa.

• Delhi High Court dismissed a lawsuit filed by Juhi Chawla against setting up of 5G Cellular network in India and imposed a Rs. 20 Lakh fine for abusing the process of law.



• Twitter permanently suspended the account of Kangana Ranaut for hateful posts about the post poll violence in West Bengal!

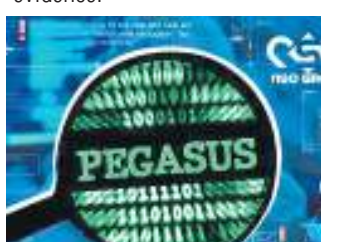


• A French online journal came out with an investigative journalism piece on the Rafale deal controversy. In the report, Mediapart alleged that the jet manufacturer had paid nearly one million Euros to an Indian middleman.



• Share prices of Fintech company Paytm, India's biggest initial public offering worth Rs. 18,300 crores fell by 27.4% on its day of listing thereby marking one of the biggest listing day loss in the history of Indian Stock market.

• A leaked database of an Israeli surveillance technology firm that sells a spyware called Pegasus was accessed by a Paris-based media nonprofit Forbidden Stories and Amnesty International. The database contained data of government clients of Pegasus since 2016. The non profit group worked on this data through an international collaborative journalism of 17 media groups from 10 countries. It was revealed that the data contains more than 300 Indians who were under surveillance through Pegasus. This included 40 journalists, opposition politicians, a supreme court judge, activists, two ministers of Modi ministry, an Election Commissioner etc. The prominent people who figured in Pegasus surveillance according to the data were Rahul Gandhi, Prashant Kishor, Ashok Lavasa, Ranjan Gogoi, Ashwini Vaishnaw etc. The Prime Minister's Office denied the allegations citing they are baseless and lack concrete evidence.



what's brewing?



● Sruthi



● Priyanka



● Priya Murthi



● Supraja Reddy



● Sahasra Reddy

FASHION FORWARD

Fashion lovers, models graced the grand curtain raiser of Sutra exhibition, which is all set for its exciting show on December 23, 24 and 25, at HICC - Novotel, HI-TEC City. The event showcases all the latest fashions that the country has to offer.



● Bindu

PARTY



G Ranjith Reddy, MP and Tirupathi Reddy, Director of SR Hatcheries participated in a ceremony at Taj Vivanta, Dronacharya Awardee Pallela Gopichand launched Eklavya—an Edtech company that aims to maximize a kid's learning potential.



(L to R) Viloo Daji- CMO Baccarose, Clint Fernandes — make-up artiste, Biju Antony, CEO & ED of Baccarose, Narendra Kumar- Fashion Designer, Chandru R- VP, Baccarose and Jatin Kampani — ace fashion photographer unveil the hashtag of the Parcos Beauty Influencer Award.



Big Boy Toyz became the first automobile organization in India to venture into the online auctioning of Vintage and Classic cars in the country. They kick-started with brands like Rolls Royce, Bentley, Cadillac, Austin, Land Rover, Buick, Mercedes, Chevrolet and more.

Photos by SV Chary

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- The crime of killing someone
- This covers your body
- Baby goats
- Cardboard box
- People you like who like you
- Envious
- Fires a gun
- An easy card game
- A student's table
- The capital of the United Kingdom
- One hundred less ten
- Light open shoes with straps
- Says again
- Overlook
- Spoiled
- Male children
- Twirl around

DOWN

- Manufacture
- People on horses
- Fly this on a string

SOLUTION

O	R	C	H	E	S	T	R	A
I	L	I	A					
R	U	N	G	S	D	R	I	N
E	S	O	S	E				
T	I	E	D	O	L	D	E	S
U	P	E	T					
R	E	P	A	I	R			
N	L	L	C	N	N			
S	N	A	I	L	R	I	N	G
T	O	E	O					
R	I	T	O	W	A	L	I	S





Liger locks its release date!

Young Sensation Vijay Deverakonda and dashing director Puri Jagannadh's maiden Pan-India project *LIGER* (Saala Crossbreed) that also marks Legend Mike Tyson's debut in Indian cinema is nearing completion. They recently wrapped up a schedule in the USA, where important portions involving Mike Tyson, Vijay Deverakonda, Ananya Pandey and other vital cast members were filmed. Only a small schedule is pending and it will be canned in India. The makers have dropped double surprises on Thursday. The Pan-India movie is ready to splash its blood, sweat and entertainment, as it is releasing in theatres worldwide on August 25, 2022. In the interim, catch a glimpse of the madness on December 31. "This Year New Year, Aag Laga Denge," assures the makers. Vijay Deverakonda's path breaking film *Arjun Reddy* was also released on August 25, four years ago in 2017.

LIGER is going to be one of the biggest action

extravaganzas in India, as it deals with the subject of Mixed Martial Arts and moreover, it features Legend Mike Tyson in a mighty role.

Fans and movie goers are waiting with bated breath to witness the real action on big screens. They are eager to see the breathtaking stunt sequences of Vijay Deverakonda and Mike Tyson. The glimpse is sure to offer a perfect New Year presentation for action movie lovers.

In association with Puri connects, the film is being produced jointly by Bollywood's leading production house Dharma Productions. Puri Jagannadh, Charmme Kaur, Karan Johar and Apoorva Mehta together are bankrolling the film on a grand scale. The film in the crazy combination has cinematography handled by Vishnu Sarma, while Kecha from Thailand is the stunt director. Ramya Krishnan and Ronit Roy play prominent roles in *LIGER*, which is being made in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam languages.

'Lived in Bengal to erect Kolkata-like temple set in Hyd'

K RAMYA SREE

Nani's most-awaited *Shyam Singha Roy* is all set to hit big screens next week and promotions of the film are in full swing. The film, produced by Venkat Boyanapalli, directed by Rahul Sankrityan, has Sai Pallavi, Kriti Shetty and Madonna Sebastian playing female leads. The film will open in theatres worldwide on December 24.

Meanwhile, we got in touch with the production designer Avinash Kolla who spoke at length about the film's sets, the work involved in setting up the Kolkata-themed temple in Hyderabad and more. "There are two stories in this — present and past. The next part of the film will talk about incidents that happened in Bengal during the 70s, that has Sai Pallavi playing Devadasi," said Avinash. He said the team had to work very hard to show the conditions organically during the 1970s. "We did research for almost three years. I stayed in Bengal during the lockdown last year. If South and North are one type, Bengal is another. I researched all the architecture and temples there," he added.

In the trailer of the film, a printing press is also seen and Avinash shares that the printing press had a crucial part in the film, because of which they learned about how to place text on the paper. "We found out what was there at the time and recreated some. The largest set associated with this film is the temple set. Major scenes were screened in it. The temple setup is a major highlight. The set was set in Hyderabad. For three months, everyone worked hard every day for that set, which was laid out on six acres," he said.

Avinash said he got excited after he heard that the story has a Kolkata theme. He feels the Kolkata culture is not found anywhere in India. "Designing a set imagining how a temple would be in Kolkata for Devadasis during 1970s was exciting," he said adding, he took Satyajit Ray's pictures as a reference for this movie.

Avinash is known for his work in Krishnagadi Veeraprema Gatha, Jersey, among others. He is also doing a web series for Sony Liv with Trisha. He also has another yet-to-be-titled movie with Nani, *Tiger Nageswararao* with Ravi Teja, whose set works has already begun. The production designer ends this interview by thanking his team for making all his work a big success.

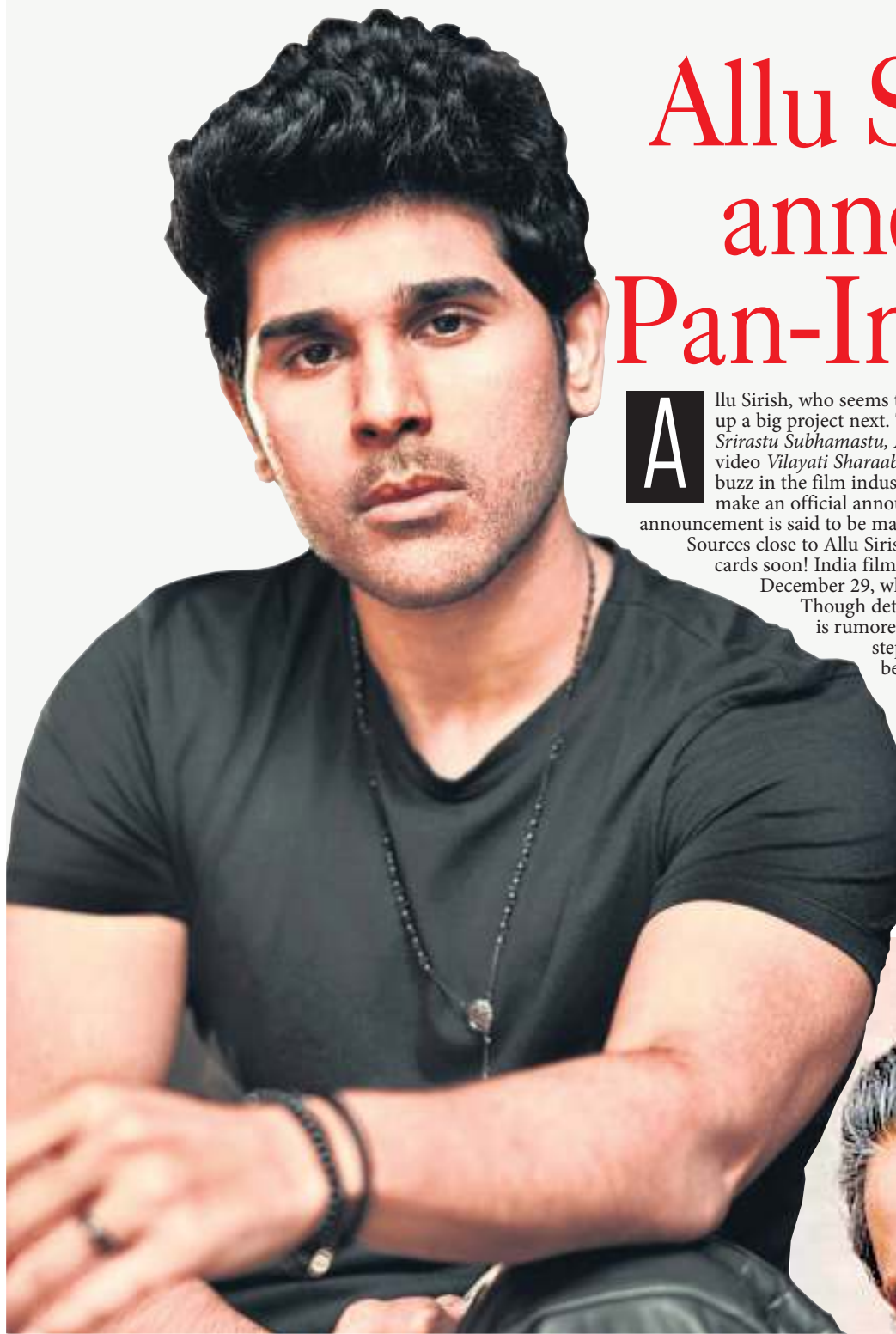


Allu Sirish to announce Pan-India film

Allu Sirish, who seems to be on a sabbatical from acting, plans to take up a big project next. The actor, known for films like *Kotha Janta*, *Srirastu Subhamastu*, *ABCD*, among others, was last seen in a music video *Vilayati Sharaab*, released in March this year. If the ongoing buzz in the film industry is to be believed, Allu Sirish is all set to make an official announcement regarding his Pan-Indian film. The announcement is said to be made this month.

Sources close to Allu Sirish revealed, "A big announcement is on the cards soon! India film with one of the country's biggest producers on December 29, which coincides with the release *Okka Kshanam*. Though details of this Pan Indian project are unknown, it is rumored to be a mega-budget film with Allu Sirish stepping into a role he has never attempted before."

On the other side, Allu Sirish will be next seen playing the lead role in *Prema Kadanta*, starring Anu Emmanuel. The film is helmed by Rakesh Sashii, who had directed *Vijetha*. The film is bankrolled by Geetha Arts 2 Pictures and presented by Allu Aravind in association with Shri Tirumala Production Pvt Ltd.



Vikram under self-isolation

Actor Vikram, who has been busy shooting for his upcoming Tamil film *Cobra*, has chosen to isolate himself at his home here after showing mild symptoms of COVID-19.

A source close to the unit of *Cobra* told IANS, "Vikram sir has a mild temperature and therefore visited a doctor. On doctor's advice, he has chosen to self-isolate himself at his home and take rest. He is doing fine."

The *Cobra* team, which has been shooting in Chennai, was on the verge of completing shooting. Sources say that if things had gone to plan, the team would have wrapped up shooting on December 18. However, now, shooting of the film might have to be extended just a little longer. The film, directed by Ajay Gnanamuthu, features Srinidhi Shetty as the female lead. It has triggered a lot of interest as it will also mark the acting debut of former cricketer Irfan Pathan.

Sree Vishnu's Arjuna Phalguna releasing on December 31



Tollywood's popular production house Matinee Entertainment is known for making different genre films and also for promoting their movies vigorously. Their next outing is Sree Vishnu-starrer *Arjuna Phalguna* and it is getting ready for release in theatres on December 31. It is going to be a New Year entertainment bonanza offered by Matinee

Entertainment. Sree Vishnu, Amritha Aiyer and three others are seen in the poster. The team will soon launch its promotional campaigns. The story and screenplay for the film is by director Teja Marni himself, while dialogues are provided by Sudheer Varma P. Jagadeesh Cheekati is the cinematographer. Niranjan Reddy and Anvesh Reddy are bankrolling the project, while N M Pasha is the co-producer.

38 YEARS OF ORIENT EXPRESS

SAMEER BAWA experiences an indulgent evening with fine wines and gourmet food accentuated by excellent service at Taj Palace

It's a bus, no it's a train, oh, it's the Orient Express! The train that defined luxury and comfort, before air travel came into vogue (1919 - 1977), has a namesake at the Taj Palace Hotel in New Delhi. The fine dining European restaurant which is celebrating its 38th anniversary offers luxury, comfort and great food on the lines of what the passengers experienced on the transcontinental journey from Paris to Constantinople (Istanbul) back in the day. The interiors of the restaurant are replete with deep armchairs, intricate panelling, oriental rugs and fine cutlery which mirrors the dining car of the original Orient Express.

I went in for an elaborate five course dinner last evening and thoroughly enjoyed the overall experience. "It's a rediscovery of Europe's culinary joys", says Ananya Mukherjee (Director PR & Marketing). The novel menu blends new and innovative preparations with the classics and, in a very special way, recreates the route of the journey.

We started with a selection of breads with *Chicken liver pâté* and butter on the side. Perfect accompaniment to your chilled tidbit of sparkling wine. Starting off, I had the *Camembert cheese soufflé* with paprika sauce. The French classic preparation has been mastered by the Chef and was light, fluffy and perfectly balanced. Just a sprinkle of freshly crushed black pepper and every bite was divine. For the soup, I requested for the *Essence of roast fennel and celery root*, broiled pepitas seeds. Light and fragrant, the soup was exactly what I needed to rev up my appetite and perfect soul food for the nippy December evening. You could get a hint of aromas of the fennel when the broth was poured over pepitas seeds. Definitely, one for people who are counting the calories.

For the mains, I requested for the *New Zealand lamb chops* encrusted with herbs, almonds and drizzled with rosemary jus. And that, ladies and gentleman, was the show-stopper! Between medium and well done, the juicy lamb was an explosion of flavours in every bite. Perfumed with rosemary jus and garnished with almond crumble, the texture and taste were on point. One preparation that touches all your senses. You get the umami from the meat, the hint of salt and sweetness from the jus and the very slight bitterness from the almonds which made it a really well rounded dish. Absolutely loved it.

Culminated my meal with a *Baileys crème brûlée* which was nice but I thought the caramelised sugar on top could have had a bit more crunch and maybe burnt for a bit longer. They also had the very popular *Warm chocolate pudding with liquid chocolate centre* on the menu, which, off late, has been a regular feature on almost every restaurant menu. I have tried it before and its brilliant. I possibly would also stick my neck out and say that the Chefs at Taj have mastered it to the T.

All in all it was lovely indulgent evening around fine wines and gourmet food accentuated by excellent service. The



staff at the Orient Express is very well trained and have a keen eye for detail. They are happy to help you with selection of wines and at the same time equally at ease to recommend dishes from the menu that match your palate. I strongly suggest that you make a plan to experience the Orient Express if you have not tried it as yet. In my humble opinion, they have a knack of transforming a regular meal into an occasion.

(The author is a food critic and food connoisseur.)

EDIBLE INGREDIENTS FOR A HEALTHY SKIN

RUCHIKA M SODHI shares easy home-made solutions to fight harsh winters and pollution



Winter months in and around the NCR are harsh on the skin, especially on account of the pollution. It is imperative that we take good care of our skin, especially our face as pigmentation, dark circles, crow's feet and black heads can become aggravated. But if you believe that you need to splurge on salon visits or on expensive creams and moisturisers, junk the thought. You can take care of your skin without the use of chemicals that will bring out the natural glow and radiance.

The very first step, if you are a smoker, is stop smoking. Though we always attribute smoking to lungs and heart diseases, it also hastens ageing of skin and creates pigmentation. Follow this up with staying hydrated and ensuring a good night's sleep. During the winter months, we tend to drink less water but it is very essential to remain hydrated. Water is a key constituent of healthy skin. The combination of a good night's sleep and hydration help to rejuvenate the skin.

To stay warm and comfortable, we tend to layer ourselves. While layers keep us nice and warm, these impede the breathing of our skin, resulting in dryness and itchiness. Simple home-made moisturisers can do wonders for our skin. A couple of simple and easy to make moisturisers are -

- Mix aloe vera gel, rose water and a pinch or two of turmeric. Make a batch and store it in a cool place. Use it every day to nourish your skin
- In aloe vera gel add a pinch of turmeric, a little almond oil, a dash of rose water and the contents of six Vitamin E capsules. Give the mixture a good shake and your nutrient-laden moisturiser.

While the body remains covered, it is the face that is exposed. We go to great lengths to add shimmer to our face and end up using a variety of creams, serums and lotions to bring out the radiance. But do you know that you can make your own effective home-made remedies to have a glowing face? I have for long propagated that you should use those ingredients on your skin that you can eat. You do not have to be a spendthrift to have a glowing skin or face. All you need is resilience and time. For starters, make a face pack using ground flax seeds, rose water and aloe vera gel. Apply this pack at least twice a week for 15 minutes at night and

scrub off with cold water. This pack will exfoliate dead skin and pollutants.

Pigmentation results in changing of your skin colour. Pollution and exposure to strong sun is one of the reasons of hyper-pigmentation that make the skin darken. The solution to remove pigmentation and marks on the face is rather simple. Boil six cloves in less than half cup of water and reduce it to one-fifth. Sieve the water and add aloe vera gel and a little rose water. Mix well and apply on your face before going to bed. You will see a distinct difference on your facial skin the following morning. If you have crow's feet and dark circles, gently massage coconut oil on the affected areas after the clove water treatment.

Skin impurities sometimes become difficult to tackle. Not only pollution and the winters but also our dietary habits have residual impact on skin impurities. Thankfully, there is a do-it-yourself remedy to weed out skin impurities. Coarsely grind oats and mix with green tea leaves. Keep in jar. Before making a pack, add milk and rose water and apply the pack on your face and neck. This should be done once a week.

Fruits and vegetable have a defining role to play to keep skin healthy. Whenever you have the opportunity, rub papaya on your skin. This will give the skin a lovely glow. Instead of a branded face scrub, you can make a scrub using couple of bananas and adding a tea spoon of coffee. Use it on your face to remove dirt particles. You can also rub a slice of beetroot on your face to even out the skin. And finally, you have to keep your face hydrated. For this a good toner is the order of the day. Make a juice of cucumber and mint leaves. Keep it in a spray bottle and spray the mixture on your face once in a while. This will keep the skin hydrated and is an excellent toner.

Nature has provided us with effective solutions to take care of our health and nutrition. It has solutions for our skincare, too. Have a healthy diet, hydrate and sleep well. These are the first three necessities of a supple skin. And to take care and maintain the supple skin during the winter months and pollution, these solutions will come handy.

(The author is a nutritionist.)

R E C I P E S



GINGERBREAD MEN BISCUITS

Recipe for 500 biscuits

WHAT YOU NEED

- Flour: 2,100 gm
- Baking powder: 60 gm
- Brown sugar: 1,020 gm
- Garam masala: 9 gm
- Ginger powder: 5 gm
- Egg: 300 gm
- Honey: 600 gm
- Butter: 600 gm

METHOD

- Take a bowl and mix well butter and brown sugar.
- Add eggs and honey little by little.
- Add flour, baking powder, garam masala and ginger powder and mix all the ingredients for one minute.
- Put it for rest at a temperature of 4° for 10 hours.
- Pre heat the oven at a temperature of 160°.
- Cut the biscuits into a shape.
- Bake the biscuits for 15 minutes.
- Leave the biscuits to cool down for 30 minutes.
- Finish by decorating with royal icing.

Courtesy: By L'Opéra culinary head, Amit Kumar



CHRISTMAS FRUIT CAKE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Light brown sugar: 200 gm
- Water: 240 ml/gm
- Butter (diced): 55 gm
- Ground cinnamon: 1 tsp
- Ground cloves: ¼ - ½ tsp
- Ground ginger: 1 tsp
- Fine salt: ½ tsp (2 gm)
- Dark or golden seedless raisins, currants, and/or dried cranberries: 300 gm
- Eggs (lightly beaten): 2 large (100 gm)
- All-purpose flour: 1½ cups (195 gm)
- Baking soda: 1 tsp (4 gm)
- Pure vanilla extract (optional): 1 tsp (4 gm)
- Candied orange or

Lemon peel (chopped): 1 cup (150 gm)

METHOD

- Take a large saucepan, over medium heat, bring to a boil and add sugar, water, butter, spices, and dried fruit. Boil gently for five minutes, then remove from heat, and let it cool until it is lukewarm (This will take about 45 to 60 minutes).
- Meanwhile, preheat your oven to 180° C. Butter, or spray an 8½ x 4½ x 3 inch (21.5 x 11.5 x 10 cm) loaf pan with a nonstick vegetable spray. Line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper and lightly butter the paper (Note: if using a dark colored pan, reduce the oven temperature to 60° C).
- Once the mixture has cooled, stir in the lightly

beaten eggs, flour, baking soda, vanilla extract (if using), and candied peel. Pour into your prepared pan, smoothing the top with the back of a spoon or offset spatula.

- Bake for about 55 - 65 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Remove from oven and let cool on a wire rack for about 15 minutes before removing from pan. If possible, cover and store for a few days before serving. This fruit cake can be frozen.
- The above cake is then covered with Marzipan and decorated for Christmas.

Courtesy: Mahesh Kini, executive chef of JW Marriott, Bengaluru

RICE ABOVE THE REST AT CAFÉ DELHI HEIGHTS

Café Delhi Heights is known for their innovative food festivals time to time, but this time they have designed the best in the form of Rice above the Rest. In India, rice is not only the staple on the plate but also a cultural mainstay.

In Indian culture, rice holds great spiritual and ritual significance. It is a symbol of wealth and prosperity. The annual calendar of festivals has many celebrations based on the harvest cycle of rice.

The versatility of rice makes it the most loved grain all over the world. Right from the khichdi, to simple pulao to fragrant pots of



rice and spice meats called biryani, rice is a feast beyond compare. Hence, Café Delhi

Heights thought of curating a special menu to celebrate this very super food. They have added dishes from different states in the menu. From the belt of Andhra / Karnataka, one can enjoy varieties like Curd Rice, Hyderabad: Biryani, Bisi Bele Bath, and so on. One also gets to enjoy the specials from Maharashtra like Masale Bhaat, Payesh from Assam, Gian Pilaf from Goa, Tehri from Lucknow, Yakhni Pulao from Kashmir, Jadoh from Meghalaya are added in this special menu, too. Not only the specials from India, but favourites from International cuisines like Risotto,

Paella, Jasmine rice with stir-fry greens, Chipotle burritos bowl are added as well. Different varieties of rice like Sela basmati, Bangaru Theegalu, Rajbhog Arua rice, Dehradun Basmati, Illupai Poo Samba, Musk budji, Goan short grain red rice, Ambe Mohar, Joha, et al, have been procured to make sure that each dish is prepared at its utmost accuracy with the perfect amalgamation of right flavours, spices and Chef's magic.

When: Till December 20
Where: All Café Delhi Heights
 Contact number for reservations: 9911154033, 8800691812

CAFÉ MONIQUE PAVING THE WAY FOR A SWEET



Dangling fairy lights, Fir and Pine trees standing tall, angel-hangings streaming down the branches and white bright lights shining upon the dawn with carols playing in the back — Christmas is here and we know just how to make it merrier for you! Café Monique is all geared up to offer a Christmas Brunch topped with a diverse palette of flavours. With world renowned French chef, Maxime, exhibiting his expertise in delicacies, desserts and baked bites, the patisserie aims to please its patrons and match up to their expectations with

the sides of warmth and joy. From Croissants, Focaccia Panini to Le Fondant au Chocolat, Le Saint Honoré and other delicacies, Monique has been building its rapport with patrons as a go-to patisserie for all their food cravings.

On the special celebration of Christmas Day, the brand shall introduce 'Make A Wish' for children. The kids can write and hang their preferred choice of dessert at the Christmas tree and Monique will pick two lucky winners who will get a

special treat.

Make your way to the bespoke French patisserie & café and enjoy the celebratory vibe with delicious munchies and desserts in town. Enjoy Monique's special orange and dark chocolate Christmas cookies, their Sablés de Noël, Madeleines de Noël, Les Bûches de Noël or Yule log and so on.

When: Till December, 12 pm - 12 am
Where: Café Delhi Heights, Delhi-NCR

EMBRACE THE WARMTH OF CHRISTMAS AT THE IMPERIAL

Add sparkle to your Christmas festivities and gear up to be mesmerised at The Imperial this year.

Christmas Eve — A lavish meal features Roast turkey, Brussel sprouts, Pork belly in a bread stuffing, giblet gravy, cranberry sauce on the Western grill station and a selection of international dishes like Shepherd's pie, Cajun chicken, celeriac, Tandoori favorites along with Italian specials, salads and cold cuts.

The extensive spread of classic global favourites also include Ginger crème brûlée, Bannoffie pie, Amaretto cheese cake and more.



When: December 24, 7pm-11pm

Where: 1911 Restaurant
Cost: Christmas Eve Buffet at ₹4,000+ taxes per person without alcohol and ₹2,000+ taxes per

child
 Call at 011-41116451/52 for reservations

Christmas Day — Nothing spells cheer like a hearty Christmas

Brunch. Drench yourself in the melody of Christmas carols and gorge on the classic feast including Roasted lamb, Traditional roasted turkey along with other global favourites like Beer chicken, Lemon couscous, Grilled artichokes, Array of Smoked fish, cold sea food bar, antipasti, mezza and carving stations and more. Desserts like Traditional plum cake, Yule log, Mandarin Panacotta, Chocolate Cream de pot, Plum pudding with brandy sauce make sure you enjoy to the fullest.

When: December 25
Where: 1911 Lawns
Cost: Christmas Brunch at ₹4,500+ taxes per person without alcohol and ₹2,300+ taxes per child
 Call at 011-41116451/52 for reservations