

ANALYSIS 7
POOR HYGIENE BRINGS
THE ECONOMY DOWN

MONEY 8
BANGLADESH TO IMPORT
DEFENCE ITEMS FROM INDIA

VIVACITY 11
38 YEARS OF
ORIENT EXPRESS

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



the pioneer

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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 years

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 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

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



marriage of women.

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

Speaking about the recommendation, Jaitley said there were two main reasons that were focussed on.

"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.

"We should give the girl an oppor-

tunity to earn and be equal to a man and she cannot become equal at 18 years when man has 21 years to do that. Secondly, we took opinions from lots of people, but the main people who were most attentive were the stakeholders 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. Across all religions everyone had the same opinion which was a very heartening thing," she said.

Four more test positive 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. From the random sampling of those from coming non-risk countries, three persons tested positive. With this nearly 6 people from non-risk countries tested positive for Omicron.

The results of samples of three more persons are awaited.

Flipkart CEO meets CM, reiterates commitment to AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Flipkart Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Kalyan Krishnamurthy met Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Thursday to highlight Flipkart Group's deep investment in Andhra Pradesh and apprised him of the developmental works the company has been undertaking for value generation for farmers, MSMEs sellers, artisans, Kirana partners and various other ecosystem partners. The delegation from Flipkart also included Rajneesh Kumar, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer of the Flipkart group.

Flipkart Group, through its group entities, including Flipkart, Ekart, Myntra, Cleartrip, and Flipkart Wholesale, is creating thousands of entrepreneurship and employment opportunities across the region.



Flipkart CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy calls on Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at his camp office in Tadepalli on Thursday.

Govt employees call off stir temporarily

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a major breakthrough, government employees have decided to temporarily withdraw their plan to go on strike. Their latest move comes after a marathon meeting with Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath and Chief Secretary Sameer Sharma. Government Employees Association JAC Chairman, Bandi Srinivas Rao announced their decision to temporarily withdraw the stir with the confidence that the government would solve their long-pending demands and issues.

After the meeting with the chief minister, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy

told reporters that they are expecting some breakthrough over the consultations with the employees by Friday. He added a final announcement on the PRC recommendations will be made after the employees meet the Chief Minister which is likely to happen on Friday. He also said that the government wants to ensure that there won't be any overall loss in the gross pay.

After meeting the chief minister, finance minister Rajendranath and the chief secretary Sameer Sharma held consultations with the employees associations and unions.

CM for Vizag today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy will visit Visakhapatnam and launch various projects on December 17. The Chief Minister will inaugurate flyover at NAD junction and launch six development projects of Visakhapatnam Metro Region Development Authority.

Later, the Chief Minister will attend the marriage function of daughter of Vizianagaram DCCB Chairman Nekkala Naidu Babu at AU Convention Centre. He will inaugurate VUDA Park and other four projects of Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation. The Chief Minister will also attend the marriage reception of granddaughter of Vice-President of India Venkaiah Naidu at Vizag Conventions.

Students rally for 3 capitals

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Even as the Amaravati Joint Action Committee leaders are going to organise a massive public meeting on Friday opposing the trifurcation of the Capital city Amaravati, a huge rally was taken out on Thursday here by students supporting the trifurcation.

The students raising the slogan 'Oka Rajadhani Voddu - Moodu Rajadhanulu Muddu' took out a huge rally in which thousands of students and intellectuals participated. The rally was organised by the Royalaseema Intellectual Forum which began at Balaji colony and went via NTR circle, Prakasam Road, Krishnapuram Thana, Nalugukalla Mandapam, Netaji Road and concluded at the Municipal Corporation office. Talking to the media on the occasion, the forum leaders said that they believe that the development of all religions equally is possible with the trifurcation of the capital city. They said that they support the proposal of the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government shifting Executive Capital city to Visakhapatnam and Judicial Capital to Kurnool.



TDP out to incite regional clashes, alleges Botsa

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Asserting that the State government is committed to the decentralisation of development, Minister for Municipal Administration Botsa Satyanarayana has said that TDP is orchestrating a political drama in the name of Amaravati farmers to incite regional clashes and create a chaotic atmosphere in the State.

JCs to decide movie ticket prices

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A division bench of the Andhra Pradesh high court on Thursday directed the owners of the movie theatres to put forth the prices of the tickets before their respective joint collectors who will, in turn, decide the prices. The HC bench has also directed the government to appoint a committee to take forward the process. The case hearing was adjourned to Monday.

The Andhra Pradesh government challenged the single bench order of the AP High Court suspending the GO 35 on movie ticket prices on Tuesday.

The petition by the State govern-



ment had come up for hearing on Thursday before the division bench comprising Chief Justice Prashanth Kumar Mishra and Justice Satyanarayana Murthy. Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday sus-

pending GO No. 35, allowing owners of the movie theatres to increase ticket prices using the old method.

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

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: MOSTLY SUNNY
Temp: 31°C
Humidity: 55%
Sunrise: 6:29 AM
Sunset: 5:38 PM
Updated: DECEMBER 15, 2021 5:00 PM

Viveka murder case: Former Pulivendula SDPO says CBI SP caused mental agony

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

Even as the then Pulivendula Circle Inspector J Sankaraiah has alleged that CBI has pressured him to give statement against the facts in the sensational murder of former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy, a senior police official, who supervised the investigation into the case initially, said that the CBI SP Ram Singh has caused a lot of mental agony by treating him with suspi-

cion. A team, led by CBI SP Ram Singh, is investigating into the sensational murder of Vivekananda Reddy that had taken place on the intervening night of March 14 and



15, in 2019 just before the polls.

In a letter purportedly written to Kadapa SP KKN Anburajan in October, and seen by The Pioneer, DSP R Vasudevan, who acted as Sub Divisional Police Officer

(SDPO) of Pulivendula, said, "The suspicion with which CBI SP Ram Singh has behaved with has caused a lot of anger and impatience. In

my 30 years of service, track record was without any remarks."

It may be worth mentioning here that at least two persons who are suspected by the CBI having links with Vivekananda Reddy's murder had come out into the open saying they were either pressured by the CBI or sought police protection citing life threat from the immediate family members of the deceased. Sankaraiah also wrote a letter to the Kadapa SP the content of which has also been published in these columns.

Vasudevan joined Pulivendula SDPO in June 2019 and was in the post till November 2020.

Miraculous escape for private bus passengers

PNS ■ ONGOLE

As many as eight passengers of Orange private travels bus service had a miraculous escape as the vehicle caught fire and went up in flames at Thimmaraju Palem village in Parchur mandal on Thursday in the wee hours.

Police said that the bus was going to Chirala from Hyderabad and there were 8 passengers and 3 bus crew when it caught fire.

The passengers, who sat in the front row of the bus, alighted quickly after flames were noticed. The flames engulfed the bus within minutes and it was completely destroyed.

Talking to the media, the passen-



gers alleged that there was no fire extinguisher in the bus. There was no emergency door either as the bus was fitted with all berths.

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 dis-integrating. 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 criti-

cism 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 scrutinised 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.

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. They had been stating that men too have responsibilities in bringing up children and running 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. If this trend was not nipped in the bud, it could also spread to syllabus in various States, they reasoned.

At a time when Science and Technology was making rapid strides, instead of including topics that would encourage scientific attitude and temperament, CBSE unfortunately included topics that would belittle women. By doing so, what kind of guidance the CBSE chose to provide to the future generations of the country, they wondered. The NFWT questioned, "How can the objective of 'Beti Bachao, 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. Such ideas would be detrimental to women who were going forward by fighting against the hurdles and confine them back to kitchens.

The NFWT demanded that 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. The CBSE syllabus should be enhanced and improved to reflect the democratic spirit, constitutional values, and scientific thought, the NFWT said.



Boost to IT sector: Genpact to set up technology 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.

"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.

Genpact CEO Tiger Tyagarajan said that they were delighted to expand in the State of Telangana. "Warangal is our next value creating centre," he said, and thanked KTR and his entire team for all the support in making it easy to do business and to deal with everything that had changed in the past two years.

He was happy to note that Warangal was very close to

their Pocharam campus and was only an hour-and-a-half 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. He wished that Warangal would grow into an important tech centre and Genpact would be starting very soon with a headcount of 100. Genpact currently has a global headcount of over 100,000 spread across many countries across the world. The Telangana Government has set up IT towers in Khammam, Karimnagar and Warangal, where the operations have already begun. The works of IT towers in Nizamabad, Mahabubnagar and Siddipet are at various stages of completion. For equi-

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

Tech Mahendra, Mindtree and Cyient have already established their campuses in Warangal. Genpact is the new addition to the list.

A team from Genpact including Tiger Tyagarajan, president and CEO, Vidya Srinivasan, senior vice-president, Global Infrastructure & Logistics, Satish Vadlamani, VP and India operations leader, and Madhu Babu, VP, legal counsel, met Minister KTR in Hyderabad. Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, Chief Relations Officer Amarnath Reddy and Digital Media Director Dileep Konatham also participated in the meeting.

'No truck between Congress and TRS'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

It is now amply clear that the Congress would not have any alliance with the Telangana Rashtra Samiti party, though rumours in this connection spread after TRS Rajya Sabha member and TRS secretary-general K Keshava Rao participated in the opposition parties' meeting convened by the Congress party in which

Keshava Rao sat besides Rahul Gandhi.

Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao confirmed this to The Pioneer over phone from Delhi. He said that an alliance with TRS will help Telangana BJP and not the Congress. He said that both TRS and BJP were adopting anti-people policies and the Congress, as a national party, would face BJP at the

national level, while the Telangana unit of the Congress would face both TRS as well as Telangana BJP.

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.

Rajya Sabha member (TRS)

Dharmapuri Srinivas, set to re-join Congress party, also opposed the proposal during his meeting with AICC chief Sonia Gandhi on Thursday evening. Some sections gave credence to rumours that the TRS was interested in joining hands with the UPA to tame the BJP. A few TRS leaders also made statements that their fight would continue till BJP was dethroned from power at the Centre.

TDP out to incite regional clashes...

Continued from Page 1

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, the minister said that the entire mahapadayatra by Amaravati farmers consisted of TDP leaders to safeguard their ill-gotten lands and plunder through real estate.

He said that the TDP's agenda is only limited to the development of 29 villages, while leaving behind the rest of the State and thus trying to benefit by trying to turn farmers' Mahasabha into a political meeting. He stated that TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu will have

to face people's rejection once again if there happens to be an unfortunate incident during the Tirupati meeting.

Unlike Chandrababu Naidu who wanted only a single region to flourish, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was committed to the development of all three regions and thus proposed to make Amaravati as Legislative Capital, said the minister.

He said that the government is not against the Amaravati region, but wanted to provide equal opportunities through decentralised development and added that

they had been providing a better package to the Amaravati farmers than that of the previous government.

Recalling the construction of Nagarjuna Sagar and Polavaram projects, Minister Botsa Satyanarayana said that many farmers have given their lands for the projects and were only compensated as per the government norms, which is a true sacrifice rather than those who gave up their lands for real estate benefits. The minister said that the opposition leader has been trying to gain by using farmers' weaknesses and provoking the

sentiments of the people to create disturbances in the State.

Minister Botsa Satyanarayana challenged Chandrababu Naidu to openly announce their agenda of confining themselves to 29 villages. He said that TDP leaders have been falsely propagating that the people of North Andhra and Rayalaseema regions have welcomed Amaravati as the sole capital. He recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP leaders had openly stated that Naidu used Amaravati and Polavaram as ATM card.

Continued from Page 1

Jaitly said the task force submitted its recommendations to the PMO, Ministry of Women and Child Development and NITI Aayog last December.

The other members in the panel include V K Paul, member (health) NITI Aayog; secretaries of higher education, school education, health, women and child development, legislative department apart from academicians Najma Akhtar, Vasudha Kamat and Dipti Shah.

Amita Pitre, Lead Specialist, Gender Justice, Oxfam India,

said the latest NFHS 5 report shows that the number of women marrying early (before 18 years) has reduced from 27 per cent in NFHS 4 to 23 per cent.

"Even so nearly, 50 to 60 per cent of marriages still take place before the age of 21 years. Raising the age of marriage to 21 years will criminalise all such marriages taking place in future. The minimum age of marriage has been 18 years since 1978. Clearly law 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.

The official added that the harms of criminalising marriage of girls below 21 years are manifold, which even manifest for those married under 18 years.

Population Foundation of India said increasing women's age of marriage is like "treating symptoms instead of the cause".

"While the concern with early marriage is a step in the right direction, legal action on this issue is akin to treating symptoms instead of the underlying causes which have allowed such a practice to

exist for centuries. A whole range of factors such as deep-rooted gender inequality, regressive social norms, financial insecurity, lack of quality education and employment opportunities together contribute to the incidence of early and forced marriages," it said in a statement.

Sheila C Vir, senior nutrition specialist and Director, Public Health Nutrition and Development Centre, New Delhi, said while revisiting the legal age of marriage for girls, it is important to take an anthropological view of the existing diverse practices across geographies.

JCs to decide...

Continued from Page 1

Owners of movie theatres filed a petition in the High Court against GO No 35 that had reduced the tickets prices. Owners, in the petition, stated that the government does not have the power to reduce the ticket rates.

The petitioners' claims were accepted by the High Court and suspended the GO in question.

It may be recalled that when Pawan Kalyan's 'Vakil Saab' was released in April, the AP government had decided to reduce ticket rates overnight through GO 35 and the issue landed in the High Court.

The film industry was of the opinion that the rates fixed by the government in the GO were less than those prevalent 10 years ago. According to the GO released by the government, the minimum ticket price is Rs 5. Producers expressed concern that the prices would not even cover the management of the theatres.

The suspension of GO 35 by the High Court has come as a big relief to the producers of the yet-to-be-released big-budget movies that include 'Pushpa', 'RRR', 'Bhimla Nayak' and 'Acharya' are yet to be released.

Flipkart CEO meets CM, reiterates commitment to Andhra Pradesh

Continued from Page 1

Sellers from the state have an opportunity to offer products across categories including audio, grooming essentials, home improvement products, and small furniture on the Flipkart marketplace, providing them access to a pan-India market and accelerating their growth potential. The company also works with more than 6,000 Kirana partners in the state for last-mile delivery of shipments to the customers' doorstep.

"The government is working actively towards building a conducive environment for companies to invest and grow while contributing to the region's growth. I appreciate the gesture from the Flipkart Group CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy of visiting the State and sharing details of the

company's developmental works for farmers and sellers from the State. We spoke on a myriad of topics including fresh investments in the state to connect farmers and sellers to a pan-India customer base while creating numerous employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. We will provide all possible support to Flipkart and look forward to charting the AP growth story together," said chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

"Committed to growing the consumer internet ecosystem in India, Flipkart is committed to promoting growth for farmers, MSMEs, sellers, artisans, Kiranas, and other ecosystem partners. Andhra Pradesh is an important state with enabling government policies that makes it very conducive for business growth. I'm delighted to meet

with the Hon'ble Chief Minister & his team to apprise him of the various developmental works we're undertaking across the state and the impact it is having on the local ecosystem & creating several thousands of new livelihood opportunities," said Flipkart Group CEO, Kalyan Krishna Murthy.

Over the past few years, Flipkart has significantly invested in the state through its Best Price stores, making it one of the key markets for sourcing a variety of items including merchandise and grocery essentials. Currently, it has six Flipkart Wholesale Best Price stores across Guntur, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, Kurnool, and Tirupati. Flipkart is also expanding its supply chain to ensure a seamless movement of shipments from the state to the

other parts of the country and vice-versa.

Flipkart serves major cities in the state such as Kurnool, Anantapur, Nellore, Chittoor, Tirupati via Supermart, it's an online grocery store, giving an impetus to the farming community in the state. It also serves key areas in Vijayawada, Guntur, and Vizag, helping farmers get the right price for their produce while reducing wastage and bringing quality food grains to the doorstep of millions of its customers.

The company has signed an MoU with Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) to promote the State's Arts, Crafts, and Handloom sectors. The partnership, under the Flipkart Samarth program, enables local artisans and craftsmen from 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Stalemate over PRC continues

Continued from Page 1

It may be worth mentioning here that the government employees have been on warpath against the government demanding implementation of the recommendations of the 11th Pay Revision Commission (PRC). The committee of secretaries headed by the chief secretary Dr. Sameer Sharma had recommended 14.29pc fitment to the state government employees on the lines of the 7th Central Pay Commission. The committee members on Monday handed over the report after examining the recommendations of 11th Pay Revision Commission (PRC) to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

However, the employees expressed displeasure over the recommendations of the committee on fitment. They said they will continue with the agitation announced a few days ago.



Miraculous escape for private bus passengers

Continued from Page 1

The luggage of the passengers was also destroyed in the fire. The passengers said that they had lost their valuables as their baggage was destroyed in the fire.

The police said that the bus driver after noticing smoke emanating from the engine stopped the bus and the 8 passengers got down from the bus. A fire tender from Chilikaluripet rushed and put out the flames. But by that time, the bus was completely destroyed.

Viveka murder case: Former Pulivendula SDPO...

Continued from Page 1

He had taken charge from D Nagaraju who initially investigated the case. Vasudevan had examined a few witnesses as part of the investigation which was transferred to him from Nagaraju.

Later, acting on the court's direction, the case investigation was transferred to the CBI. Vasudevan met CBI SP Ram Singh who is leading the investigation team on September 1, 2021 at Kadapa central prison guest house.

In the letter, Vaudevan also said that initially a case under

Section 174 CrPC was registered citing death cause unknown and later after the Panchnama FIR was registered under section 302 of CrPC.

"CBI Ram Singh had asked me if CI Sankaraiyah had given a statement to me that on the day when the murder came to light if Devireddy Siva Sankar Reddy had taken the CI to a corner of the deceased house and intimidated him. When I denied any such statement from Sankaraiyah, the CBI SP had turned impatient and yelled at me and said we all manipulated the investigation and

weakened the cases while going around the political leaders for postings," Vasudevan said in the letter to the SP.

Vasudevan also said that CBI SP charged him that he was posted as SDPO of Pulivendula with the help of an influential politician that suits him.

"I vehemently denied that mine was a political posting. I told the CBI SP I was given the posting purely on my meritorious 30 years of service track record. I also said there was no pressure from any politician on me during the course of the investigation. After that, the SP turned impa-

tient towards me again," Vasudevan said.

YS Vivekananda Reddy who is uncle of chief minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was found dead under suspicious circumstances at his Pulivendula residence on March 15, 2019. The Andhra Pradesh government had constituted three SITs to investigate the murder. The SIT examined at least 1,300 witnesses and conducted a narco analysis on three suspects. Three persons have also been arrested on the allegation of tampering with the evidence. At least two teams of CBI have been changed during the course

of investigation.

Based on the confession statement by a key accused in the case, Sheik Dastagiri who was a former driver of Viveka, another accused Devireddy Siva Sankar Reddy who is a key aide of Kadapa MP YS Avinash Reddy has already been arrested by the CBI.

Dastagiri confessed to have participated in the murder of Viveka along with three others.

He had also said in the statement that he was told that Devireddy Sankar Reddy was behind the murder and that he had offered Rs 40 crore as help to kill Viveka.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹210
Without Skin	₹190
Broiler at Farm	₹112

EGG RATES ₹/100

VIJAYAWADA	550
HYDERABAD	475
VISAKHAPATNAM	440

RETAIL PRICE ₹5.50

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Arrangements in place for Amaravati JAC meet in Tirupati

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) leaders have said that some national leaders are attending the public meeting being organised on Friday and arrangements for the public meeting are being made in a big way.

The 'Bhoomi Pooja' was performed on Thursday at the venue, located on the outskirts of the Naidupet-Puthalapattu highway at the bypass road, to make arrangements to organise a massive public meeting. Amaravati JAC leaders Shiva Reddy, Rayapati Sailaja, Puvvada Sudhakar, G Tirupati Rao, and Pulivarti Nani were among those who participated in the 'Bhoomi Pooja'.

Talking to the media, Amaravati JAC leader Shiva Reddy said that the arrangements were being made expeditiously for the public meeting since they did not have much time. "We have invited some national leaders and they consented to take part in the meeting tomorrow", he said. He appealed to all to make the public meeting a big success.



It may be mentioned here that since that government did not permit the holding of the public meeting, the Amaravati JAC leaders approached the High Court which granted permission to organize the meeting between 1 pm to 6 pm.

The Maha Padayatra which was taken out from November 1 to

December 14 concluded at Alipiri. The farmers of the Amaravati region who parted with their lands voluntarily for the construction of the Capital city are opposing the shifting of the Executive Capital city from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam. The public meeting is being organised on Friday to mark the conclusion of Maha Padayatra.

Call to make meet a success

TDP former minister Prathipati Pulla Rao on Thursday asserted that the Jagannathan Reddy government's decision on the Capital shifting has caused total destruction in all the 13 districts in Andhra Pradesh. Pulla Rao said the courts of law were giving adverse judgments just because the YSRC regime was making unlawful policies that were in total violation of the country's Constitution. The Amaravati farmers and women's maha padayatra became a roaring success just because all sections of the people all over the State have been rejecting the illogical and draconian policies of the Chief Minister. Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader called upon the people, organisations and political parties to make the Tirupati public meeting a grand success. This should be held in such a grand manner that CM Jagannathan Reddy should open his eyes to the trust that he would not be able to go against the will of the people.

The people's capital cannot be shifted at the whims and fancies of one single individual. Pulla Rao asserted that the YSRC should realise its folly and announce Amaravati as the one and only Capital City. The Amaravati agitation would be a big eye-opener to the traitors and betrayers who were provoking the people along regional lines. The Capital project was visualised and approved in a transparent manner. Over 29,000 farmers gave 34,323 acres with the sole aim of building a Capital for developing all the people in the 13 districts. The TDP former minister said the Chandrababu regime ensured that the Capital came up at Amaravati as it was centrally located in the 13 districts of the State. If it was developed with a vision, all the regions in the State would see a huge development in an integrated manner. Former CM Chandrababu made a statement in the Assembly to this effect at that time.

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, ECoRWVO president Parijata Satpathy,

ADRM (Infrastructure) Sudhir Kumar Gupta, ADRM (Operations) Dr. C. Surya Lakshmi and ECoRWVO vice-president Kavita Gupta graced the occasion. Addressing the gathering, DRM Anup Satpathy said that the Railway Week celebrations provided an opportunity

to review the performance of each unit of the Railways and recognise the meritorious services provided by the officers and staff. He complimented the personnel for their valuable contributions. Merit awards were presented to 230 staff for their outstanding performance and shields to various branches.

The Waltair division had bagged six efficiency shields in coaching depot, finance, personnel, stores (scrap disposal), signal and telecom and sports at the Railway Week celebrations at the zonal level. DRM Anup Satpathy received the shields along with branch officers.

Operation theatres inaugurated

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM/PNS

Visakhapatnam Collector Dr. A. Mallikharjuna inaugurated the operation theatres at area hospitals of Paderu, Chintapalle and Araku Valley on Thursday. The government has established the surgery theatres at a cost of Rs. 50 lakh. Recently, the government also appointed nine doctors in the hospitals. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the government had also sanctioned Rs.1.5 crore to the Paderu hospital and Rs.90 lakh to the Araku Valley hospital to improve the medical facilities.

IT firms leaving Vizag due to 'trust deficit': Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national general secretary Nara Lokesh on Thursday asserted that the YSRC government's 'trust deficit' was once again exposed as major IT companies were leaving Visakhapatnam despite its move to develop the steel city into the 'executive capital' for Andhra Pradesh.

Lokesh expressed concern that the HSBC, which has created thousands of jobs for the youth in North Andhra districts, has also closed down now. While Jagannathan Reddy was wasting time in the name of the impracticable three Capitals plan, the investors and industrialists were silently vanishing from the State, he said.

In a statement here, Lokesh said HSBC has come to stand as a landmark company by creating huge opportunities in North Andhra for the past 15 years. Such a company has now left the State for which the ruling YSRC owed an explanation to the public. The Chief Minister should at least now stop his betrayal of the AP people in the name of the so-called decentralisation.

Nara Lokesh advised the ruling party MLAs and MPs to stop taking political and financial advantage out of Vizag and start creating a conducive atmosphere for the overall development. All efforts should be made to prevent the flight of industries and companies to other states.

Man kills wife, self at Gollalapalem

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A man killed his wife by hitting her with a dumbbell and later committed suicide at Gollalapalem in the city late on Wednesday night. The deceased have been identified as S Nageswara Rao (38) and S Madhavi (29). Madhavi died on the spot after being hit on the head and Nageswara Rao was found hanging in their house.

According to the police, Nageswara Rao, a welder by profession, and Madhavi got married four years ago and they have no children.

CM giving priority to Minorities: Amzath

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister Amzath Basha has said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is giving top priority to minorities in the government and the party. Allotment of the MLC post to the family of late Md. Karimunnisa shows his dedication towards Muslims development. The condolence meeting of late Karimunnisa was held at Vijayawada on Thursday.

Deputy Chief Minister Amzath Basha praised the services of Karimunnisa and said that she was a great woman who worked for the betterment of the poor. He recalled that the CM had recognised the services of Karimunnisa and sent her to AP Legislative Council. She



worked for the development of Minorities in the State. He said that Karimunnisa's death is a big loss to minorities. He said that remembering Karimunnisa's services towards strengthening of the party and the devel-

opment of the oppressed communities. Now, the CM had decided to give MLC seat to her son which shows the dedication of the CM towards the development of minorities. Kurnool YSRC MLA Hafeez

Khan said that Minorities got a prominent place in government and the party due to the priority given by the CM Jagan to the Minority community. He said that no one gives this much priority to Minorities and now CM Jagan offered the MLC post to the family member of Karimunnisa which is a great gesture. He expressed grief over the sudden demise of Karimunnisa who was like a sister to him.

Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu, SERP CEO AMI Intiaz, Vijayawada city Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi, AP Minorities Corporation chairman Sk Asif, AP Urdu Academy Chairman Nadeem Ahmad and others recalled the services of Karimunnisa on the occasion.

Metro Rail to be extended to Sangareddy



PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Pointing out that towns and villages have witnessed development since TRS coming to power, Municipal Ad 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 Kotha Prabhakar Reddy, BB Patil, ZP Chairperson Manjuri, pro-tem chairman of legislative council Bhupal Reddy, MLAs of Narayanakhet, Zaheerabad, Andole, Sangareddy and Andole, Municipal Ad Minister Director Satyanarayana, 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.

'All religions preach service to humans'

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 candle-light. Municipal chairman KC Narasimhulu, Reverend Vara Prasad, the Bible Society president and secretaries, members, and others were present on the occasion.



Give first dose by Dec 18, DC 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 their 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, incharge DPO Rajendra Prasad, ZP CEO Saya Goud, MPDOs, Mandal level authorities took part in the programme.



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 here. 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 would improve.

Vatsayan takes over as ENC Chief of Staff

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Vice-Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan assumed charge as Chief of Staff of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) on Thursday.

Vice-Admiral Sanjay Vatsayan is an alumnus of the prestigious National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla, Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, Naval War

College, Mumbai and the National Defence College, New Delhi. The Admiral, who is a gunnery and missile systems specialist, has vast experience at sea and ashore. He has commanded an Indian Coast Guard Inshore Patrol Vessel, missile vessels Vibhuti and Nashak, the guided-missile corvette Kuthar and has also been the commissioning Commanding Officer the



indigenously constructed state-of-the-art stealth frigate

Sahyadri. His important staff assignments include Joint Director of Personnel, Director of Personnel (Policy), Director Naval Plans (Perspective Planning), and Principal Director Naval Plans at Integrated Headquarters Ministry of Defence (IHQ MoD) (Navy). On promotion to the flag rank in February 2018, he was appointed as the

Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Policy and Plans) at IHQ MoD (Navy). He commanded the Eastern Fleet in Visakhapatnam from February 2020 to February 2021. He was the Deputy Commandant and Chief Instructor of the National Defence Academy before assuming charge as the Chief of Staff, ENC, on promotion to the rank of Vice-Admiral.

CID contradicting itself on APSSDC scam: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP national spokesman K Pattabhi Ram on Thursday expressed concern that the YSRC government and the CID hatched a pre-planned conspiracy to sabotage the AP-Siemens skill development project out of sheer political vendetta.

Pattabhi Ram said that the CID was making a false alle-

gation that Rs 241 crore fund of the Siemens project was diverted and transferred to shell companies. Alarmingly, the CID was contradicting its own statements. Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader pointed out that the CID itself mentioned in its remand report that the Rs 241 Cr was returned and deposited into the account of the Design Tech company.

At the same time, the CID officials were claiming there was no trace of this money.

All these bogus allegations were only aimed to arrest an honest professional like Ghanta Subba Rao who stood for values and morals all his life. Pattabhi said that the Director General of Goods and Services (DGGS) identified that the Design Tech evaded a certain amount of tax. As a result, a case was registered.

Youth to be sensitised on ill effects of liquor

PNS ■ ELURU

AP Liquor Prohibition Awareness Committee chairman Vallamreddy Lakshmana Reddy underlined the need of creating a massive awareness among the youths against the consumption of liquor and ill effects.

An awareness programme was held in the Sri Vasavi Engineering college auditorium in Tadepalligudem on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion he said that awareness programmes were being held in various educational institutions against the consumption of liquor and their ill-effects in the state by the APLPAC.

If consumption of liquor is started at a tender age, they become addicted to it and become habitual drinkers, he opined. Stating that liquor has become a threat to society, he exhorted the students to keep their distance from the consumption of liquor.

The AP Madya Vimochana Prachar Committee is organizing Kalajatha pro-



grammes in various engineering colleges in all districts highlighting the ill-effects of liquor. It is aimed to create awareness among the engineering and degree students against the consumption of liquor.

The consumption of liquor causes crimes and road accidents, Lakshman Reddy said. He said that drug de-addiction centres were set up in 15 district-level government hospitals by the state govern-

ment and 15 such centres were set up at other places to provide free treatment. If anybody is found addicted to alcohol he should be admitted to a drug de-addiction centre. He claimed that the consumption of liquor by students had come down due to a massive awareness campaign launched by the APLPAC during the last two years.

The AP government has set up a Special Enforcement

Bureau to contain the consumption, sale and transportation of country-made liquor, ganja, drugs and liquor in the state which yielded good results. College director Grandhi Satyanarayana, Secretary and correspondent CHVV Subba Rao, Technical director Chekka Appa Rao, Principal Guduru VSSR Ratnakar and Assistant excise Superintendent Amar Babu were among those who were present.

Widow of Vir Chakra awardee felicitated

PNS ■ KAKINADA

I Vasantha, the widow of Vir Chakra awardee Captain I. Jayarami Reddy was felicitated here on Thursday at a function held at the War memorial at the Zilla Parishad junction.

The programme was organised to mark the 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh' celebration in connection with the completion of fifty years of the country emerging victorious during 1971 Indo-Pak war, I Vasantha, the widow of Vir Chakra awardee Captain I. Jayarami Reddy was felicitated.

District Sainik Welfare officer Captain Dr. P. Satyaprasad honoured her with a shawl and presented a memento. The widow was also presented with a cheque for Rs.10,000 on the occasion.

The function was organized under the auspices of the district Sainik welfare office. Ex-servicemen from various parts of the district attended in large numbers.



Collector Pravin Kumar participating in the National Energy Conservation rally in Ongole on Thursday. (Above) Pravin Kumar inspecting Village secretariat at Ulavapadu village.

Convince beneficiaries to make use of OTS scheme: Collector

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector Pravin Kumar has said that all should work in a coordinated manner to convince the beneficiaries to avail of the One Time Settlement (OTS) of Jagannanna Smpurna Gruhahakku scheme.

The Collector on Thursday inspected the village secretariats 1, 2, and Rythu Bharosa Kendra at Ulavapadu village. He also inspected the services being extended at the secretariats and the manner in which the staff was working. He enquired with the staff on how many people had taken loans to build houses. He directed the secretariat staff to explain to borrowers about the OTS. He asked them to convince the borrowers to avail the OTS opportunity being extended by the state government.

He said that beneficiaries could get title deeds of their houses if they availed of the OTS opportunity of the Jagannanna Smpurna Gruha Haku scheme. The Collector enquired as to how many beneficiaries had paid their loan amount so far under the OTS. He also inspected the land audit, Spandana and Mee Seva services at the secretariats. He asked the staff to strive hard to achieve complete vaccination of Coronavirus.

At the RHK, he inspected the services of crop booking, crops raised at the village limits. Tahasildar Sanjeev Rao, MPDO Chenamma, and Housing DE Nageswara Rao were among those who accompanied the Collector. At the Jammulapalem secretariat, the Collector expressed anger over the staff for not following the guidelines on

the OTS. He asked the staff how many houses to be tagged and how many of them had been tagged so far.

He asked them why they did not upload the details of OTS beneficiaries. He warned the staff of taking action if they continued to be indifferent. The Collector handed over the loan clearance document to a woman who paid money under the OTS.

Meanwhile, the Collector flagged off a rally taken out on the occasion of the national energy conservation day at Vidut Bhavan in Ongole on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the national energy conservation week is being organised in the district from December 14 to 20. He asked the officials to create awareness among people on the conservation of electricity.

Tollywood 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 Suman 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. It may be mentioned here that Sumanth is the nephew of popular film hero Akkineni Nagarjuna.

360 kg of cannabis seized, 3 held

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The police seized 360 kg of ganja, worth Rs. 14.40 lakh and arrested all the three smugglers near Jonnada village on the National highway-16. The police on Thursday intercepted a van on its way to Kerala with a load of coconut saplings near Jonnada village on the National highway-16 and seized 360 KGs of ganja concealed in a secret chamber in the van.

In the rear portion as usual the coconut saplings were loaded in the van. The ganja was procured in the agency area and moved to the destination in Kerala via Tamil Nadu in the van. The van along with ganja stuffed in 18 bags was seized. All the three smugglers- two from Kerala and the other from Tamil Nadu were arrested. The value of the ganja seized would be around Rs. 14.40 lakh in the open market, the police said.



Woman allegedly raped, murdered

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In a gruesome incident, a 52-year-old woman was allegedly raped and murdered at Kanumalla village in Singarayakonda mandal on Thursday. Police said that the deceased Swarna Krishnaveni (52) was found murdered on the Nandanavanam road. She belonged to Nandanavanam village in Jarugumalli manal. She

went to Kanumalla village in Singarayakonda mandal to attend a function. While she was going to her village some unidentified persons allegedly raped and murdered her.

SP Malika Garg, on the receipt of information, spoke with the DSP Upputuri Nagaraju and CI Marri Lakshman. A case was registered and the body was shifted to the government general hospital for postmortem.

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.



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 nominations. Telangana State Police have trained select police personnel as cyber warriors to fight against the menace of cybercrimes 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 Informa tion Security Summit by Mr. Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary, Ministry of Electronics, Government of India.

Young industrialist Yeluri wins Global Fame Award

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Yeluri Divyesh, who introduced the first face-labelled, antimicrobial towels in India, received the Global Fame Award 2021. At the age of sixteen, he won the prestigious Award. Yeluri Divyesh is the son of Telugu Desam Party Panchuru MLA Yeluri Sambashiva Rao.

We Connect Event & Entertainment presents the Global Fame Awards each year to celebrities who have excelled in various fields. Divyesh has been nominated for the Global Fame Awards as a young entrepreneur in the business sector in the year 2020-2021. Mr. Divyesh received the award at the hands of Bollywood film heroine Bipasha Basu at the Newtown Rajarhat venue in Kolkata on Wednesday night in the presence of many prominent business



giants from all over the country.

Divyesh, who received the Young Entrepreneur Award at a very young age, has been hailed by many celebrities. He is the son of Telugu Desam Party MLA Yeluri Sambashiva Rao. Divyesh started a towel business. He was the first in India to launch face-labelled and antimicrobial towels under the Toilet brand with the latest technology.

Introducing innovative methods in the business world, he introduced toilet towels in the market. Toilet towels received a good response from the public. Designed with the highest quality standards, these towels are bactericidal, making them accessible to the public. During the Coronavirus crisis his towel business has continued to flourish.

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 remand after being produced in court. They alleged that he had harassed Swathi for dowry.

One CCTV camera is equal to 100 policemen: Hyd Police Commissioner

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 con-



tributing 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.

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.



Govt will help pest-hit chilli ryots: Mekathoti

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharita reiterated that the government would extend help to the Nalli Tamara pest affected farmers and the issue is being taken to the notice of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

A meeting was held in the Collector's office here on Thursday in which the Home Minister, Collector Vivek Yadav, JC AS Dinesh Kumar and other officials reviewed the destruction of the chilli crop by the Nalli Tamara pest. Horticulture deputy director



Padmavati gave a PowerPoint presentation on pest damage. Speaking on the occasion, the Home Minister said that the chilli farmers incurred huge

crop losses due to the Nalli Purugu pest. She said that they would explain the situation to the Chief Minister. She asked the officials to complete the

enumeration of crop loss due to the pest at the earliest.

Collector Vivek Yadav said that 90 per cent of chilli crops had been destroyed by the Nalli Purugu pest and the yields had come down considerably in the rest of the 10 per cent.

He directed the officials to make proposals to extend compensation to the farmers under the pest epidemic. As soon as the enumeration reports were received, they would be sent to the government. MLAs Alla Ramakrishna Reddy, Kilari Venkata Rosaiah, Bolla Brahmanaidu and Dr

Undavalli Sridevi appealed to the Collector to expedite the enumeration of crop loss and extend compensation to the affected farmers.

Later, talking to the media, the Home Minister said that the farmers had raised a chilli crop in 1,06,656 hectares this year. The farmers spent Rs 70,000 to Rs 1 lakh to raise their crop in an acre but they lost their investment. She said that the Nalli Tegulu pest was damaging crops in AP, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. The scientists had taken samples and were studying, she said.

TTD Chairman inaugurates Advanced Cath Lab at SPCCH

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman Y V Subba Reddy on Thursday inaugurated the Advanced Cath Lab set up at a cost of Rs 5 crore in Sri Padmavati Children's Cardiac hospital (SPCCH) here.

Later talking to the media he said there are 70 beds including 40 beds in ICU in the hospital. During the last two months, 16 open heart sur-



geries had been performed in the hospital by specialist doctors for patients ranging from 25 days to 18-year-old and presently 170 children were on

a waiting list to undergo heart surgeries, he said.

Mr.Reddy said the TTD had set up an Advanced Cath Lab at a cost of about Rs.5 crore which used keyhole technology to fill up holes in the hearts of infants without any surgeries. ith this technology in the field of Cardiac surgery, the patients could be discharged within 24 hours of operation and in less than a week children could attend schools, he added.

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 kg 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 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. '@narendramodiji, 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 Mishal for allegedly speaking "against the Indian Constitution".

While addressing a programme organised by an organisation affiliated to the RSS on December 5 at Jammu, Mishal spoke "against the Constitution of India", Yechury claimed in his letter to Kovind. "It has been widely reported in the media that Mishal 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.

"Mishal 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.

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 93000 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.

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.



Delhi govt 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).

'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 that it is 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 downside 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.

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

PICTALK



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

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.



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

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'!

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



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 consonance 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 topline decline by 6 per cent to Rs 1,306 crore during FY21.

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



nomical 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. This 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.

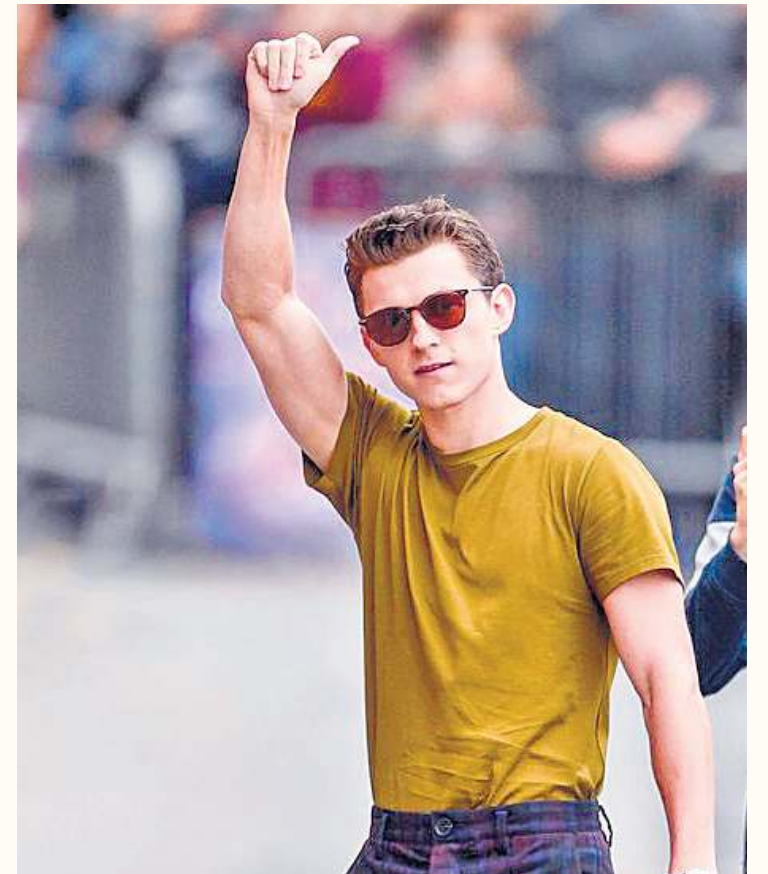
Steven Yeun, Fab 5 Freddy to produce documentary on artist Nam Jun Paik

Oscar-nominated actor Steven Yeun is teaming up with hip-hop pioneer Fab 5 Freddy to executive produce a feature-length documentary on visionary artist Nam June Paik. Paik, often referred to as the 'Father of Video Art' and a prophet of the Internet, was one of the first to use television as an artist's canvas and invented the video synthesiser. He died on January 29, 2006, in Miami, Florida at the age of 73. According to Variety, this is the first authorised documentary made in association with Paik's estate. The currently untitled production will highlight unseen footage and archival materials and will be completed in 2022. The project will chronicle Paik's life from childhood as he travelled across the world. He fled to Japan from his native South Korea at the outbreak of the Korean War, before moving to Germany and subsequently to New York City where he settled in 1964. The film will include interviews with and footage of artists he collaborated with, including Davis Bowie, Joseph Beuys, Ryuichi Sakamoto, Charlotte Moorman, Yoko Ono, Jonas Mekas, Allen Ginsberg, Andy Warhol,



John Cage, Merce Cunningham, George Maciunas, Bad Brains and John Hanhardt. Amanda Kim, previously a creative director at Vice

Media, is directing and producing the movie. This is her first feature-length documentary. Debutante director Kim added, "Nam June Paik imagined the ways in which communication technologies and the media could be a tool to foster electronic empathy between different cultures. His vision feels extremely relevant today and I am thrilled to be able to share his inspiring story." Jennifer Blei Stockman, David Koh, Amy Hobby and Jesse Wann are also attached as producers. Stockman and Koh said they hope the film will bring the genius of Paik to the forefront as he is still unrecognised by the larger public. "Nam June Paik is one of our creative heroes and an inspiration to every artist working today... It is a real honor to work with the estate, the family of the artist and with Amanda Kim," the producers said. Other executive producers are Kenzo Digital, Steven Jang and Florence Sloan. Mariko Munro, Heejung Oh and Alain de la Mata will act as co-producers.



Tom Holland ready to step back from acting to 'focus on starting a family'

Tom Holland wants to "take a break" from his acting career to "focus on starting a family". The 'Spider-Man: No Way Home' actor - who has upcoming roles in 'Uncharted' and as the lead role in a Fred Astaire biopic - has admitted he wants to step back and make his personal life a priority after six years playing the web slinging superhero on the big screen. He told PEOPLE magazine: "I've spent the last six years being so focused on my career. I want to take a break and focus on starting a family and figuring out what I want to do outside of this world." Tom - who is dating his 'Spider-Man' co-star Zendaya - revealed while he "will" wait to start a family, he is excited at the idea of being a parent in the future. He added: "I love kids. I can't wait to be a dad - I can wait and I will, but I can't wait! If I'm at a wedding or a party, I'm always at the kids' table hanging out. My dad's been such a great role model for me. I think I've got that from him. So I think

I'd be a primary school teacher or something like that [if I wasn't acting]." Meanwhile, the 25-year-old actor - who was cast as Peter Parker's alter ego for 'Spider-Man: Homecoming' in 2015 - has suggested it could be time to pass the torch and give someone else a chance to put their own spin on the character. He explained: "I've loved every minute of it. I've been so grateful to Marvel and Sony for giving us the opportunity and keeping us on and allowing our characters to progress. It's been amazing. And that's why for me, I don't want to say goodbye to Spider-Man - but I feel like we might be ready to say goodbye to Spider-Man." And if he does move on, he would like to see the role become "more diverse" after being portrayed by himself, Andrew Garfield and Tobey Maguire. He said: "I would love to see a future of Spider-Man that's more diverse - maybe you have a Spider-Gwen or a Spider-Woman. We've had three Spider-Mans in a row; we've all been the same. It'd be nice to see something different."

Ann Dowd joins cast of political thriller 'The Independent'



Emmy-winning star Ann Dowd has boarded the cast of upcoming political thriller "The Independent". Dowd, best known for her role in hit Hulu series "The Handmaid's Tale", will star alongside Jodie Turner-Smith, Brian Cox and John Cena in the movie, to be directed by Amy Rice, reported Deadline. Set in the final weeks of the most consequential presidential election in history, the film follows an idealistic young journalist (Turner-Smith) who teams up with her idol (Cox) to uncover a conspiracy that places the fate of the election, and the country, in their hands. Cena and Dowd play opposing Presidential candidates. Rice will direct the film from a Black List script penned by Evan Parter. "The Independent" will be produced by Ryan Cunningham of Anonymous Content along with Sam Bisbee of Park Pictures, Thea Dunlap, Caddy Vanasirikul of The Exchange and Parter. The film is currently shooting in New York and scheduled for a theatrical release in 2022.

Daisy Ridley to star in, produce indie drama 'Sometimes I Think About Dying'

'Star Wars' star Daisy Ridley is set to feature in and produce "Sometimes I Think About Dying", an independent drama based on a short film of the same name. The movie, also inspired by the play "Killers by Armento", is directed by Rachel Lambert of "In The Radiant City" fame. According to Deadline, the film revolves around Fran who likes to think about dying. "It brings a sensation to her quiet life. When she makes the new guy at work laugh, it leads to more: a date, a slice of pie, a conversation, a spark. The only thing standing in their way is Fran herself," reads the synopsis. Kevin Armento, Stefanie Abel Horowitz, and Katy Wright-Mead have penned the script of "Sometimes I Think About Dying". Dave Merheje, Meg Stalter, Bree Elrod, Brittany O'Grady and Parvash Cheena are also part of the cast of the film. Alex Saks, Dori Rath, Lauren Beveridge and Brett Beveridge are also producing alongside Ridley. Mariela Villa, Steven Weisman, Kyle Eaton are co-producing. The film

recently wrapped production in Oregon. Ridley will next star in "The Marsh King's Daughter", an adaptation of the psychological-thriller novel of the same name. Her upcoming line-up also includes Mathieu Kassovitz's futuristic thriller, "Mind Fall" and Disney Plus' "Young Woman and the Sea".



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



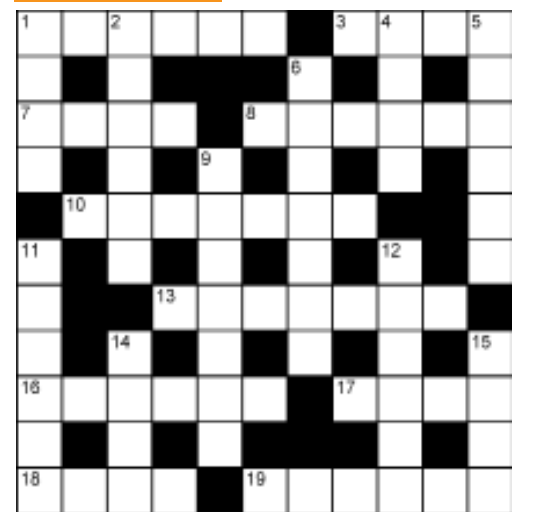
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



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
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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

DOWN

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

One hundred less ten

- Light open shoes with straps
- Says again
- Overtook
- Spoiled
- Male children
- Twirl around



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 film-makers 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.



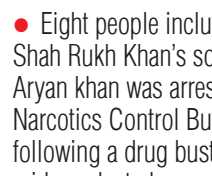
• Raj Kundra, the spouse of Shilpa Shetty was arrested by Mumbai Police on charges of making pornographic content and publishing it through mobile application named Hotshot.



• 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.



• 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.



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

• 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 Vaishnav etc. The Prime Minister's Office denied the allegations citing they are baseless and lack concrete evidence.



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 revv 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, Yakhini 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, Dehraduni 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 & cafe 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: Cafe 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, Bannofie 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, mezze 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



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

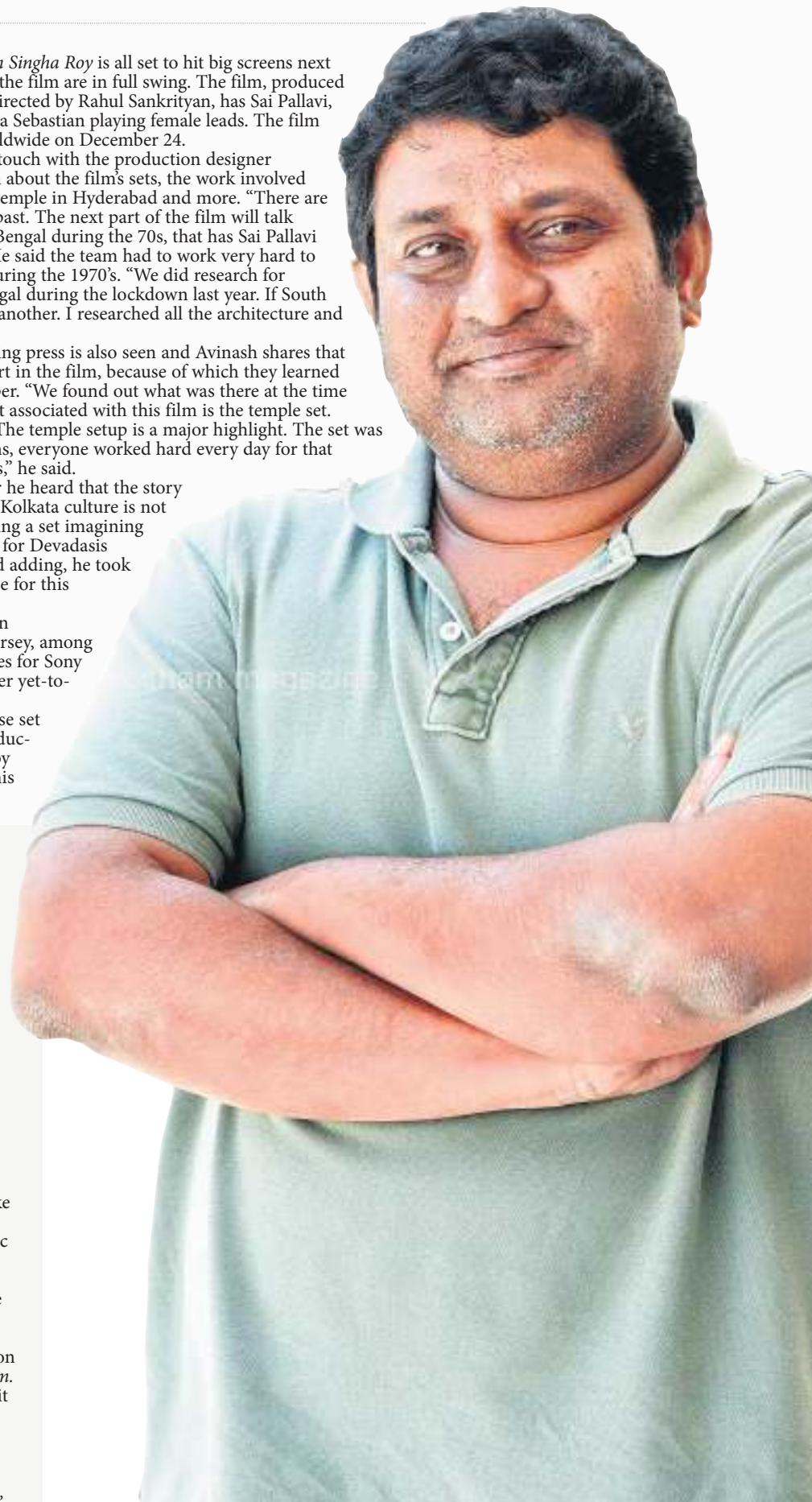
Nani's most-awaited *Shyam Singha Roy* is all set to hit big screens next week and promotions of the film are in full swing. The film, produced by Venkat Boyanapalli, directed by Rahul Sankrityan, has Sai Pallavi, Kriti Shetty and Madonna Sebastian playing female leads. The film will open in theatres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

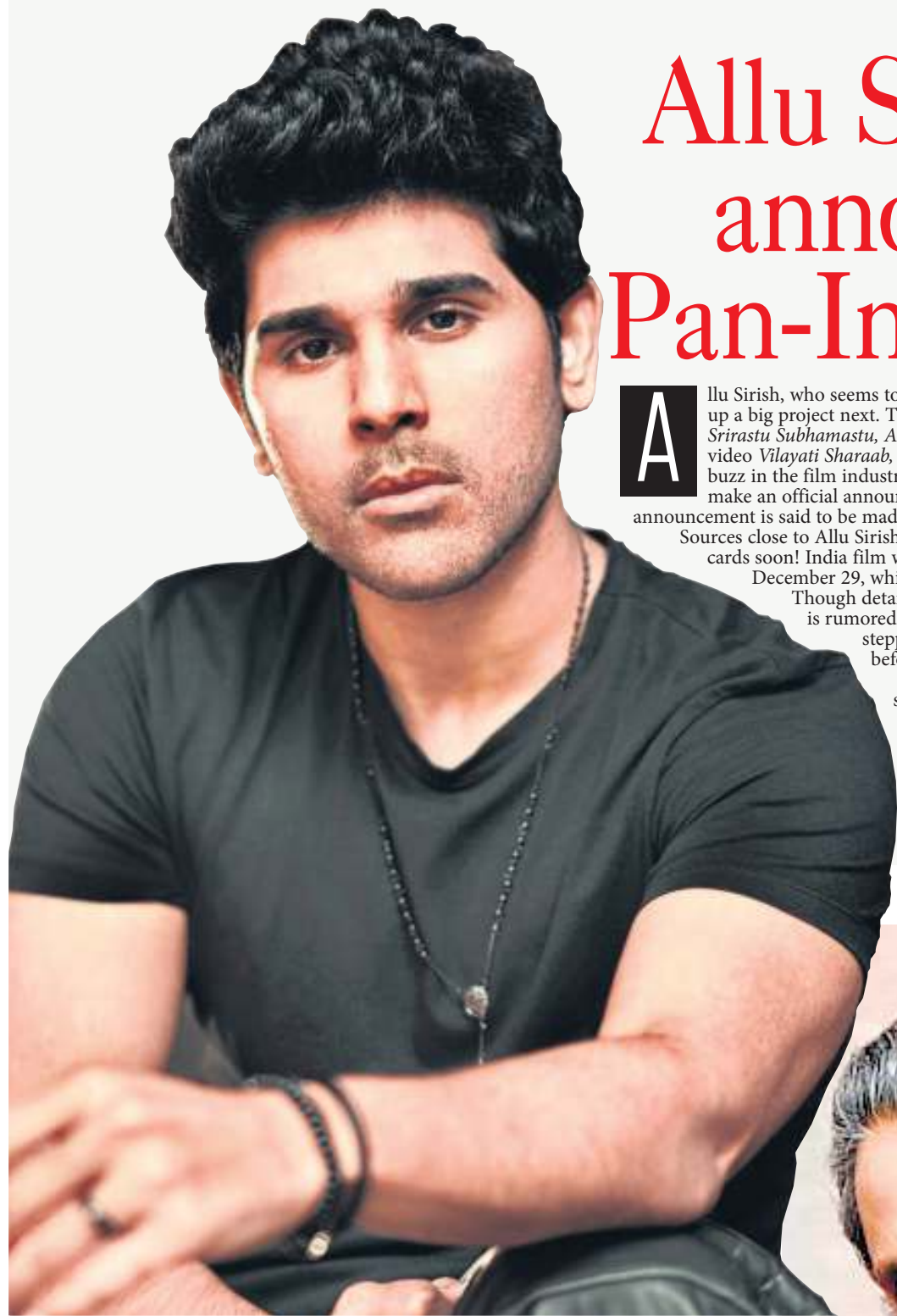


Allu Sirish to announce Pan-India film

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.