



People watch the lava flow from an eruption of a volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula in southwestern Iceland on Wednesday. Iceland's latest volcano eruption is still attracting crowds of people hoping to get close to the gentle lava flows

## Recovering well after bypass surgery: President Kovind

NEW DELHI: President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday said he is recovering well after his bypass surgery and thanked doctors and caregivers. The president said he was touched by messages from citizens and leaders from across the country and abroad wishing him speedy recovery. "It's difficult to express in words my gratitude to you all," Kovind said. Kovind, 75, had on Tuesday underwent a cardiac bypass surgery at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here. "I've been recovering well after the bypass surgery, thanks to the amazing dedication of the doctors and caregivers. I'm touched by messages, from citizens and leaders from India and abroad, wishing me speedy recovery. It's difficult to express in words my gratitude to you all," the Rashtrapati Bhavan tweeted. Kovind had undergone a health check-up at the Army Hospital (R&R) here following chest discomfort Friday morning.

## Hyderabad emerges as major healthcare hub

SHARON THAMBALA  
HYDERABAD

ALONG with Delhi, Mumbai and other big cities in India, Hyderabad has emerged as a major healthcare hub for foreigners, attracting thousands of patients every year. Though the coronavirus pandemic has interrupted the flow of foreign patients, Continental Hospital CEO Riyaz Khan said as many as 3 lakh patients used to visit the city for treatment during a normal year. "We used to get a good number of patients for all kinds of treatment like oncology, orthopedics, cardiology, spine surgery and others. ► P7



# Govt withdraws cut in rate on savings schemes

NEW DELHI

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the government will rollback a steep interest rate cut on small saving schemes such as PPF and NSC - saying it was an oversight, a move being seen as an attempt by the BJP to contain the fallout of a decision hitting the common man in the ongoing elections in West Bengal, Assam and three other states.

While the government routinely announces interest rates for small saving schemes at the end of every quarter, the Wednesday's decision to cut interest rate by up to 1.1 per cent across various small savings schemes, including the National Savings Certificates (NSC) and Public Provident Fund (PPF) came a day before the second phase of polling in West Bengal including the political hotbed Nandigram, from where West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is contesting.

The decision to rollback citing "oversight" was taken hours after announcing the steepest cut in the rate on small savings schemes. "Interest rates of small savings schemes of GoI shall con-

tinue to be at the rates which existed in the last quarter of 2020-2021, ie, rates that prevailed as of March 2021. Orders issued by oversight shall be withdrawn," Sitharaman said in an early morning tweet.

Interest rate on Public Provident Fund (PPF) was reduced by 0.7 per cent to 6.4 per cent while National Savings Certificate (NSC) was to earn 0.9 per cent less at 5.9 per cent. The highest cut of 1.1 per cent was affected in the one-year term deposit. The new rate was brought down to 4.4 per cent as compared to 5.5 per cent. Interest rates for small savings schemes are notified on a quarterly basis.

Taking a dig at the Finance Minister after she announced that the government will withdraw orders to cut interest rate on small savings schemes, the Congress on Thursday said one can imagine the functioning of the economy when such a duly approved order affecting crores of people can be issued by an "oversight".

Once restored, PPF and NSC will carry an annual interest rate of 7.1 per cent and 6.8 per cent, respectively.

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# Congratulations Talaivar!

NEW DELHI

RESPECT and valedictory messages poured in on Thursday for southern superstar Rajinikanth, who will be honoured with the 51st Dadasaheb Phalke Award. Minutes after Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar made the announcement on Twitter, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Rajinikanth with a tweet, "Congratulations Talaivar". Soon Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu too, tweeted.

## Dada Saheb Phalke for Rajinikanth



"Hearty congratulations to Shri @rajinikanth on being conferred the pres-

tigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award. Over the past many years, the versatile

actor has been enthralling people by portraying a vast array of roles depicting myriad hues of human experience and emotions. #Rajinikanth," said Naidu and added: "My best wishes for the renowned thespian's future endeavours! #Rajinikanth."

"Popular across generations, a body of work few can boast of, diverse roles and an endearing personality...that's Shri @rajinikanth Ji for you. It is a matter of immense joy that Thalaiva has been conferred with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Congratulations to him," Modi said.

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao hailed the central government for conferring the prestigious and highest film award in the country on well-known southern film actor.

Rao said Rajinikanth, who evolved a unique style of his own in the film career, has crores of fans in the country and all over the globe and it is great and befitting that he is selected for the prestigious Phalke award.

Continued on Page 5

# VACCINATION ON ALL DAYS

NEW DELHI

EVEN as the Covid-19 vaccination for all people aged 45 years and above commenced from Thursday, the Union Health Ministry sought to exponentially expand the countrywide anti-coronavirus inoculation drive, the Centre has decided to keep all public and private sector Covid-19 Vaccination Centres (CVCs) operational throughout April, including on gazetted holidays.

The Centre wrote to all states and Union territories on Thursday and asked them to make necessary arrangements for this, the Union Health Ministry said. "This step has been taken after detailed deliberations with the states and UTs on March 31 to optimally



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy and his wife Bharati receive Covid-19 vaccination in Guntur on Thursday

utilise all Covid-19 Vaccination Centres across the public and private sectors to ensure rapid increase in the pace and coverage of Covid vaccination.

"This decision is in line with the graded and pro-active approach employed by the government of India along with the states and UTs for Covid-

19 vaccination," the ministry said. The vaccination exercise continues to be regularly reviewed and monitored at the highest level, it highlighted. The government opened up the Covid-19 vaccination drive to include everybody above 45 years of age on April 1 based on a recommendation of the

National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration (NEGVA).

A countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 with healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated first, and vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) started from February 2. The next phase of Covid-19 vaccination commenced on March 1 to cover people above 60 and those in the age group of 45-59 but with specified co-morbid conditions.

More than 6.5 crore (6,51,17,896) vaccine doses have been administered through 10,86,241 sessions across the country so far, as per the provisional report till 7 am, according to the ministry.

**72,330**

highest single day rise

INDIA saw 72,330 new coronavirus infections being reported in a span of 24 hours, the highest single day rise so far this year, taking the Covid-19 tally of cases to 1,22,21,665. The single-day rise in cases is the highest recorded since October 11, 2020, while the death toll increased to 1,62,927 with 459 daily new fatalities, the highest in around 116 days, the data updated at 8 am showed.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL

BEFORE ELECTION CAMPAIGN...



ELECTION CAMPAIGN STARTS...



AFTER FIRST PHASE OF POLLING...



# Sporadic violence mars second phase polling

NANDIGRAM/ KOLKATA

HEAVY voting amidst sporadic violence, marked the second phase of polling to the West Bengal assembly, as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee slammed the Election Commission over inaction to complaints filed by her party. Sporadic violence

## Mamata hits out at EC over inaction to complaints

and minor clashes were reported from various constituencies, including the high profile Nandi-

gram, where chief minister Mamata Banerjee is locked in a high-stakes electoral battle with her former lieutenant Suvenud Adhikari now with the BJP.

An agitated Banerjee slammed the Election Commission for not taking any action despite lodging several com-

plaints and threatened to move court over it. Amongst the complaints were allegations of "booth capturing" and massive fake voting in Boiyal. "We have lodged 63 complaints since morning. But not a single action has been taken. We will move court over it. This is unacceptable. Continued on Page 5

# Biden lets Trump era H-1B visa bans expire

LALIT K JHA  
WASHINGTON

US President Joe Biden on Thursday let the ban on foreign workers visa, in particular H-1B, lapse as the notification issued by his predecessor Donald Trump expired, a move which is likely to benefit thousands of Indian IT professionals.

Amidst a national lockdown and the Covid-19 crisis, Trump in June last year issued a proclamation that suspended entry to the US of applicants for several temporary or "non-immigrant" visa categories, including H-1B, arguing that these visas presented a risk to the US labour market during the economic recovery.

On December 31, Trump extended the order to March 31, 2021, noting that an extension was warranted as the pandemic continued to disrupt American's lives, and high levels of unemployment and job loss were still presenting serious economic challenges to workers across the US.

## Thousands of Indian IT professionals to benefit

Biden did not issue a fresh proclamation for the ban on H-1B visas to continue after March 31. He had promised to lift the suspension on H-1B visas, saying Trump's immigration policies were cruel. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. The expiry of the Trump's proclamation would now result in the issuing of H-1B visas by American diplomatic missions overseas that would result in US companies bringing in talented technology professionals inside the country.

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# 4 killed in California shooting

SAN FRANCISCO

AT least four persons were killed, and two others injured during a shooting incident in the US state of California, according to authorities. The incident took place on Wednesday evening in the city of Orange, 55 km south-east of Los Angeles, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Orange Police Department said that they responded to reports of a shooting at around 5.30 p.m. and then found "multiple victims at the scene including fatalities" where shots were being fired. "The situation has been stabilised and there is no threat to the public. More details to follow," the Department tweeted on Wednesday night. The four victims were pronounced dead at the scene and two others were transported to nearby hospitals, according to the Metro City Fire Authority Dispatch, an emergency organisation providing fire and emergency medical services to over 1.2 million residents in Southern California. Video clips posted online by the local ABC 7 news channel showed a business complex, where at least two bodies lay down outside the building, one on a second floor walkway and the other in a courtyard. At the scene there were also bloody clothes and what appeared to be a weapon as officers investigated. A witness told ABC 7 that she heard two distinct sets of shots, one apparently the initial shooting and the other the gunfire exchange between the suspect and police. "I was just in my room hanging out. All of a sudden I heard five to seven gun shots go off," the witness said.

"And then I waited a couple minutes and the police came. And I heard a few more gunshots go off. It was a lot, quickly. Then the helicopter showed up and it was silent after that." Orange police said it was that city's deadliest shooting since 1997.

# Pak links import of cotton & sugar with Kashmir

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
ISLAMABAD

IN a volte-face, Pakistan's Cabinet on Thursday rejected the proposal of a high-powered committee to import cotton and sugar from India, with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi asserting that there can be no normalisation of ties until New Delhi reverses its decision to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. The somersault came a day after the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) under newly appointed Finance Minister Hammad Azhar on

Wednesday decided to buy the two key items from India, lifting a nearly two-year long ban on their import from the neighbouring country.

Qureshi said the issue of import of cotton and sugar from India was discussed during the Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan. "An impression is being created that relations with India have become normal and trade has been restored..." Qureshi said in a video message. "On this impression, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet had a consensus opinion that until India reviewed the unilateral

actions of Aug 5, 2019, it would not be possible to normalise ties with India."

Talking to reporters after the Cabinet meeting, Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry said that the Cabinet discussed the issue of ties and trade with India and decided that things cannot progress until India revokes its August 5, 2019 move on Kashmir. "We want to cooperate with India but the first condition is that it should go back to pre August 5, 2019 position in Kashmir," he said.

Finance Minister Azhar's announcement on Wednes-

day to import cotton and sugar from India had raised hopes of a partial revival of bilateral trade relations, which were suspended after the August 5, 2019 decision of New Delhi to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

India is the world's biggest producer of cotton and the second biggest sugar manufacturer. Azhar's decision became doubtful since afternoon but officials kept mum and finally the first confirmation came from Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari, who is known for her hawkish stand on Kashmir.

"Today Cabinet stated clearly NO trade with India," Mazari tweeted soon after the Cabinet meeting. Mazari said that Prime Minister Khan, who chaired the first Cabinet meeting after testing COVID-19 positive on March 20, "made (it) clear (that) there can be no normalisation of relations with India until they reverse" their actions viz Kashmir of August 5, 2019.

Ahead of the Cabinet meeting, Mazari had said that all ECC decisions have to be approved by Cabinet and only then can they be seen as "approved" by the govern-

ment. "Just for the record - All ECC decisions have to be approved by Cabinet & only then they can be seen as "approved by govt." So today in Cabinet there will be discussion on ECC decisions incl trade with India & then govt decision will be taken! Media shd be aware of this atleast!" Mazari had tweeted.

In May 2020, Pakistan had lifted the ban on import of medicines and raw material of essential drugs from India amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Ties between India and Pakistan nose-dived after a terror attack on the Pathankot Air Force base in 2016 by ter-

ror groups based in Pakistan. Subsequent attacks, including one on an Indian Army camp in Uri, further deteriorated the relationship. The ties strained further after India's war planes pounded a Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorist training camp deep inside Pakistan on February 26, 2019 in response to the Pulwama terror attack in 2019 in which 40 CRPF jawans were killed. India's move to revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019 angered Pakistan, which downgraded diplomatic ties with India and expelled the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad.



# Womenia

## DETOX YOUR HAIR



Shahnaz Husain

If you have an itchy, oily, or inflamed scalp, dry follicles, hair loss, or any scalp pain, it's time to detox. Nutritional deficiencies, environmental pollution, hormones imbalances and the stressful lifestyle leads to lackluster, thinning hair and hair loss.

The use of chemical laden hair styling products like soaps, shampoo and hair masks clog our pores leading to dead, dull, greasy and life less hair. Too much styling and coloring at hair salons frequently lead to breakage, dull, and split ends. Regularly washing your hair is not enough to keep it clean. Shampooing alone does not cleanse your scalp deep enough to get rid of pollutant and dirt. A thorough cleansing of scalp with natural ingredients can revive your pretty, shiny hair and restore back hair health and luster.

First of all, discontinue the procedures that lead to damage. Damaged hair is in a fragile condition, so treat it gently. Avoid brushes and use a wide toothed comb with smooth edges.

To heal damaged hair, have detox treatments to help nurse the hair back to good health. First of all, have the hair trimmed to remove split ends. Then start with warm oil therapy. Mix one part castor oil with two parts coconut oil. Heat and apply on the hair. Remember to apply on the ends too. Then dip a towel in hot water, squeeze out the water and wrap the hot towel around the head, like a turban. Keep it on for 5 minutes. Repeat the hot towel wrap 3 or 4 times. This helps the hair and scalp absorb the oil better. Avoid vigorous massage and rubbing when you apply oil. Keep the oil on overnight and wash hair the next day, using a mild

The best way to disentangle the hair is to use a wide-toothed comb, starting at the ends and working upwards. Avoid hair dryers and styling rods for some time to allow the hair dry naturally.

herbal shampoo. Avoid very hot water. After shampoo, wrap a towel around the head and allow it to absorb excess water.

You can use baking soda for hair detox. Sodium bicarbonate is an extraordinary cleanser and a great exfoliate that gently removes product buildup. Mix half cup baking soda in 3 cup hot water and massage your scalp with mixture for few minutes and later on rinse it out. It will remove oil accumulation on scalp and fight dandruff. You can use it once in a week.

Tea tree oil is natural antiseptic which eliminates bacteria, flakes and dandruff from scalp. Add few drops natural tea tree oil in your regular shampoo. Massage in your scalp and leave it for few minutes before rinsing.

You can detox your hair with herbal tea. Brew the tea with one tablespoon herb of your choice like Amla, Shikakai, rosemary etc and one cup of boiling water. Keep it for few minutes to cool down and then use

Shikakai is known for its deep cleansing properties. Just mix some Shikakai powder with water to form a paste. Massage this onto your scalp gently through the hair length in a circular motion for few minutes and let it dry naturally; Rinse off with fresh water.

Mixing egg whites with coconut oil works to strengthen hair, though it may not remove oils. Garlic may help with hair growth, but you need to dilute it with a carrier oil to avoid chemical burns



## Get a perfect winged eyeliner

Winged eyeliner is tough because of the upward angle that you need to create on one end. If you can use a freehand, then you need to draw out the shape on your eyelids and then fill it up. The truth is that winged eyeliner is not really rocket science. Here are three easy hacks to get a perfect winged eye-liner.

### Use a tape

If you can't manage to get the angle right to create the wing then try and use a tape. Just cut out 2 cm tape and stick it at the edge of your eyes in an angle you would want the wings to be. Using the outline of the tape, draw the wing. Then extend the line along your upper lash to finish the look.

### Use a swipe card



BEAUTY FUNDA

If you can't get hold of any tape or made a last-minute plan while at office, don't worry. You can still rock the look by using a debit or swipe card. Similar to the tape, hold it at an angle at the edge of your eyes to draw the wing and then extend it neatly on the upper lash.

### Use a spoon

Yes, you heard us right! You can even make use of a table-spoon to draw winged eyeliner. Place the handle at the edge of your eyes to draw the wing, and then use the curved part of the spoon to complete your look on the upper lashes. Once you perfect these easy tricks, you may even find yourself drawing out a flawless winged eyeliner with free hand. Who knows? Practice makes one perfect!

## Sonakshi Sinha: Don't be a fool, wear your mask

Sonakshi Sinha on Thursday took to social media and urged everyone to wear masks as Covid cases crossed 72,000 in a day. The actress posted a picture on Instagram, where she is seen taking an elevator selfie, wearing an all-black ensemble and a mask. "It's April. But don't be a fool. Wear your mask," Sonakshi captioned the image.

Sonakshi, who is known for her roles in the Da-bangg series, Lootera, Akira and Mission Mangal, is gearing up for her next release, Bhuj: The Pride of India. Besides Sonakshi, the film will also feature Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt, Sharad Kelkar, Ammy Virk, Pranitha Subhash and Nora Fatehi. The story is set against the backdrop of the Indo-Pak war of 1971. She recently announced her next project Bulbul Tarang, which will have an OTT release. The film has been directed by Shree Narayan Singh and is said to be inspired by a true story. The film also features Raj Babbar and Tahir Raj Bhasin. Sonakshi is also gearing up for her web series debut in Fallen, which casts her as a cop.



TWEET PATROL

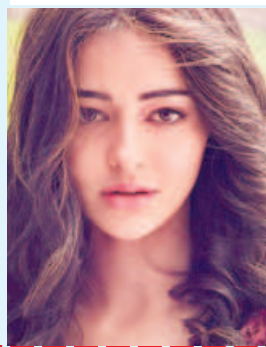


**ANANYA PANDAY**  
@ANANYAPANDAYY

Back with a splash of colours

#OriginalsKeepMoving

@SkechersIndia #StayTuned



## TV shows will never suffer, says Sonyaa Ayodhya

ASKARI JAFFER

ACTOR Sonyaa Ayodhya has been seen in television shows like Nazar, Kasauti Zindagi Kay, Shakti, Hero: Gayab Mode and she has recently made her digital debut with web series Hey Prabhu 2. She is also known with the other names Sonya Gupta and Sonya Pink on social media platforms. She is one of the well-known and popular newcomers in the television industry, with her looks and impressive acting skills, she is all set to rule the industry. Sharing about her character in the show Hey Prabhu 2, Sonyaa shares, "I am playing the role of Pia, who is a young 18 year old intern at a digital company around which the whole plot revolves around. She is innocent, sweet and positive. The character Pia is a teenager, so I just behaved exactly how I was in my teenage days- innocent and inexperienced. I have cousins who are in their teens and I'm usually someone who observes a lot, I learned a lot from their stories, gossips and mistakes. I wanted to plunge into the web for a very long time. I was also waiting to do a positive character and Pia in the show was the one and was such a character which I can relate to."

Sonyaa believes that actors are actors and nobody is a 'TV or Web actor'. She adds, "If you can mould yourself to fit any medium, then why would you stay limited to just one medium. I am looking forward to more web shows. I'm glad that I got to plunge into the web so early on in my career. I really don't like being limited to a particular medium. Unlearning is just as important as learning, I'm always willing to work on myself and work on polishing my skills."

**Actor Sonyaa Ayodhya who has been seen in various television shows like Nazar, Kasauti Zindagi Kay, recently made her digital debut with the web series 'Hey Prabhu 2' talks to The Hans India about the OTT platforms**



According to Sonyaa, the only difference between TV and OTT platform is that a TV show will go on for a year and require you to shoot longer, on the other hand the web show will require you to shoot for a couple of months. You can turn from a witch to a nun overnight

tv show. (laughs)  
"I don't think TV will ever suffer. As long as we continue to write good shows, tv will live on and it should live on. Infact, so many film productions are now plunging into TV. So, TV will never suffer," ends Sonyaa.

## TOP TRENDS IN MATERNITY WEAR 2021

PREGNANCY period is most beautiful phase in life cherish it with extra happiness and extra cautions. Does this mean that a pregnant woman needs a very comfortable closet? "Yes! That is why maternity fashion is always concentrated on comfort," Rajat Kapoor, Master Franchise India, Seraphine. One of the main concerns is 'what to wear in which tier?' to answer this question different outfits for different tiers of pregnancy phase may be tiring for some, multi-tier option gives the best option to mums. "Comfort to naive mother in their pregnancy journey, is the utmost priority by adding feed-feasible dungaree to bump friendly leggings. The evolving preference of the mother's specifically when it comes to the usage of natural fabric, stretchable outfits, multi-tier dresses, fashionable and comfortable for both babies and mothers."

### 1) Colour trends- Colours for most colourful phase

Pregnancy is the vibrant period of life. Colours play important role in psychological and emotion stability. This year, natural and neutral colors are in domination like, off white, blue, grey, pink and different shades of light green, red.

### 2) Leggings - Comfy and stylish

Leggings are the most absolute option which not only give comfort to big belly but also keep it in shape.

### 3) Tops and tunics - Cute and multi-tier

The oversized tunics, with pockets to embrace perfect shape your tummy area, tunics with flower prints, fashionable lace with appealing colours.

### 4) Maternity jeans

Would be fashion forward mums choose a pair that features a low-rise and sits below your bump for a comfortable feel. As it isn't overly stretchy which helps in balancing top heavy pregnant figure.

### 5) Maternity skirts

Flowing maxi or dresses are not the only option to design your adorable belly. There is plethora of other options that provide a flattering look such as skirts or style statement midi dresses.

FASHION FILE



World Autism Awareness Day was established on December 18, 2007 by the United Nations. The General Assembly put together resolution 62/139, which consisted of four major elements. The participation of all UN organization and its member states, a dedication to raising awareness of Autism in the general community, and a standing request to the UN Secretary-General to move forth this message to all it the UN member states.

Autism affects approximately 1 out of every 150 children around the world. It is a neural development disorder that affects their ability to socialize normally by impacting their abilities to utilize verbal and non-verbal communication. Since 2012, there has been a 30% increase in the amount of children being affected with autism, and World Autism Awareness Day helps to bring awareness to this growing health concern. Autism first appears very early on, sometimes manifesting as early as infancy, in other times waiting until later in childhood. The disease progresses steadily without remission, its first symptoms generally appearing around six-months, and being firmly in place by age two or three. Rather than having one distinguishing characteristic, Autism is indicated by the coming together of three separate symptoms. The triad in-



cludes difficulty socializing, problems in communication, and a limited number of interests combined with repetitive behavior such as can-stacking. Autism is no longer classified as a single disorder, but rather an entire spectrum ranging in severity. Autism is the core of all of these syndromes, with its features being prevalent to varying degrees throughout, and includes such disorders such as Rett Syndrome and Childhood disintegra-

tive disorder. One of the most commonly known disorders on the list, outside of Autism itself, is Asperger's. Asperger Syndrome is signified by the presence of Autism symptoms with no impairment of language development. Asperger Syndrome often leads to problems with social interaction with their peers. Common body language queues that are picked up on by those not on the Autistic Spectrum are often lost on those who suffer from AS. It is not uncommon among the Asperger community to hear them speak of their frustrations with non-Asperger people, as huge chunks of the conversation just seem utterly lost on them. Things such as tone, context, and sarcasm have to be considered very carefully, as they are not often native to those with AS, and their frustration with communication often stems from this and other social queues.

However, much like anyone on the Autistic spectrum, they will present with areas of intelligence that are much stronger than that of others. These areas tend to be in the reading, language, music, or spatial skills, occasionally manifesting to such a degree that they may fall into the "gifted" range in those areas. This seems to be counterbalanced by significant delays in other areas of development.



# UP extends Epidemic Act till June as Covid cases rise

LUCKNOW

WITH Covid cases continuously on the rise in Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government has extended the pandemic and enforced provisions of the Epidemic Act across the state till June 30.

Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) health, Amit Mohan Prasad said the decision was taken after reviewing the alarming situation in the state. He admitted that cases were going up daily and the coronavirus has hit the state again in pandemic form.

The ACS Health said that the Epidemic Act, which was enforced earlier till March 31, has been extended till June-end or till the situation arising out of the second wave is brought under control.

"In the public interest, the state government may cancel holidays of doctors, health workers and other government and private employees engaged in the duties to deal with the situation," said Prasad.

The ACS Health has also directed all health and frontline workers to take the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine on priority to develop antibodies for carrying their duties safely.



The graph of infected patients increased further in the last 24 hours after 11 deaths and 1,230 more positive cases were reported from different parts of the state. What has caused concern to the state government is that the second surge of coronavirus has brought down the recovery rate from 98.25 per cent to 96 per cent.

The state is heading back to the March and April 2020 pandemic situation. In March last year, the number of active cases were 2078 but by April 31, 2020, it had gone up to 9,848 positive cases. On March 1 this year, only 87 active cases were reported. Now the

number stands at over 1,230, which is twelve times higher.

To fight against the second round of coronavirus pandemic, the state government has ordered to reopen all Covid Management Hospitals across the state with full capacity.

The KGMU has decided to slap a fine of Rs 200 on anyone roaming in the hospital campus without wearing a mask.

Lucknow is emerging as a Covid hotspot and the state capital recorded 361 cases in the past 24 hours-the highest in the state.

Micro containment zones have been created in seven major localities in Lucknow to check the

second surge of coronavirus.

The state government has, once again, notified 45 hospitals from 30 districts as dedicated Covid facilities, said health officials.

Last month, the government had denotified nearly 240 hospitals after a dip in the number of Covid cases.

According to health officials, the state now has nearly 25,000 reserved Covid beds.

Prasad said, "We have added 45 hospitals across the state in the list of dedicated Covid facilities. These are among the hospitals that were earlier denotified. All these hospitals are of L2 and L3 category, as we now have 128 Covid facilities and close to 25,000 reserved beds. If we have even 25 per cent hospitalisation, we are prepared for around 1 lakh active cases. If needed, the number of dedicated facilities will be further increased like last year. The hospitals will be ready to admit Covid patients even on a very short notice."

State Surveillance Officer Vikasendu Agarwal said that with the increasing number of cases, they are going back to the basic strategy of aggressive contact tracing, surveillance, isolation and treatment. (IANS)



## Travel Delhi to Meerut in 45 minutes as Expressway opens for public

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi-Meerut Expressway has been finally opened for the public from Thursday. It will reduce travel time between the two cities from three hours to just 45 minutes.

It has been declared operational from Thursday by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, who said, the government has fulfilled one of its promises by reducing travel time from Delhi to Meerut.

On the expressway, the speed limit for cars has been set at 100 km per hour. Freight vehicles can also run at a maximum speed of 80 km per hour. The problems of jams and vehicular pollution is also likely to end. The construction work of Delhi-Meerut Expressway has been completed at a total cost of 8,346 crore rupees. A total of 82 km long route work has been completed under the project, of which the total length of the expressway is 60 km and the length of the national highway is 22 km.

A total of 24 small and large bridges and 10 flyovers have been constructed under the project. Adequate arrangements have been made to light up the expressway - more than 4500 lamps have been installed. Cameras have also been placed for security purposes. The expressway has been developed as a smart expressway. There are several gateways on the route while travelling from Delhi - Sarai Kale Khan, Akshardham Temple, Indirapuram, Dasna, Bhojpur and Meerut. (IANS)

## Spurious liquor claims 4 lives in UP, probe ordered

PRATAPGARH

AT least 4 persons, including two brothers, have died in the past 24 hours after allegedly consuming spurious liquor in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh district, police said on Thursday.

The deceased were identified as Sidhnath Kori, 70, Pradeep, 35, his elder brother Dilip, 50, and Ram Kumar Prajapati, 45. While two other persons are undergoing treatment.

Pratapgarh Superintendent of Police, Akash Tomar has placed the Station House Officer, Uadipur, R.K. Prajapati under suspension on the charges of dereliction of duty and ordered a detained probe into the incident that took place at the Katria village. Inspector General of police (Prayagraj range) K.P. Singh told media that police have launched a thorough probe into the case.

He said that two joint teams of police and excise department have been constituted to locate the place from where these persons had purchased or procured the spurious liquor. Police are also checking whether those persons have received any liquor during the campaign of the ongoing panchayat elections. The police said that condition of Dilip Kori, his younger brother Pradeep Kori and their maternal uncle Sidhanath had started deteriorating late on Tuesday night and the family members brought them to the nearest community health centre for treatment. The condition of another person, Ram Kumar Prajapati, also deteriorated and his family members brought him to the Sangipur CHC for treatment.

The doctors first pronounced Pradeep dead and referred three others to district hospital in Pratapgarh for treatment. However, the family members have brought them to different hospitals but these three died during their treatment on Wednesday. (IANS)

## Punjab sets record with zero pendency of bills after 15 years

CHANDIGARH

THE Punjab government said on Thursday that it has created a record with zero pendency in the state treasury during the 2020-21 fiscal after a gap of almost 15 years.

An official spokesperson said the Treasuries and Accounts of Finance Department has cleared Rs 3,556 crore related to payments to various departments during the last two days of the previous fiscal. The spokesperson pointed out that 10,295 bills were cleared on March 30 with an amount of Rs 1417.6 crore credited to 45,176 payees, while 12,484 bills were cleared on the last day of the financial year, i.e., March 31, with Rs 2138.5 paid to 301,356 payees. Notably, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has directed all the departments to conduct a review of the status of their pending bills at regular intervals to ensure zero pendency at the culmination of every fiscal. (IANS)



lar intervals to ensure zero pendency at the culmination of every fiscal. (IANS)

## Woman strangulates son, daughter after fight with husband

BAGHPAT (UP)

A woman allegedly strangulated her two young children after an altercation with her husband in Baraut area here on Thursday, police said. Anjum, the accused, allegedly strangulated her son Omar (10) and daughter Alsifa (5) at home in Kuraishian locality of Baraut area, Circle Officer Alok Singh

said. He said Anjum's husband Gulab works in Faridabad and the couple had an argument on Wednesday night after which the husband left for his home in Faridabad.

Later, on Thursday morning, Anjum strangulated her son and daughter, the police officer said. The bodies of the victims have been sent for a post-mortem. (PTI)

## Mukhtar Ansari's ambulance creates another row

LUCKNOW

CONTROVERSIES, one after another, seem to be chasing mafia don and BSP MLA Mukhtar Ansari. Now it is the ambulance that took the jailed don to Punjab's Mohali court that has raised a storm.

The vehicle had a registration number belonging to Uttar Pradesh.

The registration number of the ambulance, UP41 AT 7171, belongs to Barabanki district and had expired in 2017. It has not been renewed since then. Also, the name of the hospital in which the ambulance was registered is dubious.

Barabanki RTO officials, who did not wish to be named, said that apart from the registration, the fitness of the vehicle had also expired in 2017. What is intriguing is why was an ambulance from Uttar Pradesh used to take Mukhtar Ansari to a court in Punjab from Ropar jail.

The Punjab Police, on Wednesday, had produced Ansari before the court in connection with an alleged 2019 extortion matter.



Meanwhile, BJP MLA Alka Rai, said, "Who provided the so-called ambulance Mukhtar Ansari in which Mukhtar Ansari was presented in court? It should be investigated. Whether it was an ambulance or the luxury vehicle of the

mafia don should also be investigated. Under what circumstances did the vehicle of UP registration number reach Punjab and how is the mafia don roaming in this car?"

Mukhtar Ansari is charged with the murder of Alka Rai's husband Krishnanand Rai who was shot dead in 2005. (IANS)

## UP panchayat polls: Ghaziabad to vote on April 15

GHAZIABAD

UTTAR Pradesh's Ghaziabad district will vote in the first phase of gram panchayat elections in the state on April 15 to elect 161 village heads. Voting will take place between 7 am and 6 pm at 958 polling booths on 311 polling stations. A total of 5,56,086 voters will exercise their franchise. Nominations will be filed on April 3 and 4, District

Magistrate and Election Officer Ajay Shankar Pandey told PTI, adding that scrutiny of nomination papers will be done on April 5 and 6. Candidates will be allowed to withdraw their names on April 7 and on the same day, symbols will be allotted to the contestants. Uttar Pradesh gram panchayat elections will take place in four phases from April 15 to April 29. Votes will be counted on May 2. (PTI)

## Gurugram: Wanted criminal, aide held for murder of youth

GURUGRAM

WITH the arrest of a wanted criminal and his aide, the police here claimed to have solved the murder case of a 25-year-old youth Manish, who was allegedly gunned down in broad daylight on February 22.

The prime accused among those arrested was identified as Sanjay Panchal (31) of Gandhi Nagar in Gurugram, the police said on Wednesday. The Haryana Police had fixed a bounty of Rs 5,000 on his head. Panchal's accomplice was Yogender alias Yogi of Bhiwani, also a resident of Gurugram.

The duo were nabbed by the crime branch team after a

tip-off. During questioning, the culprits disclosed that the victim was an auto union president.

"The culprits had asked the victim to run an auto rickshaw on the same stretch but the victim refused to run the auto rickshaws there. Following this enmity, the culprits had given contract of his killing to their accomplices and on their directions they eliminated the victim," said Preet Pal Sangwan, ACP (crime).

Sangwan said the culprits were produced before a local court on Wednesday.

On February 22, the entire incident was captured in a CCTV camera installed at the incident spot. (IANS)

## IIT-K alumnus signs MoU to set up medical wing

KANPUR

A charitable trust founded by IIT Kanpur (IIT-K) alumnus Muktesh Pant and his wife Vinita, have announced signing of an MoU with the alma mater to support the establishment of the School of Medical Research and Technology (SMRT).

The MoU with the Micky and Vinita Pant Charitable Fund, amounting to 2.5 million dollars, is the first such donation towards the development of the educational institute, according to a press statement.

"The vision of a world-class medical school at IIT Kanpur is extremely exciting. The current team, under the able leadership of Professor Abhay Karandikar, inspires great confidence," said Muktesh Pant, adding that "IIT Kanpur has always been renowned for



leading the way in engineering education and this focus on bringing engineering excellence to medical technology has the potential to create many healthcare miracles in future."

Pant, also known as Micky, is an Indian American alumnus of IIT Kanpur, where he received a B.Tech degree in chemical engineering in 1976.

According to the press statement, SMRT is an initiative by

IIT Kanpur that aims to revolutionise medical education in India by bridging the gap between medical and technology disciplines.

The first phase of the project would include setting up of various Centres of Excellence (CoE), oriented towards cutting-edge medical research and innovation along with a 500-bed super specialty hospital.

The CoE are expected to

work in confluence with the core clinical departments of the hospital and biomedical expertise of various engineering departments of IIT Kanpur. Additionally, SMRT will also contribute towards meeting the healthcare needs of the population in Kanpur as well as provide benefits pan-India.

"SMRT will bring together the expertise of engineering technologies, biomedical research and clinical set-up under a single umbrella to create a one-of-its-kind world-class medical school in the country," Prof Abhay Karandikar, director of IIT Kanpur, said.

"SMRT will produce outstanding medical professionals trained in state-of-art engineering technologies who can meet the future healthcare needs of our country. We hope that this contribution will motivate others also to contribute

to create a legacy," he stated.

Meanwhile, in a career spanning over 35 years, Pant has held various senior positions in premier multinational companies such as Hindustan Unilever, PepsiCo, Reebok and Yum Brands.

He is widely acclaimed for the phenomenal growth of Yum Brands' flagship labels such as KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell in international markets including the UK, USA, China and India.

According to his profile on the IIT-K alumni page, the 65-year-old is known for his success in managing companies through social awareness, human understanding and human relationships.

His mother, Shivani, is a famous Hindi novelist and his two sisters, Mrinal Pande and Ira Pande, are also well-known writers. (IANS)



# A notable breakthrough

SCIENTISTS have developed a new technique to track the huge bubbles of gas threaded with magnetic field lines that are ejected from the Sun, disrupting space weather and causing geomagnetic storms, satellite failures, and power outages. As the ejections from the Sun, technically called Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs), cause various disturbances of the space environment, forecasting their arrival time is very important.

However, forecasting accuracy is hindered by limited CME observations in interplanetary space. Software named Computer Aided CME Tracking Software (CACTus), based on a computer vision algorithm, was so far used to detect and characterise such eruptions automatically in the outer corona where these eruptions cease to show accelerations and propagate with a nearly constant speed. However, this algorithm could not be applied to the inner corona observations due to the vast acceleration experienced by these eruptions. This severely limited the capability to track the eruptions as CMEs accelerate in the lower corona.

Moreover, with the advancement in space technology, there has been a tremendous increase in the amount of data obtained from spacecraft. To identify and track the solar eruptions in huge number of images can become tedious if done manually. Research led by Indian scientists from Aryabhata Research Institute of observational sciences (ARIES), Nainital, an autonomous institute, along with their collaborators from Royal Observatory of Belgium, has led to the development of an algorithm, CME's Identification in Inner Solar Corona (CIISCO), to detect and track the accelerating solar eruption in the lower corona.

CIISCO has been successfully tested on several eruptions observed by space observatories, including Solar Dynamics Observatory and Solar-Terrestrial Relations Observatory, PROBA2/SWAP launched by NASA and ESA, respectively. What is its significance for the common man? CMEs travel outward from the Sun at speeds ranging from slower than 250 kilometres per second (km/s) to as fast as near 3000 km/s. The fastest Earth-directed CMEs can reach our planet in as little as 15-18 hours. Slower CMEs can take several days to arrive. They expand in size as they propagate away from the Sun and larger CMEs can reach a size comprising nearly a quarter of the space between Earth and the Sun by the time it reaches our planet. The more explosive CMEs generally begin when highly twisted magnetic field structures (flux ropes) contained in the Sun's lower corona become too stressed and realign into a less tense configuration – a process called magnetic reconnection. This can result in the sudden release of electromagnetic energy in the form of a solar flare; which typically accompanies the explosive acceleration of plasma away from the Sun – the CME.

These types of CMEs usually take place from areas of the Sun with localised fields of strong and stressed magnetic flux; such as active regions associated with sunspot groups. When these flux ropes reconfigure, the denser filament or prominence can collapse back to the solar surface and be quietly reabsorbed, or a CME may result. CMEs travelling faster than the background solar wind speed can generate a shock wave. These shock waves can accelerate charged particles ahead of them – causing increased radiation storm potential or intensity. The research is essential and important for our own survival.



## Assaulted by humans and nature, Taj needs better care

BRIJ KHANDELWAL

THE 17th century monument of love, the iconic Taj Mahal in Agra, is feeling the heat of abruptly rising temperature, sand blasting by seasonal dust storms and human apathy.

"The temperature has gone up steeply in the last few days and there have been a series of sand storms," said Surendra Sharma, President of the Braj Mandal Heritage Conservation Society. Despite a series of directions by the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal, successive governments have been dragging their feet to rejuvenate the Yamuna river by containing pollution and maintaining flow of water round the year, complained green activist Shrayan Kumar Singh. After a brief respite during the 180-day lockdown triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic last year, the Taj is again looking pale, notwithstanding the mud therapy and other measures to beautify the monument.

Heritage conservationists in Agra say that if the monument looks pale to the visitors, the reason is the dry and heavily polluted Yamuna that once formed an integral part of the Taj Mahal complex.

Standing tall in the scorching summer sun, the monument of love is enveloped in yellowish sand from the neighbouring Rajasthan deserts. Any discernible visitor can tell that the summer heat is taking its toll on the Taj Mahal, blasted by sand from the dry Yamuna bed and the dust-laden winds from the Rajasthan deserts.

The gaps left by illegal mining in the Aravali ranges has raised the SPM (suspended particulate matter) in Agra. Against a standard of 100 microns per cubic metre, it remains as high as 300, touching 500 during the summer months. The problem is that sandy particles rub against the monument and leave pox marks, making the surface rough, as has been pointed out in many studies.

However, conservationists say that the crisis the Taj confronts comes not merely from nature and pollution, but also from the people -- with too many tourists and vehicles visiting Agra.

The number of vehicles in the city has shot up from around 40,000 in 1985 when Firozabad too was part of the Agra district, to more than a million now. The opening of the Yamuna Expressway has increased vehicular traffic. The pressure of heavy vehicles on the Delhi-Kolkata, Delhi-Mumbai and Lucknow-Agra National Highways passing through Agra has increased phenomenally. Adding to its fatigue is the ever-increasing human load. From a few hundred tourists some decades ago, the Taj is now daily visited by thousands of people. The tourism industry that thrives on milking the Taj Mahal wants more sops for the visitors to attract them to Agra, but the conservationists want restrictions imposed to gradually reduce the human load.

Visitors who see the Taj Mahal for the first time never forget to ask the guides, "Is it turning yellow?" The explanation given by the guides is that it is the outcome of the natural ageing process and has nothing to do with industrial pollution, as all polluting industries in Agra region have been shut down by the Supreme Court.

To ensure its dazzling whiteness and remove the stains left behind by the pollutants on the Taj Mahal, originally called 'Bagh e Baahist', the Archaeological Survey of India carries out periodic 'multani mitti' (Fuller's earth) treatment. The white marble surface is washed with soap and water too on Fridays when the monument breathes freely to enjoy its weekly off. When thousands of tourists 'invade' the serene monument every day, leaving behind hand and foot marks on the white stones, and tonnes of noxious gases through breathing, the cumulative effect on the fragile structure is huge.

Only a few tourists are genuinely aware of the historic significance of the monument and its great heritage value, but there are hordes of others who care nothing for the sanctity of the Taj.

While the problem of human load will be sorted out shortly, as a number of studies are being conducted by the ASI, the sad state of the Yamuna river at the rear is a huge problem that defies solution. According to Ved Goutam, a tour guide, Agra has already become a desert.

"When you see the camels moving around on the dry river bed, you get the impression that Agra is in a desert, a part of the Rajasthan state," he said.

The Archaeological Survey of India has restored the Mehtab Bagh at the rear of the Taj Mahal and the state forest department has developed a dense green buffer along the river bank on the opposite side.

But the major problem is the Yamuna, which has been reduced to a 'sewage canal'. Fears are being raised that if there is no fresh supply of water in the river that touches the Taj foundation to provide a shock-absorbing buffer to insulate the building from seismic movements, the monument could tilt, cave in or struggle for stability.

# Ignorant scholars and hate-mongering in univs



K KRISHNA SAAGAR RAO

IT is a fact that 'All educated are not wise, and all wise need not be educated'. This fact explains the situation in Indian universities, especially about some of the scholarly professors, who are self-declared watch dogs of secularism and democracy.

The resignation episode of P B Mehta, the Vice-Chancellor of Ashoka University, subsequent resignation of Arvind Subramanian or frequent dramas at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Visva-Bharati and many others across India, highlight the deep rot in the education infrastructure.

Universities are supposed to be the pedestals of excellence to seek knowledge and skills for young people. These knowledge disseminating facilities should act as springboards for students to launch themselves in the real world, after their education in their chosen faculties. Universities should be positive enablers for youth, to ignite their curiosity for innovation, invention, knowledge application and productivity. However, many universities in India have become cesspools of anti-social and anti-national elements. These groups which are deeply entrenched in universities are full-time enablers of hate-propaganda, driven out of their selective political and ideological leanings.

The worst part in this worsening academic environment in the universities for decades, is the nexus between few professors and student groups. The self-appointed watch dogs of secularism and democracy have stopped their core-roles of 'teaching and learning' and have taken up full-time activity of frivolous, shallow

and ignorant article-writing and speech-making about issues, which they have no knowledge about. I call them 'amateur watchdogs', there's nothing professional about them.

The downward spiral of many universities and their academic track record is indicative of professors and students' escapades with the unmandated and unwarranted non-academic, political activity. Salaries paid by the institution to Professors is not for indulging in peripheral activity by neglecting their core roles. Nevertheless, they continue unabashed wearing the mask of 'conscience keepers'.

Students who either pay the hard-earned money of their parents as tuition-fee or avail free-scholarships and entitlements from the government, disparage their time, youthful energy and valuable national resources in fighting frivolous and purposeless battles, for blind ideological leanings. Not even 1 per cent of these students would ever make full-time political careers out of these wasted youthful wake-hours and years on campus with full-time political preoccupation neglecting academic advancement; their core-purpose.

There's an impending need for 'self-regulation and re-redirection' from the criminal deviation of stated purpose, for which universities are established. I don't think, any university is ever founded on a stated purpose like - "This university is being established for the purpose of fighting street battles for mainstream political parties, and their ideologies on our campus". Or "This university is being established to incessantly criticise all incumbent governments, their policies and undertake mass protests, while even stalling all academic activity".

In fact, any university ever founded is always established for larger purposes of knowledge dissemination, skill-training, fundamental research and academic advancement. However, all these grand purposes seem to be over shadowed by frivolous, zealous lust for personal identity, ideological push, selfish-agendas and foolish self-destruction in many universities across the nation.



Below are few reasons to abhor the trend of unprofessional political pursuits by both Professors and Students in universities across India.

### Resignations are welcome

I welcome the resignations of Ashoka University vice chancellor P.B. Mehta and Arvind Subramanian. In fact, more vice chancellors and professors who deviate from their core academic roles and responsibilities from across all universities in India should resign from their paid, official roles and pursue their personal political interests.

If senior academicians and institutional heads can't exhibit professionalism and integrity to deliver their expected, well-defined roles as teachers and institutional managers, they are wrong role models for students. Teachers and students dabbling with personal prejudices, political motivation, ideological loyalties and promotion of hate is not 'academic freedom'; as there's nothing academic in these antics.

### Professors and wrong definitions

What good is a professor, if one cannot define and understand 'Secularism' factually. There are many ignorant professors who are highly educated, but their education hasn't taught them to question the 'definitions-by-propaganda'. If one falls for politically promoted definitions for 'democracy', 'academic-freedom', 'freedom-of-speech' etc., they lose out on understanding the factual meanings of these terms, they are

The self-appointed watch dogs of secularism and democracy have stopped their core-roles of 'teaching and learning' and have taken up full-time activity of frivolous, shallow and ignorant article-writing and speech-making about issues, which they have no knowledge about. I call them 'amateur watchdogs', there's nothing professional about them

blindly leading many others into a no-go zone.

The current situation in universities suits the metaphor of 'the blind, leading blind'.

I question P B Mehta and Arvind, if real secularism is to have 'religious-personal-laws' in a constitutionally stated secular nation like India? Have they ever objected to this brazen flaw, as it currently exists since 1955 after PM Nehru passed several religious laws in India mocking its secular credentials? Does any other secular State in the world have 'religious personal laws' governing their justice system?

What is the definition of 'academic freedom'? is it just about writing regular articles against PM Modi, his government and his party or does it have anything to do with academic or research pursuit?

What is the working definition of democracy, if applied to a political party? Is five generations of a family fiefdom over a party, and four generations of dynastic succession over a nation; real democracy? Not questioning these glaring deficiencies, as it does not suit one's personal and political agenda is 'Academic Integrity'? I challenge the sulking professors to answer at least few

of these questions.

### Professional protestors

Universities should not be the market places for professional protestors of any ideology. National institutions conceptualised and built for higher education cannot be allowed to become cesspools for rogues, petty-criminals, drug-abusers, alcoholics and professional protestors for paid political crusades.

A small section of deviant professors and students are consistently destroying the academic environment, peace and tranquility of beautifully designed, large academic spaces across the nation. Thousands of students who join these universities are negatively influenced, brain-washed and misdirected through mindless political narratives, these distracted groups profess.

It is time to completely overhaul the higher education system in India. The role of Universities in building academically brilliant citizens of a nation, should override the current frivolous and mis-directed path few universities have taken.

*(The author is the chief spokesperson of the BJP Telangana State, an organisational strategist & a leadership coach)*

## Dada Saheb Award for Superstar

NO doubt Rajinikanth is a public figure actor with huge fan following not only in India but also worldwide. He is great in acting gimmicks, stylish appearance and fighting with lots of people with single hand. But if you compare his acting to Kamal Haasan, you find the difference of commercial super star and talented actor. Yes Kamal is very much talented as an actor than Rajini. Now the question is why Rajini, why not Kamal?

Rajnikant is not in politics but his huge number of fans are there in Tamil Nadu. By giving this Dada Phalke award the BJP is trying to catch the fans as favourable voters for their party in this assembly election. That's the only reason why he has been announced as an awardee. Coming to Kamal Haasan, he has a political party, alliance with two other political parties and above all he is anti- BJP politician.

Similarly in Andhra Pradesh the Phalke award was not given to NTR (Senior) and awarded to ANR. If awards also become the ladder for power, then the words "impartial and unbiased valuation of art and culture" will be meaningless.

Dr T Mahadev Rao, Visakhapatnam

### II

UNION Minister Prakash Javadekar announced on Thursday that Rajinikanth will receive the

country's highest film honour for 2019.

The jury which picked him for the top award included singers Asha Bhosle and Shankar Mahadevan, actors Mohanlal and Biswajeet and filmmaker Subhash Ghai. Rajini is a versatile actor and brought up from the grassroot level. He made his presence as an actor in every film in Tamil and other languages. However, he was not able to hit a purple patch in Hindi film industry but compensated with his character role in Tamil cinema as a lead actor. He was confident and took each of his roles with force and made the Tamil audience to look at him as a superstar. He is a veteran actor and made a mark with his style, mannerism and much appreciation. He is a living legend and deserves Dadasaheb Phalke Award.

Krishnan Ramani, Ghaziabad

## Modi's campaign techniques, unique!

THE flair for coining slogans by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with alliterations and acronyms has become widely known. The present Assembly elections in the state of Kerala and in the Union territory of Puducherry are the latest examples. In prime minister parlance, Kerala has five diseases viz., Corruption, Casteism, Communalism, Cronyism and Criminalism. Its proposed target of FAST, denoting F for Fishery and Fertilisers, A for Agriculture and Ayurveda, S for Skill development and Social Justice and T for Tourism and Technology. Not

## I LETTERS

lagging behind Puducherry is promised to be made into BEST, B for Business hub, E for Education hub, S for Spiritual hub and T for Tourist hub.

Seshagiri Row Karry, Hyderabad

### Reopen schools

WHEN whole state is normally working, why should schools only be closed. The TS government must reopen all schools and colleges to run them immediately. The hostel students face problems. Managements of private schools and colleges find it difficult to pay salaries to teachers, staff, van drivers, rents to buildings, and to return fees paid by students without running them. The government should not pass any student without conducting examinations. Students will have satisfaction, only when they pursue learning in a studious environment, and writing exams in school to obtain pass marks.

J Vijay Kumar, Secunderabad

## Mamata's moves untested

THE effort by TMC's supreme Mamata Didi to cobble up together a united front to fight the BJP while the BJP wishing to hoist its saffron flag pan India could, I seem, turn out to be a vigorous battle. .TRS, who initially started this exercise has toned down its pursuit. The TDP isn't willing into get into the heat of this ongoing exer-

cise., perhaps realising that fighting BJP is an onerous task.

Both TRS & TDP have their own valid reasons for this. The results of the ongoing assembly election will show the way to the opposition and could also help them chalk out their future strategies according to the outcome. The opposition has a huge task ahead of itself and has to work really hard to succeed. The electorate has to be convinced beyond all doubts about its promises which it proposed to put forward and prove that it will emerge as a more viable alternative than the present ruling dispensation if given an opportunity to rule the country. Only then it can succeed. Will it happen, time can only reveal.

N R Raghuram, Hyderabad

### II

OPPOSITION parties in the country have been divided time immemorial and this fact had made ruling parties fascist and the then regime of Indira Gandhi led Congress and the present Modi led BJP prove this point. We have no dearth of talented leaders in the opposition but their egoistic attitude marred the unity and comes as blessing in disguise to Modi government (Mamata calls for united fight against BJP, April 1). It is time opposition parties shed their reservations and come together in the interest of the nation. This is because a strong opposition is needed to counter strong

government in the democratic setup.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao, Hyderabad

### III

WEST Bengal has become a boiling pot with leaders of the TMC, BJP, Congress and the Left indulging in allegations and counter-allegations among themselves. Further, the Assembly elections in Bengal are marred by violence and hate campaigns. Recently, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her BJP rival Suwendu Adhikari stepped up the attack against each other, just days before their high-profile contest in Nandigram.

However, as the real fight is between the BJP and the TMC, the Left and the Congress are just trying their fortunes. The 'Grand Old Party' has lost ground and differences among its leaders will cost it dear. The Left, which has an alliance with the Congress, also has very negligible chances of resurgence in the State's politics. The BJP, on the other hand, is fighting Mamata aggressively.

Nitesh Mandwariya, Neemuch

## India and Myanmar

INDIAN presence at the Myanmar Army Day parade was unfortunate and likely to cause a lot of misgivings especially in the west. It seems like an endorsement of the actions of the mili-

tary on unarmed protestors. Now this government has gone several steps ahead and issued directives to neighbouring states not to give asylum to the refugees who are fleeing from the atrocities of the military. If true; reports that more than 100 were deported back must make our heads hang with shame, because it negates all that India has stood for. Even in India there is studied silence about the entire affair. The road we seem to be taking is not the one the founding fathers fought for.

Anthony Henriques, Mumbai

## Pak move welcome

PAKISTAN'S decision to allow imports from India is a welcome move. Pakistan is finally permitting the import of yarn and five lakh tonnes of sugar from the country. This will help India to explore the market and reduce carry overstock for the following season.

Pakistan had stopped the import of cotton and yarn from India after a political fallout over the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir. Pakistani textile manufacturers have been demanding that imports from India be allowed, as it would be a cheaper option for them. Both nations should come forward to encourage bilateral trade by creating livelihood for the people.

Amit Singh Kushwaha, Satna (MP)

thehansreader@gmail.com



# Say 'no' to corruption, AP CM exhorts new civic chiefs

- States that YSRCP govt has ensured social justice to weaker sections and women by offering more posts than normal
- Seeking opinions of mayors and chairpersons to improve ward secretariats, he says the mayors can communicate directly to CMO
- Says the govt is developing 17,000 layouts to provide house sites to the poor and is planning to provide house sites to urban middle class by developing model layouts

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the state government ensured social justice to weaker sections and women by providing more number of posts in municipal corporations and municipalities. He said the government offered 67 posts accounting for 78 per cent, to SC, ST, BC and Minorities in municipalities as against the normal 45 posts. With regard to women, the Chief Minister said that 52 civic chief posts were offered to them, 61 per cent, as against the normal allotment of 42 posts.

Participating as the chief guest at the concluding session of two-day workshop organised for newly-elected mayors,



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy addressing the concluding session of two-day workshop for newly-elected mayors and chairpersons in Vijayawada on Thursday. (Below) The mayors and chairpersons who participated in the workshop.

deputy mayors, municipal chairpersons and vice-chairpersons at Vijayawada on Thursday, the Chief Minister advised the new mayors and chairpersons to 'say no to corruption'. He said the mayors and chairpersons should not show discrimination in delivering benefits of welfare schemes to people. He also sought opinions of newly-elected mayors and chairpersons to further improve the ward secretariats, adding that the mayors can communicate directly to Chief Minister's Office.

The Chief Minister said that the state government has been giving top priority to cleanliness and 8,000 garbage collection vehicles will be provided state wide. The government initiated steps to supply protected drinking water to every house, he said and asked the mayors and municipal chairpersons to work hard to meet the expectations of people as they gave massive mandate for them in the elections.

The Chief Minister said that



the state government has been developing 17,000 layouts to provide house sites to poor. Beautiful colonies should be developed in the layouts by providing underground drainage and power supply cables, parks. He said that the government was planning to provide house sites to urban middle class people by developing model layouts.

The Chief Minister said that

the state government spent Rs 1 lakh crore in the past 22 months under various welfare schemes under direct benefit transfer to the people. He said that the government has taken up improving infrastructure in schools and hospitals in a big way under Nadu Nedu programme. In addition Rytu Bharosa centres were set up for the benefit of farmers.

## Jagan, wife receive Covid jab

- Calls upon all the eligible people above 45 years of age to get vaccinated as the statewide vaccination programme will end in 90 days
- Village and ward volunteers along with Asha works will carry out door-to-door survey to see that every person gets vaccination

GUNTUR

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy and his wife Y S Bharati took the coronavirus vaccine on Thursday here and initiated the statewide vaccination programme.

Setting an example for the need to get vaccinated, the couple underwent inoculation at the 140th ward secretariat at Bharatpet in the city.

Following the vaccination, Jagan Mohan Reddy was put under medical observation for a while. He later interacted with the doctors and the ward secretariat staff.

The Chief Minister urged all the eligible people above the age of 45 years to get vaccinated and said that the statewide vaccina-



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy launches Covid vaccination for those 45 years and above at ward secretariat at Bharat Nagar in Guntur city on Thursday

tion programme will end in 90 days.

He reiterated that it is inevitable for people to coexist with coronavirus and pointed out that vaccination is the only way to ward off infection.

"The government has mooted this massive vaccination programme like nowhere else in the country by taking it through village and ward secretariats, standing up as a role model for other states," he said.

He said that the village and ward volunteer system, a grassroots governance distribution system, will conduct a door-to-door survey along with Asha

workers to ensure that every eligible person in every household gets vaccinated.

"Volunteers would be collecting the details, enrol and give a vaccination date, an ambulance will be made available along with the doctors and other medical staff at the secretariat, which will be taken as a unit and vaccination would be carried out like a 'yagana'" the Chief Minister noted.

The Reddys vaccination event was attended by Ministers All Kali Krishna Srinivas, Mekathoti Sucharita and Sriranganadha Raju, along with MLAs Ambati Rambabu, Alla Ramakrishna Reddy and others.

## AP DAILY COVID CASE COUNT ZOOMS TO 1,271

AMARAVATI

THE state reported 1,271 fresh Covid-19 cases, 464 recoveries and three deaths in 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday. The latest bulletin said the gross positives now climbed to 9.03 lakh after 1.51 crore tests, at an overall rate of 5.98 per cent.

The total recoveries increased to 8,87,898 and toll to 7,220, it said.

The state's active caseload is now 8,142. The four major hotspot districts Chittoor, Guntur, Visakhapatnam and Krishna continued to report higher number of new cases while Vizianagaram and West Godavari maintained the lowest streak.

Chittoor crossed the 90,000 total mark on Thursday, the third in the state after East Godavari (1.25 lakh) and West Godavari (94,500), as it

added 285 in a day.

Incidentally, Chittoor now has the highest number of 1,537 active cases. Its toll count of 867 is the highest in the state so far.

Guntur reported 279, Visakhapatnam 189 and Krishna 161 fresh cases in 24 hours.

Kadapa and Prakasam added 63 each, Anantapur 61, Kurnool 52, Nellore 43, East Godavari 27, Srikakulam 21, Vizianagaram 15 and West Godavari 12, according to the bulletin.

Anantapur, Guntur and Visakhapatnam reported one fresh Covid-19 fatality each.

## TDP demands fresh notification for MPTC, ZPTC polls

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

TDP politburo member Varla Ramaiah wrote a letter to State Election Commission (SEC) demanding fresh notification for Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency (MPTC) and Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) elections.

In his letter, he alleged that the YSRCP resorted to irregularities by making the elections unanimous for 24 MPTCs and 19 per cent of ZPTCs, during earlier notification issued in March 2020. He said that former too SEC complained on this to the Union home secretary.

The TDP leader alleged that

**Varla writes to SEC pointing out alleged forced withdrawals and unanimous elections last year**

the ruling YSRCP conniving with the police made several MPTC and ZPTCs unanimous with forcible withdrawals. He said YSRCP leaders resorted to threats and attacks on the contestants to make them withdraw their nominations posing threat to democratic norms.

Ramaiah said to instil confidence among people on democratic electioneering system, the SEC should issue fresh notification for MPTC and ZPTC elections.

## Put up pressure for SCS, Lokesh demands CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Thursday demanded Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy to start mounting pressure on the Central government for conferring the Special Category Status (SCS) on Andhra Pradesh in fulfilment of the AP Reorganisation Act promises.

Lokesh asked how the AP SCS could become a closed chapter when the special Union Territory status was being promised to Puducherry in the latest BJP election manifesto itself. It was a fact that the fake Chief Minister of AP has sent his party MPs and leaders to support the BJP in the ongoing election campaign there, he alleged.

In a statement here, the TDP MLC advised Jagan Mohan Reddy to stop his double game and start making genuine efforts to ensure justice for the people of AP. At the time of the 2019 election, Jagan Mohan Reddy has vowed to bend the necks of the Centre in order to bring the rightful special status to the state. After coming to power, the Chief Minister has fallen totally silent without



- Asks how the AP Special Status can become a closed chapter when UT Puducherry is being promised SCS by BJP now
- Says CM is tarnishing the image of his post by stooping to the level of getting baseless April fool stories in media against TDP

showing any commitment to industries and jobs for the youth.

Lokesh asserted that the Chief Minister should realise the fact that he would not be able to continue his secret jour-

ney with the BJP in AP any more. The people have seen through the unholy friendship between the two. It was high time that Jagan should not sacrifice the SCS for the sake of his multi-crore illegal assets cases. The latest manifesto in the Puducherry election has exposed the secret deal between Jagan and the BJP, he said.

The TDP leader strongly criticised the Chief Minister for misusing his party friendly blue media to spread falsehoods against the TDP at the time of the 2019 election. Even now, he and his blue friends were continuing their misinformation and cheap campaigns. However, the YSRCP "lying squads" were biting the dust eventually after their false campaigns became exposed in front of the people, he said.

Condemning the false reports, Lokesh deplored that CM Jagan Mohan Reddy was tarnishing the image of Chief Minister post by stooping to the level of getting baseless April fool stories in media to take political revenge against the TDP. It was unfortunate that some media were compromising their standards without any ethics, he lamented.

## Biden lets Trump era H-1B visa bans expire

Continued from P1

No new proclamation was issued by Biden till Wednesday mid-night, resulting in the automatic end to the ban on issuing of fresh H-1B visas.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the White House will not renew a ban on H-1B and other work-based visas imposed last year in response to the Covid-19 pandemic that is set to expire on Wednesday. Meanwhile, a Republican Senator from Missouri on Wednesday urged Biden to issue a fresh proclamation to continue with the H-1B visa ban. "I write today to urge you to extend the freeze on temporary foreign worker entries into the United States that, without intervention, will expire today," Senator Josh Hawley wrote in a letter to Biden. "The presidential proclamation suspending entry of certain temporary workers into the US has protected Americans suffering from the pandemic-induced economic crisis. With millions of struggling Americans out of work - and millions more desperate to make ends meet - now is not the time to open the floodgates to thousands of foreign workers competing with American workers for scarce jobs and resources," he wrote.

## Govt withdraws cut in rate on savings schemes

Continued from P1

One-year term deposit scheme to earn a higher interest rate of 5.5 per cent during the first quarter of the current fiscal while the girl child savings scheme Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana account will earn 7.6 per cent as against reduced rate of 6.9 per cent.

Accordingly, the interest rate for the five-year senior citizens savings scheme would be retained at 7.4 per cent. The inter-

est on the senior citizens' scheme is paid quarterly. Interest rate on savings deposits to be restored at 4 per cent annually from the reduced rate of 3.5 per cent. Term deposits of one to five years will fetch interest rate in the range of 5.5-6.7 per cent, to be paid quarterly, while the interest rate on five-year recurring deposits will earn a higher interest of 5.8 per cent as against the reduced 5.3 per cent.

## Congratulations Talaivar!

Continued from P1

Political party leaders in Tamil Nadu greeted actor Rajinikanth for being conferred with the Dadasaheb Phalke. Chief Minister K. Palaniswami in a tweet said he had wished Rajinikanth over phone.

"The Dadasaheb Phalke Award is the recognition for your hardwork in the movie industry," the Tamil Nadu CM said. Palaniswami also said he would pray for Rajinikanth to get more awards and for a long life. DMK President MK Stalin in a Facebook post said he was happy to hear Tamil movie world's incomparable artist and his friend Rajinikanth getting the Dadasaheb Phalke Award. "He should have been given this award long back. It is being given belatedly. My wishes to Rajini who not only in acting but has also set an example in friendship," Stalin said.

Actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan also greeted Rajinikanth with a tweet. The highest award fits Rajini 100 per cent as he has proved that by mere presence on the screen one can win over fans.

Rajini is called Talaivar or "Style Mannan" in the Tamil movie industry.

Calling Rajinikanth "one of the greatest actors in the history of Indian cinema", the I&B

minister said that the actor was being awarded for his contribution in the field of acting, production and screenwriting for Indian cinema. Posting a picture of the actor, Javadekar wrote: "Happy to announce #Dadasaheb Phalke award for 2020 to one of the greatest actors in history of Indian cinema Rajinikanth ji His contribution as actor, producer and screenwriter has been iconic I thank Jury @ashabhosle @SubhashGhai1 @Mohanlal @Shankar\_Live @BiswajeetChatterjee."

Andhra Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy also congratulated the film star, who enjoys a demigod status, made his debut in Tamil cinema with "Apoorva Raagangal". Among his numerous hits are films like "Baasha", "Sivaji" and "Enthiran". He is known as Talaivar or leader by his fans.

Widely regarded as one of the most popular cinematic icons in India, Rajinikanth has also been honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 2000 and the Padma Vibhushan in 2016 by the Government of India.

The Dadasaheb Phalke Award is India's highest honour in cinema. It is presented annually at the National Film Awards by Directorate of Film Festivals of the Information and Broadcasting ministry of the Government of

India. The first recipient of the award was actress Devika Rani. Recent recipients include Amitabh Bachchan, Vinod Khanna, filmmaker K Vishwanath and Manoj Kumar.

The Dada Saheb Phalke award jury consists of Malayalam super star Mohanlal and Tamil music composer and singer, Shankar Mahadevan, besides veteran singer Asha Bhosle, and moviemaker Subhash Ghai.

Rajinikanth is very popular in all the southern states and also Bollywood. All his movies are invariably dubbed in Telugu, Malayalam, Hindi and has set the silver screen on fire for many generations.

Tamil Nadu villages and cities burst with joy on the announcement of Rajini's feat. People took to streets and hundreds reached Poes Garden residence.

At Salem people celebrated Rajini's Phalke win by distributing sweets and lighting crackers. The Information and Broadcasting minister when asked whether this award was given to Rajinikanth to influence Tamil Nadu elections, Javadekar said: "This is in no way related to Tamil Nadu elections".

Congratulatory messages continue to pour in from political leaders, actors, directors and social workers, besides people from all walks of life.

## RINL sales turnover reaches ₹18,000 crore

- The achievement is second highest in the history of plant
- The firm records a 13% growth as the sales volume reaches 4.45 million tonnes
- RINL registers a net profit of Rs 740 cr in the past four months



HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

AMID growing protests against the 100 per cent disinvestment of Visakhapatnam steel plant (VSP), the company registered sales turnover of Rs 18,000 crore, second highest since its inception till the just concluded financial year.

Sharing details, chairman and managing director of RINL, which owns the plant, P K Rath, said with this, the company recorded a 13 per cent growth as the sales volume reached 4.45 million tonnes, the best ever production figures exceeding the capacity of 6.3 million tonnes per year. In the past four months, RINL registered a net profit of Rs 740 crore.

In March, the company achieved a sales turnover of Rs 3,300 crore and sales volume of 7.11,000 tonnes for the first time in the history, the CMD said, congratulating the RINL employees for their stupendous performance

in all areas of operations.

"During the year, we achieved export sales of 1.3 MT (million tonnes) which is 261 per cent higher than the previous year. In addition, 35 out of total 57 ocean export contracts were finalised with 100 per cent advance payment terms," Rath stated. He said that recruitment of 245 management trainees (Technical) is under process and added that the production at the Forged Wheel Plant at Raebareli is expected to start in a week.

He called upon the employees for focusing on some of the important aspects like increase in PCI (pulverised coal installation) in all the three furnaces, cost optimisation in all the areas, utilisation of waste like metallurgical waste, etc.,

Director (commercial) D K Mohanty, director (projects) K K Ghosh, director (operations) A K Saxena, among others participated.

## Sporadic violence mars second phase polling

Continued from P1

The EC is working as per Amit Shah's instructions," she said while sitting outside booth number 7 in Boyal in Nandigram, where her party men alleged many voters were unable to cast their ballot. "Goons from other states are creating ruckus here," she said.

Protesters also blocked the road in Nandigram's Block 1, alleging Central forces stopped them from going to the polling stations. "The CRPF personnel accompanying Suwendu Adhikari stopped us from casting our votes," a protester said. On the other hand, Suwendu Adhikari's car, was attacked, and stones were pelted while he was visiting booths in the assembly constituency. Two separate stone-pelting incidents took place in Takapura and Satengabari in Nandigram. His vehicle was gheraoed at various locations as TMC supporters shouted slogans against the BJP leader. Security forces patrolling the area dispersed the mob. "I am used to such protests by TMC goons. They are all followers of Mamata begum (Mamata Banerjee). Let them do whatever they want till the results are out on May 2," Adhikari told reporters. Meanwhile, BJP candidate from Keshpur assembly constituency Tanmay Ghosh's vehicle was vandalised allegedly by the Trinamool Congress supporters, police said. Three persons have been arrested in connection with the incident, they said. More than 75 lakh voters will decide the fate of 191 candidates in the 30 constituencies for which voting ends at 6.30 pm.









## No Tax on income earned in Gulf countries



## FinMin releases ₹45,000 cr to States

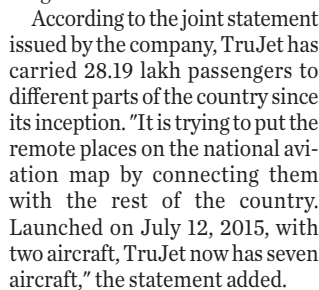
The Finance Ministry on Thursday said it has released Rs 45,000 crore to the states as additional devolution in the 2020-21 fiscal following revenue buoyancy in the March quarter. As per the Revised Estimates for 2020-21, Rs 5,49,959 crore, being 41 per cent of the shareable pool of taxes and duties were estimated to be released to the states.

ELHI FRIDAY 2 APRIL 2021

CoinDCX recently launched App Coin DCX Go is trying to bridge the gap between those challenged by knowledge on crypto and those who are concerned about the safety and security of their investments. The app is available both for Android and iOS devices and has been downloaded more than 1,50,000 times. On the app, a user can buy or sell crypto, while easily navigating through its secured backdrop and finish his business on the platform as he finishes his coffee or tea. The app only features 14 out of some 4000+ crypto assets that exist in the market. Neeraj Agarwal, Co-Founder, CoinDCX said: "CoinDCX has partnered with Bitgo, the most trusted crypto custodian in the world, to ensure users' crypto funds are completely safe and insured on the Go app. In addition, CoinDCX also partnered with Onfido to protect users against user identification fraud."

## Companies now shall disclose shareholding of promoters and current maturities of long-term borrowings

According to the doctor who is managing the 750-bedded JCI accredited hospital located in the financial district, there are myriad reasons for the city of pearls to emerge as a major destination for foreign clientele. Quality of service,





# ‘Sindhu needs to pay more focus to recovery between matches to win Tokyo medal’

NEW DELHI

WORLD champion P V Sindhu remains India's best Olympic medal prospect but she has to give more attention to her recovery process between matches to achieve the feat at the Tokyo Games, believes former India badminton coach Vimal Kumar.

Sindhu didn't have a good outing in the three events in Thailand in January and even though she reached the finals at Swiss Open or the semifinals at All England, she suffered demoralising losses to Olympic champion Carolina Marin and Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong.

"I feel the best (Olympic) medal prospect is Sindhu, she can and there is still time. She showed some glimpses against Akane Yamaguchi (at All England

quarters). But she needs to give more attention to recovery to be ready for next match because there will not be 24 hours to recover," Vimal told PTL.

"May be ice bath, there are so many ways to get rid of the lactic acid accumulation after a tough match. If she can look into those aspects, she will be all right. I don't think she has any fitness issue."

At the Swiss Open final, Sindhu was blown away by Marin 12-21 5-21, while Chochuwong beat the Indian 21-17 21-9 in the semifinals at All England. However, the Indian showed great intensity during her win over Japan's Akane Yamaguchi in the All England quarter-finals. "She has been very sluggish against Marin and Pornpawee. Between matches what you do, that matters, it is sometimes tough to recover due to the schedule. Look at the tennis players, after 5-6 hours of gruelling matches, they again play five-setters. So recovery really matters," Vimal said.

"Some top players take ice bath immediately after a match and also before going to sleep. It is very

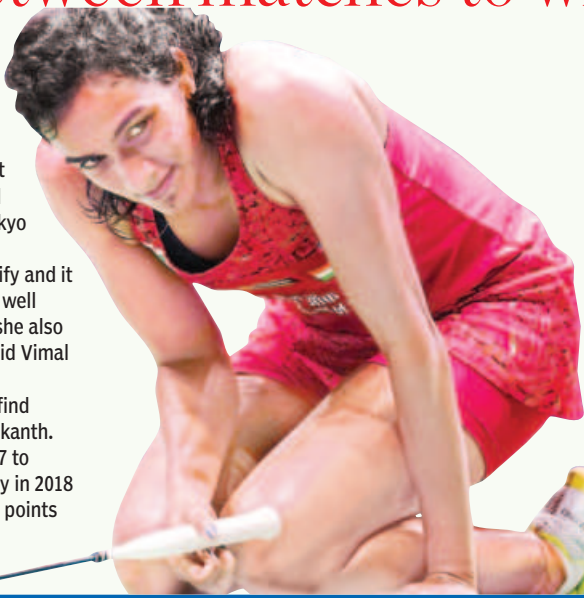
common in international level...But I think you need to give her some space and she will come back."

Asked about London Olympics bronze medallist Saina Nehwal, who is racing against time to qualify for her fourth Olympics, Vimal said it will be very tough for her to make it to Tokyo given her recent results.

"Saina is still injury-prone but she can qualify and it all depends on India Super 500, she has to do well here. It is a very tough job, after India Open, she also has to do well in Malaysia and Singapore," said Vimal who coached Saina from 2014 to 2017.

Another Indian player who is struggling to find form is Rio Games quarterfinalist Kidambi Srikanth. He had claimed four super series titles in 2017 to eventually hold the world no. 1 position briefly in 2018 but he is now desperately looking for ranking points to book a Tokyo Olympics berth.

"He lost to a young french



player (Toma Junior Popov) in Orleans Masters and at All England he lost to a Vietnamese guy from Ireland (Nhat Nguyen). For his standards these are poor results, he needs to find some sort of tactical inputs, employ some strategies, he looks clueless when playing," Vimal said.

"He was always a player who would come to the net quickly, it was difficult to read his shots when he would jump, he seldom uses those now." Srikanth had pulled out of Yonex Thailand Open due to a calf injury while he was forced to withdraw from Toyota Thailand Open after his roommate B Sai Praneeth had tested positive for COVID-19.

"Srikanth seems to be under a lot of pressure, I also don't see the joy in his face, he seems to be tensed allways. These factors are letting him down," Vimal said. "It is becoming difficult for him (to qualify for Olympics). At India Open, he has to get to semifinals. He has to reach semifinals and finals at Singapore and Malaysia to make it to Olympics." (PTI)

## Decision Review System

# ‘UMPIRE’S CALL’ WILL REMAIN, RULES ICC

DUBAI

THE contentious 'Umpire's Call' will continue to be a part of the Decision Review System, the International Cricket Council's Board ruled on Thursday, but introduced a few changes to the current DRS protocols.

Called "confusing" by India captain Virat Kohli, the Umpire's Call has been a subject of controversy for a while now. As per the existing rule, 50 per cent of the ball should be hitting at least one of the three stumps for the batsman to be adjudged LBW on review in case an umpire's not out call has been challenged.

"The Cricket Committee had an excellent discussion around Umpire's Call and analysed its use extensively," ICC's Cricket Committee head and former Indian captain Anil Kumble said in statement issued by the governing body after the end of its board meetings on Wednesday.

"The principle underpinning DRS was to correct clear errors in the game whilst ensuring the role of the umpire as the decision maker on the field of play was preserved...Umpire's Call allows that to happen, which is why it is important it remains," he added.

Kohli had argued that the batsman should be declared out if the ball is hitting the stumps, even if marginally. The ICC introduced three minor changes to the DRS and third Umpire protocols.

"For LBW reviews, the height margin of the Wicket Zone will be lifted to the top of the stumps to ensure the same Umpire's Call margin around the stumps for both height and width," the ICC stated.

This means that the review, which until now covered till the base of the bails, will extend to the top of the bails as well, effectively increasing the height of the wicket zone while analysing the trajectory of the ball.

A player will also be able to ask the umpire whether a genuine attempt has been made to play the ball before deciding to review an LBW decision.

"The third Umpire will check a replay of any short run that has been

called and correct any error prior to the next ball being bowled."

It was also decided that the interim COVID-19 regulations that were introduced in 2020 to allow international cricket to resume will continue to be followed. It means that home umpires will be asked to officiate games where neutral umpires were previously required ad hygiene protocols like ban on saliva will continue.

"The committees noted the excellent performances by the home umpires over the past 9 months but encouraged the more widespread

appointment of neutral Elite Panel umpires whenever circumstances allow," the ICC release said. (PTI)



## Kohli, de Villiers, reach Chennai for RCB camp

CHENNAI

ROYAL Challengers Bangalore (RCB) captain Virat Kohli and star batsman AB de Villiers have arrived in Chennai, the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise said on Thursday.

de Villiers and Kohli will quarantine for seven days before joining the rest of the squad in the training camp at the Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research.

Yuzvendra Chahal, Navdeep Saini, Mohammed Siraj, Harshal Patel, Shahbaz Ahmed, Pavan Deshpande, Mohammed Azharuddeen, Rajat Patidar, Sachin Baby,

Suyash Prabhudesai and KS Bharat are currently attending the camp.

The nine-day conditioning camp is taking place under Mike Hesson, director of cricket operations and Simon Katich, head coach of the team. Sanjay Bangar, S Sridharan, Adam Griffith, Shankar Basu and Malolan Rangarajan are the other members of the coaching staff.

RCB face defending champions Mumbai Indians in the opening match of the season on April 9. They qualified for the playoff and finished fourth last season, losing to SunRisers Hyderabad in the Eliminator by six wickets.

## FIFA announces 10 host stadiums for 2023 Women's WC

SYDNEY: Football's global governing body FIFA on Thursday announced nine host cities and 10 stadiums across Australia and New Zealand as venues for 2023 Women's World Cup.

Eden Park in Auckland will host the opening match of the tournament on July 10 with Stadium Australia in Sydney selected to host the final on August 20. The other stadiums that have been announced as host venues are Hindmarsh Stadium (Adelaide), Brisbane Stadium (Brisbane), Dunedin Stadium (Dunedin), Waikato Stadium (Hamilton), Melbourne Rectangular Stadium (Melbourne), Perth Rectangular Stadium (Perth), Sydney Football Stadium (Sydney) and Wellington Stadium (Wellington).

Both Australia and New Zealand will also host one semi-final each with the full match schedule for the World Cup to be announced later this year. "The appointment of the 9 Host Cities represents a major milestone for the next FIFA Women's World Cup 2023, as well as for players and football fans across Australia, New Zealand and around the world," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino.

"Building on the incredible success of France 2019 both on and off the pitch, the FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 and 9 Host Cities across Australia and New Zealand will not only showcase the world's very best players, but will also provide a powerful platform to unite and inspire people, transform lives and create a lasting legacy for women's football in Australia and New Zealand and around the world," he further said. (GASS)

## Germany handed shock defeat in WC qualifier

DUISBURG (GERMANY)

JOACHIM Loew's final World Cup qualifier as Germany coach ended in a shock defeat to North Macedonia as Elif Elmas struck late to give the visitors a 2-1 win.

Elmas nudged home from close-range, with the aid of a slight deflection, five minutes from time after veteran Goran Pandev had given North Macedonia the lead in first half injury-time on Wednesday, DPA news reports.

Ilkay Guendogan levelled from the spot midway through the second half and Timo Werner mis-kicked a rare chance with the goal at his mercy to give Germany the lead.

"I don't know how to explain it," said Guendogan, who was captain in the absence of the injured Toni Kroos.

"It's not easy to do. We knew that we couldn't underestimate the opponent and I don't think we did that. We just weren't good enough tonight and have to be better in front of goal, otherwise we extend the invite in games like this," he said.

But North Macedonia will feel their win was deserved, especially as Emre Can escaped a blatant handball in the box and with no video review referee available their protests were ignored.

"The guys have once again made our nation proud, against

the four-time world champions, and three-time European champions," said North Macedonia coach Igor Angelovski.

"Our team are our heroes, they have brought the nation to its feet."

The win takes North Macedonia second in Group J on six points, above Germany on goals scored, three shy of shock leaders Armenia, who beat Romania 3-2 to have a perfect nine points from the opening triple-header.

Iceland won 4-1 at Lichtenstein in the other game. Loew will end his 15-year reign as national coach, which included the World Cup win in 2014, after Euro 2020 delayed to summer because of the coronavirus pandemic.

**Italy continue perfect record in WC qualifiers**

In Vilnius (Lithuania), Italy continued their winning streak in the 2022 World Cup qualifiers as it beat Lithuania 2-0 on Wednesday, claiming the third consecutive win without conceding a goal.

Azzurri have beaten both Northern Ireland and Bulgaria 2-0 in the previous two games, and coach Roberto Mancini rotated the starting line-up, as Stephan El Shaarawy, Federico Bernardeschi stepped in while Rafael Toloi made his debut, Xinhua news reports.

Italy was utterly dominant in the first half but failed to find the net as Lorenzo Pellegrini and Emerson Palmieri's attempts was denied. Mancini introduced Stefano Sensi after the break and the Inter Milan midfielder quickly made the impact in the 48th minute as he gathered the ball from Manuel Locatelli to drill home on the edge of the box.

## SENIOR, JUNIOR & SUB-JUNIOR NATIONAL TRACK CYCLING C'SHIP-2021

# 14 previous records broken as event draws to a close

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

14 old records were broken and new ones established as the Cycling Federation Of India's 72nd Senior, 49th Junior & 35th Sub-Junior National Track Cycling Championship-2021 concluded in the city on Wednesday evening.

In the Mens Elite Category - Team Sprint event, the team from Manipur comprising of K. Jemsh Singh, Y. Rojit Singh and Ronaldo Singh new a record by breaking their own record of 01:03.977 set in 71st NTCC Jaipur. The new record is 01:02.302.

In Mean Elite Category - Sprint ESOW, Andaman and Nicobar set a new record of 10.433 against their own record of 10.827.

In Men Elit category - Team Pursuit, SSCB Team of Manjeet Singh, Dinesh Kumar, Dinesh and Mularam set new record by clocking 4:29.971.

In the same category Individual Pursuit event, Anil Manglaw from RSPMset a new record 4:48.778. In 1 km Time Trial, Amarjeet Singh from Punjab registered a new record time of 1:05.943.

In Women Elite Class - Individual Pursuit event, Swasti Singh broke the record of N Chaoba Devi and set a new time of 4:05.547. In the same category in Team Pursuit event, RSPB players comprising of Megha Gugad, Nayana Rajesh P, Matoulebi Devi and Vaishnavi Gabani broke the previous record of 5:23.454 set by Kerala Team.

Men Juniors broke four records. In Individual Pursuit, Vishavjeet Singh of Punjab sets new record by clocking 3:33.336; In Team Pursuit, Rajasthan's team of Vinod Gat, Ganesh Ram Benipal, Mahendra Saranin and Aayush Jakkar broke the previous record set by Punjab Team by clocking 4:43.841. In 1 km. Time Trial and Sprint events, David Becham



of Andaman & Nicobar set new records. He broke the old records set by Sahil of Haryana and Esow of Andaman and Nicobar. He clocked 1:07.300 and 11.032 respectively in two events

In Women Junior category a new record was established. Chayabika Gogoi of Assam broke five years old record by registering 2:43.132 in 2km Individual Pursuit.

In Sub Juniors Boys category, Niraj Kumar of Haryana established a new record in 2km Individual Pursuit event by breaking five years old record set by Venkappa Kengalgutti-KAR. The new record is 2:23.942

Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, Govt of Telangana, who is also the President of Telangana Olympic Association, was the chief guest at the closing ceremony and gave away medals to the winners and record holders. S. Onkar Singh, Sec. General, Asian Cycling Confederation; Chairman of Cycling federation of India and Joint Secretary of Indian Olympic Association graced the Championship.

Impressed over the arrangements, Onkar Singh expressed the desire that Hyderabad could host Asian Tack Championship. Accordingly Telangana Cycling Association (TSA) was asked to be ready to host the Asian Track Championships in October this year.





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