



WINDOWS



Archbishop holds a statue of baby Jesus during the Christmas celebrations at a church in Ajmer, on Thursday

China targets Alibaba with monopoly probe

BEIJING: Chinese regulators on Thursday announced an anti-monopoly investigation of e-commerce giant Alibaba Group, stepping up official efforts to tighten control over China's fast-growing tech industries. The market regulator said it was looking into Alibaba's policy of "choose one of two," which requires its business partners to avoid dealing with competitors. The one-sentence statement gave no details of possible penalties or a timeline to announce a result. Chinese leaders said earlier an economic priority in the coming year will be to step up anti-monopoly enforcement. Regulators earlier forced the suspension of the stock market debut of Ant Group, an online finance platform spun off from Alibaba. Alibaba Group is the world's biggest e-commerce company by total sales volume.

UK, EU clinch post-Brexit deal

BRUSSELS: Britain and the European Union have struck a provisional free-trade agreement that should avert New Year's chaos for cross-border commerce and bring a measure of certainty to businesses after years of Brexit turmoil. The breakthrough came on Thursday with just over a week to go until the UK's split is completed. Now comes the race to approve and ratify the deal before the UK leaves the EU's economic structures at the end of the year.

China yet to permit 2 ships to unload

NEW DELHI: India on Thursday said two cargo vessels with a total of 39 Indians on board have been on anchorage in Chinese waters as they were not allowed to unload their cargo though some other ships have managed to do so. "There is a considerable amount of stress on the crew members on account of this unprecedented situation," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said. Srivastava said bulk cargo vessel MV Jag Anand is on anchorage near Jingtang port in Hebei province of China since June 13 and it has 23 Indian sailors. Another vessel, MV Anastasia with 16 Indian nationals as its crew, is on anchorage near Caofeidian port in China since September 20, waiting for discharge of its cargo, he said.



Let's talk, but not MSP: Govt
Govt sends fresh invite to protesting farmers

NEW DELHI

THE government on Thursday extended a fresh invite to protesting farmer unions for talks, but made it clear that it would not be "logical" to include in the agenda any new demand related to minimum support price (MSP), saying it was out of the purview of three new farm laws.

In a three-page letter written to 40 farmer leaders, Agriculture Ministry Joint Secretary Vivek Aggarwal said, "I again request you that the government has been discussing all issues with an open heart and good intention to end the protest, and will continue to do so. Kindly suggest a date and time (for the next round of talks)."

Previous five rounds of talks between the govern-



Farmers raise slogans during their protest against the Centre's new farm laws at Ghazipur border, in New Delhi on Thursday

ment and the unions have failed to break the deadlock with the farmers in-

sisting on the repeal of the three laws and camping at various border

points of Delhi for nearly a month now. Aggarwal asked the union leaders to

provide details of other issues they want to discuss. The talks will be held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi at a ministerial level, he said.

On MSP, Aggarwal said the farm laws have no connection with the price regime nor would have any impact on the procurement of farm produce at the fixed rates. This has been told to the unions in every discussion and it has also been made clear that the government is ready to give written assurance on MSP, he said.

"Any new demand related to MSP, which is out of the ambit of farm laws, is not logical to include in the talks. As informed earlier, the government is ready to discuss all the issues raised by farmer unions," he noted.

Continued on Page 5



Punjabi singer Rajveer Jawanda joins farmers' protest at Ghazipur border, in New Delhi on Thursday



A farmer distributes woolen caps among fellow farmers during a protest, at Ghazipur in New Delhi on Thursday



Security personnel have lunch distributed by farmers protesting against the new farm laws, at Singhu Border in New Delhi on Thursday

No backdoor talks with India underway: Pak FM

HAMZA AMEER ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that there can be no talks with India under the current deteriorating situation between the two countries. Qureshi also asserted that there was no backdoor or diplomatic dialogue underway between Pakistan

and India. "There is no possibility of a backdoor or diplomatic dialogue with India in the prevailing situation," he said. "It is not possible until the Indian atrocities are stopped in Kashmir. The circumstances are not suitable for any dialogue at the moment."

Qureshi's statement comes at a time when heavy

exchange of fire between the Indian and Pakistan border security forces have intensified, leaving dozens of casualties on both sides.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry has been summoning the Indian envoy to record their protest against what it calls, India's deliberate ceasefire violation along the Line of Control (LoC).

Continued on Page 5



Cong finalises alliance with Left for West Bengal polls

NEW DELHI

THE Congress on Thursday formally approved its electoral alliance with the Left parties for the assembly elections in West Bengal, party's state unit chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury announced.

The West Bengal PCC had earlier recommended an alliance in favour of the Left parties. The Left parties had also favoured an alliance with the Congress for the state elections.

"Today the Congress high command has formally approved the electoral alliance with the Left parties in the impending election of West Bengal," Chowdhury said on Twitter.

The Left and Congress did not contest the Lok Sabha elections in Bengal together. The two parties are also pitted against each other in Kerala.

The West Bengal assembly elections are due by March-April next year.

BITTER COLD ACROSS NORTH INDIA

NEW DELHI

BITTER cold conditions persisted in most parts of north India on Thursday as the minimum temperatures hovered well below the normal limits at several places in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. There was slight improvement in cold conditions in Kashmir as the minimum temperature rose across the valley, even as the Meteorological office forecast the possibility of light snowfall over two days from Saturday.

Continued on Page 5

Tagore's vision essence of Atmanirbhar Bharat mission: PM

SANTINEKATAN

GURUDEV Rabindranath Tagore's vision is the essence of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' mission of his government for empowerment of India and the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday, as he took forward his outreach to premier educational institutions.

Addressing a function to mark the centenary celebrations of Visva-Bharati, the country's oldest Central University, he extolled the pivotal role it played in India's freedom movement and in furthering the cause of universal brotherhood.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks at Visva Bharati University, via video conferencing, in New Delhi on Thursday

Visva-Bharati was declared a Central University and an Institution of National Importance by an Act of Parliament in 1951. "Gurudev's vision for

Visva-Bharati is the essence of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Atmanirbhar Bharat is the path to India's development for the development of the world.

It's a campaign for India's empowerment and prosperity, and through it, the prosperity of the word," he told the gathering through video conferencing from New Delhi. He said Tagore and the institution he founded not only strengthened the spirit of nationalism but also promoted inclusiveness that strengthened "vishva bandhutva" (universal brotherhood).

The prime minister, who addressed the convocations and centenary celebrations of four universities--the Mysore University, Lucknow University, Aligarh Muslim University and Visva-

Bharati--within a span of little over two months, dwelt on the role played by educational institutions in driving the freedom movement. He said from the "Vedas to Vivekananda", Tagore's thoughts reflected the collective thought of India, which was never introverted or exclusive.

"His vision was that what is best in India the world should benefit from it, and India should learn from the good things they have. Now look at the very name of your university--Visva-Bharati....coordination and cooperation of India with the world," he said.

Continued on Page 5

Bhadradri float festival celebrated in specially created pond

HANS NEWS SERVICE BHADRACHALAM

THE corona pandemic had its impact on the grand celebration of Teppotsavam (float festival) at the temple of Lord Sri Rama in Bhadrachalam.

Normally on every Vaikuntha Ekadasi day, the Teppotsavam is held in River Godavari on a beautifully decorated Hamsa Vahanam accompanied by the

bursting of firecrackers witnessed by many devotees.

But for the first time in the last five decades, the celebrations were held in a pond in front of Chitrakuta mandapam inside the temple premises in a specially created pond and in a very low-key manner. No devotees could witness the event.

Only people's representatives, officials, priests and temple offi-

cials were present. These celebrations were first launched by the then Executive Officer Nagi Reddy and Trust Board Chairman Alluri Murthy Raju in 1971.

The deities were decorated with colourful clothes and were taken out in a procession from the main temple to the temporary pond. The deities were seated on a small Hamsa Vahanam and the temple

priests performed the puja by chanting Vedic hymns. The main puja lasted for an hour.

It may be mentioned here that Sri Rama Navami and Mukoti Ekadashi celebrations were also conducted in a simple manner in view of the pandemic.

The temple will be open for limited devotees for the Uttara Dwara Darshanam on Friday between 5 am and 6 am.





The year
that
wasn't



Shaktikanta Das

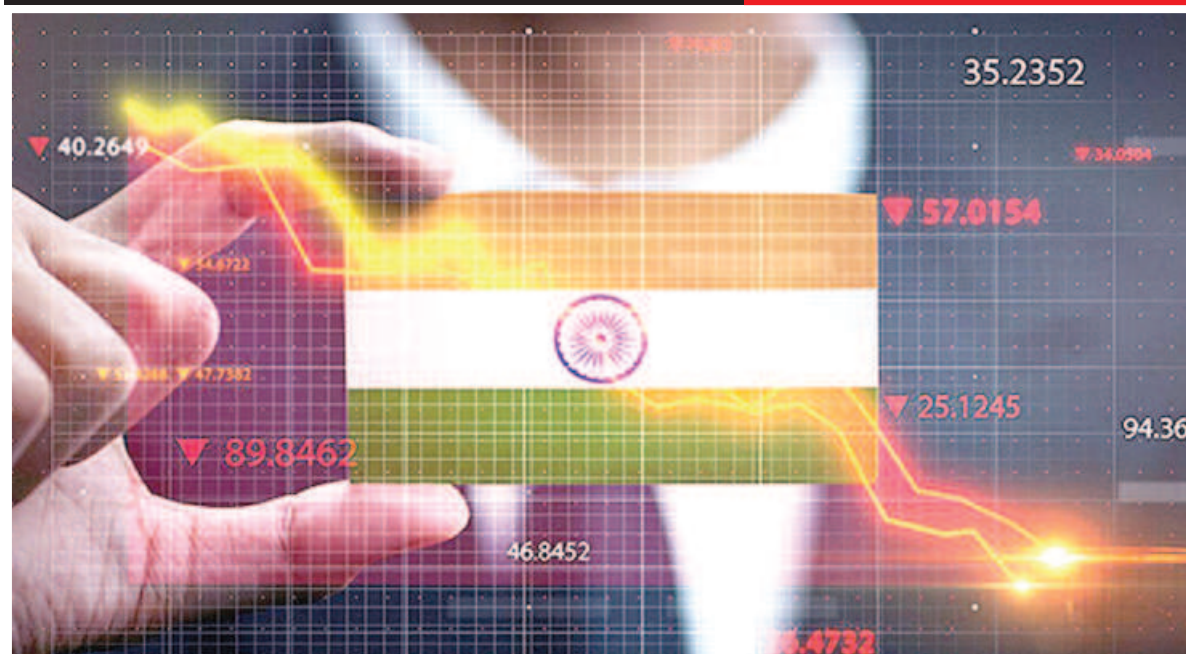
The policy man



This retired 1980-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Tamil Nadu cadre and Narendra Modi's point-man for demonetisation, was appointed as the 25th Governor of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on December 12, 2018, a day after Urjit Patel's abrupt resignation. Roped in to join the RBI amid a tussle between the government and the central bank over several issues, including the latter's autonomy, rich cash reserves and liquidity crises in the economy, Das, a soft-spoken and balanced bureaucrat, has constantly been trying to steer the RBI towards an innovative path to aid recovery. In the recent monetary policy, the RBI maintained status quo and kept the policy repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent, continuing Das' accommodative stance to support growth.

Markets

Covid that crippled India's GDP



It was coronavirus all the way in 2020; Economy down by a whopping 23.9% in April-June

Jeff Bezos

Way beyond Richie Rich



While many businesses have been hit hard by the pandemic, Jeff Bezos, the 56-year-old founder of Amazon, has seen his fortune swell \$74 billion in 2020. Already by far the world's richest person, Bezos has set a fresh record, increasing his fortune by an additional \$13 billion in a single day in July to take his personal wealth to an unprecedented \$189 billion. Bezos had managed to make so much money as millions of people trapped at home by coronavirus lockdowns around the world turned to the online delivery giant to keep themselves fed and entertained. Bezos would have been even richer, if he had not been required to give his ex-wife MacKenzie 25 per cent of his Amazon shares when they divorced last year.

On a roller coaster ride



In the year that was, stock markets exhibited exuberance in the second half of the year what with Benchmark Sensex touching a record 47,000 mark. However, stock markets painted a starkly different picture in the first half with benchmark indices, haunted by the pandemic and associated lockdowns, registering historic falls day in and day out. However, indices - Sensex and Nifty - started regaining their lost glory after lockdown were lifted gradually from June. The markets have seen healthy inflow of the foreign funds from foreign institutional (FIIs) which poured over Rs 1.35 lakh crore in Indian bourses. The IT and healthcare stocks led the rally and remained the biggest gainers.

SIPs



Safe bet

The systematic investment plans saw a good demand in view of the prices of precious metals shooting up constantly. People found it safe and secure to invest in the MFs in view of market volatility. Several regular stock investors too shifted to mutual funds, finding them a safer bet.

Oil, Rupee

Constant uptrend

In the same coin as the stock markets, oil and rupee continued to rise through the year. Rupee touched a peak of 73 against the US Dollar. Despite the ups and downs in the international crude price, the Indian oil prices showed a constant uptrend through the year. Petrol and diesel prices touched record highs.



Saying that coronavirus disease 2019, popular as Covid-19, created havoc in the Indian economy is a gross understatement. The global pandemic triggered by the Chinese-born novel coronavirus crippled India's GDP, with the country's economy contracting by a staggering 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal i.e. April-June period.

This sharp decline in GDP could be attributed to the nationwide lockdown that the Modi government imposed on March 25. Economic activity came to a standstill across the country during the total lockdown, which continued till April 20. Though the central government relaxed restrictions in those geographies where Covid-19 was not detected, the pandemic continued to haunt the economy as the Covid count rose steeply in many States. However, the economic activity picked up after the unlocking phase began on June 1 and several sectors were opened. As a result, the contraction in GDP narrowed down to 7.5 per cent in Q2 (July-September). Revival measures announced by the central government under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan and steps taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also helped the economy.

Covid also took a heavy toll on the global economy as well. In October, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated that global GDP would contract by 4.4 per cent in 2020. With a more potent strain of coronavirus detected in the UK, the impact on the global economy is likely to be far higher than the IMF has forecast so far. For India and its economy, 2020 was a nightmare, to say the least. Some rating agencies forecast that the Indian economy would be back in black during the October-December quarter. But 2020 will still turn out to be the worst year for the Indian economy in many decades.

Reliance



The rise of Jio

The year 2020 has left more bad memories for many in the Indian corporate sector, but for Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries it has been the best. After 20 years of entering into the telecom business, it has emerged as the top telecom company in the country, with Jio raising \$20 billion by selling minority stakes to global players like Facebook, Google and Intel. Reliance, in its AGM in 2020, has promised 100 per cent home-developed 5G technology for India. It has completed its \$15-billion stake sale deal with global oil giant Saudi Aramco in June 2020.

Telangana

Ease of doing biz



Andhra Pradesh retained its top position in the nationwide Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) rankings for 2019, while Telangana slipped to the third spot from the second position it secured in 2018. In Telangana, the State government implemented reforms under the 17 categories, but could not implement the reforms with regard to filling up 90 per cent vacancies in specialised commercial courts, and reforms pertaining to the digitalisation of the transactions in the State Excise. India's position in the ease of doing business ranking had jumped 14 notches last year to 63 among 190 countries. In the last five years, the country has improved its ranking by 67 slots.

Stimulus package

Call for self-reliance

In May 2020, Prime Minister Modi announced Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, a stimulus package worth Rs 20 lakh crore allocated for different sectors to impede the pandemic's adverse effects. He gave the slogan of "go vocal for local" and stated that self-sufficiency is the only path that can pull the country out from the dark phase. The scheme covers five pillars -- economy, infrastructure, technology-driven system, vibrant demography and demand -- and would further involve land, labor, liquidity and laws.



Amazon

Pinnacle of investment

Amazon's growth in online sales skyrocketed in 2020. It also remained as one of the few companies to hire graduates for WFH during the pandemic times. Amazon Web Services has announced setting up an AWS Region with three Availability Zones in Hyderabad at an estimated investment of \$2.77 billion, making it the largest foreign direct investment in Telangana. Telangana has an upwards curve for IT growth and government transparency in policy-making, the company stated.



Andhra Pradesh

Big push for MSMEs

Andhra Pradesh has unveiled its new Industrial Policy 2020-23 with much focus on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME). The new policy plans to develop plug and play infrastructure facilities for MSME firms at affordable rates, besides making available pre-approved land parcels in industrial parks and develop clusters, mega industrial parks and specific industrial parks as per local needs. The State government has also identified 10 key sectors including food processing, textiles, pharma and biotechnology, and aerospace, thrust sectors, for which the government will extensively reach out to investors.



Adani Group

Multiplying wealth

The Adani Group founded by Gautam Adani has done exceptionally well in terms of business in 2020. Its market capitalisation has increased Rs 1 lakh crore, and Adani Green Energy has become the group's most-valued stock. Adani has become the second-richest individual in the country with \$23.7 billion net worth this year. Six listed entities of the group have made money for equity investors in 2020. It has acquired a 74 per cent stake in Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL) from GVK Group, and won concession agreements for six airports in Jaipur, Guwahati, Ahmedabad, Mangaluru, Lucknow and Thiruvananthapuram.

Startups beat the pandemic to become unicorns

India saw close to a dozen startups becoming unicorns in 2020, what with Covid-19 wrecking havoc on the economy. While the pandemic has shaken the world and brought many businesses to a standstill, some Indian startups have shown resilience and quickly changed gears, courtesy the Covid-led shift to digital consumption that provided the necessary tailwind to sectors including education, commerce, healthcare, news and information, and payments. In all, 11 Indian startups - Unacademy, Pine Labs, FirstCry, Zenoti, Nykaa, Postman, Zerodha, Razorpay, Cars24, Dailyhunt and Glance - became unicorns this year. According to a report jointly prepared by TiE-Delhi, a not-for-profit network of entrepreneurs, and global management and strategy consultancy Zinnov, around 75 per cent startups are gradually, but steadily, recovering post-lockdown, while 30 per cent have pivoted to new markets for alternative revenue streams. India is expected to be home to around 62,000 startups, including 100 unicorns, by 2025, despite the huge impact of coronavirus on the country's startup ecosystem, the report said.



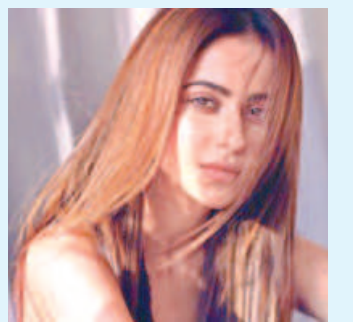
Womenia

TWEET PATROL



RAKUL SINGH
@RAKULPREET

Happpppy happpppy bdayyyy
@AnilKapoor sir .. may you always
remain jhakaas! Have a fantastic ,
healthy , fit and fabulous year!!
Thankyou for being the inspiration
you are 😊😊



Take care your hands this winter

Among the many kinds of moisturisers, hand creams are better than body lotion because they are more nourishing. Lotions, which are primarily water-based, can further dry out the skin because the water evaporates. Creams, which are often oil-based, are more effective after washing hands. Once your hands are dry, immediately use hand cream to seal in the moisture

Most of us face a similar problem during the harsh winter when our hands react terribly to the cold air and harsh winds during peak winters leading to lizard skin. You may also find that dead skin tends to accumulate quicker in the winter and rough patches of skin seem to be all over. This is because in the winter the cell turnover rate is decreased. If you're washing your hands frequently to avoid coronavirus, you could sap whatever natural oils are left in your skin.

The skin on the back of the hands is thin and lacks oil glands. That is why the hands are prone to wrinkles and lines. The nails also become dry and brittle, breaking or chipping easily during peak winters.

Exposures of hands during winters can lead to skin issues like pain, redness, flaking and itching. Ironically, by washing our hands with chemical-

laden soap, we can develop dry cracks in the skin giving bacteria an entry point into our bodies which lead to conditions such as eczema. The outermost layer of our hands is composed of oils and wax, and it acts as both a shield from the outside and a guard that maintains natural moisture in the skin. The skin barrier is a mix of proteins, lipids, and oils. It protects your skin, and how good a job it does is mostly about your genes.

Protect your hands by wearing rubber gloves or mittens for your washing chores and vegetable chopping to retain the moisture you already have. Always wash your hands with tepid water. Make sure the water is not too hot or cold. Limit exposure to high heat. Surgical gloves are easily available at a chemist store.

Apply freshly extracted aloe vera gel on hands and let it dry in the natural environment on your skin. You can apply it twice a week. The best prevention is to begin using aloe vera gel before your hands show signs of dryness. Apply raw milk cream if you have dark knuckles, it will help lighten the color.

Bath time is appropriate for pampering the hands and supplying them with the oil and moisturizing they need. Before your bath, apply warmed oil on the hands and massage it into the skin. This helps to soften the skin. You can use coconut oil, which is very nourishing. Coconut oil is recognized for its anti-inflammatory, moisturizing, and anti-microbial properties. Applying coconut oil over damp hands helps in sealing the mois-

ture. Or, use pure almond oil immediately, after your bath, apply a moisturizing lotion or cream, while the skin is still damp. This helps to seal in moisture. Twice a week, have a pre-bath treatment by mixing ground almonds with curd and a pinch of turmeric. Apply on hands. After 15 minutes, rub the paste gently on the skin and wash it off with water. At night, massage cream on your hands, working it into the skin. You can also try some home remedies to keep the skin soft and smooth:

Among the many kinds of moisturisers, hand creams are better than body lotion because they are more nourishing. Lotions, which are primarily water-based, can further dry out the skin because the water evaporates.

Creams, which are often oil-based, are more effective after washing hands. Once your hands are dry, immediately use hand cream to seal in the moisture.

Take 2 tablespoons sunflower oil, 2 tablespoons lemon juice and 3 tablespoons coarse sugar. Mix together till it becomes a paste. Apply and rub into hands. Wash off after 15 minutes. Do this three

times a week. Take fresh orange peels, pierce them with a fork. Rub the peels on the hands to brighten them.

Choker (wheat bran) and besan (gram flour) can be mixed with turmeric and milk into a paste and applied on the hands. Wash off after 20 minutes. This softens, cleanses and tightens the skin. Mix almond oil and honey in equal parts and massage into the nails and cuticles.



Shahnaz Husain

That's a stylish endeavour!

Finding clothing that fits well is always important. Beyond choosing clothing that works well for your particular shape and colouring, these universal tips can help any woman have only the most wearable items in her wardrobe. You don't necessarily need to adhere to every single one, but following even one or two can make a big difference. Save on the basics: Certain items don't require hefty spending. Basic tank tops, T-shirts and shorts, for example, are available for very reasonable. There's simply no reason to blow your budget on these everyday essentials. In fact, since you tend to wear these pieces regularly, spending less on them at a store means you can buy more of them in one go. If you happen to find a tank top you love at a low price, you can purchase several colors without suffering buyer's remorse. Now that's a stylish endeavor!

Clean your closet: This is one tip almost all women can benefit from at some point or another. Lose the clothes that you never, ever wear. This includes anything that is completely outdated, doesn't flatter your figure, is a leftover trend that you'd soon rather forget or hasn't seen the light of day in years. Maximise their potential, though, by donating them to a worthy charity.

Build the classics: There are no items

worth more in the long run than the classics in your wardrobe. They include a little black dress, a crisp white shirt, a blazer, a pair of flattering jeans, black pants, a smart wool coat, a neutral cardigan and a wrap dress. These are the pieces you can comfortably spend a bit more on. In other words, don't resist a slightly more costly winter coat if it fits you beautifully - it's something you'll likely wear for years.

Trend lightly: Every season brings with it its fair share of trends. Recent seasons have seen everything from tops with sculptured shoulders and gladiator heels to sequins and studs. At some point or another, everything will come back into play again - but don't go overboard on your trend spends. Ideally, the bulk of your outfit should be composed of classics and accented by a trendy piece.

Play up your assets: Whether you have strong, toned arms, great cleavage, killer legs or an hourglass figure, play up your best feature with clothes that really suit your shape. While this is right in line with wearing clothes that fit, it goes a step beyond that to include clothes that do more than just that. Truly flattering clothes will draw attention to your best features while downplaying trouble spots. Don't be afraid to show off what you've got!

Taneira enters 'ready-to-wear' category with the launch of EIRA

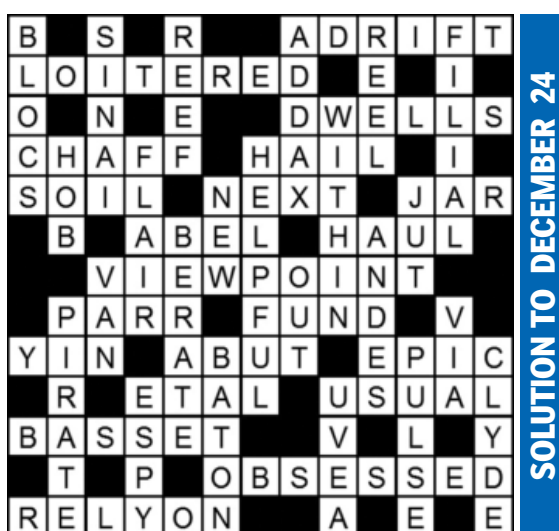
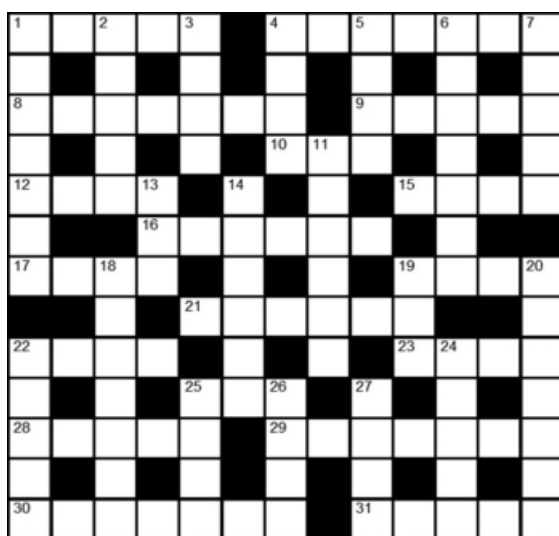
Titan's ethnic-wear brand Taneira enters into the ready-to-wear category with the launch of EIRA. A collection of stitched Kurta sets for the progressive Indian women. Eira brings alive the effervescence of style with a fresh take on silhouettes, vibrant tones, rich embroidery, intricately carved motifs and traditional craft techniques of the age-old weaves in the ready-to-wear segment. The handcrafted kurta sets will be available in Linens, Tussars and soft Silk Ikats.

It encapsulates a stylish range of kurtas teamed up with farzi pants & straight-cut pants along with contrasting dupattas. This entire collection is designed in a festive colour palate comprising of fuchsia, tangerine, raspberry wine, charcoal grey, peach, mustard yellow amongst others. Delicate metallic detailing adds further grace to the outfits.

Handcrafted using pure and authentic fabrics, the collection boasts of multi-functional outfits that caters to various moods throughout the day. Whether it is your Zoom call meeting, a brunch day-out with friends or your best friend's wedding, these gorgeous ensembles hand-woven in silk & linen complement every occasion with an understated elegance.

Rajeshwari Srinivasan, Chief

Operating Officer, Taneira said, "We are excited to enter into the ready-to-wear segment with Eira across the markets. In the last 4 years, Taneira has made a special place amongst loyal customers for its exquisite range of pure & authentic handcrafted sarees from across the country. Complementing the current offering, Eira: presents a unique melange of rich weaves, festive tones & eclectic silhouettes to suit the contemporary styles of the modern Indian woman in the ready-to-wear category. We hope this collection will receive a warm welcome by our discerning customers. In the first phase, we are introducing over 1000 designs and look forward to coming up with new inspirations and designs throughout the year."



SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 24

CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 Waist bands (5)
- 4 Took on rent again (7)
- 8 Foes (7)
- 9 Piquant (5)
- 10 Peep (3)
- 12 Shove (4)
- 15 At a distance (4)
- 16 Charge (6)
- 17 High-pitched tone (4)
- 19 Political alliance (4)
- 21 Probable (6)
- 22 Track circuits (4)
- 23 Send forth (4)
- 25 Consumed (3)
- 28 Corpulent (5)
- 29 Photocopied (7)
- 30 Best possible (7)
- 31 Warble (5)

Down

- 1 Bar's cousin (7)
- 2 Yorkshire cricket venue (5)
- 3 Expectorate (4)
- 4 Grate upon (4)
- 5 Indefinite (4)
- 6 Relaxing (7)
- 7 Laundry room fixture (5)
- 11 Din (6)
- 13 Part of the body (3)
- 14 Habituate (6)
- 18 Feat (7)
- 19 Cricket sundry (3)
- 20 City fortress (7)
- 22 Cowboy's rope (5)
- 24 Mingled (5)
- 25 Elementary particle (4)
- 26 School test (4)
- 27 The city of Paris (4)

SUDOKU

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SOLUTION TO DECEMBER 24

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NEWS ROUNDUP

Neha Kakkar gives ₹1 lakh to Shantabai Pawar aka Warrior Aaji

Singer Neha Kakkar has given one lakh rupees to Shantabai Pawar, who became an internet sensation after a video of her performing Lathi Kathi on a street in Pune went viral. Popular as Warrior Aaji, Pawar said, "I'm performing since I was eight years old. People mostly remain indoors due to Covid, so I clang utensils to make them aware of my performance. I now take care of 10 orphan girls and provide for

them. There are times when I go hungry in order to feed these girls."

Now in her eighties, she also mentioned that she faces trouble doing the Lathi Kathi act due to physical limitations.

She shared her story during an appearance on the show "Indian Idol", which has Neha as one of the judges.

Inspired by her, Neha offered Rs 1 lakh to Pawar, to support her for good work.



Trump packs a punch

WHOEVER thought Trump is not a fighter? He is known to test his moods and fortunes till the very end. He thought, and still thinks so, that his victory has been snatched away illegally by Biden and so he does not want to spare him. The Democrats are worried now over the damage that Trump could do to them and their future prospects of coming to power in the last days of his White House stay. When the Congress passed the COVID relief package, it miscalculated once again. Trump did not say no to it but sought an amendment to the \$892 billion relief package to be given to people.

Taking to Twitter as usual, he said the

proposed amount was a disgrace and that the Bill also contained wasteful items. The Congress has passed a Bill that got nothing to do with Covid, he tweeted. The bill includes one-off \$600 payments to most Americans, but Trump said the figure should be \$2,000. The Republican president, who leaves office on January 20, had been expected to sign the sprawling legislation into law. But in his message from the White House, Trump criticised spending in the bill on other countries, arguing that this money should go to struggling Americans.

Trump sought to embarrass Biden and the Democrats and place them in a

soup over the Bill. He picked up allocations made to non-Americans in doing so. He said: "This bill contains \$85.5m for assistance to Cambodia, \$134m to Burma, \$1.3bn for Egypt and the Egyptian military, which will go out and buy almost exclusively Russian military equipment, \$25m for democracy and gender programs in Pakistan, \$505m to Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama."

The president also questioned why the Kennedy Center, a performing arts complex in Washington DC, was set to receive \$40m when it is not even open, and more than \$1bn has been allocated to museums and galleries in the capital. As Trump says the Congress seemed to be having "plenty of money for foreign countries, lobbyists and special interests, while sending the bare minimum

to the American people who need it. It wasn't their fault. It was China's fault." "I am asking Congress to amend this bill and increase the ridiculously low \$600 to \$2,000 or \$4,000 for a couple." "I'm also asking Congress to immediately get rid of the wasteful and unnecessary items from this legislation and to send me a suitable bill, or else the next administration will have to deliver a COVID relief package." If the Capitol Hill did not see it coming, it was its fault.

As for the technicalities, Trump has chosen the right way of doing it - killing the Bill. If he were to reject it, the lawmakers would have been able to get it passed. He refused to sign it. The Bill dies now. As for Trump he simply followed his 'America First' policy. If the Democrats insist on the Bill, what would Americans think of them? A real Catch-22 situation for them!



Vaccine crime threat and Covid-19 pandemic

P SAIRAM

THE expectation of the development of a viable Covid-19 vaccine has generated global attention. The anticipated arrival of a genuine Covid-19 vaccine has already inspired criminal activities and will likely be exacerbated once vaccines become available. Trafficking of pharmaceutical products takes place on a large scale and is highly lucrative for the organised crime groups involved. Organised crime has reacted swiftly to adapt its methods and product offerings to the Covid-19 pandemic.

What is happening?

The World Health Organization detected a falsified influenza vaccine in Mexico in October 2020. The fake vaccine had a different batch number and expiry dates than genuine products. The alleged manufacturing pharmaceutical company confirmed that they did not produce or distribute this product.

Fake vaccine

The detection of a fake influenza vaccine confirms that criminals seize opportunities as soon as they present themselves. Owing to the pandemic, the demand for the influenza vaccine has been higher than usual and their risks being a shortage. Criminals have reacted quickly by producing counterfeit influenza vaccines. The same scenario is also likely to happen when Covid-19 vaccines do become available. Criminals may attempt to exploit the current global focus on Covid-19 vaccines. Criminals may spread disinformation about vaccines to defraud individuals and companies. When a Covid-19 vaccine does become available, it will likely not be available for sale online. However, fraudulent pharmaceutical products advertised as allegedly treating or preventing Covid-19 are already on sale, both offline and online.

Phony brands

Some dark web markets feature advertisements for fake Covid-19 vaccines. The number of offers is limited at this stage but will likely increase once a legitimate vaccine becomes available. Criminals advertise their fake vaccines using the brands of genuine pharmaceutical companies that are already in the final stages of testing. Once a legitimate vaccine enters the market, counterfeited versions of the specific vaccine brand are expected to circulate rapidly. Fake vaccines may even have a wider-reaching impact if new outbreaks emerge in communities assumed to be vaccinated. Counterfeit vaccines may circulate on illicit markets or be introduced to the legal market, as occurs regularly with other counterfeit pharmaceuticals. The expected high demand for Covid-19 vaccines will likely attract organized crime groups seeking to capitalize on the pandemic situation and subsequent vaccination campaigns. For example, criminals may resort to illegally refilling empty vials. Therefore, procedures for the correct disposal of vials by grinding or incineration will have to be properly enforced.

Vulnerable supply chains

When demand exceeds supply, criminals seek to divert pharmaceutical products from the legal market due to the substantial profits on offer. High demand may prompt some people to seek out alternative sources of the vaccine rather than official government-sanctioned vaccination program. Genuine Covid-19 vaccines will be highly valuable commodities and their supply chains (storage, transportation and delivery) will be at risk of being targeted by criminals seeking to obtain these pharmaceutical products. Organised crime groups might target transit containing Covid-19 vaccines for hijacking and theft. Transport associations are preparing for the large-scale logistical effort of transporting and distributing the vaccines taking into consideration security risks. Diversion from the legal market may also pose risks to public health, as vaccines found outside the cold chain are not considered safe.

Mushrooming websites

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, cyber threat actors have capitalised on global interest surrounding the virus to target users. Early in 2020, thousands of website domains related to Covid-19 were registered, and many of these websites were subsequently used to host malware and for other fraudulent activity. Phishing emails using Covid-19 lures have also been sent to users in an attempt to convince the recipient to divulge sensitive or financial information, or open malicious links or attachments. These same tactics continue to be employed, now with Covid-19 vaccine themes and lures. Covid-19 vaccine-themed phishing emails may include subject lines that make reference to vaccine registration, information about vaccine coverage, locations to receive the vaccine, ways to reserve a vaccine, and vaccine requirements. Links and attachments included in various phishing campaigns may employ brand spoofing and impersonate well-known and trusted entities, such as government agencies, healthcare providers, or pharmaceutical companies.

Thus, misinformation and disinformation regarding Covid-19 vaccines are already circulating, particularly on social media platforms, and will likely continue for the foreseeable future. It is imperative to only seek out vaccine information from official sources, such as the centres for disease control and prevention, World Health Organisation, or your healthcare provider.

(The author is a security researcher)

UP celebrates Ayodhya, gets flak over Hathras

SUBHASHIS MITTRA

STREAMS of jobless migrants heading home from the cities after the coronavirus lockdown, a rape and murder case that shook the nation and a controversial new law to stop what the right wing calls "love jihad". These grabbed headlines from Uttar Pradesh during the past year. Yet, the defining image of 2020 could very well be the bhoomi puja in Ayodhya for a Ram temple, performed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, wearing a mask to guard against COVID-19. The ceremony in August was watched live on TV by millions, just months after the Supreme Court settled the decades-old land dispute over the site on which the Babri Masjid stood till 1992.

Ayodhya continued to remain in focus after the ground-breaking. In Lucknow, a special CBI court recorded the final statements of 23 people including BJP stalwarts L K Advani, M M Joshi, Kalyan Singh and Uma Bharti who were accused of a conspiracy to demolish the mosque. It acquitted all of them. As the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust went about the process of getting work started on the site, another trust unveiled the blueprint of a mosque which will come up in the district's Dhanpur village, replacing the Babri Masjid.

It will look nothing like the mosque demolished by kar sevaks - there will be no minaret and the dome will look unconventional. The complex will house a 200-bed hospital. The PM returned to Ayodhya later in the year to promise all-round development and watch the banks of Saryu lit up by 6,06,569 earthen lamps, an event which got the pilgrim town into the Guinness As life returned to a normal of sorts, after the lockdown, a bloody ambush of policemen in Kanpur district shocked the state.

Gangster Vikas Dubey and his men mowed down eight policemen with gunfire from the rooftops in Bikru village where the team had gone to arrest him shortly after midnight on July 2. Eight days later, Dubey was shot dead by police when he was allegedly trying to escape from their custody while being brought back to Kanpur after his arrest in Ujjain. Five of his accomplices had already been eliminated in similar circumstances since the ambush.

In September, the alleged gangrape of a 20-year-old Dalit woman in a Hathras village put the Yogi Adityanath government on the back foot. The woman succumbed to her injuries at a hospital in Delhi. She was cremated near her home at a hurried funeral in the dead of the night, with her family alleging that local



authorities forced them to do so. Across the country, there were angry protests. Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra were among those headed towards Hathras, provoking confrontations with police on the way. The Supreme Court too came into the picture.

The CBI has recently filed a charge sheet against four men, accusing them of rape and murder. Around the same time, similar cases of crime against women were also being reported from elsewhere in the state, providing ammunition to opposition parties to target the BJP government. But they could not swing the mood of voters when bye-elections to fill seven UP assembly seats took place in November. In the so-called referendum on the Adityanath government, the

ruling BJP retained the six seats it held earlier.

In the aftermath of violence during protests earlier against the citizenship amendment law, the Uttar Pradesh government armed itself with a stringent law to recover compensation from those accused of damaging public and private property during riots. A PIL was filed in the High Court against it. Another new law has created much controversy. The state government brought the UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020 amid a right-wing chorus over "love jihad" - the alleged conversion of Hindu women lured or forced into marriages by Muslim men.

The law stipulates a punishment of up to 10 years for forcible or fraudulent conversions, in-

cluding those involving a marriage. Since its promulgation in November, there has been a flurry of cases of UP Police rushing in to stop interfaith weddings, allegedly violating it. The Lucknow Police even interfered in an all-Muslim marriage, after getting a wrong tip-off. By far, the biggest challenge of the year was COVID-19. Nearly six lakh cases have been reported in the state and over 8,000 lives lost so far. But the state government did get praise from the WHO for its COVID management strategy, calling it an example for others to follow.

According to the State government figures, over 35 lakh migrant workers came home to Uttar Pradesh during the coronavirus lockdown - an influx which stretched its resources. The Adityanath government set

up a separate labour commission to find jobs for them. There were efforts as well to give the economy a boost. The government said 23 MoUs were signed at a DefExpo are expected to bring in an investment of Rs 50,000 crore, generating up to three lakh jobs. The prime minister gave the state the sobriquet of "Express Pradesh", recognising the expressway projects under progress

The Lucknow Municipal Corporation bonds are now listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange, the event marked by Adityanath ringing the bell at the BSE. The CM created another flutter in Mumbai, when he promoted the Film City planned in Noida, triggering charges that he was trying to snatch business from Bollywood.

rail bridge over Musi must be a thing of the past for people visiting Hyderabad.

SLakshmi, Hyderabad

Church should shed its ostrich-like attitude

THE verdict of a special CBI court in Kerala convicting Father Thomas M Kottoor and Sister Sephy and sentencing them to life is a tribute to the long arm of the law. It is a case of justice long delayed, but not denied eventually. It will give the victim's brother, members of her wider family and all those who grieved the tragic death and fought for justice a sense of closure. The details of how the 21-year-old Sister Abhaya was killed in cold blood don't bear thinking about.

The court found out that the convicts were together in a compromising situation on the night March 26, 1992 and bludgeoned Sister Abhaya to death when she accidentally saw them. Life is so unfathomable that it is very hard for us to comment on crime and punishment. Justice must be tempered with mercy. There seems to be more than a legal angle to the crime. The convicts did

not spare the accidental discoverer of their copulation because sex was so forbidden.

The church should ask itself whether it is necessary to be so rigid on sexual mores and stigmatize sexual gratification. Catholic priests and nuns take vows of celibacy when they are inducted into religious orders. But then celibacy is against the law of nature and priests and nuns do not cease to be men and women in flesh and blood or overcome biological urges or the desire for copulation just by taking celibacy vows and donning religious robes. Its abolition will bring about some desirable changes in the lives and lifestyles of those tasked with ministry in the church.

Normalising or legitimising what is now regarded as forbidden love through reforms could help abate crimes emanating from the negative feelings of fear, guilt and shame. There is no valid reason to keep the doors to the institution of marriage shut to anyone on any ground. Sex is something 'ordained' for pleasure and procreation. It is life-affirming and need not be associated with sin. The church should stop adopting an ostrich-like attitude towards human sexuality and bring about reforms in tune with the times.

G David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

Wanted, faster justice

IT is appreciable that the court had taken up the case of 21-year-old novitiate Abhaya who was murdered in a convent after the People's Action Council led by activist Jomon Puthenpurackal sought intervention of the case while the police and crime branch hurriedly concluded the case as a suicide. It is surprising to note how the police and the crime branch had concluded the death of novitiate, Abhaya as a suicide.

It is generally seen that even the case of a suicide would be probed on the lines of whether it is suicide or murder and if so what are the reasons that forced the victim to commit suicide. In this case it seems thorough enquiry had not been made and the evidence also is destroyed. But finally with the intervention of court the culprits are confirmed and punishment of life had been awarded to the murderers. Though the case was run for 28 years which is very abnormal, justice has been done to the victim.

The courts must find ways to reduce the period of judgement by bringing some innovative reforms in the laws. The cases must be prioritised according to the seriousness and judgement should be

delivered as soon as possible by cutting short the number of adjournments especially in the cases of rape and murder so that people should not lose faith on the judicial system.

TSN Rao, Bhimavaram

J&K politics turns interesting

DUE to the absence of Assembly in the state J&K will act as a link between the people and the government. These elections have reopened the political space and restored the link that was effectively snapped due to the dissolution of Assembly in November 2018 and there after abrogation of Article 370 on August 5 last year. Even though it was a local bodies election both the BJP and Gupkar alliance turned it into referendum on these elections. Naturally the PAGD has projected its victory as a resounding rejection of all that the Centre has done in the state over the last year and a half, and as support for its own demand that special status and statehood be restored.

Yash Pal Ralhan, Jalandhar

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Indebted to Pulivendula: AP CM

- Lays stones for a slew of developmental works, including RTC bus stand, depot and 76 BT roads
- States that YSR Govt Medical College works will begin in Feb
- Blames the previous govt for ignoring R&R of Gandikota reservoir oustees

KADAPA

CHIEF Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy on Thursday laid foundation stone for several developmental projects worth Rs 5,000 crore as part of his visit to the district. Speaking at a public meeting on the occasion, the Chief Minister said he will be forever indebted to Pulivendula.

The Chief Minister laid foundation for the RTC bus stand, depot to be constructed at a cost of Rs 34.20 crore, along with a new building for BC welfare girls residential school and other developmental works of local temples. Also, a foundation stone was laid for the 76 new BT roads which are being undertaken under the Pulivendula Area Development Authority, Gandikota-CBR, Gandikota-Paidipalem lift scheme, and for the construction of four model police stations.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that the projects initiated in 2019 have been progressing well, where the works of YSR Government Medical College will take off from February. He said that the works of 132 KV substation in Nallacheruvupalle village were underway and promised to start the irrigation and drinking water works in uranium-affected villages at the earliest. Besides these, additional buildings will be constructed at the JNTU Engineering College and a new building for Vempalle Degree Colleges will also be established. Further, the bed capacity of the community hospital in Vempalli will be increased from 30 to 50. The Chief Minister stated that 18 new temples will be constructed alongside the development of 51 existing temples and the works of in-



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy lays foundation for Intelligent SEZ Development Limited at industrial park in Pulivendula on Thursday

‘No compromise on transparency’

- CM sets the stone for Intelligent SEZ Development Limited being set up in Industrial Development Park in Pulivendula at a cost of ₹70 cr
- Says Apache leather industry began its journey in AP with the support of his late father YSR
- Calls upon multinational companies to choose AP as their destination as the govt is providing all infra facilities and corruption-free environment

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KADAPA

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy said his government was committed for promotion of transparency in governance without any compromise to raise living standards of poor and downtrodden people in the state.

Addressing a gathering after laying stone for Intelligent SEZ Development Limited of BESTEK Footwear India Pvt Ltd coming up at a cost of Rs 70 crores at Industrial Development Park in Pulivendula on Thursday, Jagan Mohan Reddy said

that the government formulated policies balancing growth among different regions and sections of people. While congratulating SEZ for establishing unit in Pulivendula, the Chief Minister recalled that Apache leather industry had started its successful journey in AP with the support of his father late YS Rajasekhara Reddy in 2006 and was providing employment to many youth. He said that the state was welcoming the investors by providing infrastructure facilities like power, water, land, skilled manpower and corruption-free and transparent government. He said multinational

companies can establish their units without fear as government is always with them in extending full cooperation.

Saying that India is a favourite destination for Taiwanese businesses, Apache Foot wear director general Beng Wang said that his company was wishing continued growth of Taiwan-India economic relations. “I am sure my trip to AP would help to promote familiarity and friendship between two sides and will help welcome and encourage more investments from Taiwan,” he said. Wang invited Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to visit Taiwan next year.

He also laid foundation for Institute of Rural Management Anand (IMRA) at AP Centre for Advance Research on Live Stock (APCARL) in Pulivendula.

Deputy Chief Minister Amrutha Basha, district in-charge minister A Suresh, Kadapa MP YS Avinash Reddy, APIC chairperson and MLA R K Roja and others were present.

tegrated sports complex are underway in Pulivendula.

He said that the lift irrigation works on Gandikota reservoir will start in March and micro irrigation works worth Rs 1,256 crore will be executed. He said that it was hard to maintain the full capacity water level of Srisaillam barrage in order to take water

through Pothireddypadu. In the last 15 years, full water at Srisaillam was seen for only about 20-25 days. The previous government failed to provide R&R (rehabilitation and resettlement) for Gandikota and thus the reservoir was never filled to its full capacity of 26 tmc ft. The state government had paid Rs 665 crore for rehabili-

itation and filled the reservoir with 26.85 tmc ft water. Similarly, for Chitravathi reservoir, the state government paid Rs 247 crore under R&R and filled it with 10.13 tmc ft of water. The Chief Minister directed the authorities to resolve the R&R problems of the displaced families Gandikota and Chitravathi projects.

17,000 new townships to come up in State

- Minister Botcha says distribution of lands worth ₹23,535 cr will be start from today
- For those having land, ₹1.8 lakh will be given for construction of house

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

CLOSE to 17,000 townships will be formed across the state as part of the distribution of house site pattas to 30 lakh beneficiaries, municipal administration and urban development Minister Botcha Satyanarayana announced.

Ahead of the distribution of pattas to the poor, the minister said lands valued Rs 23,535 crore will be given away to the poor. “To those who already are in possession of land, Rs 1.8 lakh will be given to construct a house. None will be missed out in the process. Simultaneously, founda-



Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister Botcha Satyanarayana speaking to media in Visakhapatnam on Thursday

tion stone for 15.6 lakh houses will be laid as a part of the first phase and 345-sft house will be given away to each beneficiary at a cost of Rs 1,” he said addressing the media here on Thursday.

The biggest exercise of distributing house site pattas to 30 lakh BPL families will commence on Friday without any political discrimination, he said.

Terming the massive programme as a historic moment, Satyanarayana said no other government had ever ventured into such an endeavour.

He said the state government has taken a big leap towards reaching out to the poor unlike the previous government that ensured that the poor remained poor. “Despite levelling baseless allegations, TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu could not stop Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy from fulfilling his poll promises,” he added.

Instead of hosting online meetings, the minister pointed out, Naidu should visit villages and then pass a remark on the government. “I am sure, people will shoo him away till the boundary of the hamlet,” he claimed.

With the house sites distribution initiative, Satyanarayana said the state was going to wear a festive look for 15 days as many poor are going to own a house which remained a distant dream till now.

State logs 357 fresh cases

AMARAVATI

THE total Covid-19 cases in the state crossed the 8.80 lakh mark on Thursday with 357 more people testing positive for the infection.

After a sum of 1.14 crore sample tests, 8,80,075 turned positive for coronavirus at an overall positivity rate of 7.67 per cent, the latest government bulletin said.

The total recoveries increased to 8,69,124 as 355 patients got cured in 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday.

The overall Covid-19 toll in the state rose to 7,089 as four more succumbed during the period, the bulletin said.

The active case count fell to 3,862.

East Godavari district reported 58 fresh cases while Chittoor and Krishna added 54 each, followed by Guntur 42.

The remaining nine districts added less than 30 new cases each. Anantapur, Krishna, Kadapa and West Godavari districts reported one more fatality each on Thursday.

TDP chief demands CBI probe into Sneha Latha’s murder

- Says there is no safety and respect for women under Jagan regime
- Alleges that Tadipatri attack on JC Diwakar Reddy is aimed at diverting attention from atrocities

AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday described the burning alive of Sneha Latha in Anantapur district as a ghastly incident that was more horrific than even the Nirbhaya and Disha atrocities in the country.

Blaming the YSRCP government’s negligence for such atrocities, Naidu demanded an inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to bring out the

facts and to nab the culprits responsible for the girl’s murder. Over 400 horrific attacks were committed on women, girls and even girlchildren in the state which needed to be probed by CBI.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP chief asked why Chief Minister Y S Jaganmohan Reddy did not go to Anantapur to initiate immediate action and to console the victimised family even though he was currently touring the neighbouring district of Kadapa.

Had Jagan responded and taken stern action against the culprits in the first two or three incidents, the law and order situation would not have slipped into this sorry state now. “Very strangely, Jagan was not opening his mouth on atrocities being committed on women. The Chief Minister spoke of how concerned about safety of girls since he too has daughters but he is not taking

action against the perpetrators of atrocities,” he said.

Stating that the Disha Act was a non-existent law, Naidu said that the Jagan Mohan Reddy regime was not even using the existing laws to punish the culprits. The YSRCP modus operandi was to encourage these anti-social elements and miscreants in order to use them only for its political ends. He said even the attack in Tadipatri on Thursday against TDP leader JC Diwakar Reddy’s house was just a ploy to divert the attention of the public from the burning issue of Sneha Latha murder.

In Ongole, a disabled girl was burnt to death in her tricycle itself but the government and the police were terming it as a suicide. How can a disabled girl get petrol and set herself ablaze in her own tricycle, he asked adding that the Chief Minister was not caring to break his silence on such ghastly incidents.

VAIKUNTA DWARA DARSHAN

Locals throng in large numbers for offline tokens

- TTD allotted one lakh SSD tokens for locals (10,000 per day) and 20,000 Rs 300 special entry tickets daily for 10 days event
- Braving chill weather, locals with families of women and children patiently stand in queue line three to four hours before the commencement of issuing of tokens early in the morning

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

LOCALS turned up in large numbers to avail the offline tokens started here on Thursday for Vaikunta Dwara Darshan in Tirumala temple from December 25 to January 3.

Braving chill weather, locals with families of women and children patiently stood in the line



Large number of devotees stand in long queue lines for Vaikunta Dwara Darshan tickets at Municipal office in Tirupati on Thursday

three to four hours before the commencement of the issuing of token early in the morning.

Elaborate arrangements on the part of TTD saw the issuance of the SSD (time slotted Sarva Darshan) tokens at five locations in the city going on smoothly.

Heavy rush was witnessed in the counters at the beginning of the issuing of tokens to public in

the morning at 6 and thinned down after five hours and in some counters the queue line was empty.

However, it is learnt that in some locations, the issuing of SSD token started well before the issuing to general public, to enable select people get the SSD tokens for the first two days i.e. Ekadasi and Dwadasi (Dec 25 and 26). Con-

trary to the repeated assertions by TTD senior officials including Executive Officer Dr K S Jawahar Reddy making it clear that the issuing of SSD tokens is only for locals to have Vaikunta Dwara Darshan, tokens were issued to non-locals who stood in the queue lines at the counters, much to their elation and surprise. TTD allotted one lakh SSD tokens for locals i.e. 10,000 tokens per day for the 10-day Vaikunta Dwara Darshanam while 20,000 tokens daily of Rs 300 special entry tickets were issued online for ten days i.e. total of two lakh tickets.

TTD chairman YV Subba Reddy said 75,000 SSD tokens were issued at the counters set up for locals Vaikunta Dwara darshanam on the first day Thursday.

Reddy said that all the special entry tickets quota (daily 20,000) and donation based Srivani Trust break darshan tickets (daily 2,000) were over. In addition, TTD issuing about 4,000 tickets to VIPs including protocol for Vaikunta Dwara Darshanam.

Let’s talk, but not MSP: Govt

Continued from P1

Aggarwal’s letter has come in response to the Samyukt Kisan Morcha’s December 23 letter, through which it had informed the government that the farmer unions are ready for talks but asked it to send a “concrete proposal in writing instead repeating rejected proposals around meaningless amendments.”

In its new letter, the government reiterated that it is ready to find a “logical solution” to the issues raised by protesting farmer unions. Aggarwal said it is important to keep all doors open for discussion for the government. It is the responsibility of the government to listen to farmer organisations and farmers and the government cannot deny this.

The government with an open heart has held several rounds of discussion with farmer unions under the Samyukt Kisan Morcha and urged them to choose a date as per their convenience for

the next round of talks, he added.

Thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana, UP and some other states are protesting against the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

Enacted in September, the three farm laws have been projected by the central government as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and allow farmers to sell anywhere in the country.

However, the protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of Minimum Support Price and do away with the mandi system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

Tagore’s vision essence of Atmanirbhar Bharat mission: PM

Continued from P1

The prime minister said Visva-Bharati was the embodiment of the vision and the hard work of the Nobel laureate and a “venerable source of constant energy to the country.” He said, today, India was spreading Visva-Bharati’s message to the world. “India is today leading the world in the field of environment protection through the International Solar Alliance and is the only country moving at a rapid pace to achieve the goals of the Paris Accord,” he asserted. He recalled the role of the leaders of the Bhakti Movement like Guru Nanak, Kabir and Surdas, who sowed the seeds of the freedom movement long before it started in the 19th and 20th century.

The Bhakti Movement, he asserted, strengthened India’s spiritual evolution and collective consciousness. He said after the long period of the Bhakti Movement arrived Ramkrishna Paramhansa who discovered Swami Vivekananda who was a “blend of Bhakti (devotion), Gyan (knowledge) and Karma (action).” “The Bhakti Movement united us, the Movement for Knowledge gave us intellectual strength and the Movement of Karma, exemplified by the likes of Shivaji, Maharana Pratap, Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi and Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki gave us the spirit and courage to fight for our rights.” He said at a time when India was fighting to win freedom from the colonial rule, the need was felt for an ideological movement and to prepare a new generation that could play a major role in rebuilding India. “Educational institutions and universities like Visva-Bharati and others gave a new direction to the freedom movement.”

No backdoor talks with India underway: Pakistan FM

Continued from P1

Pakistan maintains that Indian forces have recently targeted a UN vehicle, while various violations have caused loss of lives of civilians living along the border along with damages to their properties.

“Indian troops unprovoked ceasefire violation in Tatta Pani and Jandrot Sectors along the Line of Control, deliberately targeting civil population with mortars and heavy weapons,” the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Pak-

istan has said that the shelling from the Indian side came hours before Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited the frontline troops at the LoC.

“These egregious violations of international law reflect consistent Indian attempts to escalate the situation along the LoC and are a threat to regional peace and security,” the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. While Pakistan accuses India for the violations, New Delhi has denied Islamabad’s claims. (IANS)

Bitter cold across north India

Continued from P1

In the national capital, the minimum temperature remained below five degrees Celsius for the second consecutive day, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The Safdarjung Observatory, which provides

representative data for the city, recorded a minimum of 4.5 degrees Celsius, three notches below normal, and a maximum of 23.1 degrees Celsius. Cold wave conditions are likely in parts of Delhi over the next two days and the mercury is expected to drop to three Celsius on Friday.

APPOINTMENT OF VCs ELUDES VARSITIES IN TELANGANA

Officials of KU say, "All that is needed is a nod from the higher ups from State government, so that the university can issue notification for filling vacant posts

VRC PHANIHARAN
HYDERABAD

ALL the groundwork is said to have been done. But the process has been going on for the past one year. However, "None of us have any idea when our university will have a regular vice-chancellor," said a senior faculty member of Osmania University.

It is not the lone case, but ten of the State universities have been waiting for regular vice-chancellors for more than a year. Because no appointment of VCs is affecting the appointment of the teaching staff.

Speaking to The Hans India, sources in the State Higher Education Department (SHED) said, "Initially, the appointment of VCs had come to a halt by August 2019, as several universities do not have executive councils." After much efforts the State government had completed constituting the executive council taking one whole year, by the end of September 2020.

State Education Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy had an-

❖ Governor, CM and higher authority interventions showed no impact on the process

❖ 10 State universities waiting for regular VCs and filling up of faculty positions



nounced in the second week of September this year that the search committees were going to meet on the issue of appointment of vice-chancellors for the 10 State universities.

Governor and Chancellor of the State Universities Dr Tamil-sai Soundararajan had further asked the State government for the early completion of the ap-

pointment of VCs. Following this, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had also directed the State Higher Education Department officials to take steps to speed up the process.

A SHED official privy to the process pointed out that "All the high in the State government-Governor, Chief Minister, Education Minister have made an-

nouncements and assured that the process would be completed soon. Besides, the UGC named its nominees to take part in the process of appointment of VCs."

It may be mentioned here that so far the entire process of appointment of VCs and filling faculty vacancies saw the change of two education ministers and three education secretaries.

However, there is no sign or clue as to when the process will be completed and the State universities will get their full-time VCs. Further, officials in the Kakatiya University said that the university had completed all the processes from its end and "All that is needed is a nod from the higher ups from the State government so that the university can issue notification for the filling vacant posts."

But, when pointed out that the State government has already made it clear that it had given clearance for filling up teaching vacancies in the State universities two years ago. Then, why do they need a new clearance, the official was clueless.

RBI warns people against digital money lending agencies

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN the wake of increasing cases of harassment by digital money lending agencies in Telangana, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has warned the consumers not to fall in the trap of unauthorised App money lenders which promise instant loans at exorbitant rates of interest.

In an official statement, the India's apex bank said that "Members of public are hereby cautioned not to fall prey to such unscrupulous activities and verify the antecedents of the company/firm offering loans online or through mobile apps."

The RBI cautioned people should never share the copies of their KYC documents with unidentified persons and unverified/unauthorised Apps.

Asks people to not to fall prey to the unauthorised App money lenders which promise instant loans at exorbitant rates of interest

- Urges people to not to share details of their KYC documents
- Tells victims to lodge online complaint by using Sachet portal



People have been requested to inform the law enforcement agencies in case any illegal agency offering instant loans. People can also file an online complaint by using Sachet portal.

The central bank said that all digital lending platforms used on behalf of banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies

(NBFCs) should disclose name of the bank or NBFC upfront to the customers. The names of and addresses of the NBFCs registered with the Reserve Bank can be accessed at the RBI website and the portal for filing complaints against the entities regulated by the RBI can be accessed through here, the official statement said.

VH bats for BC as next TPCC chief

HYDERABAD

SENIOR Telangana Congress leader V Hanumantha Rao has urged the party leadership that new party chief in the State should belong to the backward classes or weaker sections and should not go to any leader who has come from other parties. "The post of TPCC president must be given only to the core and original Congress leaders of the state and not to any leader who came in from

other parties. I have already written a letter to party chief Sonia Gandhi describing the situation," Rao said. He said various political parties have been focusing on giving strength to people from backward classes. "The leaders from backward classes are being given higher positions in the parties. If the post of party chief is given to leaders from BC, SC or from the minority community, the Congress Party would be strengthened in the Telangana," he said.

6 involved in ATM burglaries arrested

Rs 20.28 lakh worth cash and other items have been recovered from their possession



HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGA REDDY

SIX members of an interstate gang involved in multiple ATM burglary cases in various states including the recent Abdullapurmet ATM burglary case were caught by the Rachakonda police on Thursday. Cash, vehicles, mobiles and other property worth Rs 20.28 lakh was recovered from their possession.

According to the Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat, the gang had last week broke open into an Indicash ATM centre at Abdullapurmet and decamped with Rs 35,800.

The arrested persons were identified as Waris Khan (23) and Mohd Mohin Khan (23) of Rajasthan, Munazeer alias Munna (23), Mufeed Khan (38) and Waheed Khan (33) of Haryana, Md Zahir Khan (19) of

Uttar Pradesh and four others, Khader Khan (35), Azhu, Haris and Irfan are absconding, said the CP. The gang first stole a Tata Sumo vehicle and went to Aunagar where they stole a gas cutter before heading to the ATM centre at Abdullapurmet. They sprayed black paint on the closed CCTV camera and later cut open the cash dispensing machine to steal the cash. Bhagwat said, adding that the gang was involved in eight ATM burglary cases in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh this year. Previously the gang was involved in 20 cases in different parts of the country. The Commissioner said the gang preferred to escape from the spot of crime on motorcycles or cars and after travelling some distance, would take interstate trucks to reach their destination.

TS sees 574 new Covid cases

HYDERABAD

A total of 574 new COVID-19 cases, 384 discharges and two death were reported in Telangana on Wednesday, as per the state health department. The State Health Department in its Thursday bulletin said the total count of coronavirus cases in the State has increased to 2,83,556 including 2,75,217 discharges and 1,524 deaths. The active cases currently stand at 6,815

Out of the total of 2,83,556 cases, 1,98,489 are asymptomatic while 85,067 are symptomatic. Telangana's recovery rate stands at 97.05 per cent and the case fatality rate is at 0.53 per cent. As many as 44,516 samples were tested on Monday and 4,487 patients are kept under home/institutional isolation.

Meanwhile, India recorded 24,712 new cases in the last 24 hours, taking the country's coronavirus count to 1,01,23,778 on Thursday, according to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. With 312 deaths in the last 24 hours, the cumulative toll has now reached 1,46,756.

At present, there are only 2,83,849 active cases. As daily new recoveries continue to outnumber fresh infections, the overall recoveries reached 96,93,173 after 29,791 recoveries.

Kongarakalan submerged in flood water since two months

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGA REDDY

KONGARAKALAN in Adibatla Municipality has been submerged with rain water for the



past two months. The flood waters have stood still since September partially inundating many houses in the area. Three houses were collapsed after foundations were deteriorated by flood water.

Local residents said that the area is still half submerged with

September floods, foundations of houses are gradually deteriorating because of the inundation. With stagnant water and muck all over the place, the roads have become breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

They also said that earlier the water would flow down to Firangi Naala but now as it is illegally occupied the water has no way but to stay in the colony. The stagnant water was measured up to 6 feet and residents said

that after pumping the water with a 10HP motor only 3 feet was cleared in 45 days.

Local Councillor Mahender said that the only solution for this problem will be diverting the water to Firangi Naala and asked the officials to take proper action as soon as possible.

Govt will distribute clothes on festivals : Vikarabad MLA



HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIKARABAD

VIKARABAD MLA Dr Methuku Anand distributed presents to the Christians on the eve of Christmas at Sri Shakti Bhavan in Dharur mandal.

On this occasion, the MLA said that the State government has been providing clothes and other arrangements to people irrespective of religions with the intention of making all the people celebrate their festivals

happily. The State government has decided to distribute clothing on various festivals with a thought that even the poor could equally celebrate their festivals happily. MP Vijayalakshmi, ZPTC Sujatha, AMC Chairman Ramulu, PACS Chairman Satyanarayana Reddy, Rythu Bandhu President Venugopal Reddy, Vice MPP, Vice Chairman, sarpanches, MPTCS, MRO Bhimaya Goud, MPDO Amrita and leaders were also present.

Brain dead woman's organs donated

HYDERABAD

UNDER the Jeevandan organ donation project, the family members of a 44-year-old homemaker, P Pavani, a resident of Bolarum, Secunderabad, who was declared brain dead by doctors, donated their organs. Pavani had a sudden fall

in her house on December 4, and was taken to a local hospital and later transferred for treatment to Care Hospitals, Banjara Hills.

After a fortnight of intensive care therapy, the woman's health did not improve and she was pronounced brain dead by doctors on December 20. IC

bleeding, intracerebral haemorrhage, caused by inner bleeding inside the brain tissue and a recognised life-threatening form of stroke, was the cause of death, doctors said.

The family members of the deceased were informed by the hospital staff and Jeevandan grief officials and they immediately

decided to donate organs. Her husband, P. Kumara Swamy, and his family members gave her permission to donate her organs. Two kidneys, liver and two corneas were recovered by the surgeons and sent them to other transplant facilities in Hyderabad, based on Jeevandan's guidelines.

LEGAL NOTES

Land allotment to film director at throwaway price questioned

High Court makes it clear that it will not lift the interim orders unless the arguments were completed

HYDERABAD

THE High Court Chief Justice bench on Thursday heard the plea filed by J Shankar who alleged that allotment of land admeasuring 5 acres in Survey No 96 of Mokila village of Shankarpally mandal in Ranga Reddy district at a nominal cost of Rs 5 lakh per acre to film director N Shankar as arbitrary and illegal. Director N Shankar's counsel requested the court to lift the interim orders which has been given to stop the studio construction work. The High Court rejected the respondent counsel's request and stated that it would not lift the interim orders until full arguments were heard. The hearing in the case has been adjourned to January 6.

PLEA IN HC TO PREVENT ILLEGAL STONE CRUSHING PLANTS

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

THE High Court bench comprising of Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bollam Vijaysen Reddy on Thursday heard the public interest litigation filed by Sharath Kumar Reddy alleging the inaction of the State government in preventing and operation of the illegal and unauthorised stone crushing plants in Ranga

Reddy and Sangareddy districts and to direct the government to seize and prevent the operation of such stone crushing plants.

The petitioner's counsel, P Somasekhara Naidu, informed the court that the illegal stone crushers were changing their names very often. As soon as the media or somebody goes there to identify, the very next day they change the names of the crushing units.

Chief Justice RS Chauhan

questioned the Special Government Pleader, A Sanjeev Kumar, as to why the government had not filed the counter affidavit regarding the issue. Sanjeev Kumar informed the court that the counter affidavit would be filed within a week.

The High Court issued notices to the concerned government authorities and directed Sanjeev Kumar to file the counter by December 31, adjourning the matter to January 4.



Irregularities in awarding fellowships to students of OU, KU alleged

HYDERABAD

THE High Court Chief Justice Bench on Thursday heard a Public Interest Litigation filed by K Srinivas, a PhD student of Osmania University, alleging that large scale irregularities have taken place while awarding fellowships to students of OU and Kakatiya University. Further, the petitioner alleged that the fellowship was granted to the ineligible contrary to the UGC guidelines. He sought CBI investigation into the alleged irregularities in awarding fellowships. The High Court bench issued notices to Central government, UGC, CBI, OU, KU to give explanation within four weeks and adjourned the matter for four weeks.

Constitute social security board for workers of unorganised sector, HC tells TS

HYDERABAD

THE High Court division bench heard the plea filed by Congress leader C Damodara Raja Narasimha seeking a direction to the State government to constitute the State-level Social Security Board for workers of the unorganised sector.

Petitioner's counsel Ch Ravi Kumar informed the court that the State has filed the counter affidavit and the Central government was yet to file its counter affidavit. Further, the counsel informed the bench that the State was obli-

gated to constitute the board for the security of all workers in the State as mandated under Act (33) of 2008 and the Constitution of the Board would help the unorganised workers immensely to get on with their lives, during the ongoing corona pandemic.

The bench, while adjourning the case, directed the Advocate General Banda Shiv-ananda Prasad to get back to the court with information on constitution of the State-level Social Security Board for the workers of unorganised sector in Telangana State within four weeks.

Inform steps taken for vaccine development: HC to Centre

HYDERABAD

THE High Court Chief Justice bench issued notices to the Union Health Ministry and Family Welfare, New Delhi, directing it to inform the court on the endeavors made by the Central government in coming out with a vaccine to curb the rampant spread of coronavirus in the country. The bench headed by Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice Bollam Vijaysen Reddy, hearing the public interest litigation filed by C Mad-

hukar, sought a direction from the Government of India to lay special focus on the aspect of coming up with the vaccine for Covid-19 as mandated under the Constitution of India. The Chief Justice queried with the Assistant Solicitor General Namavarapu Rajeshwar Rao as to why the Central government was delaying in bringing out a vaccine when the country had numerous talented scientists, who could be entrusted with such a task. For further hearing, the plea was adjourned by six weeks.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Skilling our workforce is essential

"I believe that skilling our workforce and equipping them to meet the impending challenges will create new opportunities. I would like to congratulate all the DSA graduates and strongly believe that by imparting such skills, OYO is building world-class data science teams

— Sanjay Dhotre, Union Minister



STRIKE

Air India pilots warn of industrial action

Disinvestment-bound Air India's pilot unions have rejected the paltry five per cent rollback in their salary cuts and warned of industrial action if there is no substantial reversal in their pay cuts and said it is an outright insult. In April, Air India had reduced its pilots' salary up to 70 %

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	77.95	South	
Euro	94.15	African Rand	5.77
UAE Dirham	22.02	Hong Kong Dollar	10.91
Thai Baht	2.81	Japanese Yen	0.82
British Pound	104.15	New Zealand Dollar	54.92
Australian Dollar	58.67	Saudi Riyal	21.55
Canadian Dollar	60.15	Swedish Krona	10.22
Swiss Franc	86.11	Singapore Dollar	58.12

DELHI FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER 2020

BIZ BRIEFS

No fund from ICICI Pru MF

ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund has launched ICICI Prudential Business Cycle Fund, an open-ended equity scheme which aims to provide long term wealth creation by investing in equity and equity related securities with focus on riding business cycles through dynamic allocation between various sectors and stocks. The fund will follow a top down approach right from monitoring macro indicators (global and domestic). Nimesh Shah, MD & CEO, ICICI Prudential AMC, said: "Stock market sector returns generally are affected by the various business cycle phases. The new fund offers a different style which focuses on macros. By investing, investors can gain access to appealing sectors at any particular point in time. It will further aim to achieve diversification within those sectors."

LG launches new product

LG Electronics has expanded its health and hygiene range in retail segment with its new LG Styler, an innovative product in steam clothing care portfolio. Styler range is available in B2B segment in India since 2018 and considering the demand of hygiene care appliances, LG is enhancing its availability to meet new lifestyle which gives new way to care for clothes and other accessories by boasting many practical uses and thoughtful features including LG's patented TrueSteam technology that eliminates over 99.9 per cent of viruses. Vijay Babu, VP Home Appliances, LG Electronics India said, "We are extremely confident that LG Styler will be well received by the Indian consumers. With a sleek design and highly effective performance, the elegant LG Styler takes in-home clothing care to the next level."

Dalmia Cement's expansion

DALMIA Cement (Bharat) Limited has announced a capacity addition of 2.3 million tonnes at its Bengal Cement Works (BCW) unit in West Midnapore with an investment of Rs 360 crore. This addition is in line with the company's business pillar 'Growth' and will increase the overall capacity of the BCW unit to 4 million tons per annum. Ujjwal Bhatia, COO, Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited, said, "At the outset, I extend my gratitude to the Government of West Bengal and people of Salboni for their continuous support and enabling us to be a part of the Bengal growth story. Under this project, we now have an installed capacity of 4 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) at Bengal Cement Works, Midnapore."

HAI starts TS chapter

HOTEL Association of India (HAI), the apex body of hotels, has launched its Telangana State Chapter with an aim to provide a unified voice to the hospitality sector and aid in the resurgence and sustenance of the industry following the global pandemic. Previously they launched chapters in Karnataka and Punjab. The TS chapter will be primarily focused on taking up relevant issues and challenges facing the industry with the Telangana State Government. Ian Dubier, Member of Telangana State Committee, Hotel Association of India & Area Director, Hyderabad and General Manager, Taj Krishna, Hyderabad, said "The hospitality sector has faced strong headwinds throughout the year in the state and needs immediate policy intervention in order to tide over the disastrous impact of pandemic."

RBI SEES POSITIVE GDP GROWTH IN Q3

An article in RBI Bulletin says economy recovering faster than expected

MUMBAI

THE economy is coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic's deep abyss faster than most of the predictions, and the growth will enter positive zone in the third quarter of the current financial year, said an article on the 'state of economy' in the RBI Bulletin.

"More evidence has been turned in to show that the Indian economy is pulling out of Covid-19's deep abyss and is breaking out amidst winter's lengthening shadows towards a place in the sunlight. It is reflatting at a pace that beats most prediction," said the article written by the officials of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, the Indian economy dipped by a historic 23.9 per cent in the first quarter of the current financial year.

The contraction narrowed down to 7.5 per cent in the second quarter. Quoting reports, the article said, "Real GDP growth is expected to break out into positive territory in Q3 - albeit, to a slender 0.1 per cent." Two important forces are conspiring to bless this turning of the page on the virus,



the article said. "First, India is bending the Covid infection curve: since mid-September, barring localised surges, infections are slanting fashion to support investment and consumption demand," it said. "The fiscal measures have been sequenced in a designed shift in focus from consumption expenditure in Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGK) to investment expenditure in AatmaNirbhar 2.0 and 3.0," the article added.

Abstracting from the inherent flux in high frequency indicators, the underlying trend would reveal that the pick-up in momentum of

economic activity that commenced with the onset of the second half of 2020-21 is sustained, it noted. "The absence of the dreaded 'second wave' of pandemic in India so far has imparted elevation to this momentum in an environment of supportive macroeconomic policies, spurring a faster unlock and normalisation of the economy," it added. RBI said the views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the central bank.

Authors of the article further said that contractions forecast by various agencies for the year as a

DATA POINTS

- GDP dipped 23.9% in the Q1
- Contraction narrowed 7.5% in Q2
- GDP likely to break out into positive in Q3

whole are already being trimmed, and if the current momentum is maintained, the bounce back expected in the last quarter of the year may be stronger than postulated under baseline assumptions. "At the same time, efforts need to be redoubled to exorcise the 'worm in the apple' - inflation - before it hurts the impulses of growth that are taking root," they said. Efficient, effective and timely supply management, including checking runaway retailer margins and reducing the incidence of indirect taxes on consumers, can break the back of the inflation pressures before they incipiently broaden and work against the intent of fiscal and monetary stimuli, the article said.

Aurobindo Pharma signs pact with Covaxx

To develop, produce and market UB-612 vaccine to fight Covid-19, for India and UNICEF

HYDERABAD

AUROBINDO Pharma Ltd and Covaxx, a US-based company, have entered into an exclusive license agreement to develop, commercialise and manufacture UB-612, the first Multitope Peptide-based vaccine to fight Covid-19, for India and UNICEF.

According to a release issued by the city-based drug maker, Covaxx is currently conducting a Phase I clinical trial for the vaccine candidate. Managing Director of Aurobindo Pharma Ltd, N Govindarajan, said, "We are proud to partner with Covaxx in developing the first-ever

synthetic peptide-based vaccine to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. This vaccine has immense potential in eliminating shedding, and hence containing, the spread of the pandemic."

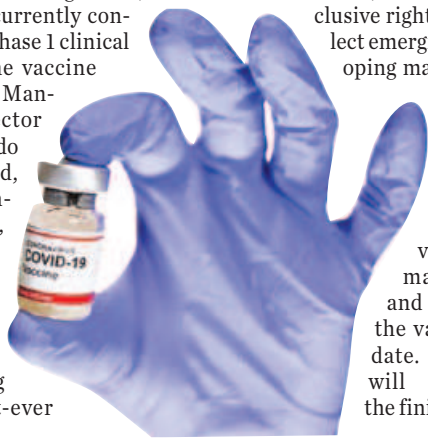
Under the signed agreement, Aurobindo Pharma has obtained the exclusive rights to develop, manufacture and sell Covaxx's UB-612 vaccine in India and UNICEF, as well as non-exclusive rights in other select emerging and developing markets, it said.

Aurobindo Pharma and Covaxx are partnering on clinical development, manufacturing and marketing of the vaccine candidate. Aurobindo will manufacture the finished doses at

its facilities in Hyderabad.

It has the capacity of manufacturing 220 million doses in multi-dose presentation and is building additional facilities to have a total capacity of nearly 480 million doses by June 2021. Mei Mei Hu, co-founder and CEO of Covaxx said his company is committed to providing an equitable distribution of UB-612 by prioritising emerging markets where there is the unmet need. "During this global health crisis response, we must establish partners with the strongest capabilities, like Aurobindo, to prioritize the development and the delivery of our vaccine."

As one of the leading industry players with a strong track record of execution and investment in vaccines, Aurobindo Pharma is the ideal partner to advance UB-612 in India and other emerging nations and to support our mission of democratizing health worldwide," Hu said. (PTI)



EY to hire 9,000 AI skilled people in India

NEW DELHI

LEADING global professional services organisation EY on Thursday said that it will hire 9,000 professionals in India in 2021 who have skills across Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), cyber security, analytics and other emerging technologies.

The hiring from the STEM background will be done across all member firms including the global delivery centres, to expand its digital capabilities and help organisations solve their complex end-to-end business transformation challenges, the company said in a statement. EY in India currently has over 50,000 people working in all member firms, including global delivery centres.

"With the pace of digital adoption accelerating exponentially, we are strengthening capabilities in emerging technology roles and significantly intensifying our hiring efforts in the coming year," said Rohan Sachdev, Partner and Consulting Practice Leader, EY India. Currently, 36 per cent of all EY India employees are from the STEM background.

"We are using our sector knowledge to deliver tailored dig-



ital solutions and services to support our clients' transformation plans and leveraging the managed services model to help them navigate the volatility," said Mahesh Makhija, Partner and Technology Consulting Leader, EY India. EY said it has launched the 'EY Techathon 2021: #ISolve4aBillion Challenge' aimed to engage the best technology minds in India.

The company is inviting university students from all disciplines to come forward and develop novel solutions to immunise Indians, considering the challenges of the country's vast geography, demographics and infrastructure.

Participants will get to use the latest technologies such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, machine learning and gamification, to develop a model immunization program across different spheres of supply chain, delivery, monitoring and vaccination, EY said. (IANS)

Mrs Bectors off to flying start

NEW DELHI

SHARES of Mrs Bectors Food Specialities on Thursday made a remarkable market debut and closed with a premium of 107 per cent against its issue price of Rs 288. The stock opened at Rs 501, reflecting a jump of 73.95 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it rose to Rs 601.20, up 108.75 per cent. It finally closed at Rs 595.55, a gain of 106.78 per cent. On the NSE, it zoomed 105.72 per cent to close at Rs 592.50. The company's market valuation was at Rs 3,498.65 crore on the BSE.

In traded volume terms, 37.81 lakh shares were traded at the BSE and over 3.70 crore units on the NSE during the day. Mirroring massive investor response, Mrs Bectors Food Specialities initial public offer was subscribed a whopping 198 times earlier this month. The price band for the share sale was at Rs 286-288 apiece. Mrs Bectors Food manufactures and markets a range of products such as biscuits, breads and buns. It markets a wide variety of biscuits and breads under the flagship brand 'Mrs Bector's Creamica' and the 'English Oven', respectively.

Godrej Appliances ramps up medical refrigerator output

NEW DELHI

GODREJ Appliances on Thursday said it has ramped up its medical refrigerator production capacity for providing an end-to-end solution for the Covid-19 vaccine cold chain in the country. "To cater to the urgent demand for Covid-19 vaccine storage in India, the brand has a range of vaccine refrigerators which operate in the precise temperature band of 2-8°C and now, also offers advanced medical freezers with cooling up to -20°C," Godrej Appliances said in a statement. These temperature ranges are completely suited for the multiple Covid-19 vaccines being evaluated by India, it added. "Godrej Appliances has already ramped up medical refrigerator production capacity from 10,000 units per annum to 35,000 units per annum, to meet the growing demand," the statement said. The brand has received multiple



orders worth Rs 150 crore from the central government, various state governments and international aid bodies as well, solely for the purpose of Covid-19 vaccine storage. It is also receiving enquiries from PSUs who are joining the immunization effort, it added. "Over the years, Godrej Appliances has gained its expertise in refrigeration and has extended this further into the medical refrigeration domain. We are proud that this expertise is proving to be useful to day in times when the country needs a strong vaccine cold chain and are glad to be able to contribute to the cause," Godrej Appliances Business Head and Executive VP Kamal Nandi said. (PTI)

IT cos to benefit as engg deals swell

Engineering services in demand as global manufacturers look at cost-cutting

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA BENGALURU

INDIAN IT services and engineering services firms have started to garner a larger share of outsourcing deals from global manufacturers operating in automotive, oil and gas, and other sectors. This has been reflected as three more than \$100-million worth of contracts were clinched in the last six months by Indian companies.

In September this year, Wipro bagged a multi-year global agreement from Marelli for automotive engineering services worth around \$250 million. Marelli is one of the world's leading global independent suppliers to the automotive sector with operational headquarters in Saitama, Japan, and Corbetta, Italy.

Similarly, Infosys has entered



into a partnership with aerospace and defence technology company Rolls-Royce under which the latter will transition a significant part of its engineering centre capabilities for civil aerospace in Bengaluru to the IT services firm. Sources said the contract is worth more than \$100 million.

Earlier, L&T Technology Services (LTTTS) has bagged a plant engineering contract worth more than \$100 million from a leading oil and gas major.

According to experts, this indicates increased engagement of engineering services providers with the clients, which is eventually

MAJOR DEALS STRUCK

\$100 mn
L&T- Oil&gas major

\$250 mn
Wipro-Marelli

\$100 mn
Infosys-Rolls-Royce

leading to more work being outsourced to these companies.

"Deal sizes in the engineering services space used to be lower in the previous years. There used to be one \$100-million deal per year in this segment. However, Indian firms have bagged three more than \$100-million contracts in the last six months," said Pareekh Jain, an IT outsourcing advisor and Founder of Pareekh Consulting.

