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## A drone that can change shape to fit package

Gachibowli: The researchers at International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) in Hyderabad on Monday launched a flexible drone that changes its shape to fit the size of package to be lifted. Suraj Bonagiri, a researcher from the Robotics Research Centre in his research on the mechanism behind a reconfigurable quadcopter, highlighted limitations of existing delivery drones and proposed a novel design.

## 1,914 fresh positive cases in Telangana, 5 deaths

INDIAN CHRONICLE BUREAU  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Coronavirus in Telangana: Around 1,914 fresh coronavirus positive cases and five deaths were registered until 8 pm on Tuesday taking the total number of cases to 3,16,649 and fatality count to 1,734. Meanwhile, the total recovery cases went up to 3,03,298 with 285 recoveries in the last 24 hours. At present, there are 11,617 active cases out of which 6,634 are in home or institutional isolation.

Between Monday and Tuesday, around 74,274 tests were conducted of which 1,914 turned positive and the reports of 3,202 are awaited. So far, 1,05,72,621 tests have been conducted in the state since the pandemic broke out. The positive cases registered across the state include 393 in GHMC, 205 from Medak, 179 from Nizamabad, 169 from Rangareddy, 104 from Nirmal, 76 from Sangareddy, 68 from Jagtial, 64 from Kamareddy, 60 from Warangal Urban, 48 from Khammam, 42 from Siddipet, 40 from Nalgonda, 37 from Mancherial, 36 from Mahabubnagar, 32 from Rajanna Sircilla, 31 from



Suryapet, 29 from Adilabad, 25 each from Yadadri Bhongir and Vikarabad, 23 each from Medak and Peddapalli, 21 from Komarambheem Asifabad, 18 from Nagarkurnool, 17 from Wanaparthy, 13 from Jangaon, 12 from Jogulamba Gadwal, 9 each from Warangal Rural and Mahabubabad, 8 from Narayanpet, 7 from Bhadradi Kothagudem, 6 from Mulugu, 5 from Jayashankar Bhupalpally.

## Corona second wave higher in intensity than first wave: Telangana health director

INDIAN CHRONICLE BUREAU  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Telangana state public health director Dr G Srinivas Rao warned the citizens to consider the current situation as the last warning as the coronavirus second wave is much higher in intensity than the second wave. In the last three months, people neglected wearing masks and maintaining social distancing which led to the spike in coronavirus cases. The health director asked the people to be on alert and mandate wearing a mask if they do not want another lockdown and curfew in the state. "If the cases rise further, there would be great pressure on the health department which can also cause a great loss to the public health," he said.



## Six-month-old thrown into sump by father, dies

INDIAN CHRONICLE BUREAU  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

A six-month-old baby boy was thrown into a water sump by his father on Tuesday at Rajendranagar in Rangareddy district. The accused, Vikram is said to have been in a drunken state when the incident occurred. Getting into details, Vikram who is addicted to alcohol used to quarrel with his wife frequently. On Tuesday, he picked up a quarrel again and in a fit of rage, he threw his son into the sump and closed it. The boy drowned in water. A pall of gloom descended in Rajendranagar with the death of the six-month-old baby. The police registered a case and took Vikram into custody.



## Sabitha Indra Reddy releases study materials for Class X



Adarsh Nagar: Education Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy on Tuesday released new study materials for the benefit of the stu-

dents appearing for the ensuing Class X examinations. The Minister said the initiative was meant to enhance the understanding of students about their sub-

jects which have been taught through online classes. She noted that the study materials were designed in such a way as to make students clearly

grasp the basic concepts of various lessons being taught as part of their syllabus.

The materials are designed in English, Telugu, and Urdu languages, the Minister termed them better than those prepared by corporate educational institutions. That apart, she said that the State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) has come up with a multilingual dictionary to enable students studying in the English medium to understand the technical terminology in their mother tongue.

She said the publication of a multilingual dictionary is a milestone for the SCERT. Special Chief Secretary Education.

## Free national autism helpline launched

Punjabgutta: Pinnacle Blooms Network has launched the helpline number 9100181181 to provide free counselling and guidance to children with autism and their families across India.

Through this helpline, families with autism children can get free advice and guidance on how their child's health conditions, changes in their upbringing and deficiencies can be addressed. Autism is a psychological and neurological disorder that is affecting children. Children with autism naturally have sensory and psychological problems.

## Modi urges people to focus on fighting COVID-19 by taking all precautions

New Delhi: GNS News Agency, April 7

On the occasion of the World Health Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged people to focus on fighting COVID-19 by taking all precautions, including wearing a mask, regularly washing hands and following other protocols.

His appeal comes amid a spike in COVID-19 cases with over 1 lakh daily cases reported twice in the last three days.

"#WorldHealthDay is a day to reaffirm our gratitude and appreciation to all those who work day and night to keep our planet healthy," the prime minister tweeted.

It is also a day to reiterate our commitment to supporting research and innovation in healthcare, Modi said.

"On #WorldHealthDay, let us keep the focus on fighting



COVID-19 by taking all possible precautions including wearing a mask, regularly washing hands and following the other protocols," he said in a series of tweets.

At the same time, do take all possible steps to boost immunity and stay fit, Modi added.

"The Government of India is taking numerous measures including

Ayushman Bharat and PM Janaushadhi Yojana to ensure people get access to top quality and affordable healthcare," the prime minister pointed out.

India is also conducting the world's largest vaccination drive to strengthen the fight against COVID-19, he asserted.

The World Health Day is a global health awareness day celebrated every

year on April 7 under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization (WHO).

From its inception at the First Health Assembly in 1948 and since taking effect in 1950, the celebration has aimed to create awareness of a specific health theme to highlight a priority area of concern for the WHO.

## India records highest daily spike with over 1.15 lakh COVID-19 cases

Leaving behind its previous record, India reported over 1.15 lakh COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours. According to the Union Health Ministry, the country recorded 1,15,736 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours. With this fresh surge, the number of infections has reached 1,28,01,785. The country reported 630 COVID-related deaths in the last 24 hours, while the active number of cases stands at 8,43,473. As many as 59,856 people discharged/recovered from the disease during the same period. With the new COVID-19 deaths, the cumulative toll in the country has mounted to 1,66,177.

The previous high was recorded on April 5 when the country reported 1,03,844 fresh COVID positive cases in a single day. As many as 8,70,77,474 people have been inoculated against COVID-19 in the country so far. From April 2, the government started vaccinating all people above 45 years. India started its vaccination drive on January 16 with priority given to all healthcare and frontline workers in the first phase. The second phase started on March 1 where doses were administered to people above the age of 60 and those between 45 and 59 years with specific comorbidities.

## Invoked NSA against 534 people: Yogi government

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh home department has said that it invoked the National Security Act against 534 persons in the past three years. In an official statement on Tuesday, the government spokesman said that 106 NSA cases have been turned down by the advisory board while 50 others were quashed by the Allahabad High Court. The district administration and police invoked NSA against 184 persons in 2018, while in 2019, 128 persons were booked under the NSA and the figure went up to 222 in 2020.

The advisory board turned down NSA in as many as 38 cases in 2018, 21 in 2019 and 47 in 2020. Similarly, the Allahabad High Court quashed NSA against 23 persons in 2018, 24 in 2019 and three in 2020. Senior police officials said that most of the cases in which NSA was imposed were related to cow slaughter which led to tension and against heinous crimes committed on girl children and other crime cases.

It may be recalled that as per the reports appearing in a section of media, the Allahabad High Court



The Allahabad High Court ruled in 120 habeas corpus petitions challenging preventive detention under the NSA. In 94 detentions, it quashed orders of district magistrates in as many as 32 districts and ordered the release of the detainees.

from the 94 cases, the court also quashed 32 cases given by the district magistrate and ordered the release of the detainees. The court considered the state government's cases as 'misuse of the NSA law'. The court said that important information in the police FIRs were a 'cut and

paste job. On the detention orders given by the district magistrates, the court said they seem to be 'non-application of mind'. The court also slammed the denial of legal procedure to the accused and using the law repeatedly to cancel the bail and dealt a setback to the Uttar Pradesh government by staying the orders.

# Indian Chronicle

English Daily

## Middleman, again

The French investigative news portal, Mediapart, has claimed that there was indeed a middleman in the much-debated Rafale deal. At the very outset, the Rafale deal struck by the NDA government had come in for attack from the Opposition over the pricing of the twin-engine medium multi-role combat aircraft. The Opposition had claimed that while it was in power, it had struck a much better bargain with the same Dassault Aviation for the delivery of 126 jets at a lower price with transfer of technology to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited than what was finally agreed to in 2016 for the off-the-shelf purchase of 36 aircraft at 7.87 billion euros. The agreement was vetted by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the allegations of corruption were heard and dismissed by the Supreme Court twice, first in 2018 and then in a review petition in 2019. Now, the Mediapart investigation has dug up dirt on the deal and put a face to the allegations.

According to this online journal, French anti-corruption watchdog Agence Francais Anti-corruption in its routine audit of the contract found that Dassault had agreed to pay an Indian company — middleman Sushen Gupta's Defsys Solutions — one million euros for producing large replicas of the Rafale jet. But, according to Mediapart, the audit did not find any proof of the replicas being actually made and that 'the head of the French Public Prosecution Services' financial crimes branch, Eliane Houlette, shelved investigations into the evidence of corruption behind this deal despite the contrary opinion of her colleagues'. US national Sushen Gupta was arrested for his involvement in the UPA-era VVIP chopper kickback case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and is now out on bail. His name getting linked to the Rafale deal brings to focus the omnipresence of middlemen in India's defence sector and exposes the hollow claims of successive governments.

## CM KCR committed to welfare of farmers: Puvvada

Khammam: Telangana was the only State in the country that has been procuring paddy by offering minimum support price to farmers in Yasangi season, stated Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar. Even though the Central government was against setting up procurement centres to purchase paddy, Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao has decided to procure paddy at village level for the benefit of the farmers keeping in view of Covid-19 pandemic, he said.

Ajay Kumar inaugurated paddy procurement centres at Kuppenakuntla village in Penuballi mandal and at Lingala village in Kallur mandal in the district on Tuesday. About 3.5 lakh tonnes of paddy will be procured in the district in the season. He said the Chief Minister has a resolute commitment towards the farmers' welfare and with his decision, more than 6,000 paddy procurement centres have been set up across the State. During the last three seasons, the government procured every grain of paddy produced by farmers by ensuring transportation and speedy payments to the farmers, he recalled.



"Because of the pro-farmers measures such as free power supply, Rythu Bandhu and better irrigation facilities, the crop cultivation area reached 1.2 lakh acres in the State. Telangana is at top place in procuring paddy for Food Corporation of India. By next Vaanakalam season, the farmers in the district will be able to have better irrigation facilities with the supply of Godavari River waters to Palair reservoir through Sita Rama Lift Irrigation Scheme," he said.

Sathupally MLA S Venkata Veeraiah speaking on the occasion stated that the BJP government at the Centre has introduced Farm Laws that advised against food grains procurement from farmers by the government. But keeping the farmers' welfare in view, the government has decided to procure paddy in this season. In last season about 1.60 lakh metric tonnes of paddy was procured in Sathupally Assembly constituency, he informed.

MLC B Lakshminarayana, DCC Bank Chairman K Nagabhushaiah, DCMS Chairman R Seshagiri Rao, Additional Collector N Madhusudhan, Civil Supplies Officer Rajender and others were present.

## Rising Covid cases: Half day for school teachers in Telangana

Hyderabad: Teachers under all managements i.e., government aided and private management should attend the schools for half-a-day (8 am to 12.30 pm) from Wednesday.

The Director of School Education in a proceeding on Tuesday said the Minister for Education had taken a decision to this effect during a meeting on Tuesday, and directed the regional joint directors of School Education Hyderabad and Warangal and all the District Educational Officers in the State to take necessary action accordingly.

## COMED K- Uni-GAUGE entrance exam for UGET2021: Application dates announced Expects over 80000 students to appear for the examination across 400 centres



Hyderabad:

COMEDK UGET and Uni-GAUGE entrance examination will be held on June 20, 2021, as a combined examination. The entrance test will be held for admissions to B.E/B. Tech, for colleges affiliated with the Karnataka Professional Colleges Foundation Trust and Uni-GAUGE member universities. The exam will be conducted online in over 150 cities across India, with over

400 test centres. This year, it expects over 80,000 students to appear for the examination.

Applicants have to register at [www.comedk.org](http://www.comedk.org) or [www.unigauged.com](http://www.unigauged.com). The application process is open online from 22 March 2021 to 20 May 2021

Dr. Kumar, Executive Secretary COMEDK, says: "Karnataka has been a pioneer in Engineering education, and has always been a destination for Engineering students from across the country. Over the years, we have seen an increase in the number of students taking the entrance test from outside Karnataka. While there was a decline in admissions due to pandemic in 2020, we see that as an aberration and anticipate that this year will see a distinct increase in student interest, due to easing of restrictions."

ComedK - Uni - GAUGE has become the second-largest multi-university private engineering exam in India, with 180+ institutions and 30 plus Universities accepting scores. With a reach of 150 cities and 400 test centres, it has gained significant momentum over the years.

The entire application and exam process will be online. A detailed process guideline on the online exam and application process has been made available to students on [www.comedk.org](http://www.comedk.org) or [www.unigauged.com](http://www.unigauged.com).

## ORDI media statement on National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021

Hyderabad

This statement is with reference to the National Policy for Rare Diseases, 2021 ("NPRD, 2021") released by the Health Ministry on March 30, 2021; a long awaited and long delayed document whose journey began in 2017. All the advocacy, angst, and anticipation has amounted to naught, for the rare disease community in India. This is because not much has been altered from the draft National Policy for Rare Diseases released in 2020. If anything, it is another iteration that fails to acknowledge and address the real challenges of rare disease patients and their families.

Organization for Rare Diseases India (ORDI) strongly believes that there are many things that are woefully missing in the NPRD 2021. For one thing, the Government has taken a rather cavalier approach to the issue of affordability of the care needed to sustain a life of dignity for persons living with rare diseases. To tackle the issue of affordability, the NPRD 2021 suggests that an ailing/dying patient or their family should rely on crowdfunding for treatment. Picture the scene: a person desperately in need of medical intervention or continued medicines, must themselves or with help from their family, organise fundraisers, so that they may continue living. A stark picture indeed, one that amplifies either the fact that the struggles of the rare disease community



don't matter, or worse, that the Government doesn't believe it has a role to play in ensuring holistic, affordable care for all rare diseases. Persons living with rare diseases, irrespective of age, gender, economic status, caste, religion or another societal classification, have a right to dignified treatment, supportive care, and funding options to afford treatment and supportive care.

## PLANNING TO TRAVEL? HERE'S WHAT YOUR TRAVEL CHECKLIST SHOULD INCLUDE

Hyderabad:

Travellers take note! It's time you add a few new essentials to your checklist as you pack masks, sanitizers and disinfectants among a few other safety and hygiene must-haves for your travel. This new travel checklist will help you plan a safe, seamless and most importantly, an ambiguity-free travel in these uncertain times.

As coronavirus cases see a new spike in the country, MakeMyTrip has released a checklist of travel products and solutions that Travellers should consider even as they exercise more caution while taking up their journey. With a promise to make end-to-end travel safe, contactless and secure, the company has introduced a slew of tech-integrated solutions to help travellers prioritize safety at all times.

Lock air fares as you firm up your air travel: Staying watchful of the ongoing uncertainty and planning your air travel accordingly is the best that you can do as you firm up your travel dates. But given the evolving scenarios one cannot worry least about the change in air fares — leaving many to think whether they should wait and consequently risk fare hike, or book the ticket right away. So,



here's what flyers can do as they finalize their travel. Lock fares and reserve their seats without paying for the actual price of the ticket upfront. With this flyers can also secure themselves against any price hike as they can purchase the ticket at the same locked-in price later. The service allows customers to lock airfares for one, three or seven days for a nominal fee — that later gets adjusted into the full price of the ticket at the time of the final purchase. Here's a quick and easy resolve to buy time and same money on your air tickets!

## Pearson launches Click Code Connect to equip students with new age coding and IT skills

Hyderabad:

Pearson India, the world's learning company has announced the launch of its latest computer science series, Click Code Connect, for the students from grades 1-8.

The announcement is aligned with government's agenda to increase exposure towards technology through coding for school students. The series takes the students through a journey that begins with the basic knowledge of handling mouse and keyboard to the stage where the student acquires 21st century coding skills. The series culminates with the student being able to learn real-life applications of technology such as Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, etc.

Speaking about the platform, Rajesh Pankajakshan, Director, Product, Pearson India said, "Advancements in technology are changing our world at an astonishing pace and coding has become an essential skill for students to learn and apply. Click Code Connect is Pearson's endeavour to equip students with the necessary repertoire of technical skills to adapt to these changes and contribute effectively in shaping the digital world. The content of the series has been planned and organised in a systematic manner ensuring smooth transition from the basics to the latest developments in the field of technology."

He further added "one prominent reform announced in the NEP is the initiation of classes on coding for students from class 6 onwards which will result in increased exposure to technology. The platform will help in cementing the impact of NEP to raise the spirit of innovation and



let the learner learn at his own pace. It is structured around concept of Self-Paced Learning (SPL). It will push students to question, observe, analyse and record everything around them thus providing them with hands-on experience of coding and inculcating logical thinking."

## Tiffin box creates tinderbox situation in Siricilla

Rajanna-Siricilla: A steel tiffin box surfaced near the forest of Marrimadla of Konaraopet mandal created tension among the police on Tuesday. In the wake of Maoists' attack on police troops in Chhattisgarh, district police bosses were alerted immediately and deployed a bomb squad to defuse the alleged explosive. However, no bomb was found in the tiffin box. According to police, farmers, who were going to attend work in their agricultural fields, found a dog digging soil near the forest on the outskirts of Marrimadla.

## ASSIST partners with Philip Morris International; committing towards elimination of child labour

Hyderabad:

ASSIST, an NGO working for the development of poor and marginalised communities in rural areas, has reported a significant improvement in school attendance as a result of its programs directed at reduction and elimination of the use of child labour by tobacco growers. The project undertaken by ASSIST in collaboration with Philip Morris International (PMI) on "Prevention of Child Labour and Rural Development in tobacco growing villages of Andhra Pradesh & Karnataka" is focused on school infrastructure development to promote school attendance, income generation activities and building awareness.

As of now, the program has resulted in children from 62 communities in 57 villages attending school regularly. Around 13400 have started attending school regularly, thereby moving out of the farm workforce. Aware-



ness programs have reached out to over 4530 children through child-to-child workshops. Awareness rallies and cultural programs involving over 12650 children have sensitized around 78000 villagers against child labour. Conducting 'after school' programs during peak growing season in over 45 schools have discouraged farmers from involving children in the farms.

Mr K.S.R. Murthy, Executive Director, ASSIST India, said "Child labour is a social evil that not only steals the innocence from a child's formative years, but also takes away any form of opportunity to develop and grow into an educated human being. Many children in poor communities in rural Andhra Pradesh have been missing the opportunity to get education and charting the path towards a better future. Children in rural areas are being compromised on their right to care and education, given the large looming issues of poverty, illiteracy and lack of infrastructure. It is ASSIST India's endeavour in partnership with PMI to support these underprivileged and underprovided children by aiding in development of school infrastructure, ensuring they have access to education, equipping them with a skillset for a better life, while safeguarding their exposure to the environment they work in. Our programme has been implemented in schools in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Over the years, we have seen a significant change in the schooling patterns of these children. Students, supported by their parents, prefer to go to schools which now have good facilities and infrastructure. We are pleased at the way in which local communities have joined hands with us in spreading awareness against child labour and encouraging students to attend schools.

India has a large number of economically active children, estimated at 4.35 million (5-14 years) by the Census of India in 2011. Worldwide 60 per cent of all child labourers in the age group 5-17 years work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock. The majority of child labour are unpaid family members.

## Minister Koppula Eshwar hands over CMRF cheques

Hyderabad: Social Welfare Minister Koppula Eshwar on Saturday handed over letter of credit for Rs 4 lakh to the family members of P Ratna Sheela to provide proper treatment to her at NIMS here.

After Ratna Sheela's family members hailing from Velgatur in Jagtial approached him requesting to provide financial assistance to them as they were facing financial problems for the treatment, the Minister immediately responded and took necessary steps for sanctioning Rs 4 lakh from Chief Minister Relief Fund (CMRF). He handed over the letter to the family members at his camp office here. Ratna Sheela's family members thanked the Minister for helping them in giving proper treatment to her.

## BJP MLA Raghunandan's remark triggers row

Hyderabad: The newly elected BJP MLA M Raghunandan Rao has triggered a controversy by stating that the slogan of 'Jai Sriram', which defeated the Telangana sentiment in Siddipet during the Dubbaka bypolls, was now ready to win Tirupati Lok Sabha bye-elections.

He made these remarks while participating in Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency by-election campaign in support of the BJP candidate K Ratna Prabha, who was the former Chief Secretary of Karnataka. The video containing the remarks made by Rao was widely circulated on various social media platforms.

"Your verdict through your votes should bring change after May 2 results," Rao said, addressing people during the campaign in Tirupati. It may be recalled that Raghunandan Rao won the Dubbaka bypolls in a nail-biting contest defeating his nearest rival Solipeta Sujatha of TRS by a slender margin of 1,431 votes.

The Dubbaka bye-election was necessitated following the sudden demise of Sujatha's husband Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy in August last year.

# TN Assembly polls: Just over 65 pc voter turnout recorded



Chennai: GNS News Agency, April 7

Tamil Nadu recorded a voter turnout of 65.11 per cent in the single-phase Assembly elections that took place on Tuesday. Voting in all 234 assembly constituencies in 38 districts of the state had begun at 7 am.

As per the Election Commission, Karur reported the highest voter turnout at 77.21 per cent. Other districts where voters came out in large numbers to cast their votes are Kallakurichi (74.41 per cent), Namakkal (74.99 per cent), Perambalur (74.51 per cent) and Ariyalur (72.99 per cent). Chennai reported a turnout of 50.56 per cent.

In Edappadi constituency, where Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami is contesting, a voter turnout of 73.00 per cent was recorded, while Kolathur, where DMK chief MK Stalin is up against AIADMK's Adhi Rajaram, recorded a turnout of 48.20 per cent was registered.

Coimbatore (South), from where actor and Makkal Needhi Maiam leader Kamal Haasan is making his electoral debut, recorded a turnout of 55.44 per cent.

Several leaders cast their votes today, including incumbent Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, who urged voters in the state to do the same after he voted at a polling station in Siluvampalayam.

Meanwhile, actors Rajnikanth and Vijay, and actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan also cast their vote in the first and final phase voting of the state Assembly polls.

Tamil actor Vijay rode a bicycle to the polling station at Vels International Pre School, Neelankarai in Chennai.

A total of 3,998 candidates are in the poll fray in a single phase. In order to combat the COVID-19 spread, the number of polling stations has been increased to 88,937. AIADMK MP P Ravindranath's car was allegedly attacked when he went to inspect polling in Bodinayakanur constituency from where his father and Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister O Panneerselvam is contesting the elections.

Tamil Nadu is witnessing a fierce battle between arch-rivals All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and MK Stalin-led DMK. DMK, which has been out of power since 2011 in the state, is in a head-to-head battle with the ruling AIADMK in nearly 130 constituencies.

AIADMK is contesting the poll in a pre-poll alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Paattali Makkal Katchi (PMK). PMK and BJP are contesting in 23 and 20 constituencies respectively in the 234-member Tamil Nadu assembly while the AIADMK has fielded its candidates for the rest of the seats.

The DMK has allotted 25 seats to Congress, six each to CPI, CPI (M), Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) and Vaiko's Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK).

# After Anil Deshmukh, Maharashtra CM should also step down: Athawale

Mumbai: Union Minister Ramdas Athawale on Tuesday said Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray lost the moral ground to continue to be in power and should immediately resign.

"Anil Deshmukh stepped down but he should have stepped down earlier. Not just this, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray also has lost the moral ground to continue to be in power and should immediately resign," Athawale told ANI.

He added that this was the first time a police officer, who is supposed to protect people, has been involved in such activity.

The Union Minister questioned why Deshmukh did not resign before and did so only after Mumbai High Court ordered a CBI inquiry into the allegations made by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Slamming the Maha Vikas Aghadi government



for its mismanagement of the COVID-19 situation, Athawale said, "The state government has completely failed in controlling the deteriorating COVID-19 situation. Maharashtra is the number one contribu-

tor on a daily basis." Deshmukh, who is facing allegations of corruption levelled by Singh, has tendered his resignation to Uddhav Thackeray on Monday.

The developments came after Bombay High Court on Monday ordered the CBI to start a preliminary inquiry within 15 days into corruption allegations against Deshmukh.

# Maharashtra govt to challenge HC's order on charges against Anil Deshmukh

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government will move the Supreme Court against the Bombay High Court's order for a preliminary probe by the CBI into allegations of corruption

on Monday after the HC directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to conduct a preliminary inquiry within 15 days into the allegations levelled against him by former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh.

Later, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari handed over the charge of the key department to cabinet minister and NCP leader Dilip Walse Patil.

Talking to reporters on Tuesday, Walse Patil said the state government will provide all assistance to the CBI for its probe into the matter.

"The government will challenge the high court's order in the Supreme Court," he said.

On March 25, Singh filed a criminal public interest litigation seeking a CBI probe against Deshmukh who, he claimed, had asked police officers, including suspended cop Sachin Waze, to extort Rs 100 crore from bars and restaurants.



against NCP leader Anil Deshmukh, state Home Minister Dilip Walse Patil said on Tuesday.

Deshmukh resigned as Maharashtra's home minister.

# TN polls: BJP's Khushbu Sundar alleges cash distribution to voters by DMK

Chennai: After casting her vote during the single-phase Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu on Tuesday, BJP candidate from Thousand Lights Assembly constituency Khushbu Sundar said her party has approached the Election Commission (EC) against the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) over the alleged distribution of money to voters.

"We have found people from DMK distributing money to voters. We have complained to the Election Commission. The DMK would want to win by hook or by crook," Sundar said while speaking to ANI.

"In my constituency, they (DMK) have demolished the quarters and 220 voters list is deleted completely. The EC has to take a call on them. However, cops have taken a few people into custody," she



added.

Earlier, while campaigning for the state Assembly polls, Sundar had said that she would deposit Rs 1 lakh into the account of every girl child. "It is extremely important for women to be financially independent. The time she is born, I will deposit Rs 1 lakh in her account, making it

easier for her to grow up," Sundar had told ANI.

Tamil Nadu is witnessing a fierce battle between arch-rivals All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) and DMK. MK Stalin-led DMK, which is out of power since 2011 in the state, is in a head-

to-head battle with the ruling AIADMK.

Polling across 234 Assembly constituencies in 38 districts of the state began at 7 am on Tuesday. In view of COVID-19, the number of polling stations has been increased to 88,937.

# IMA urges PM Modi to open COVID-19 vaccination for all above 18 years

New Delhi: Amid a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country, the Indian Medical Association has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggesting that vaccination be allowed for all people above the age of 18 years.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections in India remained above 90,000 for the third consecutive day on Tuesday taking the nationwide COVID-19 tally of cases to 1,26,86,049, according to the Union Health Ministry. The country had a day ago reported 1,03,558 new cases.

"At present, we are vaccinating the population above 45 years. In view of the rapid spread of the second wave of the disease, we suggest that our vaccination strategy be geared up with immediate effect and on war footing," the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said in its letter to the prime minister.

The doctors' body said that "we request following suggestions in the COVID-19 vaccination drive — all citizens above 18 years of age shall be permitted to receive COVID vaccination and walk-in COVID vaccination should be available for all, free of cost at their nearest possible place".

The IMA also suggested that private sector family clin-

ics should be included actively in the vaccination drive along with private hospitals.

Making vaccination certificate mandatory for entering public places and to receive products under the public distribution system, was also part of the suggestions made by the association.

The IMA stated that the pandemic's second wave surge is reaching record highs and added that "vaccination against COVID-19 stands as a single evidence-based resource for us to restrict cases by raising the personal immune response and pave the way for herd immunity to decrease the severity of the disease".

It said that availability of vaccination with all doctors and family physicians will have positive impact on the inoculation drive.

District level vaccine task force teams should be constituted with public and private participation to enforce mass vaccination, to monitor and mitigate adverse drug events, and to build confidence, the IMA suggested and added that it is willing to actively take part in it.

# Central govt urged to remove 'smoking rooms' at public places

Hyderabad: On the eve of World Health Day, noted personalities from all walks of life have urged the Central Government to remove designated smoking rooms at hotels/restaurants and airports to protect people from second-hand smoke.

While appreciating the government for initiating the process to amend COTPA 2003, they appealed for immediate removal of the current provision that permits smoking areas to make India 100 per cent smoke free and check the spread of Covid-19 infection.

All designated smoking areas which are rarely compliant as per COTPA requirements and actually put public at great health risk from exposure to secondhand smoke, should be abolished, Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, Head Neck Cancer Surgeon, Tata Memorial Hospital said.



In India, smoking is banned in all public areas as per the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce Production, Supply and Distribution) Act COTPA 2003. However, at present the Act

allows smoking in designated smoking areas. Member of Parliament, Ramapati Ram Tripathi said, "There is an urgent need to strengthen the provisions for making India 100 per cent smoke free and protect millions from tobacco related diseases and deaths."

Former Indian badminton player P Gopichand in the release also urged the Central Government to introduce amendments in COTPA in order to save the youth of the country from the menace of tobacco products.

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# In major blow to NRIs, Oman to ban entry of foreigners

Jeddah: GNS News Agency, April 7

In a major blow to NRIs, Oman has decided to impose strict measures during the holy month of Ramadan to limit the spread of Coronavirus.

In a significant development, it has restricted the entry of Non-Omanis and Non-Oman visa holding foreigners effective from Thursday. Until now, Indians including a significant number of Hyderabad NRIs of Saudi Arabia were traveling from home to Saudi Arabia via Oman. With the latest restriction, this route will be closed until further notice.

However, foreigners with an Oman Residency visa can enter the country.

Some thousands of NRIs have been traveling to Saudi

Arabia via Oman after the former banned the entry of any passenger from India with a rider that they can enter the country only after 14 days after leaving India. NRIs had opted to spend 14 days in Oman prior to embarking for Saudi Arabia.

"I was shocked to know the restriction as I have arranged travel plans to bring my wife through Oman to Saudi Arabia", said J Abhishek, hailing from LB Nagar in Hyderabad and working as a software professional in Riyadh.

In Oman and elsewhere in the Gulf, Ramzan is celebrated with large gatherings, group prayers at mosques, and several other activities. Taraweeh prayers, which are the additional ritual prayers performed by Muslims at night after the Isha prayer during the holy month of Ramadan, will not be allowed.

# DMK MP Kanimozhi, other COVID-19 affected people in TN vote wearing PPE kit

Chennai: DMK Lok Sabha MP Kanimozhi, who is being treated for COVID-19, on Tuesday voted at a polling station here by wearing the Personal Protective Equipment kit.

Also, a number of others being treated for the virus voted here and in other parts of Tamil Nadu.

Kanimozhi, also DMK's women's wing secretary, arrived in an ambulance from the hospital where she is being treated for the infection and voted with the PPE kit on. She had tested positive for the virus on April 3.

Ahead of the arrival of people infected with the coronavirus, all personnel in polling stations donned the PPE kits and facilitated their voting.

The premises were sanitised later.

The last hour (6 pm-7 pm) of polling was earmarked for COVID-19-infected voters or those suspected to be infected by the virus.

The total number of people, who chose to vote using PPEs despite being infected by the virus, is not known immediately.

# New Zealand to open travel bubble with Australia on April 19



Wellington: GNS News Agency, April 7

New Zealand announced on Tuesday it will open a long-anticipated travel bubble with Australia on April 19.

The start of quarantine-free travel between the neighbouring nations comes as a relief to families who have been separated by the coronavirus pandemic as well as to struggling tourist operators.

Both countries have been successful in stamping out the spread of the virus.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said health officials believe the risk of the virus being transmitted from Australia is low and that travel is now safe.

"The bubble will give our economic recovery a boost and represents a world-leading arrangement of safely opening up international travel while continuing to pursue a strategy of elimination and keeping the virus out," Ardern said.

Australia had previously allowed New Zealanders to arrive without going into quarantine but New Zealand had taken a more cautious approach, requiring travellers from Australia to spend two weeks in quarantine upon arrival.

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# Bangladesh imposes 7-day nationwide lockdown amidst spike in COVID-19 cases

Dhaka: Bangladesh on Monday clamped a week-long nationwide lockdown, suspending public transport and shutting markets to combat the surge in coronavirus cases in the country, amidst demonstrations by small business owners against the move.

According to a government circular issued on Sunday, the directives will remain in effect from 6 am of April 5 till 12 midnight of April 11, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

People have been asked not to move out from their homes from 6 pm to 6 am, the report said.

The decision was taken in light of the current situation in the country where the rate of infections and deaths have increased in recent weeks. The government has said that they are increasing the number of COVID-19-designated hospitals and ICU beds to deal with the rising number of patients, it said.

Bangladesh has registered 7,087 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to 637,364, in the last 24 hours until Sunday which is the highest number of infections since the start of the pandemic, the United News of Bangladesh reported.

Besides, the deaths due to coronavirus rose to 9,266 with 53 news fatalities during this period.

The mortality rate fell to 1.45 on Sunday from Saturday's 1.46 per cent.

All public transport services (roads, river, railway and domestic flights) were suspended and only emergency services remained operational.

However, all government/non-government/autonomous offices, courts and private offices will be able to facilitate the commute of their employees to work using their own transport on a limited scale.

Thousands of people left Dhaka on Sunday fearing getting trapped during the lockdown. Most of the people who left were unemployed or in poverty.

Many shop owners and employees have, however, taken to the streets protesting the government's decision to shut down all shopping malls and markets during the weeklong lockdown, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

Several hundred traders staged their demonstrations in Dhaka's New Market area blocking the road.

This is the second time lockdown has been imposed in Bangladesh. The country earlier imposed a 66-day lockdown from March 26 to May 30 last year when a nationwide holiday was also enforced.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged people to help curb the spread of the virus in a speech in Parliament.

"I know everyone will face difficulties. Despite this, I say lives should be given preference over everything," Hasina said Sunday.

Hasina has sought everyone's cooperation to combat the ongoing second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh.

Speaking on the new strain of coronavirus in the country, the premier said: "The damage done by the new virus variant is hard to detect right away. One's condition worsens suddenly. For this, we have to be careful."

# One of country's largest sugar maples removed for safety

Kensington: A sugar maple tree that has watched over a New Hampshire home for more than 200 years and was one of the largest of its kind in the United States is coming down because of safety concerns. As a small crowd looked on Monday, arborist Micum Davis started trimming the crown of the tree in Kensington with the goal of taking it apart by the end of the day. Given the tree has a crown stretching 100 feet (30 metres) across, a diameter of more than 7 feet (2 metres) and stands 100 feet tall, the job required a crane to haul away branches as Davis cut them off with a chainsaw. A wood chipper howled in the background.



American Forests' National Champion Trees Programme.

Janet Buxton, whose family has owned property where the tree stands since 1954, proudly showed off a certificate she received touting its size. "It's been the guardian of us. I don't know what to say. We grew up with it. It's been special to the whole family," Buxton said, sitting at her kitchen table. "We're all

sad to see it go but we have thoroughly enjoyed it for the 67 years we have been here."

The maple being cut down has as survived plenty of storms over the years and provided a place for birds including a whip-poor-will whose calls could be heard many nights and a recent owl family that made a home

in the trunk. Squirrels, Buxton said, used the tree to get into the family's attic. But a bout of recent storms with strong winds proved too much. Cracks formed in the trunk and it became clear that the tree had become a safety hazard, with the potential for branches to fall onto the house. There was also widespread rot in the tree and Braxton began to hear the tree creaking.

# Global Covid-19 caseload tops 131.6 million: Johns Hopkins

Washington: The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 131.6 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 2.85 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University.

In its latest update on Tuesday morning, the University's Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) revealed that the current global caseload and death toll stood at 131,696,594 and 2,859,357, respectively.

The US is the worst-hit country with the world's highest number of cases and deaths at 30,777,338 and 555,403, respectively, according to the CSSE.

Brazil follows in the second place with 13,013,601 cases and 332,752 fatalities.

The other countries with more than two million confirmed coronavirus cases are India (12,589,067), France (4,893,971), Russia (4,538,101), the UK (4,376,629), Italy (3,678,944), Turkey (3,529,601),

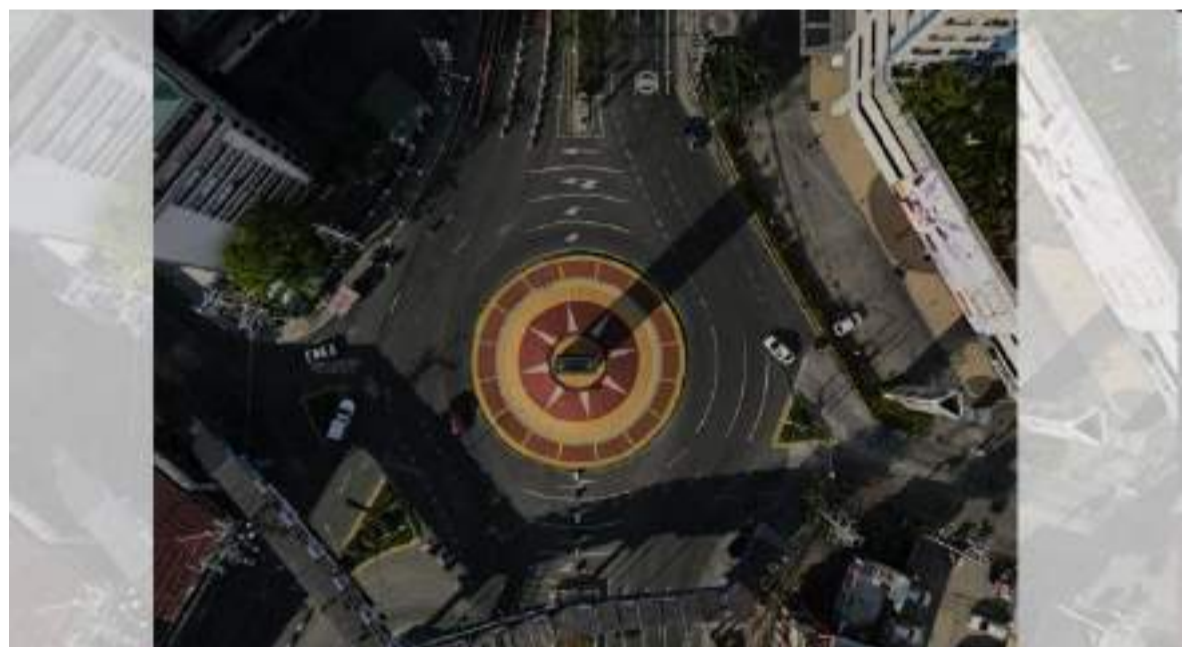


(3,311,325), Germany (2,903,036), Colombia (2,456,409), Poland (2,448,463), Argentina (2,407,159) and Mexico (2,250,458), the CSSE figures showed.

In terms of deaths, Mexico comes in the third place with 204,147 fatalities.

Nations with a death toll of over 50,000 are India (165,101), the UK (127,106), Italy (111,326),

Russia (99,049), France (97,005), Germany (77,070), Spain (75,783), Colombia (64,293), Iran (63,332), Argentina (56,471), Poland (55,005), Peru (53,138) and South Africa (52,995).



Manila: The Philippine government extended a lockdown by another week on Monday after an alarming spike in coronavirus infections continued to surge and started to overwhelm many hospitals in the capital and outlying regions.

President Rodrigo Duterte placed Metropolitan Manila and four outlying provinces, a region of more than 25 million people, under lockdown last week as daily infections breached 10,000.

Roman Catholic leaders shifted Holy Week and Easter events online after all public gatherings, including in places of worship, were temporarily banned.

The government-run Lung Centre of the Philippines became the latest hospital in the capital region to announce over the weekend that it can no longer accept walk-in patients after its COVID-19 ward reached full capacity and its emergency room was handling twice its capacity.

"We are not just full. We are very full. In fact, the

hospital has been full for the past two weeks," Lung Centre spokesman Dr Norberto Francisco said.

Other hospitals said they could expand bed capacity but lacked enough medical workers partly because many had been infected.

Duterte's administration has increasingly faced criticisms of mishandling the pandemic, but presidential spokesman Harry Roque said the spread of more infectious coronavirus variants came as a surprise.

"No one could have probably foreseen how infectious these new variants are and as a result of which we have these ballooning numbers," Roque told ABS CBN News, adding officials would inaugurate a 110-bed intensive-care unit in a hospital in the capital region Monday and were planning to launch mobile COVID-19 intensive-care centres.

The Philippines has reported more than 795,000 COVID-19 cases with 13,425 deaths, the highest totals in Southeast Asia after Indonesia.

# Egypt moves 22 Pharaonic mummies to new museum

Cairo: Authorities have moved 22 Pharaonic mummies from the Egyptian Museum on Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC) in a festive parade known as "The Pharaoh's Golden Parade".

The festivity started on Saturday evening with 22 ancient-styled vehicles es-

pecially designed for the event, each carrying the name of the mummy of the king or queen inside, moving through Tahrir Square and escorted by parades of chariots, motorcycles and men and women dressed in ancient Egyptian outfits, reports Xinhua news agency.

The royal mummies belong to 18 kings and four queens from the 17th, 18th,

19th and 20th dynasties that ruled ancient Egypt over 3,000 years ago.

They include mummies of famous ancient Egyptian King Ramses II and Queen Hatshepsut.

About an hour before the parade set off, President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi inaugurated the main hall and the mummies hall in the NMEC, accompanied

by Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Khaled al-Anani, Unesco Director-General Audrey Azoulay and Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Zurab Pololikashvili.

The Minister explained that the main hall of the NMEC contains 1,500 artefacts and it will be open for visitors the next day.

# KKR closes \$15 bn PE fund to invest in APAC

Mumbai: GNS News Agency, April 7

Global buyout major KKR on Tuesday said it has closed a \$15 billion fund to invest in private equity deals in Asia-Pacific region. The company, which has over \$5.7 billion invested or committed in the country across 20 deals, did not specify how much of the newly raised Asian Fund IV will be committed to India.

"India is an important part of KKR's Asia Pacific investment strategy across all our asset classes. The country's dynamic population and strong economic fundamentals are fuelling the growth of India's innovative and disruptive homegrown companies," its partner Gaurav Trehan said.

A company spokesperson said it is not setting specific deployment targets for each market and the same would depend on a "favourable risk-to-reward balance" in a region and added that India is a key part of its regional strategy. "We think there are attractive opportunities centered around the themes of consumption upgrades, carve-outs, and divestitures from large conglomerates, globally competitive, export-driven businesses, and generational transitions," the spokesperson added.

Till date, it has made five investments from the fund even before its final close, and two of them have been in Indian companies, the spokesperson said. These include \$1.5 billion investment for a 2.32 per cent stake in Reliance Jio announced in May 2020, and \$755 million for a 1.28 per cent stake in Reliance Retail announced in September 2020.

In a statement, the company said the fund is at present the largest private equity fund dedicated to investing in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, and KKR will itself be investing \$1.3 billion in it alongside investors. Its co-head of Asia Pacific Private Equity Hiro Hirano said while each market is unique, "the long-term fundamentals underpinning the region's growth are consistent — the demand for consumption upgrades, a fast-growing middle class, rising urbanization, and technological disruption."

## Credit Suisse foresees \$4.7 billion charge over hedge fund default

Geneva: GNS News Agency, April 7

Swiss bank Credit Suisse on Tuesday announced the departure of two top executives and said it expects a one-time charge of 4.4 billion Swiss francs (\$4.7 billion) in connection with a previously announced default of a U.S. hedge fund on margin calls.

The Zurich-based bank said it provisionally expects to report a loss of 900 million francs for the first quarter, though final figures are still being worked out. Credit Suisse said it has suspended a share buyback program and reduced its dividend in the wake of the default.

"The significant loss in our prime services business relating to the failure of a U.S.-based hedge fund is unacceptable," CEO Thomas Gottstein said. "Serious lessons will be learned." The bank said it has launched two investigations 'to be carried out by external parties,'

and said Brian Chin, the head of Credit Suisse's investment bank, and chief compliance and risk officer Lara Warner will leave the bank.

Credit Suisse didn't identify the hedge fund or the other banks affected, or give other details of what happened. News reports identified the hedge fund as New York-based Archegos Capital Management, whose default also ensnared Japan's Nomura. The Financial Times reported last month that Archegos had large exposures to ViacomCBS and some Chinese technology stocks and was hit hard after a drop in shares of the U.S. media group in March.

A margin call is triggered when investors borrow using their stock portfolio as collateral and have to make up the balance required by banks when the share prices fall and the collateral is worth less.

## Varde funds Phoenix \$155 mn for two office developments in Hyderabad

Hyderabad: GNS News Agency, April 7

Varde Partners, a global alternative investment firm, announced it has provided construction financing on two pre-leased office assets in the Gachibowli Financial District of Hyderabad. The \$155 million (over Rs 1,130 crore) facility will be used to refinance and fund to completion over 2.5 million square feet across the two Grade A developments owned by Phoenix Group.

To date, over 1.5 million square feet has been pre-let to two multi-national companies, reflecting the quality and location of the assets. Construction of both projects is well-advanced, with sub-structure development complete and super-structure phases underway.

Hyderabad is a recognised global tech hub, with the city's financial district home to a large number of multi-national tech, financial services and professional services companies. The city is one of the fastest growing metropolitan cities in India and one of the strongest markets in the country for office absorption, Varde said in a statement.

Varde believes that India's real estate market is experiencing a significant imbalance in the supply and demand of capital, leading to many businesses with robust balance sheets seeking alternative sources of capital.

"We see significant opportunity across the Indian office market for both the financing and purchase of assets, in a market that offers potential strong cash-flow visibility, multinational tenants and strong absorption," said Tim Mooney, partner and global head of Real Estate at Varde Partners.

"We believe that a real estate cycle is upon us and while not nearly as pronounced as the cycle brought on by the global financial crisis, the opportunity set is significant and growing," Mooney added.

## T-Hub's Lab32 programme launches fifth edition, selects 30 startups

Hyderabad: GNS News Agency, April 7

Innovation ecosystem builder T-Hub on Tuesday announced the launch of the fifth edition of its flagship pre-acceleration programme, Lab32 by onboarding 30 startups. The startups will receive consultation from leading experts on business goals like revenue growth, customer acquisition, market expansion and product roadmap.

The programme will run until June 2021 and it will continue with its hybrid model, launched last year owing to the pandemic. Startups from various cities are part of the programme along with startups from rural innovation space with social impact. The selected startups offer solutions in industries such as media, SaaS, healthtech, e-commerce, drones, social commerce, blockchain, agritech, rural commerce, robotics, enterprise IT, foodtech, mobility, and adtech.

T-Hub CEO Ravi Narayan said, "Lab32, the pre-acceleration programme aims at preparing startups for rapid growth making them investment ready. Most of our alumni have contributed to our country's economy by successfully expanding their business to global locations. We are confident that chosen startups from various sectors will make sizable contributions to the



economy and society."

More than 300 startups applied for this batch, and the same were evaluated by the startup innovation team of T-Hub. The startups were further shortlisted through one-on-one connection, with T-Hub interviewing and educating them about the programme. The startups were selected based on the technology market readiness and the maturity of founders who had a clear business roadmap.

In the first month of the Lab32 program, T-Hub will conduct a pre-programme assessment to understand the requirements of the startups in detail, followed by consultant connections. The startups will then undergo rigorous training and consultation sessions by professional trainers, advisors, and subject matter experts, based on the needs of the startup. In the end the programme will assess the progress made by each of the startups based on the objectives

set at the beginning of the programme. Thirteen startups from the fourth batch graduated in February 2021 and attracted interest from investors and corporates during the take off.

Telangana IT department principal secretary Jayesh Ranjan said, "It is good to see the Lab32 programme progress successfully to its fifth batch. The program has continued to be a support system for the early stage startups, not just in Telangana but across India."

## Glenmark Pharma to use IFC's \$40 mn loan for debt refinance and capex

Chennai: GNS News Agency, April 7

Pharma major Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd will be utilising the \$40 million loan from International Finance Corporation (IFC) to refinance existing debt and for capital expenditure.

Glenmark is having a good presence in generics, over the counter and specialty drugs.

The IFC has committed an unsecured loan of \$40 million to the company.

Queried about the deployment of the loan fund a company spokesperson told IANS: "The \$40 mn loan will be utilized to refinance existing Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds (FCCBs) and capex funding."

The IFC in 2016 had



invested in convertible debt of \$75 million in Glenmark for expansion project.

According to the

Glenmark spokesperson, IFC had subscribed to the company's FCCB for a principal of \$75 million.

"The FCCB's have maturity in June 2022 and are not yet converted," the official said.

## No change in petrol, diesel prices for full week

New Delhi: GNS News Agency, April 7

Fuel prices in the country remained unchanged on Tuesday with oil marketing companies continuing on the pause mode and keeping petrol and diesel prices unchanged for seven consecutive days.

Accordingly, pump price of petrol and diesel remained at previous days level of Rs 90.56 and Rs 80.87 a litre respectively in the capital.

Petrol and diesel fell by 22 paise and 23 paise per litre respectively last week on Tuesday in the wake of global softening of oil prices. OMCs have decided to pause price revision as they want to watch the crude price movement that has now fallen to around \$62.5 a barrel from remaining above this level in much of the last week.

Across the country as well the petrol and diesel prices remained static on Tuesday but its retail levels varied depending on



the level of local levies on respective states.

In Mumbai, petrol continues to be priced at Rs 96.98 a litre and diesel at Rs 87.96 a litre. Premium petrol, however, continues to remain over Rs 100 a litre in the city as is the case with several cities across the country.

The OMCs went on price cut for the first time this year on two consecutive days — March 24 and 25 after keeping oil prices steady for past 24 days. It again reduced the price on March 30. Thereafter, fuel prices have remained unchanged.

Earlier, petrol and diesel prices increased 26

times in 2021 with the two auto fuels increasing by Rs 7.46 and Rs 7.60 per litre respectively so far this year.

Officials in public sector oil companies said that retail price may rise again if crude and product prices pick up but for now it will fall or remain static for few more days.

## Rupee surges 10 paise to 73.20 against US dollar in early trade

Mumbai: The rupee appreciated by 10 paise to 73.20 against the US dollar in opening trade on Tuesday supported by positive domestic equities and strong Asian currencies.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 73.22 against the US dollar, then inched higher to 73.20 against the greenback, registering a rise of 10 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee had settled at 73.30 against the American currency.

"However, appreciation bias could be capped amid concerns that rising COVID-19 cases and subsequent lockdowns in some states may hurt economic recovery and cause foreign outflows," Reliance Securities said in a research note.

Most of the Asian currencies were stronger this Tuesday morning and could lift sentiments, the note added.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex was trading 270.03 points higher at 49,429.35, and the broader NSE Nifty advanced 85.45 points to 14,723.25.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.05 per cent to 92.64.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.76 per cent to USD



62.62 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market as they offloaded shares worth Rs 931.66 crore on Monday,

according to exchange data.

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link to subscribe.

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## Hyderabad to add data centre capacity

Hyderabad: The Indian data centre sector is expected to see 560 MW (IT Power Load) capacity additions during 2021-23, which will drive the capacity of 447 MW to 1,007 MW. Of this, Hyderabad alone is expected to see a capacity addition of 66 MW by 2023, accounting for over 9.5 per cent of India's capacity then, from the current 30MW level.

Telangana is among the very few States in the country to have an independent Data Centre Policy, as early as 2016. Apart from being home to a large pool of talented manpower, high quality and cost-effective

infrastructure, the city is centrally located in India, well connected and seismologically safe. All these advantages backed by a dedicated policy make Hyderabad one of the most attractive investment destinations for setting up data centres, say experts.

Of India's current data centre capacity of 447 MW, Hyderabad accounts for seven per cent share as of December 2020 standing at 30 MW IT power load capacity. India's data centre capacity is expected to grow from 447 MW in H2 2020 to 1,007 MW by 2023, registering a CAGR of 31

per cent.

During 2021-23, despite absence of cable landing stations, Hyderabad is expected to attract data centre companies as well as hyperscale cloud providers due to favourable policy incentives, reliable power supply and economical set up costs, said Sandip Patnaik, MD & head Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, JLL.

New projects

Hyderabad today roughly has an IT design power load of 30MW capacity with a data centre built up space of over seven lakh sq ft primarily.

## Resolve your argument for better overall health: Study

If you want a longer, healthier life then resolve your arguments by end of the day as it reduces the emotional response associated with the disagreement, a new study revealed.

On the day of an argument or avoided argument, people who felt their encounter was resolved reported roughly half the reactivity of those whose encounters were not resolved, the findings indicated. "Everyone experiences stress in their daily lives. You aren't going to stop stressful things from happening. But the extent to which you can tie them off, bring them to an end and resolve them is definitely going to pay dividends in terms of your well-being," said researcher Robert Stawski from the Oregon State University.

For the study, published in The Journals of Gerontology, the team used data from an in-depth survey of more than 2,000 people who were interviewed about their feelings



and experiences for eight days in a row.

The researchers looked at reports of both arguments and avoided arguments, defined as instances where the person could have argued about something but chose to let it slide so as not to have a disagreement.

They then measured how the incident affected the person's reported change in negative and positive emotions, both for

the day of the encounter and the day after it occurred.

The measure of how an experience affects someone emotionally, an increase in negative emotions or a decrease in positive emotions, on the day it occurs is known as "reactivity," while "residue" is the prolonged emotional toll the day after the experience occurs.

The results showed that on the day of an argu-

ment or avoided argument, people who felt their encounter was resolved reported roughly half the reactivity of those whose encounters were not resolved. On the day following an argument or avoided argument, the results were even starker — people who felt the matter was resolved showed no prolonged elevation of their negative affect the next day.

## Amazfit T-Rex Pro smartwatch launched in India at Rs 12,999

Amazfit, the smart wearable brand on Friday launched its military certified rugged outdoor smartwatch T-Rex Pro to India for Rs 12,999.

Amazfit Trex-Pro is an upgraded version of T-Rex, which was launched globally during CES 2020. The smartwatch will be available on Amazon as well as on in.amazfit.com starting March 28. According to the company, Amazfit T-Rex Pro is considered to be the most affordable Military Cer-

tified Rugged Outdoor Smartwatch.

The Amazfit T-Rex Pro has passed 15 regulations of military standard (MIL-STD-810). Under these the smartwatch is made to T-Rex withstand Extreme Temperature and conditions from 70C heat to -40 cold along with 240Hrs of humidity, 96 hours of Salt spray and many more.

The smartwatch is packed with 100+ sports modes, tracking user performance in everything from indoor and outdoor running



to cycling to skiing and more. The smartwatch features a 1.3-inch AMOLED screen with (360x360 pixels) with always-on-display, SPO2.

It features 40hrs GPS, quad-GNSS, a BioTracker, optical heart rate sensor, 10 ATM water resistance.

## Disabling video during online meets boosts communication

As videoconferencing remains the only option for millions of workers as the Covid-19 pandemic continue to surge, a new study has challenged the effectiveness of online meetings, suggesting that non-visual communication methods that better synchronise and boost audio cues are, in fact, more effective.

The findings showed that it might be worth to disable the video function during online conferencing via various tools like Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet, in order to promote better communication and social interaction during collaborative problem-solving sessions.

Researchers from Carnegie Mellon University and University of California, Santa Barbara, in the US studied collective intelligence — the ability of a group to solve a wide range of problems — and how synchrony in non-verbal cues helps to develop it.

"We found that video conferencing can actually reduce collective intelligence," said Anita Williams Woolley, Associate Professor at Carnegie Mellon's Tepper School of Business. "This is because it leads to more unequal contribution to conversation and disrupts vocal synchrony. Our study underscores the importance of audio cues, which appear to be compromised by video access," she added in a paper appeared in the journal PLoS One.

Essentially, conversation is what happens when at least two speakers take turns sharing their thoughts, and nonverbal cues are how they establish when and how to take these turns. Currently, video conferencing has become the de facto tool for group collaboration within many

organisations. The prevalent assumption is that technology that helps to mimic face-to-face interactions via a video camera will be most effective in achieving the same results.

To challenge this assumption, researchers focused on two forms of synchrony: facial expression synchrony and prosodic synchrony. Facial expression synchrony is pretty straightforward and involves the perceived movement of facial features. Prosodic synchrony, on the other hand, captures the intonation, tone, stress, and rhythm of speech.

Woolley and her colleagues pulled together a large, diverse sample of 198 individuals and divided them into 99 pairs. During a 30-minute session, each duo completed six tasks designed to test collective intelligence. The groups with video access did achieve some form of collective intelligence through facial expression synchrony, suggesting that when video is available, collaborators should be aware of these cues.

However, the researchers found that prosodic synchrony improved collective intelligence whether or not the group had access to video technology and that this synchrony was enhanced by equality in speaking turns.

"Most strikingly, though, was that video access dampened the pairs' ability to achieve equality in speaking turns, meaning that using video conferencing can actually limit prosodic synchrony and, therefore, impede upon collective intelligence," the researchers noted.

searcher Victor Hugo C. de Albuquerque from the Universidade de Fortaleza, noting that most X-ray images are available within minutes, compared to the days required for swab or saliva diagnostic tests. However, the researchers found a lack of publicly available chest X-rays to train their AI model to automatically identify the lungs of Covid-19 patients.

They had just 194 Covid-19 X-rays and 194 healthy X-rays, while it usually takes thousands of images to thoroughly teach a model to detect and classify a particular target.

To compensate, the

team took a model trained on a large dataset of other X-ray images and trained it to use the same methods to detect lungs likely infected with Covid-19.

Since X-rays are very fast and cheap, they can help to triage patients in places where the health care system has collapsed or in places that are far from major centers with access to more complex technologies," Albuquerque said.

"This approach to detect and classify medical images automatically can assist doctors in identifying, measuring the severity and classifying the disease," Albuquerque added.

## 10 minutes of video gaming everyday may enhance esports skills

Video gamers can significantly improve their esports skills by training for just 10 minutes a day, a new study revealed.

The study also found that novice gamers benefited most when they wore a custom headset delivering transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS) for 20 minutes before training sessions. "Our study found that novice gamers who received tDCS over their motor cortex before training improved their performance on the specific task over five days, significantly more than novices who trained following no such stimulus," said researcher Mark Campbell, director of Lero's Esports Science Research Lab (ESRL).

For the study, published in the journal Computers in Human Behavior, the participants wore a custom headset designed to deliver transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS).



However, some received no stimulation, others just a 'sham' treatment, while the remainder received a 20-minute exposure."

One of the original and most prominent esports over the past 20 years has been the first-person shooter (FPS) game, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO)," the researcher said.

"We asked participants to shoot and eliminate enemy targets as quickly and accurately as possible during their training sessions in the study," they added. According to the researchers, when they examined the effect of tDCS on training compared to non-stimulated groups, they observed a significant effect of tDCS on training for left and right targets, but not

centre targets. The researchers said that in light of the team's findings, tDCS may be especially beneficial during the initial stages of task learning.

"Stroke patients, for example, could benefit from tDCS at the start of their rehabilitation process when re-learning complex movements that were once automatic," Campbell said.

## Coffee waste can boost forest recovery

Coffee pulp, a waste product of coffee production, could be used to speed up tropical forest recovery on post agricultural land, suggests a new study. In the study published in the journal Ecological Solutions and Evidence, the team spread 30 dump truck loads of coffee pulp on a 35-40m area of degraded land and marked out a similar sized area without coffee pulp as a control.

"The results were dramatic," said lead researcher Rebecca Cole from the University of Hawai'i in the US. "The area treated with a thick layer of coffee pulp turned into a small forest in only two years while the control plot remained dominated by non-native pasture grasses," Cole added.

After only two years, the coffee pulp treated area had 80 per cent canopy cover compared to 20 per cent in the control area. The canopy in the coffee pulp area was also four times taller than



that of the control area. The addition of the half-metre thick layer of coffee pulp eliminated the invasive pasture grasses which dominated the land. These grasses are often a barrier to forest succession and their removal allowed native and pioneer tree species, that arrived as seeds

through wind and animal dispersal, to recolonise the area quickly. The researchers also found that after two years, nutrients, including carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus, were significantly elevated in the coffee pulp treated area compared to the control. For the study, the researchers analysed soil

samples for nutrients immediately prior to the application of the coffee pulp and again two years later. They also recorded the species present, the size of woody stems, percentage of forest ground cover and used drones to record canopy cover.

## Aerobic exercise may help address dialysis-related symptom



"We found that as little as 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise two to three times per week seemed to improve several common symptoms in people undergoing hemodialysis and make them feel better," said researcher Clara

researcher Clara Bohm, from the University of Manitoba in Canada. "There have been very few rigorous, well-designed studies published that look at the effect of exercise on symptoms in people undergoing hemodialysis, and larger studies that use standardized measurement tools are needed to help us determine the effect of exercise on common symptoms in these patients more clearly," Bohm added.

"We found that as little as 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise two to three times per week seemed to improve several common symptoms in people undergoing hemodialysis and make them feel better," said

researcher Clara Bohm, from the University of Manitoba in Canada. "There have been very few rigorous, well-designed studies published that look at the effect of exercise on symptoms in people undergoing hemodialysis, and larger studies that use standardized measurement tools are needed to help us determine the effect of exercise on common symptoms in these patients more clearly," Bohm added.

Hemodialysis is a procedure where a dialysis machine and a special filter called an artificial kidney, or a dialyzer, are used to clean blood.

According to the team,

undergoing hemodialysis to treat their kidney failure doesn't always reduce these symptoms, and it can sometimes make some symptoms worse.

Importantly, people receiving hemodialysis have noted that finding effective treatments for hemodialysis-related symptoms should be a research priority. For the study, published in the Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology, the research team searched the medical literature and analyzed all relevant studies investigating the effects of aerobic exercise on dialysis-related symptoms. The search uncovered 15 randomized controlled trials, with differ-

ent studies looking at restless leg syndrome, sleep disturbance, symptoms of anxiety and depression, muscle cramping, and fatigue.

The researcher said that there are many hemodialysis-related symptoms for which the effect of exercise has not been studied, and most people included in published trials were men with relatively high levels of physical function.

"Future studies need to include people with diverse characteristics, particularly older women, elderly individuals, and people with low functional status, to see if exercise has similar effects," Bohm said.

## X-rays, AI together may help detect Covid-19 faster



A team of researchers has found that X-rays could be a leading-edge diagnostic tool for Covid-19 patients with the help of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The findings, published in the IEEE/CAA Journal of Automatica Sinica, indicate that the research team used several

different Machine Learning (ML) methods to detect Covid-19, two of which resulted in a 95.6 per cent and a 98.5 per cent accuracy rating, respectively. "We decided to investigate if a Covid-19 infection could be automatically detected using X-ray images," said re-

## 'Main Mulayam Singh' coming in Telugu



The biographical movie of political stalwart Mulayam Singh Yadav will soon be dubbed for Telugu audiences. A special screening was held recently at Prasad Labs in the city. Producer Meena Sethi Mondal, director of the film Suvendu Raj Ghosh, actor Amyth Sethi who played the role of Mulayam, were felicitated after the film screening.

The special screening was facilitated by Guvvala Bharat Kumar and Kottakurma Sivakumar who produced it jointly under the banner Loshi Entertainments. The engrossing on-screen tale traces the journey of the political leader and the life events after he took the reins of Uttar Pradesh.

TRS leaders S Venugopala Chary, corporator Bonthu Sridevi Yadav, Anjan Kumar Yadav, Ghazal Srinivas, former IPS Gopinath Reddy, filmmaker Dasaradh, film producer Tummalapalli Rama Satyanarayana were among several personalities present during the event.

## Dwayne Johnson announces 'Black Adam' release date



Los Angeles: Hollywood star Dwayne Johnson's "Black Adam" is slated to be released on July 29, 2022. Johnson shared the date on Instagram, along with a video of his voiceover blaring in Times Square.

"A disruptive and unstoppable global force of a message from the man in black himself. BLACK ADAM is coming July 29, 2022. The hierarchy of power in the DC universe is about to change," the 48-year-old actor wrote on Sunday. "Black Adam" is a spin-off from Warner Bros and New Line Cinema's "Shazam!", featuring Zachary Levi.

The character first appeared in DC Comics in the 1940s as a villain corrupted by power. He became an anti-hero in the early 2000s. Jaume Collet-Serra, who has directed Johnson in the upcoming "Jungle Cruise", will helm "Black Adam". The movie also features Aldis Hodge as Hawkman, Noah Centineo as Atom Smasher, Quintessa Swindell as Cyclone, and Pierce Brosnan as Dr Fate.

Rory Haines and Sohrab Noshirvani wrote the latest draft of the script, from a previous draft by Adam Szykiel. Johnson is also producing the movie with Dany Garcia and Hiram Garcia via their Seven Bucks Productions, and Beau Flynn through FlynnPictureCo.

## Movie 'Padmashri' trailer launched



## Music was composed by John Potla while lyrics are penned by Basangi Suresh

Starring newcomers Kishore Kumar and Sandhya Rani, the theatrical trailer of the upcoming movie Padmashri was formally launched on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, journalist-turned film director SS Patnaik said, "It's a story-oriented movie. I wouldn't say it is a message-oriented one, because the movie will remain as a message itself. It has all the three elements of comedy, horror and action. Some part of it was made with graphics and visual effects. And audiences can experience it after watching it."

Elaborating on the cast, he added, "Padmashri's title role is being played by actor Jyothi. Lead actors Kishore and Sandhya will get recognition through this movie. Censor formalities have been completed and Padmashri received a U/A certificate. I am very happy to make the trailer launched in the presence of film and photo journalists. I am happy to celebrate my birthday with the launch of the trailer."

Music was composed by John Potla while lyrics are penned by Basangi Suresh. Cinematography is by Mekala Narsing Rao. The movie is being bankrolled by Sadasivuni Sirisha under the banner SS Pictures. Mamidi Sambamurthy, Kothakota Balakrishna and PVS Rammohan Rao are co-producing the film.

# 'Anamika' now comes in a new style

Remember the massively popular 'Kala Sha Kala', 'Kahi Karta Hoga Intezaar', 'Sona Disda' — the numbers that grooved an entire generation in the 90's? Well, singer Anamika Grover is all set to re-release her old classics to introduce youngsters to her music now.

"But I'm not going to disappoint my fans who have loved my music all these years, and will give these new songs my 'old tadka'," she smiles.

Entering the Indian pop music scene with 'Catwalk' in the year 1996, Grover feels that only improved in the past few decades. "The reach has gone better unlike the previous times. The digital reach is excellent today. I feel the best part about the times we live in is the fact that you can promote your music in a bigger way. However, one feels sad that pop-music which was more popular in those days has now faded



with Bollywood music, though the latter picked up after the pop music that we did in those times."

Grover, who is trained in both Indian as well as Western Classical music feels that the same has helped her immensely as the former taught her to hit the right note, while the latter helped her understand how to stimulate the voice, giving it variations and modulations. "Indian classical was of course the

base from which I started my singing career. Later, I decided to enhance it with western training, considering I am quite fond of singing international songs. And yes, I might do an international number soon."

The singer who has joined 'Bolo Indya' to promote her new album #Ferraree says that she wanted to reach a larger audience, and the micro creators led strategy provided by Bolo Indya across

vernacular languages drives word of mouth like messaging for artists, making them more connected to its audiences. "I am loving the engagement level at Bolo Indya. During a recent 15 minute live session, I witnessed over 20k people were following and Live with me." The singer, whose two upcoming songs — 'Shalalala' and 'Chak De Dhol' are almost ready says that although she realises the power of social media when it comes to promoting music, she is someone who prefers to keep her social media activities very personal and takes it slow. "I am not going to go very aggressive or stressed on what and what not to post. I understand it is a powerful tool, but I am not stressing myself. I handle my own Instagram, Facebook and now Bolo Indya. I interact with my fans personally and that's how it keeps me connected and I will continue to do that."

# Ruhaniyat is back in a digital avatar

India's biggest mystic music festival, Ruhaniyat is back in a new avatar. Over the years, Ruhaniyat festival has been criss-crossing history, geography and musical streams featuring solos, group presentations, specially curated global productions that melt boundaries and create musical bridges of universal brotherhood, love, harmony, peace and joy!

When in the midst of all the chaos surrounding the pandemic and the lockdown, for most, connecting with the divine, in whatever way, seemed like a soothing balm, a ray of hope.

As November arrived, we at Banyan Tree helplessly looked at the scenario which was far from suitable to take off on our annual Ruhaniyat journey. Finally, the wait is over and we are all set to present Ruhaniyat once again. Though except Mumbai, it will not be a physical concert, yet we are thankful to present Ruhaniyat in a digital format to all our loyal audiences across the country.

And, despite the difficult times to be able to



present Ruhaniyat in all the eight cities, once again, we are truly grateful to our national partners, Tata Consultancy Services, for joining hands with us yet again.

In each city, every digital version will be a specially curated Ruhaniyat concert. Each will be a combination of freshly shot performances as well as some exceptional performances from our Ruhaniyat archives, keeping in mind the

taste of each city and acts which they might have missed out over the years.

Digital Ruhaniyat concert in Hyderabad will be presented on April 4 at 6 pm on bookmyshow.com. Tickets are priced at Rs 350 (Including GST). For more details, Sachin Mane +91-92232313529 or email on sachin.banyantree@gmail.com. Artistes line up

- Jikir-Jari — Hafiza Beghum Chowdhury (Assam)

- A bridge across Sand Dunes — Kachra Khan & Group (Rajasthan)

- Mystic Pathways — Siberia to Rajasthan — Two Siberians (Russia)

- The Dancing Dervish of Egypt — Tannoura (Egypt)

- When Hearts Connect: Indo Belgian production Mir Mukhtiyar Ali & Group (India) with Louvat Brothers (Belgium)

- Qawwali — Chand Nizami & Group

# Elsa says Chris Hemsworth giving her lots of workout tips for 'Interceptor'



The actor, who shares eight-year-old daughter India and seven-year-old twins Sacha and Tristan with the Thor star, said she wants to maintain the routine even after the shooting is complete.

London: Actor-model Elsa Pataky says she and her husband, Marvel star Chris Hemsworth are spending a lot of time training together to get her ready for her upcoming movie, Interceptor. Pataky, 44, is set to play a US Army lieutenant in the action drama, to be directed by Matthew Reilly.

The actor said Hemsworth, 37, is "thrilled" about giving her a lot of

workout tips. "I'm always training and keeping fit because I like to have a toned body. But for this role, I had to take things to a whole other level. Chris is thrilled because we're training together more often now. He's giving me lots of great tips. I'm now doing more weight training, because I needed to boost my physical strength... I needed to be very agile too. It was very

tough," Pataky told HELLO! magazine.

The actor, who shares eight-year-old daughter India and seven-year-old twins Sacha and Tristan with the Thor star, said she wants to maintain the routine even after the shooting is complete.

Starring in Interceptor is a dream come true for Pataky, who said she always wanted to star in an action film. "I play a really strong woman, physically and mentally — a real fighter, a lieutenant in the US Army, with a real sense of duty. It's an action film, from

start to finish. I'd always really wanted to be in an action movie," she added.

The story of the Netflix film centres on an Army lieutenant (Pataky) who must utilise her years of tactical training and military expertise to save humanity when 16 nuclear missiles are launched at the US, and a violent coordinated attack simultaneously threatens her remote missile interceptor station.

Also starring Luke Bracey, the movie has Hemsworth attached as one of the executive producers.

## Why Oscar winner Jodie Foster won't do comedies

Los Angeles: Two-time Oscar winner Jodie Foster has opened up on why she normally does not want to do comedies.

"People have said to me, 'Why don't you do comedies? You never even did a romantic comedy!' And I say, 'I've done 'Maverick'. But there are a number of reasons why I don't do comedies. I like them, but they don't give me the same feeling of significance, and even as an actor doing them, I think they can be kind of fun for a week, then you start getting hungry for feeling like you should be doing something more important," she said, according to femalefirst.co.uk.

# Vilayati sharaab was a 'stroke of luck', says Allu Sirish



Hyderabad: While many actors from the South have made their debut in Bollywood with film roles, Telugu actor Allu Sirish is trying the music video route. He features in video of the hit track "Vilayati sharaab" sung by Darshan Rawal and Neeti Mohan.

The song is composed by Lijo George and DJ Chetas, and penned by Kumaar. Featuring with Sirish is TV actress Heli Daruwala. Sirish, brother of Telugu star Allu Arjun, calls the video a "stroke of luck", adding that he awaits "something exciting" for a Hindi film debut.

"I have not thought about a Hindi debut yet but if something exciting comes my way I will definitely do it," Sirish tells IANS. He adds: "Right now my dubbing work only is travelling so much and that gets me so excited. With the films lined up here, I don't get time to actively pursue anything else."

Sirish made his acting debut as the lead star of the 2013 bilingual film "Gouravam" and later did successful films such as "Kotha Janta", "Srirasthu Subamastu" and "Okka Kshanam". The actor's last release, "ABCD: American Born Confused Desi", got a great response from pan India television reach.

Talking about "Vilayati sharaab" and how it happened, Sirish says: "I don't know how did this land in my lap. This is a stroke of luck or something. Even while doing the video I didn't think how many views I would get. I just enjoyed it so much. I wish I could just again shoot the video because it was so much fun."

# Parineeti Chopra on working in 'Animal': It'll be months of learning school

Mumbai: Actor Parineeti Chopra says she is thrilled to feature in director Sandeep Reddy Vanga's next "Animal" as the film has given her the opportunity to work alongside the likes of Anil Kapoor and Ranbir Kapoor.

Reportedly billed as a dark thriller, the film marks Vanga's second Hindi directorial after the massive success of 2019's "Kabir Singh".

Chopra said while she can't talk about the film or her role in detail as yet, she is looking forward to sharing the screen space with the duo for the first time.

"I don't sit and desperately plan that I want to work



with this director or that actor. I have never done that in my career. So for me, the opportunity to be a part of 'Animal' means a lot. It is a huge honour to be a part of a film with Anil Kapoor sir and Ranbir. These are actors I've enjoyed watching and respect immensely in personal capacity. For me, working in 'Animal' will be months of learning school," the 32-year-old actor told.

Produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series, Pranay Reddy Vanga, Murad Khetani, and Krishan Kumar, "Animal" also stars Bobby Deol.

The makers had announced the film earlier this year with an audio teaser. Chopra, who is scheduled to start the film later this year, said the script of "Animal" is "stunning".

"I've also spent time with the director and I love him as a person. Being on that set will be extremely exciting. I'm grateful and humbled they thought of me for the film. I am happy the director had confidence in me to pull off the role," she added. Chopra has had back-to-back three releases this year, starting from "The Girl on the Train" on Netflix, and "Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar" and last week's sports biopic "Saina" in the theatres.

"Animal" Sonakshi Sinha wraps up shoot for Zoya Akhtar's next series" is slated to be released on Dussehra 2022.

# Sonakshi Sinha wraps up shoot for Zoya Akhtar's next series

Bollywood actor Sonakshi Sinha announced the wrap up of her upcoming digital debut film with ace filmmaker Zoya Akhtar, on Sunday. The Dabangg star who was shooting for her upcoming untitled Amazon Prime series, hopped on to Instagram and shared a note of thanks to her team while announcing the wrap up of the project.

"As it comes to an end I don't even know where to begin! What a journey Fallen (that's what we're calling it, for now, wait for the actual name) has been (sic)," Sonakshi wrote. The 33-year-old actor added, "Leaving this set with such amazing memories, new friends, bike riding skills and a heart full of happiness! Thank you @reemakagti1 and @zoieakhtar for giving me Anjali Bhaati... I can't tell you how long I've waited for her (sic)."

Further acknowledging her team, she wrote, "I can safely say this has been the best schedule ever for me because of this amazing team... every single person who has been a part of it... i cannot thank you enough! You know who you are (sic)."

## La Liga: Last-minute goal helps Barca down Valladolid



Barcelona: GNS News Agency, April 7

Ousmane Dembele's last-minute goal gave Barca three vital points with a 1-0 win at home to Valladolid to move them to within a point of Atletico Madrid at the top of La Liga.

Dembele fired home at the far post after the ball had been flicked on when it looked as if Barca were not going to break down a well-drilled Valladolid who ended the game unhappy at having a good penalty appeal turned down and ending the game with 10 players after Oscar Plano was shown a rigorous red card.

Barca coach Ronald Koeman repeated the starting eleven that had won 6-1 away to Real Sociedad two weeks ago but his side struggled to find the fluency it showed in San Sebastian, thanks partly to a well-organised Valladolid.

The visitors, who had lost just one of their last six games, were unlucky not to open the scoring in the ninth minute when Kennan Kodro's header bounced back off

the crossbar. Barca was again playing with three central defenders and that allowed Valladolid to close down spaces in central midfield and they created very little until the last minute of the half when Valladolid keeper, Joel Masip got enough of a touch on Pedri's shot to tip it onto the post.

Neither side made changes at the start of the second half, although Barca changed their system with Frenkie de Jong moving into midfield from defence and the home side started the brighter of the two with Jordi Alba firing over the bar before Antoine Griezmann nodded wide after Ousmane Dembele's shot was blocked by Masip after a pass from Messi.

Valladolid asked for a penalty after the ball clearly hit Jordi Alba's hand in the Barca area, but the VAR decided that it was not punishable, and almost immediately afterward, Barca made a triple change with Martin Braithwaite, Francisco Trincao, and Ronald Araujo replacing Griezmann, Sergio Busquets, and Griezmann.

## Bio-bubble is tough but Indians more tolerant: Ganguly

Kolkata: The BCCI President Sourav Ganguly on Tuesday said Indian cricketers are "more tolerant" when it comes to dealing with mental health issues compared to those from England and Australia but acknowledged that being confined to bio-bubbles amid a raging pandemic is not easy for anyone.

International cricket in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic has forced players to stay in bio-bubbles, where their life is restricted to hotels and stadiums. They do not have access to people outside the bubble during series and India skipper Virat Kohli is among those who have voiced their concerns about the mental toll that the current situation is taking.

"I feel we Indians are a bit more tolerant than overseas (cricketers). I have played with a lot of Englishmen, Australians, and the West Indians, they just give up on mental health," the former India captain said at a virtual promotional event here.

"In the last six-seven months, with so much cricket being going on in



the bio-bubble, it's so tough. Just going from the hotel room to the ground, handle the pressure and come back to the room and then get back to the ground again, it's an absolutely different life."

Ganguly cited the example of the Australian cricket team which pulled out of a tour to South Africa following a defeat to India

at home. Australia were slated for a three-Test tour in March-April but they pulled out citing an "unacceptable level of health and safety risk to players, support staff and the community".

"Look at the Australian team, they were supposed to go to South Africa for a Test series after India

played there. They refused to go there..." he said.

"And always there's this scare of Covid. 'Hope it's not me the next time'. You have to stay positive, you have to train yourself mentally. All of us have to train ourselves mentally so that the good will happen. It boils down to training," Ganguly added.

## West Ham into the EPL's top 4



London: West Ham jumped above Liverpool, Tottenham and Chelsea into the top four of the Premier League.

Injuries to arguably its two best players might see the team struggle to stay there. Jesse Lingard inspired a 3-2 win over Wolverhampton as the midfielder ran from the halfway line to score one goal and also set up another for substitute Jarrod Bowen.

Lingard has now scored six goals in eight games since joining on loan from Manchester United in February, a hot streak that has seen him earn a recall to the England squad.

The victory saw West Ham climb into fourth place —

the final Champions League qualification position — with eight games remaining, continuing its revival under David Moyes. The London club has never played in Europe's top competition.

However, Moyes is set to be without Declan Rice reportedly for at least four weeks, with the holding midfielder missing the game at Molineux after getting injured on international duty with England last week.

Also set for a spell on the sidelines is Michail Antonio, who left the field because of a hamstring injury in the 32nd minute. It is the latest setback for the injury-prone Antonio, who has been transformed from a winger to a rampaging center forward under Moyes and is the only senior striker in West Ham's squad.

## Gagan Narang to tie the knot on April 21

Gagan and Annu have known each other ever since their shooting career started. With their friendship blossomed into love, the duo has decided to tie the knot at an ITC Hotel in Gachibowli on April 21.

Given the Covid-19 pandemic, Gagan has decided to take all precautions for this auspicious occasion. The couple's invitation reveals, "Although the Covid-19 crisis has created much uncertainty, as of now, we will be proceeding with our wedding on April 21, 2021. We understand that the situation is in constant flux, but based on the current guidelines and the recommendations in the State of Telangana, we feel we should be able to pull this long-awaited wedding off successfully provided we all contribute towards a



safe environment and adhere to all Covid protocols."

In the invitation, they have said they taken special measures in coordination with the hotel. They will be conducting Covid tests

of all their staff on a regular basis and sanitisation of the venue.

The marriage party has assured all the invitees of providing adequate amenities like

sanitisers, face masks and shields.

The invitees have been given the option of taking a RT-PCR tests at home. For those coming from outside Hyderabad,



## Consistent SRH eye another good show

Hyderabad: Sunrisers Hyderabad is one of those teams putting in consistent performances year after year. The team from Hyderabad has reached the playoffs every season after winning the title in 2016.

Like every season, this year too, the team banks on its unknown heroes to deliver the goods.

David Warner has been their go-to man in every season. He has been one of the consistent performers in the history of IPL. He is the only cricketer in IPL to score 500 plus scores for the sixth straight season. He had also won Orange Cap thrice since 2015, which is a testimony to his consistency.

Kane Williamson

Adding to that, his opening partner from England Jonny Bairstow was in red-hot form in the series against India. With New Zealand skipper Kane Williamson to come next at No.3, the batting is one of the dreaded ones. If it was Warner-Bairstow duo that provides blistering starts, the presence of Williamson in the middle provides solidarity. However, much will depend on Manish Pandey and Vijay Shankar to provide the final flourish that SRH lacked on many occasions.

Lack of a proper finisher has been their bane on many occasions. The likes Abdul Samad and Priyam Garg failed to cement their place in that particular role. In a bid to fill the gap, SRH have bought Kedar Jadhav this year and it will be interesting to see whether he can fulfill the role.

The inclusion of Jason Holder last year provided a much-needed balance to the side as the former West Indies skipper proved handy with both ball and the bat.

## BAI defers all domestic tournaments

New Delhi: Domestic badminton tournaments that were scheduled to be held in April and May have been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Badminton Association of India (BAI) said in a statement on Monday.

"With the exponential rise in the number of Covid-19 cases across the country, BAI President Himanta Biswa has decided to postpone all the upcoming domestic tournaments starting with B'lore (April 18-25) followed by junior & sub-junior in Hyd in May," the BAI said.

According to the calendar that the BAI released on March 26, the All Indian Senior Ranking tournament was scheduled to be held in Bengaluru from April 18 to 25. Apart from the senior ranking tournament, qualifiers and main draws of the junior and sub-junior tournaments were scheduled to be held in Hyderabad, Mysore and Bangalore in May.



The Indian Open is scheduled to be held from May 11 to 16 in New Delhi and the BAI has not yet indicated if the Super 500 tournament has been affected in any way due to the surge of Covid-19 cases in the country.