



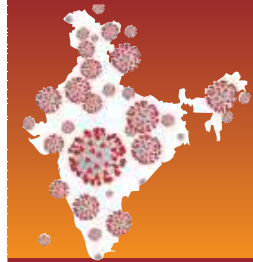
the pioneer

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

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RAKSHASUDU
SEQUEL IN THE
WORKS

Page 11

CORONA
Cases in
INDIA

20,25,338

Recover
13,77,387Deaths
41,634NOT HOSPITALS, BROKERS BOOK
BEDS FOR COVID PATIENTS!

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With shortage of beds in private hospitals becoming a major issue in Hyderabad, and demand increasing, it's no surprise that brokers are stepping into the picture and exploiting the desperation of Covid-19 patients and their families.

Despised for their ability to smell desperation and swoop in to extort, brokers surface whenever there is an emergency, and the prevailing pandemic is a perfect opportunity for them to suck the blood of a hapless citizenry.

It's now almost routine that one has to utilise the services of a broker to get a bed in a private hospital, and people are grudgingly paying through their nose to middlemen, as it is a matter of life and death.

Once contacted, the brokers, a majority of whom are marketing executives of private hospitals, take the details and the health condition of the



It's now almost routine that one has to utilise the services of a broker to get a bed in a private hospital, and people are grudgingly paying through their nose to middlemen, as it is a matter of life and death.

patients, and manage to connect those in need with the nearest corporate hospital.

This correspondent contacted one such broker named Pavan, and told him that her

father has tested positive for Covid-19 and needed hospitalisation.

Pavan reeled off the names of the various hospitals in her vicinity.

"There is Sunshine, Secunderabad and PACE, Begumpet near your house. You will have to pay Rs 1.5 lakh as advance in the hospitals. Then, if you just need a bed in the ward it would be Rs 40,000 to Rs 45,000 per day. If the patient needs oxygen, that will cost you around Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000 per day. If the patient has to be shifted to an ICU, the cost per day will be around Rs 80,000 to Rs 1 lakh. If the patient needs ventilator support, it would cost you Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1,50,000 per day," he said.

The rattling off of the figures, the familiarity of the procedure, and Pavan's over all confidence made it clear that it was all part of a day's work for him. Though he did

Pavan also cautioned this correspondent not to reach the hospital without informing him, as doing so would mean that there wouldn't be a bed available for the patient.

Cash custodians
steal Rs 1.23 cr
meant for ATMs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Four custodians working for a cash management company in Hyderabad stole currency notes valued at Rs 1.23 crore. According to the police, Srinivas Rao, general manager of Secure Values India Private Limited, lodged a complaint stating that they had handed over the cash replenishment and deposit work of two routes in the city to another company, BTI Payments Limited.

In the recent few weeks, four employees Rajasekhar, Ram Bharath, Sai Teja and Ashwin, who work with BTI Payments Limited, were entrusted with the task of depositing the cash in the ATM machines.

2

RBI adds glitter to
gold, allows higher
loans against jewellery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India on Thursday added additional shine to gold ornaments and jewellery by allowing banks to give loans up to 90 per cent of the value of such items pledged by borrowers.

At present, loans sanctioned by banks against pledge of gold ornaments and jewellery is up to 75 per cent of the value of such items.

The additional loan against jewellery is expected to mitigate the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on households, entrepreneurs and small businesses and help them tide over their temporary liquidity mismatches.



"With a view to further mitigate the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on households, entrepreneurs and small businesses, it has been decided to increase the permissible LTV for loans against pledge of gold ornaments and jewellery for non-agricultural purposes from 75 per cent to 90 per cent," the RBI said.

Rs 400 crore released for new
Secretariat, tenders in two days

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State Government on Thursday released Rs 400 crore for the construction of the new Telangana Secretariat complex that will come up in place of the now razed buildings. According to sources, the government may issue the tender notification for the proposed Secretariat complex within two days.

The government has earlier announced Rs 400 crore for the construction of the integrated Secretariat complex and the State Cabinet, that met on Wednesday, approved it.

Meanwhile, the Roads and Buildings Department will formally issue administrative per-



mission for the construction of the integrated complex.

Incidentally, a scheduled meeting of the authorities with Chennai-based architects Oscar and Ponni was postponed for Thursday.

Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu has asked the officials to ensure creation of all amenities so that officials and ministers work in tandem and the work is completed smoothly.

HC wonders over TS govt
decision on online classes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A division bench of the Telangana High Court on Thursday asked the State Government how it could say that it would allow online classes to be conducted by schools without any academic calendar in place?

The bench was responding to a submission by the Government that the State Cabinet had recently passed a resolution on conducting classes in government schools and state affiliated schools through digital mode and online platforms.

The government also informed the court that orders would be issued in a day or two on the matter.

Referring to the submission of the CBSE that its affiliated schools' academic calendar has been started from May



The government also informed the court that orders would be issued in a day or two on the matter.

2020, the Court remarked that it has come to its notice that online classes were being conducted for 4 hours every day. Responding to this, counsel for the CBSE sought 10 more days to file its counter.

2

Priest on deputation
in Tirumala shrine
dies of Covid-19

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A 45-year-old priest — Srinivasacharyulu — who was admitted to the SVIMS a week ago with Covid-19 symptoms, passed away on Thursday morning while undergoing treatment.

Srinivasacharyulu was posted at Tirumala shrine on deputation basis and was originally a priest at the Lord Govindarajwamy temple.

However, the TTD is yet to officially declare the demise of the priest. It may be mentioned here that a former head priest of the TTD died of Covid-19 last month. Chittoor District Administration has been enforcing Corona rules strictly in view of increasing cases in Tirumala. Because of the curbs, the intensity of the cases has come down, say the district authorities.

TRS MLA Ramalinga
dies of heart attack

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ruling TRS MLA in Telangana Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy died here on Thursday while undergoing treatment at a private hospital. He was 59.

Ramalinga Reddy, MLA from Dubbak in Siddipet district, died this morning due to a heart attack while undergoing treatment for an infection in the leg, TRS said on Twitter.

Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu, several of his Cabinet colleagues, state Congress president N Uttam Kumar Reddy and other leaders



condoled the death of Ramalinga Reddy. KCR expressed shock over the demise of Ramalinga Reddy and recalled his association with the departed leader as a fellow activist from his native region, an official release said.

2

Industrial parks in 100 acres
to be converted into IT parksL VENKAT RAM REDDY
■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State government plans to create at least one crore square feet of built-up space for IT firms, and this it intends to do by converting industrial parks spread over an extent of 100 acres in Uppal, Pocharam, Ghatkesar, Kompally in the next five years.

The Government hopes that the move will give a huge fillip to the booming IT industry in Hyderabad and create around one lakh new jobs in IT/ITES sectors over the next five years.

This also fits perfectly with the State Government's plans to expand IT sector beyond the west of the city, where IT industry is currently concentrated.

The government has decided to offer several incentives for developers for conversion



This also fits perfectly with the State Government's plans to expand IT sector beyond the west of the city, where IT industry is currently concentrated

of industrial parks into IT parks as part of IT Grid Policy (Growth in Dispersion) approved by the State Cabinet on Wednesday, which aims to ensure that IT companies are spread across all four corners of the city.

The Grid policy will be in force for five years since the guidelines are issued and companies who set up their units during these five years can

avail the incentives for a five-year period.

As part of the incentives, the State government will allow conversion of industrial parks to IT parks where the developers can allocate 50 per cent for developing space for IT companies and use the remaining 50 per cent land for non-IT purposes like residential and commercial purposes.

2

Coronavirus
spread contained
in India: Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan asserted that the spread of coronavirus has been contained in the country, citing how half the total cases are from three states only and another 30 per cent from seven others. Speaking at a virtual meeting of WHO's Regional Director, South East Asia, Poonam Khetrpal Singh with Health Ministers from the region on maintaining essential health services and public health programmes in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Harsh Vardhan alluded to the efficacy of the government's containment strategy.



2

TS woos EV manufacturers with Rs 825cr sops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has offered to allot 755 acres on city outskirts besides extending incentives worth Rs 825 crore to electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers to encourage them to set up operations in Telangana.

The state government's new Telangana State Electric Vehicle and Energy Storage Solution Policy approved by the State Cabinet on Wednesday aims at attracting investments worth Rs



30,000 crore and provide direct employment for 1.20 lakh people.

This apart, the policy is expected to reduce vehicular pollution resulting in reduction

of carbon dioxide emissions of 6.61 Terra grams (661 crore kg) in state.

The state government has decided to establish an exclusive EV Park spread over 755 acres at Divitipally on city outskirts while utilising existing Electronic Manufacturing Clusters (EMCs) at Raviryal and Maheshwaram on the city outskirts.

The policy, which aims to make Telangana a 'most preferred destination' for electric

vehicles and energy-storage sectors, offers incentives not just for EV manufacturers but also buyers to encourage them to switch over to EVs.

The government offered to waive 100 per cent road tax and registration fee for buyers of electric two-wheelers and four wheelers.

This waiver will be extended only for the first two lakh two-wheeler buyers and first 5,000 four-wheeler buyers.

2

No benefit of plasma therapy to reduce covid mortality risk: AIIMS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Convalescent plasma therapy did not show benefit in reducing mortality risk among COVID-19 patients, according to an interim analysis of a randomised controlled trial done at AIIMS in Delhi to assess the efficacy of this mode of treatment.

The therapy involves taking antibodies from the blood of a person who has recovered from COVID-19 and transfusing those into an active coronavirus infected patient to help kickstart the immune system to fight back the infection.

AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria told news agency PTI on Thursday no clear mortal-



This is just an interim analysis and we need to do a more detailed evaluation to see if any sub-group may benefit from plasma therapy

— DR RANDEEP GULERIA
AIIMS Director

ity benefit of convalescent plasma therapy was seen during a trial conducted among 30 COVID-19 patients.

During the trial, one group of patients was given convalescent

plasma therapy along with the standard supportive treatment while the other group only received standard treatment. The number of fatalities recorded in

both the groups was equal and there was not much clinical improvement in the condition of patients, he said.

"However, this is just an interim analysis and we need to do a more detailed evaluation to see if any sub-group may benefit from plasma therapy," Dr Guleria said.

He also underlined that plasma has to be tested for its safety and should have sufficient antibody to be useful to COVID-19 patients.

The efficacy of convalescent plasma therapy in moderate to severe coronavirus-infected patients was discussed in the

third National Clinical Grand Rounds (CGR) on COVID-19 held on Wednesday.

"Plasma is safe. As far as its efficacy is concerned, we do not have a green signal yet. So the clinical use has to be very judicious and within the ambit of national guidelines," Dr Monish Soneja, additional professor in the Medicine department at AIIMS, said at the webinar.

Convalescent plasma therapy has been listed as an investigational therapy for off-label use in coronavirus infected patients because as of now there is no conclusive evidence for its efficacy, Dr Soneja said.

2

Inflation to remain
elevated in
Q2FY21: RBI Guv

8

TV actor Samir
Sharma found
hanging in
Mumbai home

5

NEP 2020 –
What it means
for school
education

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Shravana & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi: 01:05 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Purva Bhadrapada:
01:33 amTime to Avoid: (Bad time to start
any important work)

Rahukalam: 10:46 am – 12:21 pm

Yamagandam: 03:32 pm – 05:07 pm

Varjyam: 12:13 am – 01:59 am

Gulika: 07:36 am – 09:11 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: NIL

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 am – 12:47 pm

HYDERABAD
WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy

Temp: 29/23

Humidity: 84%

Sunrise: 05:57 am

Sunset: 06:46 pm

Current Weather Conditions
Updated August 6, 2020 5:00 PM

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, is expected to enunciate future course of action proposed to be taken in the education sector in the country.

As the policy covers the entire gamut of the education sector, it would be appropriate to analyse it in different parts.

To begin with, let us focus on school education that lays the foundation for the future generation of the country. It goes without saying that a prudent policy should provide the roadmap from start of the journey to the contemplated destination in terms of methodology, resource planning, tackling challenges, time frame and parameters to ascertain the extent of success. There are hard questions regarding this, and these days, policymakers don't want to answer such questions.

In various sectors, it is noticed that a nice presentation, full of intents and plati-

NEP 2020 – What it means for school education

tudes, substitutes for substance.

Let us see to what extent the school education segment of NEP is able to deal with the substance.

NEP starts with the vision and key principles, universal access and early childhood education, curriculum and pedagogic structure for learning. It further deals with outcomes and competencies to be achieved, and the process of schools accreditation.

On the positive side, a complete section is devoted to education and development of teachers. The focus area of NEP pertaining to school education is equity, gender and special needs. Refreshingly, unlike many other policy documents, this segment of NEP spells out goals and implementation

NEP starts with the vision and key principles, universal access and early childhood education, curriculum and pedagogic structure for learning. It further deals with outcomes and competencies to be achieved, and the process of schools accreditation.

plans too.

There are several new features introduced in the NEP, the most prominent being changes in the academic structure. As against existing 10+2 system of school education, the proposed academic structure now has four constituents namely, foundation (3 years of pre-schooling and two years of Class 1 and 2), preparatory (3 years of play, discovery and activity-based interactive classroom learning), middle stage (Class

6 to 8) and secondary stage of four years (multidisciplinary study, greater critical thinking, flexibility and student choice of subjects).

The additional three years proposed in the new structure are due to formal integration of pre-schooling. This calls for close coordination between school education and women and child welfare departments at all levels.

How this formal integration of pre-schooling is going to be achieved in practice remains



SHAILENDRA KUMAR JOSHI
FORMER CHIEF SECRETARY
OF TELANGANA
ADVISOR OF TELANGANA
GOVERNMENT.

to be seen.

As many progressive states were already shifting anganwadis for better supervision within the premises or vicinity of primary schools, the process will now get expedit-

ed. This integration of anganwadis with schools is going to throw several challenges. First and foremost is going to be dual control over the staff of women and child welfare department as well by the education department.

Another peculiar situation likely to be is that the mothers of, and children between 3 to 6 years of pre-schooling age group will be taking relatively nutritious food in comparison to children studying in classes 1 and 2. Introducing uniformity of scale for the entire pre-schooling segment will solve this problem.

However, another challenge would remain to be physically segregating foundation, preparatory, middle and secondary segments in the existing one or more school buildings.

The changes contemplated at the secondary stage are going to be profound in nature.

The related issue would be children coping with their course work along with preparing for competitive entrance examinations for various professional courses such as JEE, EAMCET etc.

The pattern of entrance examinations too needs to be changed in accordance with the proposed changes in secondary education. It is easier to write phrases such as 'greater critical thinking ability' in the policy documents but would be quite tough to implement in real life situations without attitudinal changes in the society.

The welcome aspect is reduction in curriculum and having interactive classes and

experiential learning and focus on socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs).

Here again, outcome will largely depend on the quality of implementation of such initiatives. Integrating vocational education at all levels, setting up of the National Centre for Performance Assessment, Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic development (PARAKH) and clearcut timelines and new assessment patterns are some other salient features.

Here, a word of caution will be appropriate to take into consideration needs of special children while promoting online and digital education.

We have seen several policies in the past full of pious intentions and platitude. The real difference would be wholly dependent on the quality and commitment of people involved in implementing the policy.

Monitor patients in isolation: Eatala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Following the directions of Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Rao, Minister for Health and Family welfare Eatala Rajender along with the Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar IAS on Thursday held a video conference with the district Collectors, district medical and health officers and Hospital superintendents and reviewed the Covid-19 management in the districts.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister asked the district Collectors to seek suggestions and advice of the district ministers in extending treatment for the Coronavirus in the district. He directed the Collectors to regularly monitor the home isolation patients by providing proper counseling



with the doctors. Collectors have to ensure that all the patients are provided with proper medicare and instill confidence in the patients.

Chief Secretary underlined the need for conducting testing

of all persons who came for testing after being enrolled in the app. The positive patients have to be provided counseling along with medical kit at the centre. He asked the Collectors to furnish the proposals for

new testing centers., details of vacancies of medical staff for Covid treatment, proposals of private hospitals for permitting them as designated Covid hospital.

He directed the Collectors to

send proposals for extending oxygen supply for all the beds in the district hospitals, area hospitals and those attached to medical colleges in the state. He wanted the Collectors to submit all the pending bills related to Covid in prescribed format to the government.

He instructed the officials to prepare a circular on medicines provided in the home isolation kit and issue guidelines for treatment protocol on Covid. Rizvi, Secretary Health and Family Welfare and Karuna, Commissioner, Health and Family Welfare, Neetu Prasad, Member Secretary, PCB, Raghunandhan Rao, Commissioner, PR & RD, Ronald Rose, Special Secretary, Finance and other officials attended the meeting.

Provide disabled friendly facilities at hospitals: HC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD





Dealing with a PIL filed before it issuance of orders to the state government to come to the aid of disabled persons during COVID-19 crisis, a division bench of the High Court directed the state to have disabled friendly facilities at the designated COVID-19 hospitals, testing centres and isolation wards. It also asked it to sensitise health care workers about the needs of the disabled people. It also directed the state government to provide care gives monetary allowance and to implement guidelines issued by ICMR and the Central government for the benefit of the disabled persons.




HC wonders on...




Continued from Page 1

Following this, the High Court has asked them to file their counter by August 24. The court has also dismissed an implead petition filed by some parties.

The High Court later adjourned the case to August 27.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
 ₹ 57,830 (10 gm)	
 ₹ 10	▲
SILVER	
 ₹ 71,500 (1kg)	
 ₹ 6,450	▲

CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
 Dressed/With Skin	₹171
 Without Skin	₹195
 Broiler at Farm	₹118

EGG RATES ₹/100	
 HYDERABAD	365
 VIJAYAWADA	405
 VISAKHAPATNAM	405
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.90
(IN HYDERABAD)	

Homeo clinic seized in Warangal

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The District Medical and Health Department on Thursday seized the homeopathy clinic of Dr VS Reddy for misleading the public that he has homeopathy medicine for Coronavirus. The Health Department seized the clinic following a complaint lodged with the Ayush Commissioner in Hyderabad by the local chapter of the Indian Medical Association.

In fact, the treatment of Covid-19 depends on the symptoms. This has proved effective and many more have

recovered from the virus. Yet some have been claiming that they have cure for the virus and saying that the cure is definite. As such offers are not only misleading but also violate of Government rules the Health Department has initiated disciplinary action.

Homeopathic Dr VS Reddy of Hanamakonda gave publicity that he has the cure for the virus. He can also give medicine to prevent the virus. He claims to have treated many. Moreover, he says that those who have contracted the virus need not wear masks at all. Therefore, the local IMA

chapter was forced to lodge a complaint with the Ayush Commissioner.

In the letter, the IMA chapter contended that the doctor is undertaking home visits to Corona patients and advising people against not wearing masks. Thereby, he is deliberately putting others lives in danger, said Dr Kottagattu Srinivas, president of IMA Warangal chapter. DMHO Dr K Lalita swung into action and seized Dr VS Reddy's homeopathy clinic. The Ayush Department authorities have been conducting an enquiry into the incident.

Homage paid to Prof Jayashankar

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Rich tributes were paid to Telangana ideologue late K Jayashankar by the TRS leaders here on Thursday marking his jayanthi celebrations.

Zilla Parishad Chairman Lingala Kamalraj, MLC B Lakshmi Narayana, MLA L Ramulu Naik, DCC Bank Chairman K Nagabhushanam, SUDA Chairman B Vijay Kumar,

TRS State secretary T Madhu and the TRS district party office in-charge RJC Krishna have offered floral homage to Jayashankar and recalled his services to the cause of separate Telangana.

Industrial parks in 100 acres to be converted into IT parks

Continued from Page 1

The developers have to pay 30 per cent of the initial registration value to the Industrial Development Authority for conversion of the land.

The government estimates it can earn Rs 150 crore through land conversion from the developers alone.

Further, the IT and ITes

companies setting up their units in these areas can avail power at Rs 2 per unit subsidy not exceeding Rs 5 lakh per annum. They will also get 30 per cent subsidy against the lease not exceeding Rs 10 lakh per annum. A special incentive package will be given to companies providing more than 500 jobs. The State government has estimated to release Rs

66.75 crore over next 10 years towards incentives under the Grid policy.

IT companies will be encouraged to start operations along the Outer Ring Road especially in areas like Kompally (North zone), Uppal and Pocharam (East), Shamshabad and Adibatla (South), Kollur and Osmansagar (northwest) and

Coronavirus spread contained in India: Vardhan

Continued from Page 1

"The strategy has been successful in that 50 per cent of the cases are from three states and 32 per cent of the rest are from seven states. The spread of the virus thus has been contained."

The Minister said that the lockdown was effective in slowing down the rate of growth of cases and gave the government time to augment the health infrastructure and testing facilities.

"From one lab in January, India has 1,370 labs today. Indians anywhere can access a lab within three hours travel time. 33 of the 36 states and UTs (Union Territories) exceed WHO's recommendation of testing 140 people per million per day," he said.

He also stressed that earlier viral outbreaks like the Avian Influenza, H1N1, Zika,

India needs to look beyond what rating agencies think, says Rajan

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan said on Thursday that overly focusing on what sovereign rating agencies think can take one's eyes off what needs to be done for the economy. "It is also important to convince both domestic and international investors that after the crisis associated with the pandemic is over, we will return to fiscal responsibility over the medium term, and the government should do more to convince them of that," Rajan told the Global Markets Forum.

India was placed under one of the strictest lockdowns in the world in late March for more than two months to stem the spread of the Coronavirus, but cases have continued to rise steadily since the government eased restrictions in June, stymieing hopes of an economic recovery. The government has announced



The RBI and government have certainly been cooperating, but it seems like it is elsewhere, the ball is in the government's court to do more, said the former Governor of RBI Raghuram Rajan

several initiatives to help the poor and small- and medium-size businesses, but actual cash outgo from the government's measures has been estimated at just about 1 per cent of GDP.

Several attribute the fiscal prudence to fear of a downgrade after Moody's cut India's rating and outlook in early June followed closely by a change in outlook from Fitch. The central bank on its part too has reduced the key lending rate by 115 basis points on

top of the 135 bps last year and is widely expected to cut rates by another 25 bps later on Thursday. "The RBI and government have certainly been cooperating, but it seems like it is elsewhere, the ball is in the government's court to do more," Rajan said. He said the RBI needs to focus on whether credit is reaching the stressed areas of the economy and also if the viable firms were able to access credit and not the unviable ones.

No benefit of plasma...

Continued from Page 1

About the initial findings of the randomised controlled trial, Soneja said, "Convalescent plasma is not a magic bullet." It may be used particularly in early moderate stage of the disease. There may be a subset of patients with certain characteristics who may benefit from plasma, he said, adding, "This is a work in progress as we do not know those characteristics."

The findings highlight that relatives of the patients should

ATM custodians...

Continued from Page 1

The four persons were tasked with replenishing cash in 36 ATM machines on two different routes and had failed to submit the daily/weekly reports to the company.

"Following this, the management conducted an audit and discovered that an amount of Rs 1,22,98,800 was not deposited in the cash dispensing machines," the police said. Based on a complaint made by the company, the police registered a case and started an investigation.

TRS MLA Ramalinga dies...

Continued from Page 1

He conveyed his condolences to members of the bereaved family, it said. In a statement, the PCC president and Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader M Bhatti Vikramarka said Ramalinga Reddy had a deep understanding of people's problems.

Ramalinga Reddy played an active role in public life as a legislator and as a journalist, they said. Born in 1961, Ramalinga Reddy had worked as a journalist before joining politics.

TS woos EV manufacturers ...

Continued from Page 1

Electric three seater auto-rickshaws will also get 100 per cent exemptions of road tax and registration fee for the first 20,000 buyers.

Retro fitment incentive at 15 per cent of the cost capped at Rs 15,000 per vehicle for first 5,000 units will also be provided for the rickshaws. Electric light goods carriers (including three-wheelers) will get the same exemptions for the first 10,000 units, as will the first 5,000 private electric cars and first 500 electric buses.

The new policy will also benefit buyers that are expected to save Rs 22,588 crore in 15

years towards running costs and maintenance of EVs.

For EV industries, 20 per cent capital investment subsidy capped at Rs 30 crore, power tariff discount of 25 per cent capped at Rs 5 crore, 100 per cent reimbursement of SGST up to Rs 25 crore for seven years, interest subvention of 5.25 per cent for five years capped at Rs 5 crore and other exemptions like stamp duty will be extended.

Telangana already has the presence of country's leading electric bus manufacturer Electra Greentech and electric three-wheeler manufacturer Gayam Motor Works.

Not hospitals, brokers book beds for Covid patients!

Continued from Page 1

"Inform me at least half-an-hour before you start for the hospital. I will arrange and hold a bed for you. Otherwise you won't get a bed," he instructed.

Apparently, Yashoda, Secunderabad and Apollo, Marredpally didn't have any beds available, if one called up the hospital directly.

Soon enough, this correspondent's phone started ringing — executives from Sunshine and PACE hospital

trying to connect. They assured the reporter that her father will be in safe hands in their hospitals.

Giving an insight into the matter, a recently discharged Corona survivor, Rakesh (name changed), says, "I and my father were diagnosed with Covid and since we were both finding it a bit difficult to breathe, we urgently required admission. I was given the number of a broker from a friend. He told us to get admitted in a nearby corporate hospital that had beds with oxy-

gen. He knew about the daily tariffs of all the local hospitals by heart. And he even informed us about how the treatment there would be and how many beds in each hospital were vacant."

Some patients are pestered to pay extra for the bed even after they are discharged.

Saipraneeth Reddy, who lost his father to Covid, said, "Both my parents were admitted in Virinchi Hospital and we paid Rs 9.5 lakh for treatment. After I lost my father and my mother was discharged, I start-

ed getting calls from the hospital to pay Rs 2 lakh each, for both my parents, and that too in cash, for which they would not generate any receipt. When I enquired why, they said it was for the bed that was allotted to my parents. I haven't paid them anything as yet."

These brokers have links with almost all major hospitals in the city.

Jagan Goud, president of Telangana Private Hospital Public Problem Solution Association, said, "It is actually a network. Most of them are

marketing executives of major hospitals. They are aware of the tariff and let the patients know on the call itself about how much advance and daily payment will be for each hospital.

These dealers get paid around 25 per cent to 30 per cent of the total bill generated for the patient as commission. Also, the advance paid by the patient may or may not be adjusted in the bill generated. It's pretty disturbing that they make money from people's desperation."

IN BRIEF

UOH to resume online classes from August 20

The University of Hyderabad (UoH) has decided to resume classes in online mode for about 2,000 ongoing post-graduate students in various programmes with effect from August 20. This decision comes as a Task Force constituted by the university administration recommended for start of online teaching in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. Earlier, the UoH had suspended classes for all batches on March 15 and has since completed the evaluation process of final semester students, allowing them to graduate. The Task Force headed by former Dean of Sarojini Naidu School of Arts & Communication, Vinod Pavarala, held wide-ranging consultations with various stakeholders, including students and faculty members, and received number of suggestions by email on the resumption of academic activities.



SCR introduces first of its kind cargo express



With a view to enhance railways freight basket, South Central Railway (SCR) has introduced cargo express, which is the first of its kind and innovative concept over Indian Railways. Under this concept, SCR has announced a time tabled freight train between Sanathnagar to Adarsh Nagar in New Delhi as a pilot project for a period of six months and would be running the cargo express once a week every Wednesday. Generally, bulk commodities in huge quantities are being transported by rail in freight trains. But in the recent past, there is a gradual increase in the market for transportation on non-bulk segments, a press release said. For any queries in this regard or to register and book the wagons freight customers and interested parties can seek help from phone numbers: 9701371976 or 040-27821393, which are available round-the-clock helpline, the release added.

TS launches B-PoST to empower poor women



Telangana is at the forefront of using frontier technologies for delivering services to the citizens. Stree Nidhi, the initiative of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department of state government has implemented B-PoS (Blockchain) technology based solution to empower the poor women, especially the unbanked and underbanked population. The loan disbursement and repayments of Stree Nidhi for all the 1.5 lakh members will be recorded on blockchain platform. The Self Help Group (SHG) member level credit rating will be derived from these Blockchain transactions. SHG members may now leverage their credit rating to avail other financial instruments from banks and other institutions. The pilot project has been launched by Principal Secretary to IT Jayesh Ranjan, Secretary to Panchayat Raj & Development Department Sandeep Kumar Sultanania and Managing Director of Rural Stree Nidhi Vidya Sagar Reddy.

TFMC to observe National Handlooms Day on Aug 7

The Telangana Facilities Management Council (TFMC) will observe National Handlooms Day on August 7 with all the heads of facilities and other facilities management professionals wearing handloom masks. Facility management is a profession that improves business and lives by ensuring functionality, comfort, safety, and efficiency of the built environment and is practised by 25 million people around the world. TFMC president Satyanarayana Mathala said they will take a virtual oath to pledge their support to handlooms and a handloom mela calendar for the year 2020 and 2021 will be unveiled. TFMC has been promoting 'Handlooms Monday' initiative for the past couple of years to encourage 6 lakh IT employees working in over 400 companies wear handloom clothes every Monday. To promote this, TFMC has organised a series of handloom melas in various offices in IT Corridor for the past three years.



TSCHE to finalise new academic schedule soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Council of Higher Education is planning to start the academic year 2020-21 soon.

Chairman of TSCHE Prof T Papi Reddy said, "We will share the details of the new academic schedule in a day or two. Since attending colleges might be an issue for the students, we plan to telecast the lessons on Television channels, details of which will be shared soon."

Meanwhile, the Council has instructed the private degree colleges - DOST and non-DOST - to not take any new admissions for the

academic year.

As per a letter issued to the colleges, the Council said, "TSCHE has been receiving number of complaints from parents and students organisations that the Private Degree Colleges in Hyderabad are making admissions and collecting huge fees from candidates which is illegal."

Hence, all the Private Degree Colleges are hereby instructed to immediately stop the admission process."

The Council also plans to take initiative to cancel the affiliation if they receive any more complaint against any colleges.



Big fat weddings now give way to intimate functions

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

For over a period of time, the city emerged as a destination for big fat weddings, parties and other celebrations. But, the Coronavirus has poured cold water on the spirit of the party lovers forcing even top guns to make their celebrations brief with the list of guests reduced to a large extent.

Wedding planners define the weddings with guests not exceeding 150 as intimate weddings. Those who do not prefer postponement of weddings are inclining to celebrate intimate weddings, according to a representative of the event planners.

Representative of the Crafted Weddings and Events Sweta Sarda says that performing big fat weddings is ruled out till October-end.

Invitation designer Uttara said that providing a sense of security is important to guest if we invite them. A recently married couple enquired about the health of the guests who attended the wedding after two weeks.

Moreover, observing unprecedented hygiene standards are being followed at the



Not just planners, everyone involved in a wedding like decorator, caterer, photographer, housekeeping staff, is bearing the brunt

venue. A wedding designer placed 100 bottles of sanitiser near buffet counters. The guests are using sanitisers before taking plates and bowls and before greeting the couple. The staffers and servers are wearing PPE kits and masks.

A wedding photographer said that the health record of him and his staff members is being sought prior to giving

them contract. The wedding organisers are putting clause whether if they would send another photographer in case the photographer tested positive for the virus.

The same situation is being faced by almost all those who serve the guests in weddings.

Wedding planner Puneet Jasuja advises the clients to divide the guests into batches

of 150. The reception can be planned for two days at the same venue with the same décor. The elders are invited for traditional events, while the youth are invited for cocktail parties and events like Sangeet and so on.

As big fat weddings and destination weddings are not taking place, hall decorators, florists, lightman, make-up and hair-stylists, photographers and videographers and others dependent on weddings for their livelihood have lost their livelihood. A jewellery store made up to 1000 designs in April last year for weddings as against introducing only 10 varieties this year as people are not preferring to wear heavy jewellery for intimate weddings.

Bridal make-up artists are also affected because of the Coronavirus -imposed slump in their market. As the number of guests is limited and that too only close relatives are being invited, make-up artists services are not at all needed, according to a city beautician Uma.

She says the situation will improve by October or November this year.

Cops arrest 4 for harassing women over MLM fraud

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police officials arrested four persons on Thursday for sexually harassing women in the name of multi-level marketing (MLM).

According to the police, the gang targets women in need of job or those who are in financial need and cheat them by enrolling them in their multi-level marketing activities. The police took action on the basis of a complaint lodged by one of the women duped by the gang.

The organisers of agency encouraged the women to enrol more and more women in their enterprise.

In case any one left job and demanded the organisers to settle their account, the gang members used to harass them, the complainant said.

Based on the complaint, the police arrested the accused.

2 held for browsing child pornography

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The City Cyber Crime Police arrested two persons for browsing child pornography content on different web platforms.

Those arrested persons were identified as Mohammed Feroz, 33, of Habsiguda in Tarnaka and Prashanth Kumar, 22, of Kachiguda.

"The duo were browsing child pornography on various websites last year and were identified by agencies specially working to identify the online child abuse. On information they were arrested and their mobile phones were seized," said KVM Prasad, ACP, Cyber crime police.

The police added that they had searched for the child pornography material on various search engines last year and the activity was tracked down. The Crime Investigation Department had

CID received the information pertaining to the activity of Feroz and Prashanth along with 13 others from Telangana

received the information pertaining to the online activity of Feroz and Prashanth along with 13 other persons from various parts of Telangana from central agencies.

The Hyderabad cybercrime police warned people against searching/browsing child pornography as regular world-wide joint operations are taken up to identify those indulging in online child abuse.

The two who were arrested were produced before the court and remanded.

ATMANIRBHAR ABHIYAN

Extend collateral-free loans to MSMEs: Somesh to collectors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar on Thursday directed the district collectors to extend collateral-free loans to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises under the Guaranteed Emergency Credit Line and ensure that hundred per cent target is achieved.

The Chief Secretary was speaking at a video conference with district collectors and bankers to review the Atmanirbhar Abhiyan package for MSMEs.

He directed the district collectors to conduct regular review meetings with district managers of industries department and lead bank managers on extending loans to MSMEs in the state so as to ensure maximum benefit to the beneficiaries. He asked the collectors to pay more attention as the



Finance Minister T Harish Rao carries mortal remains of the departed MLA Ramalinga Reddy to the burial ground on Thursday

Condolences pour in for departed leader

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Dubbaka MLA S Ramalinga Reddy, 57, died of a heart attack after prolonged illness at a private hospital here on Thursday.

Expressing shock over the sudden demise of Ramalinga Reddy, Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Reddy recalled his association with the legislator during the agitation for separate Telangana State and also being a native of the same district. The Chief Minister offered his condolences to the bereaved family, and prayed for peace to the departed soul.

IT Minister K T Rama Rao condoling Ramalinga Reddy's death said that he was deeply disturbed by his death and conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the family members.

Finance Minister T Harish Rao said Reddy was a people's man, who played a key role in the Statehood movement as a journalist and then as a leader.

Ministers Niranjan Reddy, E Rajender, Dayakar Rao, Srinivas Yadav, Indrakaran Reddy, Satyavathi Rathod, Sabitha Indraredy, K Eswar, Srinivas Goud, MP J Santosh Kumar and others expressed condolences on the death of Ramalinga Reddy.



scheme will end after the threshold limits are reached and there are no State-wise limits. He asked the bankers to furnish the list of MSMEs eligible under the credit guarantee scheme for subordinate debt.

Referring to the enumeration of street vendors, he asked the collectors to complete enrolment of all the street vendors to extend bank linkage by appointing incharge officer for every street. He

advised the bankers to issue necessary instructions to resolve problems faced in branches as also to extend credit to the beneficiaries as per the targets given to them.

Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary MA&UD, Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, IT & Industries, Manick Raj, Commissioner Industries, Satyanarayana, CDMA, and other officials attended the meeting.

Youths ride triples for thrill, ignore rules

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The triple riding menace continues in the city with most youngsters risking theirs and others' lives.

Recently, two students died on the spot and their friend had a narrow escape who were riding triple under inebriated conditions.

Triple riding has become a common phenomenon in the city. Lives of many youth are getting sniffed in the middle because of rash driving under inebriated conditions.

Generally, one of the triple riders get down at the traffic intersections and catch the vehicle after it crossed the police.

Traffic cops said that though



the elderly too are culprits of triple riding, it is mostly youngsters who indulge in this.

They added that youngsters should understand that they may escape most of the times, but a single unfortunate inci-

dent could cost them their lives

In fact, automobile companies manufacture two-wheelers for travel by two. It specifies clearly that only two persons should travel on it. In fact, engines of the motorcycles are

designed for only two persons to travel. If more people travel on motorcycles, it would affect the engine performance as well.

If three people travel on a two-wheeler, its capacity to accelerate comes down. When the acceleration capacity is reduced it would be a problem for the two-wheeler to overtake causing road accidents.

Balancing and breaking capacities are also affected while triple riding on a two-wheeler. Applying the break and balancing the vehicle at the same time are essential to control the vehicle. Even if the danger is spotted, the triple riders would not be able to exercise control over the vehicle and bring it to a halt.

10 barge into medical shop for sedatives

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Langar Houz police are on the look out for a group of 10 tipplers who barged into a medical shop at Babu Ghat in Langar Houz and demanded the shop owner to give them sedative tonic.

The shop owner tried to convince them that such tonics should not be sold without doctor's prescription. As the shop owner refused to give them the tonic, they created nuisance, at the shop.

The shop owner immediately complained about the issue to the police, who are on the look out for the tipplers with the help of the CCTV camera footage.

With 2K cases, Covid tally crosses 73K

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana continues to report over 2,000 Coronavirus cases on a daily basis. On Thursday, the state reported 2,092 cases in comparison to the 2,012 cases reported on Wednesday. State health officials said that with the latest updates, the overall tally has jumped to 73,050 while the death toll climbed to 589 with 13 deaths reported in the 24 hours ending 8 p.m., on Wednesday. As many as 21,346 tests were conducted during the last 24 hours, ending 8 p.m. Wednesday. With this the cumulative number of tests has touched 5,43,489.

As per the Health Department's media bulletin, results of 1,550 samples are awaited. As of date, 39 government and private laboratories are conducting RT-



PCR/CBNAAT/TRUENAT types of tests while 320 government-run centres are conducting rapid antigen tests. However, no break-up of the types of tests was made avail-

able by the Health Department. The case fatality rate in the state stayed at 0.80 per cent, well below the national average of 2.09 per cent. While 46.13 per cent of deaths were attrib-

uted to Covid-19, of 589 fatalities so far, 53.87 per cent suffered comorbidities.

With 1,289 recoveries in the past 24 hours, the recovery rate further improved to 71.3 per cent. With this 52,103 people have so far recovered from Covid-19.

Officials said the number of active cases now stands at 20,358 including 13,793 persons in home/institutional isolation. More than 84 per cent of those under home isolation were reported to be asymptomatic.

The Greater Hyderabad area contributed the lions share of 535 new cases.

However adjoining districts also suffered from high Covid numbers. Medchal- Malkajgiri, and Rangareddy districts reported 126 and 169 cases respectively, while Sangareddy district had 101 new cases.

No progress in OU professor's threat plaint

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Veteran journalist and HoD of journalism in Osmania University Prof Nageshwar has said that there is no progress in the case which he filed on threats hurled out to him even 12 days after lodging complaint with the police.

He said that some unidentified persons have called him on July 25 and threatened to kill him for expressing his views on various developments. As soon as he received the threatening calls, he lodged a complaint with the police through Hawk Eye mobile application.

If this is the fate of his complaint, what would be the fate of the complaints filed by common man, he wondered.

Fuel outlets to rake in moolah for RTC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar on Thursday virtually inaugurated the operation of fuel outlet at Janagaon. Fuel outlets at Hanumakonda, Mahbubabad, Bichkonda, Birkur and Asifabad in KRMR Zone will become operational from 15 August.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the government had already started Cargo services to increase the revenue of TSRTC. This project of retail fuel outlets started by TSRTC is to augment more revenue to the Corporation, he said.

He also said that with the operation of these fuel outlets, TSRTC will earn revenue of around Rs 20.65 lakh per month (Rs.17 lakh in the form of commission and Rs.3.65 lakh in the form of lease rentals). With a view to augment its commercial revenue, TSRTC has entered into MOU with HPCL & IOCL to set up retail fuel outlets at 92 prominent places (at 61 locations with HPCL & at 31 locations with IOCL) of TSRTC such as Bus stations and Bus Depots.



Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar inaugurating the operation of fuel outlet at Janagaon on Thursday

Once the construction of outlet is completed in all aspects, TSRTC has to take over the same and starts the operations either with the appointed service provider or on its own. The Oil companies shall pay a commission of Rs 2.83/- per ltr on MS Oil and Rs 1.89/- per ltr on HSD Oil in addition to lease rentals for the sites. For operation of the

above fuel outlets, corporation appointed Zone wise service providers through open tenders for all the 3 Zones i.e., Greater Hyderabad Zone, Hyderabad Zone and Karimnagar Zone.

The service provider of KRMR Zone has opted for premature termination of the agreement after operation of certain fuel outlets for a peri-

od of one year. Hence, it has been decided to operate the 6 outlets at Hanumakonda, Mahabubabad, Janagaon, Bichkonda, Birkur and Asifabad of KRMR Zone by TSRTC with the help of RTC employees, who have become excess due to introduction of Private Hire Buses (PHBs). Thereby TSRTC will be entering into direct business of sale

of fuel by itself in association with M/s HPCL.

Out of total 45 outlets (including the above 6) proposed in KRMR Zone, NOCs have to be obtained for the remaining 39 outlets which are pending at different stages at Govt., and once these outlets are also commenced by RTC itself, the total expected revenue would be Rs.83.58 lakh per month (Rs 67.72 lakh in the form of dealer commission & Rs.15.86 lakh in the form of lease rentals). With the launch of RTC run petrol bunks, people will enjoy quality and quantity of fuel besides more mileage and longer engine life.

Along with Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar, Principal Secretary, T,R&B Department and TSRTC MD Sri Sunil Sharma, Special Secretary Viziendira Boyi, T,R&B Department, Transport Commissioner MRM Rao, TSRTC Executive Director (Rev.&I.T.) & Secretary to Corporation A Purushotham, Executive Director(E) C Vinod Kumar, Executive Director(GH& Z) V Venkateshwarlu and others were present.

Hyd poised to lead India's efforts in Life Sciences: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao wrote a letter to Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan regarding the ongoing vaccine development efforts in the state. Minister KTR in his letter stated that Hyderabad is known as the "Vaccine Capital of the World" manufacturing 5 Billion doses every year which is also one-third the global vaccine output. He said that the Life Sciences industry in Hyderabad has worked relentlessly to achieve this recognition and has also made significant contributions to the ongoing fight against Covid-19 pandemic. Informing the Union Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan about the attempts in coming up with the vaccine, the Minister mentioned three Hyderabad-based companies working towards developing the vaccine for Covid-19.

"I am proud to inform you that one of these companies is leading these efforts and should soon have its Covid vaccine available in the market," he added. Minister also mentioned about the other companies involved in manufacturing drugs such as



KTR wrote a letter to the Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare Dr Harsh Vardhan regarding the ongoing vaccine development efforts in the state

hydroxychloroquine, favipiravir, etc that are actively used to treat Covid affected patients.

KTR mentioned about his recent interactions with biotech industry leaders and companies involved in vaccine development. He stated that India has great indigenous capabilities and Hyderabad is poised to lead India's efforts in Life Sciences. KT Rama Rao, in

the letter mentioned the issues which the industry had been facing. A few issues which were mentioned were decentralization of authority for fast-tracking testing and approvals for vaccines, development and licensure of the Covid vaccine, expediting approval for Clinical Trials and manufacturing, procurement policy, and funding support for vaccine development. "India has one of the most complex regulatory systems in the world for vaccine approvals. There are 6 different ministries at the Central and State level that give approvals for vaccines - Ministry of health GOI, Ministry of Animal Husbandry GOI, Ministry of Science and Technology GOI, Ministry of Commerce GOI, Ministry of Environment and Forests GOI, and Ministry of Health State Governments. India needs to have a regulatory framework that can hold good for global competition and ensure quality with speed. Therefore, it is recommended that India look at setting up a strict but simple and transparent regulatory regime to fast track development of vaccines and also the biotech industry in general," he said.

Jagga slams govt over Corona cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MLA from Sangareddy T Jagga Reddy found fault with the decisions taken by the state Cabinet on Wednesday. He alleged that the Cabinet spent more time to discuss issues pertaining to new Secretariat construction than Corona pandemic.

"The Cabinet discussed on how many floors should be constructed and where to construct a dining hall. Did the Cabinet discussed on the current situation? People are dying due to Corona. Is it correct on part of government to allocate Rs100 crore for Corona and Rs500 crore for construction of Secretariat?" he asked.

Addressing the media on Thursday, Jagga Reddy suggested the government to put the efforts its showing on the construction of new Secretariat on hospitals.

Child trafficked by Srushti staff traced

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Skeletons continue to surface in the child-trafficking racket run by Universal Srushti Hospital with the police unearthing the illegal sale of one more baby girl and arresting two more persons on Thursday.

The two arrested have been identified as Dr Chekuri Padmaja of Padmaja Hospital, Seethammadhara and N Nooka Ratnam, a resident of Cheedikada in Vizag district.

The racket through the IVF hospital came to light a few days ago and that followed arrest of six people, including two doctors, Dr P Namrata, MD of Universal Srusti Hospital, Dr Tirmala an employee at the same hospital and six others for selling off a baby boy to a Kolkata-based couple.

Digging into the case further, the police and medical officers carried out searches at Universal Srushti Hospital and also Padmaja Hospital.

Revealing details about the



development on Thursday, police said that the gang sold a newborn girl to a couple of Vizianagaram by informing the mother of the infant that the baby was stillborn.

Vizag city police chief RK Meena said that they received a complaint from Chandaka Venkata Lakshmi of Chodavaram on July 30.

In her complaint, the woman stated that while pregnant, she visited Dr Jagga Rao Hospital at Chodavaram in

Vizag district for a medical check-up in November 2019 where one Nooka Ratnam had informed Venkata Lakshmi that she knew a doctor at Srusti Hospital in Vizag and assured to perform the operation free of cost.

Believing Ratnam, Venkata Lakshmi visited Srusti Hospital and gave birth on January 31, 2020.

However, Ratnam along with Ramakrishna, Dr Tirumala, Dr Namrata, Dr

Sarojini informed her that the baby was stillborn, and covered the child in a white cloth.

Venkata Lakshmi was discharged from the hospital on February 3, 2020.

Recently, Venkata Lakshmi came to know about the sale of infants by Srusti Hospital through the media and approached the MVP Police station in Vizag suspecting that the Srushti hospital team might have sold her child by cheating.

Upon investigation, police found that Dr Padmaja prepared the case sheet fraudulently in the wrong name of the baby receiver, even though she knew the pregnant woman is the biological mother of the child and sold the baby for Rs 13 lakh to the Vizianagaram based couple.

So far, six cases have been registered against Srusti Hospital.

"We will recover the baby girl and will produce before the child welfare committee to reunite with her biological parents," the police chief said.

KCR building his personal political legacy: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP strongly condemned the unilateral confirmation and passing of new secretariat building designs without taking opposition parties into confidence, in the Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. K Krishnasagar Rao here on Thursday, he said in a parliamentary democracy, it's a tradition and best practice to involve opposition parties while making decisions which have far reaching impact on a state. It gives opportunity for the opposition parties to put forward voice of the people and extend advice to the government.

RICH TRIBUTES



Former Nizamabad MP Kalvakunta Kavitha pays tributes to the portrait of late Prof. Jaya Shankar on Thursday

KCR, KTR misleading people, alleges Cong

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy on Thursday asked IT Minister KT Rama Rao to stop politicisation and dramatisation of Covid vaccine.

"Several pharma giants from Hyderabad like Bharat Biotech, Shanta Biotech, Dr. Reddy's Lab, Hetero Drugs, etc., have rich history of producing several vaccines and drugs. Many companies are into the research and production of vaccine even before KTR was born. Therefore, he must not enact dramas to give an impression that he was playing a personal role in the production of vaccine for Covid-19," Narayana Reddy said in a statement.

He asked KTR to explain as to why he should be given credit for Covid-19 vaccine. "KTR was a student when the Genome Valley was commissioned as S P Biotech Park in 1999. Not even an inch of 600 square km of land in Genome Valley was allocated by TRS government. Entire infrastructure was developed and expanded under the Congress regime from 2004-2014. But



we never tried to politicise the scientific community and never interfered with the research. The Congress regimes only acted as the facilitator and provided all logistic help to the scientists. But KTR is enacting too many dramas by trying to take credit for something which he or his government is not involved with," he said.

"By giving statements on Covid vaccine, KTR is trying to give an impression as if he was the Chief Scientist and the vaccine is being developed in TRS Bhavan. KTR is not even a volunteer in the human trial for vaccine," Narayana Reddy said.

He said KTR did not respond when World Health Organisation chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan rightly pointed out Coronavirus could not be defeated without carrying out tests at a massive scale.



Cracking the whip against corrupt officials

PNS ■ GADWAL

During the past six months, several people have approached the Anti-Corruption Bureau complaining against some officials leading to arrest of six authorities' red handed while demanding and accepting bribe. The ACB seized Rs 1, 34,000 from them. The departments of medical and health, revenue, labour and food control are crucial departments. Officials posted in these departments are not discharging their duties unless their palms are greased.

In Gadwal district, the state government earmarked special funds for emergency medical treatment. On the basis of false reports, the funds are alleged to have siphoned off. The ACB raids indicated that the patients did not receive nutritious food, medicines and other amenities. The people of the district appeal to authorities to focus attention on the corruption going on in Medical and Health Department at Nadigadda.

In undivided Gadwal district, official supervision is lacking in all important government departments. The officials have been allegedly demanding and accepting bribe to do official favours. Gold and textile businesses are

ACB has prepared a list of 'corrupt' officials working in various government depts, including Enforcement, Vigilance, Taskforce and etc

conducting zero business and not giving bills to the customers as commercial and income tax officials look the other way.

The ACB has reportedly prepared a list of corrupt officials working in various government departments, including Enforcement, Vigilance, Taskforce and so on. A strict vigil is being monitored on their activities. The corrupt officials have been severely trying to find out whether their names figured in the list or not.

On July 23, a medical officer working in PHC at Vaddepalli Manjula got seat in PG course. She asked officials to relieve her from her duties to enable her to join the PG course. She applied to the in-charge DMHO Bhim Naik. The latter is alleged to have demanded Rs 7,000 to relieve her.

Cong demands FIR against contractor for mosque razing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Led by Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Minorities Department chairman Shaik Abdullah Sohail, Congress workers on Thursday held protest at Saifabad Police Station demanding registration of FIR against the demolition of two mosques and one temple in the Secretariat complex.

Mild tension prevailed at the Saifabad Police Station when the police officials refused to give acknowledgement or register the complaint. Abdullah Sohail had a heated argument with the officials and informed them it was the duty of the police to register a case and issue FIR on receipt of a complaint.

He pointed out that the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court in Lalita Kumari v. Govt. of U.P [W.P.(Crl) No; 68/2008] held



that registration of First Information Report is mandatory under Section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, if the information discloses commission of a cognizable offence and no preliminary inquiry is permissible in such a situation. He also handed over a copy of the Supreme Court to the police officials.

After much persuasion, the police officials agreed to make a General Diary entry of the complaint lodged by the Congress leaders. "Congress

leaders have been trying to register an FIR against the illegal demolition of places of worship in the Secretariat premises. Two mosques, including a heritage structure, and one temple were illegally demolished in the Secretariat complex on the intervening night of 7th and 8th July, 2020 without any notice to the Masjid Committees or the Telangana State Wakf Board, which was the custodian of those properties.

The Masjid Dafaatir-e-Muatamadi, was adjacent to the C Block and Masjid-e-Hashmi was situated near the D Block. One temple Nalla Pochamma Temple was located opposite to C Block. However, the concerned police station is not even accepting the complaint so as to avoid registration of FIR," Abdullah Sohail told reporters at the Saifabad Police Station.

Eminent personalities who fell victim to Covid-19

PNS ■ HYDERABAD /AMARAVATI

Two former Ministers, a well-known child rights activist, a popular folk artist and a leading physician were among the eminent personalities who succumbed to Covid-19 in the Telugu states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Tribal leader and former legislator Sunnam Rajaiah, who died at a hospital in Vijayawada on August 4, is the latest prominent personality to lose the battle against Covid-19.

Known for his simplicity, the Communist Party of India-Marxist leader served as a member of Assembly twice in undivided Andhra Pradesh and once in Telangana. The 68-year-old had participated in various movements for the



G Narendra Yadav



Pydikondala Manikyala Rao



Suddala Nissar



Sunnam Rajaiah

rights of tribals. Rajaiah's death came only three days after former minister Pydikondala Manikyala Rao succumbed to Covid-19 at a hospital in Vijayawada at the age of 60.

The senior leader of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had served as endowments Minister in Telugu Desam Party-led coalition government in Andhra Pradesh from 2014

to 2018.

Hailing from West Godavari district, Rao rose from the RSS cadres and joined the BJP in 1989. On July 29, another former Andhra Pradesh minister and leader of ruling YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) Koppanna Mohan Rao died at a hospital in Kakinada. He was 75.

He was elected from

Pithapuram Assembly constituency in East Godavari district twice and had served as the Forest Minister in the Cabinet of Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy in undivided Andhra Pradesh. Last month, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) secretary G. Narendra Yadav died of Covid-19 at a private hospital in Hyderabad. Earlier, former

On July 22, Well-known child rights activist P Achyuta Rao died of Covid-19 at a hospital in Hyderabad. He was the founder of Balala Hakkula Sangham

chairman of minority cell of party in undivided Andhra Pradesh, Mohammed Sirajuddin succumbed to the virus.

On July 22, Well-known child rights activist P Achyuta Rao died of Covid-19 at a hospital in Hyderabad. He was 58. He was the founder of Balala Hakkula Sangham, a non-

governmental organization fighting for child rights.

Telangana's revolutionary balladeer Mohammed Nissar Ahmed popularly as Suddala Nissar succumbed to the virus on July 8. A poet, singer, writer and dancer, Nissar breathed his last at state-run Gandhi Hospital. He was 55. Nissar, who recently penned and sang a folk song to create public awareness about coronavirus, succumbed to the same disease. Nissar, an employee in state-owned TSRTC, was also the state assistant secretary of TSRTC Employees Union and secretary of Telangana Praja Natya Mandali, an association of revolutionary singers. KVR Prasad, a prominent physician in Hyderabad, also died of Covid-19 on July 2. He was 85.

SHORT READS



Maha: Two police personnel die of COVID-19 in Nagpur

NAGPUR: Two personnel of Nagpur police died of COVID-19 on Thursday, becoming the first fatalities of the pandemic in the city police force, an official said. A 50-year-old head constable and a 54-year-old assistant sub-inspector succumbed to COVID-19 infection at government-run hospitals in Nagpur city in the early hours of the day, a public relations officer of Nagpur police said. The head constable was attached to the Dhantoli police station, while the ASI was posted at the police headquarters, the official said. With these deaths, the Nagpur police has registered the first casualties of COVID-19, he added. As on Wednesday, Nagpur district had recorded 6,752 COVID-19 cases, while the toll stood at 204.

UP CM asks officials to intensify fight against COVID-19

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath asked officials on Thursday to take COVID-19 as a challenge and intensify the fight against it. He also directed them to improve the health facilities in Kanpur, Varanasi, Jhansi, Gorakhpur and Prayagraj and send a team of experts from the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGI) and King George's Medical University (KGMU) in Lucknow to Kanpur for guidance. Addressing a routine review at his official residence here, the chief minister said, "Take COVID-19 as a challenge and intensify the fight against it. We should be proactive in dealing with it." He directed the additional chief secretaries of the medical education and health departments to inspect hospitals and provide a report on availability of beds.

BJP leaders praise new Jammu & Kashmir LG Sinha

NEW DELHI: Lauding former Union minister Manoj Sinha as an accomplished administrator, BJP leaders on Thursday expressed confidence that his appointment as Jammu and Kashmir lieutenant governor will usher in development in the union territory. "A gentle, erudite and experienced leader with loads of administrative experience as a minister to head J&K administration. J&K to progress on the path of development with renewed vigour," BJP general secretary Ram Madhav tweeted after Sinha's appointment was announced. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed confidence that new benchmarks of development will be established in Jammu and Kashmir, saying Sinha is an accomplished administrator and organiser and is dedicated to the nation's development as a leader. Sinha, a BJP leader from Uttar Pradesh, was appointed as the new LG, the first political leader to take charge as the LG of the union territory. He replaces former IAS officer Girish Chandra Murmu who tendered his resignation on Wednesday.

BSF constable held in cross-border smuggling case dismissed

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

A BSF constable, who was arrested by the Punjab Police in a cross-border drugs and weapons smuggling case, has been dismissed from service, said an official statement of the BSF on Thursday.

Border Security Force Constable Rajendra Prasad was held along with two others by the Punjab Police on July 28 from his native place at Sriganganagar in Rajasthan.

"As per the Punjab Police investigation report, Constable Rajendra Prasad of 71 Bn BSF

Centre releases Rs 890 crore as Covid-19 aid for 22 states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has released Rs 890.32 crore as the second instalment of the COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness package to 22 states and Union Territories, the Health Ministry said on Thursday.

The amount of financial assistance to each state and Union Territories is based on their COVID-19 caseload.

Those who received financial assistance in the second instalment include Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Sikkim, the ministry said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the Rs 15,000 crore package as part of



the 'Whole of Government' approach wherein the Centre is leading the COVID-19 response and management, and supporting the states and UTs through technical and financial resources.

The second instalment of the aid will be used to strengthen public health infrastructure for testing, including procurement and installation of RT-PCR machines, RNA extrac-

tion kits, TrueNat and CB-NAAT machines, bolster infrastructure for treatment and development of ICU beds, installation of oxygen generators and procurement of bedside oxygen concentrators among others. It would also be used for engagement, training and capacity building of necessary human resources and incentives to healthcare workforce and volunteers, including

The amount of financial assistance to each state and Union Territories is based on their COVID-19 caseload

ASHA workers on COVID-19 duties, the health ministry said, adding that wherever necessary, volunteers registered on the COVID Warriors portal may also be engaged in coronavirus duties.

The first instalment of Rs 3,000 crore was released in April to all states and UTs to aid and enable them ramp up testing facilities, augment hospital infrastructure, conduct surveillance activities along with procurement of essential equipment, drugs and other supplies, the health ministry said.

Ram temple ceremony historic, says Muslim body

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The Muslim Rashtriya Manch (MRM), an affiliate of the RSS termed the 'bhoomi puja' of the Ram temple in Ayodhya a "historic" event.

A senior office-bearer of the MRM said that since peace and goodwill prevailed after the Supreme Court ruling in favour of a Ram temple last year and even during the foundation-laying ceremony, it shows that Muslims had given their "silent approval" for the religious structure. "The ground-breaking ceremony was a historic day for us. We could witness this historic event that neither our forefathers could, nor the future generation will be able to," MRM national convener S K Muddin said. "After the SC verdict in favour of the construction of a temple of Lord Ram, peace and goodwill had prevailed, which was the case even during the ceremony," he said.

Day after Ram temple event, prayers offered at Hanumangarhi

PNS ■ AYODHYA

As devotees entered Ayodhya's Hanumangarhi temple on Thursday, a day after PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation of a Ram temple at a site nearby, a constable could be seen keeping tabs on them to ensure that they follow social distancing norms.

People were seen taking a dip in the Saryu river while some excited youngsters took selfies as the city woke up to a cloudy and windy morning.

Some devotees at the Saryu's Naya ghat were seen offering prayers to an idol of Lord Hanuman.

Shops too opened in the vicinity of Hanumangarhi after the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram temple on Wednesday with traders hoping that its construction will benefit their business.

Forty-seven-year-old Shriram, a constable in the Provincial Armed Constabulary, says the number of devotees seemed more on Thursday.

They might have waiting for



the August 5 event to get over and then offer prayers at the temple, the constable who hails from Uttar Pradesh's Gorakhpur says.

Shriram mans a picket near the Hanuman temple for eight hours a day and he says they stand guard on a rotational basis. He has three sons and a daughter and says they visit him whenever they come to Ayodhya.

Meanwhile, the life seemed to return to its normal routine.

Most shops selling prasad in the vicinity of the Hanumangarhi temple were

open. Shopkeepers were seen asking devotees to buy prasad from them.

Amit Kumar, who sells the items used in worshipping, says he opened his shop after five days. "Saturday and Sunday were the weekend lockdown while we kept our shops closed on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday," he says hoping for a brisk business. Cloth merchant Ravi Chandra Gupta, who has a shop in the bylane leading to the Ramjanmabhoomi, says, "Once the Ram temple is built, we hope that it will benefit us."

‘Pak trying to sneak weapons into J-K’

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Pakistan has adopted a new technique of sending arms and ammunition to Jammu and Kashmir using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and several such incidents have been detected in the recent past, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police Dilbag Singh said on Thursday.

He also said less than 200 militants are currently active in Jammu and Kashmir, and just 26 terrorists could enter the Union Territory from across the border so far this year. "Pakistan has been trying to send arms and ammunition to militants through drones (UAVs). We have detected several such incidents in the past," Singh told PTI here.

The police chief said such incidents of Pakistani UAVs carrying weapons were detected in Kupwara, Heera Nagar, Kathua and Rajouri.

Another modus operandi of Pakistan to dispatch weapons



Dilbag Singh

through trucks to Jammu and Kashmir was unearthed in Punjab in the past, he said.

"There has been a huge shortage of weapons for the militants operating here," the police chief said. "There has been 75 per cent more firing from across the border in the first seven months of 2020. There were 487 incidents of firing from Pakistan till July this year in comparison to 267 such incidents in the same period in 2019. The firings are cover to infiltrate militants. So far, just 26 militants could infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

504 separatist leaders sign good behaviour bond

PNS ■ SRINAGARI

As many as 504 separatist leaders, who had been detained following the abrogation of Article 370 provisions a year ago, were released after they signed bond of "good behaviour", Jammu and Kashmir Police chief Dilbag Singh said.

Singh also said out of the 350 separatist leaders and stone pelters who had been sent to jails in other states, only 50-60 continued to remain behind bars and the rest were released.

"A total of 504 separatist leaders belonging to Hurriyat Conference and Jamaat-e-Islami (JK) and others have been released so far after they signed good behaviour bond," he said.

Delhi court directs police to lodge FIR over fake order for masks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi court has directed the police to register an FIR in a case of alleged duping of a man into ordering 3M category masks worth about Rs 2.25 lakh.

Metropolitan Magistrate Manu Vedwan directed the Station House Officer (SHO) of Police Station, Punjabi Bagh, to lodge the case and file a status report by September 18.

"The SHO, Police Station, Punjabi Bagh, is directed to lodge an FIR under appropriate sections of IPC or any other law with all the contents of complaint in the case and carry out the investigation in a fair manner and to conclude the same as expeditiously as possible which otherwise also in the mandate of the law," the court said in its order passed on July 30.



Metropolitan Magistrate Manu Vedwan directed the SHO of Police Station to lodge the case and file a status report by September 18

It further said that the investigating officer was not to be influenced by the registration of FIR and directed him not to arrest the accused unless viable grounds are found.

PM to deliver inaugural address at conclave on new National Education Policy on Friday

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will deliver the inaugural address at the 'Conclave on Transformational Reforms in Higher Education under National Education Policy' on Friday, an official statement said.

The conclave is being organised by the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the University Grants Commission, it said.

The conclave will have sessions dedicated to significant aspects of education covered under the new National Education Policy (NEP), including holistic, multidisciplinary and futuristic educa-



The conclave will have sessions dedicated to significant aspects of education covered under the new NEP

tion, quality research and equitable use of technology for better reach in education.

The NEP approved by the Union Cabinet at a meeting presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi replaces the

34-year-old National Policy on Education framed in 1986 and is aimed at paving the way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems to make India a global knowledge superpower.

TV actor Samir Sharma found hanging in Mumbai home

PNS ■ MUMBAI



Samir Sharma

Television actor Samir Sharma, best known for his roles in "Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi" and "Left Right Left", was found dead in his home in suburban Malad where he lived alone, police said on Thursday.

The 44-year-old was found hanging from the fan of the kitchen on Wednesday night, police officials said. He may have been dead for two days before he was found, they said.

"We have not found any suicide note at the spot. It seems to be suicide case. It is suspected that he hanged himself two days back. We have sent the body for an autopsy," Malad police station's senior inspector George Fernandes said.

Sharma, who also worked in serials such as "Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki", "Yeh Rishtey Hain Pyar Ke" and "Wo Rehne Wali Mehlon Ki", lived in a rented flat in Chincholi Bunder locality in Malad (West).

His body was discovered by the building's watchman, who

peeped through the kitchen window and saw him hanging. He then alerted members of the society who informed the police.

Police rushed to the spot and took Sharma to a hospital where doctors declared him brought dead, another official said.

Efforts were on to get in touch with the family of the actor, who had been living alone since February, he said.

Based on primary information, an Accidental Death Report (ADR) has been registered, Fernandes said, adding that further investigations are underway.

On July 27, Sharma posted

He was found hanging from the fan of the kitchen, police officials said. He may have been dead for two days before he was found, they said

his last words on Instagram with a poem on death and dreams.

"I built my pyre and slept on it and with my fire it was lit. And all that was me I burned in it. I killed my dream to wake up from it. Now my dream is gone," he wrote on his page.

After that, he posted some photographs but no written content. His bio on Instagram reads "Actor. Writer. Poet" and mostly has shots of beaches and videos of him driving to scenic places.

Sharma's death comes at a time the entertainment industry is reeling from the shock of the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

Create awareness about NEP, varsities told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has directed universities and colleges across the country to create awareness about the new National Education Policy (NEP) amongst teachers, students, officials and other stakeholders in the higher education system.

The universities and colleges have been asked to share the activities in this regard on the university activity monitoring portal maintained by UGC.



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The NEP approved by the Union Cabinet at a meeting presided by Prime Minister Narendra Modi replaces the 34-year-old National Policy on Education framed in 1986 and is aimed at paving the way for transformational reforms in school and higher education systems to make India a global knowledge superpower.

Maliwal pulls up police officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Commission For Women Chairperson Swati Maliwal on Thursday hit out at the police over the delay in the arrest of the accused who allegedly sexually assaulted a girl two days ago.

The 12-year-old girl was also hit her on face and head with a sharp object at her home in Paschim Vihar area on Tuesday evening, police had said. Maliwal visited the girl at the AIIMS on Thursday. She said the girl's condition was quite serious and doctors were saying that they were not sure whether she would survive or not.

"The girl has multiple head fractures and bite marks all over her body," Maliwal said. "She has been brutally assaulted to the extent that every body part has injury marks." "I'm summoning the DCP and going to ask him about the investigation," the DCW chairperson said.

New L-G for Kashmir

Will Manoj Sinha be able to fill the political vacuum and get things moving or will he just be another conformist appointee?



That Kashmir is drifting away with a current of people’s angst — what with the widening chasm of trust deficit and clampdowns even one year after the abrogation of Article 370 — is evident from persistent militant activity and targetted killings. With no signs on the ground of the promised development, economic revival or civil engagement, its integration with the mainstream is increasingly looking like an exercise in political egoism, a tool that is disempowering than engaging, a punishment for history than an incentive for moving on. The spate of hitback killings of BJP leaders and sarpanches is worrisome as the office-bearers are seen

as extensions of Central authority. BJP sarpanch Sajad Ahmad Khanday was shot dead in south Kashmir’s Kulgam district yesterday. It comes close on the heels of similar attacks over the past couple of months. A BJP-affiliated panchayat member, Arif Ahmad Khan, was also shot in Kulgam early this week, while last month, former BJP district president, Waseem Bari, his father and brother were killed as militants fired on them from close range. In June, Congress sarpanch Ajay Kumar Pandita was killed in Anantnag district. Only 7,528 of the 19,582 panch and sarpanch seats in Kashmir went to polls in 2018. Yet most of those elected are hiding out in hotels in Srinagar for fear of being attacked for participating in an electoral process initiated by the Centre. The BJP had hoped to build an alternative political pyramid with friendly leaders at the local level and devolving power to them. But that was not to be. Over 12,000 posts are still empty, affecting local administration and despite the former State’s changed status, nobody is ready to engage till all known elected representatives are freed from detention. With credible leaders redefined as public enemies, as bad as militants, and basic rights and connectivity denied to locals, there is confusion, disenchantment and fatigue everywhere, one that can congeal to become a violent force if left to fester. Perhaps, that’s the reason why the Government is sending a seasoned politician like Manoj Sinha to be the new Lt Governor of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. A low-key, subtle performer, he is probably being sent to test the waters and work out ways of connecting with people without disturbing the BJP’s overall schematics in the Valley. That’s a delicate exercise requiring fine negotiation skills. Most importantly, he could use his administrative depth and experience to fill up the political vacuum in the Valley. Although his predecessor GC Murmu was an establishment man, he was essentially a bureaucrat with a focus on policy, not politics. And he could not build a rapport with local bureaucrats. Besides, he did shoot his mouth off on two sensitive issues that the Government should rightly consider but would not talk about much at this stage. First was his comment on the restoration of 4G internet in the Valley, saying he was not afraid of how people of Kashmir would use it. This went against the Government’s rationale that the services were shut because they could be misused by militants. He also advocated early elections in the Valley, running ahead of both the Government and the Election Commission, which would have liked to take a call on this in a measured manner and at a time of their choosing. This speaking out of turn almost amounted to embarrassing the Government and showed it as a reluctant decision-maker.

Sinha undoubtedly has a political acumen that could be banked upon for handling the sensitivities in Kashmir. Especially if implementation of the uniform civil code is on the agenda. And he happens to be in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s good books. His appointment is crucial at a time when political activity is picking up with the release of local leaders, some of whom are voicing strong opinions. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah has already claimed the moral high ground and with Saifuddin Soz scaling the walls of his home to call out the Government’s “no detention” claim, the Government needs a politician to articulate its position. Known to be an amicable person, who is equally skillful in interacting with the media, which has been muzzled ruthlessly, Sinha fits the bill. At least he can be accommodative without appearing to be too conformist. But the Government has to realise that it cannot make any claim of transformative intent till it gets some kind of mediatory presence of local parties. The failed panchayat polls are proof enough. Demonising leaders has been costly as some of them have been lionised among locals. The BJP did raise the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP), drawing rejects from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and NC, but it looks more sorry than credible. Sinha might be the interlocutor who could connect to people’s representatives and get them to meet the Government half way constructively provided they didn’t play a dual strategy with Pakistan. He could still use Omar to work a middle ground. But first, the Centre should restore normalcy and mainstream internet connectivity. The youth are already feeling punished for being left out of the digital education revolution and we cannot let them be radicalised. The economy is in shambles with disruptive clampdowns affecting the supply chain and the services sector. Even the traditional performing sectors like the apple trade, tourism and handicrafts have wilted and there is nothing that seems worthy of big ticket investment. There must be an enabling climate or Kashmir could go into a perennial freeze.

Monumental apathy

Unpardonable callousness in storing ammonium nitrate causes Beirut’s worst blast and the scars may take a long time to heal



It may not have been a terrorist attack, most expected in a conflict zone as flagrant as Lebanon, but is a man-made disaster no doubt. One that could have been avoided. Even as the people of Beirut pick up the pieces of their lives that have been shattered by the massive blast on August 4, anger is rising against official negligence, apathy and callousness. This simmering anger comes on the back of an official admission of carelessness by Lebanese authorities that led to the Hiroshima-type explosion in the port, flattened more than half of Beirut, killed at least 135 people, injured thousands and left many more homeless. Nearly 3,000 tonnes of ammonium nitrate were stored without safety measures in a warehouse since 2014. Just six months ago, inspectors had warned the authorities against piling up the consignment and predicted a massive explosion. Yet, the port officials sat on the stockpile till it blew up and devastated whatever was left of an already comatose city that has been through the rigours and ravages of civil war, repeated bombings, a corrupt Government and the pandemic.

Now, as a firefighting measure, the Government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab has put a few Beirut port officials under house arrest. There is also a probe going on to find out how such highly explosive materials were stored less than 100 metres from residential areas. But this is not enough to assuage the anger of the people who are writhing under a bankrupt economy. They need answers, someone to be held accountable for this unnecessary suffering. They need the Diab Government to step up rescue and relief work, provide more hospital beds, restore regular power supply, mend the infrastructure to import and store essential goods at the earliest before a scarcity of food and other goods hits them. The world needs to come to Lebanon’s aid as it has suffered enough. Its institutions of governance may be democratic but the Parliament does not represent the interests of the Lebanese people. Power has been divided between militarised factions, a fetid legacy of the 1975-90 civil war and the result is a barely functional statehood. The Diab Government has failed to halt the nation’s slide towards bankruptcy and Lebanon is on the brink of failure. The International Monetary Fund and other lenders don’t want to sink money into a corrupt machinery where a small group of power brokers put their personal and financial interests above the nation’s stability. The blast has not just exacerbated Lebanon’s plight, it has ripped its soul.

Religion vs culture

Never mind the differences between the deductive and inductive approaches. For domestic peace to prevail, we need to co-exist, respect each other’s limits than be confrontationalist



PRAFULL GORADIA

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan hit the nail on its head last week when he said that some people make the mistake of equating culture with religion. The former is about a consciousness and identity that set us apart as a people and wholly unrelated to the individual faiths we might practise. Yet some commentators look at things from a Western or Semitic frame of reference. The subject of logic has two broad sections, namely deductive and inductive. The former section begins reasoning with a clear-cut premise without any explanation. For example, Judaism asserts that Jehovah is god; Moses the Prophet and Torah the scripture. What follow are logical corollaries of this premise, all of which the believer must expectedly accept during his/her journey to heaven, which ends on Doomsday.

Allah, the merciful, is the god of Muslims. Muhammad is the last Prophet and the *Quran* the final message for all those who consider Abraham as the first Prophet of all. The *Quran* is supplemented by the *Hadith* or traditions and the *Sunnah*, which records the lessons of the Prophet’s life. Between these scriptures, the *momin* or the faithful Muslim would get a complete prescription for how to live life individually as well as collectively. There is, as it were, no need to look left or right. The Islamic scriptures lay out all possible dos and don’ts, the *halals* and *haraams* about which the believer does not need to ponder or hesitate. The logic of the religion flows like a river.

Christianity preceded Islam, and among the Abrahamic religions, has more followers than either Islam or Judaism on paper. Islam acknowledges Jesus but as a Prophet and not as a son of God. Moreover, governance is covered by religion; whereas the *Bible* assigns politics to Caesar, as the emperor was called in those days. As a result, separating the Church from the State was possible when the “Reformation” came in the 16th century. However, the religion of Christ has grown into many denominations, each having a somewhat different theological view. By contrast, Islam stopped *ijtihad* or reinterpretation of theology, which was reflected in the Sunni (about 90 per cent Muslims) attitude to the temple issue.



So what lies at the core of the Hindu-Muslim equation in India? There are differing views on the subject. MA Jinnah had said that Pakistan was born the day the first Hindu was converted to Islam. In contrast, MK Gandhi had told the then British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald in London in 1931 that Hindu-Muslim riots are coeval with British rule. The rule ended 73 years ago but riots still continue; remember the Partition was meant to be a solution to the problem. In that context, Jinnah’s separatism did take the Islamic pressure off the other communities. He, however, had in mind a complete exchange of population, as designed by the League of Nations and implemented in 1923 between Greece and Turkey and between Bulgaria and Turkey. BR Ambedkar endorsed this proposal but Congress leaders paid no attention to the idea.

Coming back to logic, the deductive section is clearly up-down, given the premise followed by its corollaries and reasoning. Abrahamic faiths follow this approach. Inductive logic is the reverse; there is no given premise. The facts, data and sentiments are gathered from the ground, the people and the reasoning move upwards until a conclusion is arrived at. This is free reasoning; nothing is given.

Hinduism, Indic faith or what is often referred to as the *Sanatan Dharma*, or eternal faith or virtue, follows the inductive path. Which would

“THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DEDUCTIVE AND INDUCTIVE APPROACHES IS CLEAR AND SHARP. THE FORMER INSISTS ON ITS VIEWPOINT AND DOES NOT CONCEDE THE OPPOSITE CONTENTION; HENCE FIGHTS AND WARS HAVE BEEN FREQUENT. FOR THE DEDUCTIVE TO BE AT PEACE WITH THE INDUCTIVE IS MORE DIFFICULT. THIS IS THE HINDU-MUSLIM SYNDROME”



SOUNDBITE

If this lad was Virat Kohli, everyone would be talking about him but because he is Babar Azam, no one is talking about him.



Former England captain —Nasser Hussain

I’ve skipped many steps that many people have had to fight for. I’ve gotten chances that many people wouldn’t have gotten easily. I’ve fast-tracked into this system already



Actor —Janhvi Kapoor

The world has seen China become more aggressive during the pandemic. It has deployed troops along the LAC with India and is acting out in a way that is inconsistent with international norms.



US Defense Secretary —Mark Esper

If the Congress had a clear stand on secularism, the country would not have faced the present fate. I don’t find anything new in the approach of Rahul or Priyanka.



Kerala Chief Minister —Pinarayi Vijayan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Justice should prevail

Sir — This refers to the editorial, “Closure for Sushant” (August 6). The Centre’s decision to order a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into Sushant Singh Rajput’s death has emboldened hopes for justice. Despite having a good professional reputation and high integrity, the Mumbai police so far has not been up to the mark in probing this case. It was surprising that the Mumbai police and the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) forcibly quarantined Vinay Tiwari, the officer from Bihar who came to Mumbai for a detailed investigation of the case. People lost trust because of these feeble approaches, necessitating a CBI probe. One hopes that justice shall prevail.

Tushar Anand
Patna

Reality beyond temple

Sir — It is true that as far as Ayodhya is concerned, “history” is being made and crores of Indians cannot believe that this

Trolls and their impact on social media

Of late, it has become an unpleasant fad for some social media users to target celebrities and post unsavoury comments about them. Most often such utterances are found to be irritable and repugnant. This is why sometimes celebrities lose their cool and are forced to stoop to the level of these people whose only aim is to get publicity and pose as a “hero” in the social media domain. In recent times, we have seen Indian superstar and Bollywood icon Amitabh Bachchan being targetted by some who have been commenting on his actions unsparingly and that, too, using immodest and indelicate words. A rude twitter troll even asked Abhishek Bachchan how he would fend for himself when his father was hospitalised after he tested positive for Coronavirus. Abhishek took his usual, graceful but impactful stance and said that he hoped for their good health. What these “commentators” forget is that by using derogatory remarks just for momentary fame, they themselves are degrading themselves on a public forum.

day has come.” There is no doubt that the Ram temple will be a symbol of modern India but the reality cannot be wished away. The economy is in trouble; unemployment has affected many households and businesses have shrunk. Privatisation is on the rise and there is trouble as far as China and Pakistan are concerned.

Our leaders must follow Swami Vivekananda’s thought: “It is a privilege to serve mankind, for this is the worship of god. God is here, in all these human souls. He is the soul of man.” The Government must reassess its priorities, particularly when the enemy is at our door.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad



Freedom of expression is permitted but then many do not understand that using abusive and provocative comments does not come under this right. A response to such cheap commentary often leads to further conflicts that at times even lead to legal procedures and court battles. Let us learn from Big B, who often responds even to provocative comments in a decent and wise manner.

M Pradyu
Kannur

Pakistan at it again

Sir — This refers to the editorial, “Now Pak in map war” (August 6). That Pakistan has released a territorially misleading map, which includes much of Kashmir and Junagadh into its territory, shows its desperation. Brazen actions like these smack

of Chinese connivance in the backdrop of the standoff along the LoC. This move drew a sharp reaction from New Delhi as it dubbed it an “exercise in political absurdity.” But this time, we need to firmly refute its claims and reassert our territorial sovereignty.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

Corona spiral

Sir — It seems only a matter of time for India to attain the dubious distinction of topping the global charts of daily COVID deaths. Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, which reported the highest number of cases until now, have managed to bend the virus curve. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal are the new hotspots. Sadly, many of these States are less equipped to tackle the virus load. Central coordination and support will be needed to fight the virus in the hinterland.

Shambhavi
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Race to space is hotting up

Investments in long-term space programmes require change in strategic, far-reaching thinking, which unfortunately is clouded by politics



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Why go to the stars? Because we are the descendants of those primates who chose to look over the next hill, because we won't survive here indefinitely," wrote science fiction authors James and Gregory Benford.

Take a moment off from the ongoing COVID-19 crisis to look up and wonder what lies beyond that beautiful cloud-filled August sky. And that is where the Indian space programme or "space diplomacy" should come in. While we were busy looking at the pandemic's impact, not many noticed the three intra-planetary objects launched across the globe. The first was the Hope orbiter from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), followed by Tianwen 1 by China and finally the Perseverance by the US. All three are expected to reach destination Mars by February 2021 thereby opening up a whole new chapter of Star Wars. No matter who reaches there first, or what their stated objectives are, the world is again welcoming a "highly-contested and thereby, surveillance-hungry and of course trillions of dollars worth of yet-to-be-explored space" right above our heads. The battle for global dominance has just gone into space.

Leading the race for interstellar supremacy is China, which has openly stated its objective of joining the elitist space club with self-reliant rockets, satellites and telescopes by 2049. The Mars Mission is part of a larger plan which aims to set up a space station orbiting Earth in the next two years. China has already shot most rockets into space with "shrouded ambitions" in 2018 and its BeiDou-2 navigation system has an impressive array of satellites, mapping every corner of the globe, providing an alternative to the European and US navigation systems. Meanwhile, China has taken the Moon seriously and wants to establish a lunar research centre within the next decade.

So why does an edge in the cosmic sphere suddenly become so important, specially if it is led by terrestrial players, hungry perhaps, for new territories? First, it is about a strategy to occupy as much of the outer space as one can for global dominance. Remember the Cold War-era Moon rush between the then superpowers? Today a host of citizen services beginning with the internet, electricity, common city navigation via the GPS, high-tech military surveillance and missile and torpedo navigation can all be beamed from a satellite, with needle-edge precision, onto any tech-enabled receiver.

We are all aware of China's lust for territorial colonialism — barely hidden under a veil of loans and infrastructure development projects — targeted towards those willing to barter away their sovereignty. In fact, the BeiDou-2 navigation system is an excellent example of how China aims to keep an eye on its strategically-chosen welfare partner countries and the globe. China knows that future wars will not be fought on terra firma. The second reason for China's space rush is to lay claim to trillions of dollars worth of unmined minerals, precious metals and rare earths that can be found just a few kilometres above the Earth, floating around in space and in our galactic neighbourhood, the Moon. A mineral-rich asteroid or comet if somehow pushed back to Earth can cover and provide for billions of dollars worth of space missions.

Clearly it is a heady combination of new horizons with dominance in existing spheres and India has just begun to look at opening its space programme to private players. The desire is to have indigenous companies like Blue Origin, Virgin Galactic and Space X — all of which are funded by billionaires who made their fortunes elsewhere — be a part of the race to space.

Investments in long-term space programmes require change in strategic, deep, far-reaching thinking, which unfortunately is mostly clouded by politics on the ground. In the land of great physicists and mathematicians like Bhaskaracharya, Aryabhata and CV Raman, there is a black hole of lost opportunities and scientific temper. Independent India was left plundered and poor by the colonisers. It has taken more than 50 years for India to be able to truly start telescoping between ancient knowledge with modern-day quantum theories to start rebuilding its starships.

It is here that the true human and monetary resources of the country need to be pooled together for an "Indian Century." A deeper focus on marketing and glamourising space studies with ample doses of creative imagination, mixed with scientific knowledge, would be a good start for young minds at school. After all, the Indian interstellar traveller of the future is perhaps still at school. Similarly, billions of worth of long-term bets without any visible returns in the near future can only be achieved by a clever mix of private enterprise and the taxpayer's money. Remember NASA can easily be dubbed as the most criticised and perhaps expensive space organisation in the world, yet it made communicating with anyone around the globe at the touch of a button possible. Mark Twain said, "There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesome returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact."

(The writer is a policy analyst)

BHOOMI PUJAN CEREMONY FOR THE RAM TEMPLE IN AYODHYA SHOULD BE SEEN AS A CELEBRATION OF NATIONAL UNITY, FRATERNITY AND CULTURAL AFFINITY.
— CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



WE DISAGREE WITH THE STATEMENT ISSUED BY PRIYANKA GANDHI ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RAM TEMPLE. HER STATEMENT IS OUT OF PLACE.
— IUML MP PK KUNHALIKUTTY

A rural Indian spring

The harbinger of this change is a unique policy experiment in village-level governance, the Panchayati Raj Act, which has brought transformative results for village women



MOÏN QAZI

In the last two decades, the gender landscape in rural India has been greening and women are now on the cusp of a powerful social and political revolution. The harbinger of this change is a unique policy experiment in village-level governance, the Panchayati Raj Act, which has brought transformative results for the weakest of the weak: The village women. In a country that has a bad scorecard in matters of gender equality, India has set a stellar example by becoming a crucible for one of social democracy's most innovative experiments in gender justice. Women now steer local governance in thousands of villages.

This revolution led to the discovery of several hidden gems and one of them is Shalan Shelke, an intrepid and passionate woman with a unique brand of earnestness and determination. She has galvanised the poor, unlettered women in Sangamner, a remote corner of India's deep hinterland. Sangamner is the site of the confluence of three rivers: Pravara, Mhalungi and Adhala in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra. Now a 49-year-old firebrand, Shalan was one of those emerging backyard leaders, who realised early on that powerful things could happen if marginalised communities were themselves involved in finding solutions to issues plaguing them. She is now a crusader for a number of social causes. By giving marginalised women a stake in the outcome of their communities, Shalan and her band of workers are trying to unlock human potential, both for themselves and for thousands of women in villages around Sangamner.

Shalan was 20, barely out of college, when she became a social activist and entrepreneur. Although she had mentors and friends to support her, the journey was hard. She taught herself advocacy and business skills in a male-dominated culture. "Being a woman in this space is challenging," says Shalan. She recalls how "scary" it was when her initial efforts landed her in trouble but relatives and friends rallied around and chipped in.

She had seen women of her mother's generation bearing multiple burdens. The drudge work that goes into cultivation is mostly done by women. They till the land, sow the seeds, de-hull the grains, attend to livestock and also act as primary caregivers to their families, that include children and elders. We all are aware of this but do little to change some of the harsh realities of our country. But Shalan was made of sterner stuff and instead of being resigned to *status quo*, she decided to upend it.

Shalan's voice is one among many pushing for women's rights. In recent years, women have felt more empowered to call out men's wrongdoings, leading to conversations about the power dynamics that women are subjected to in the home and beyond. In many ways, it is still a man's world, yet women are working to change that in their communities. Change is seldom easy. The patriarchal *status quo* is deeply entrenched, especially in traditional societies where challenging the system comes at a hefty cost.

Shalan's journey began with the founding of Nirmiti Mahila Udyojik Sahakari Sanstha (called Nirmiti for short) in 2001 in Sangamner. It supports local communities to transition from a supply-led to a demand-driven approach and harnesses resources from the departments of agri-

“ IN RECENT YEARS, WOMEN HAVE FELT MORE EMPOWERED TO CALL OUT MEN'S WRONGDOINGS, LEADING TO CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE POWER DYNAMICS THAT WOMEN ARE SUBJECTED TO IN THE HOME AND BEYOND. IN MANY WAYS, IT IS STILL A MAN'S WORLD, YET WOMEN ARE WORKING TO CHANGE THAT IN THEIR COMMUNITIES. CHANGE IS SELDOM EASY. THE PATRIARCHAL STATUS QUO IS DEEPLY ENTRENCHED, ESPECIALLY IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES WHERE CHALLENGING THE SYSTEM COMES AT A HEFTY COST ”



culture, tribal welfare and other Government agencies. Through their multiple roles and responsibilities, women are learning, adapting and reinventing themselves along the way. The society now has about 900 members with a yearly turnover of about ₹90 lakh.

A chance encounter in 2003 helped Shalan make her mark as a business leader and also put me on a wonderful journey. I was posted in Mumbai to head my bank's State operations in micro-finance. Shalan was heading a federation of self-help groups (SHGs) of women in Sangamner. She was also a prominent face on various platforms in Mumbai and Pune for rural women. I was amazed at her understanding of global economics, particularly her ability to analyse local issues in the international context. I continue to marvel at the logical precision with which she presents the economic and social case of marginalised women.

It was around this time that Shalan and her colleagues decided to set up an organic fertiliser manufacturing unit. One of the primary livelihood activities of women in her federation was the collection of neem seeds, which were processed and then supplied to manufacturers of fertilisers and pesticides. Shalan and her associates decided to set up their own production facilities to enhance employability for locals. The loan processing was fast-tracked and the money released in time, thanks to Shalan's perseverance. However, due to her lack of experience and the technical inadequacy of the team to whom the job of assembling the plant was outsourced, the unit couldn't take off.

It was a major setback but Shalan fought back. She and her partners didn't let the bank down either. They paid off the entire loan from their own savings. Shalan has grown wiser in the process and has preferred to spread her risks evenly by opting for joint ventures.

While pursuing her entrepreneurship journey, Shalan didn't lose sight of her primary mission: Advocacy for broader social issues of poor and discriminated women. In 2006, she started a magazine to channel the voices of these women. It is named *Bahina*, after a local poetess Bahinabai Choudhari, who was herself unlettered but composed inspiring verses. The coverage of rural issues in the mainstream media is very spotty and *Bahina* filled an important space. It has a distinct activist flavour and serves as a hyper-local platform. The region's arid expanse overflows with social and economic strife. This has been channelised into the magazine's writings where issues are reported and analysed from a woman's perspective.

The magazine brought about immense change in the lives of the readers. It has been able to capture the groundswell of discontent and package the subtle nuances of the discourse in a highly palatable form. It has been able to build the perspectives of women so that they are equipped in their effort to upend the feudal system that kept their women ancestors trapped in servitude.

Shalan has also tapped business opportunities for women to have a reliable and consistent source of income. In 2011, the co-operative set up a canteen at the girls' hostel in the local university campus. The canteen caters to 500 girls, providing nutritious, hygienic meals made from locally-grown crops and vegetables. Three years later, the Nirmiti started canteen services for the students of the Lok Panchayat Rural Technology College in Sangamner. In 2016, Nirmiti set up its own Co-operative Credit Society. It has 1,237 members with a share capital of ₹20 lakh and fixed deposits of ₹1.25 crore.

Shalan's entrepreneurial dreams found sturdy wings when she collabo-

rated with an acclaimed food company to set up a bakery. Reema Sathe, a well-known entrepreneur, has mentored this project which provides employment to farmers, workers at the baking unit and retailers. Nirmiti has also been able to use the time-honoured native knowledge of seeds to build a cadre of "seed mothers" who are now the stewards of biodiversity, protecting the genetic wealth of the country through "seed vaults." They are conserving the indigenous seed heritage and preserving heirloom races of crops.

Now, more than ever, these women, many of whom escaped poverty through the SHG route and know what it is like to be destitute and poor, are living up to their motto of self-help and solidarity. For these women and communities, crisis is not new. They have lived through failed crops, unpaid debts and recurring droughts which they have faced almost every single year. Nirmiti's approach of self-reliance and self-empowerment has helped strengthen the innate resilience of these women that is steering them through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Shalan has come a long way since she started out. She shepherds a federation of almost 350 SHGs, all of which are actively engaged in a variety of socio-economic activities. Her success story underscores the importance of giving poor people access to loans, savings accounts and other financial services that can help them create businesses and reach their full potential. It is worth understanding that sheer grit and a helping hand can sometimes blaze trails where none seems possible. "It feels so good," beams Shalan. "I really feel like a seasoned business leader." Women leaders like Shalan present us with shiny, silver glimmers as they steer their communities through these tenuous times.

(The writer is a well-known development professional)

India is choking its rivers with sewage

The country must establish new STPs to increase the current 37 per cent treatment capability to at least 80 per cent of the waste generated



KOTA SRIRAJ

While crossing the Kalindi Kunj bridge over the Yamuna in Delhi, have you ever wondered about the reason for the white, frothy foam floating on the river's surface? This toxic foam, that is usually seen in abundance in July, prompted the National Green Tribunal (NGT)-appointed special committee to instruct the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) to submit a report to it on the issue. The report concluded that sewage flowing into the Yamuna contained an abnormally high amount of detergent. This, coupled with the churning of the waters at the barrage, led to the formation of the toxic foam on the river's surface. The problem was compounded by the

presence of traditional laundries along the banks of the river and 23 drains from Delhi directly discharging sewage containing phosphate detergents and industrial effluents into it.

The two-member Yamuna monitoring committee got this information with the aid of the nine quality monitoring stations of the DPCC along the banks of the river. Now that the cause for the toxic foam on the river's surface has been found, it is for the Government to convert the findings of the report into verifiable and meaningful action.

Sadly, rivers in urban India have always been the dumping ground for sewage, effluents from industries, riverside laundries and tanneries, ashes of the dead and even bodies of those who are not cremated. The Yamuna is no exception and has endured pollution of all kinds, for centuries. The most visible form of a river lodging a silent protest against pollution is the appearance of the toxic foam.

The Bellandur Lake in Bengaluru is another such water body that has



been in the news for spewing excessive white, toxic foam. The pollution level in Bengaluru's largest lake is an example of the apathy and inefficiency of the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board in managing sewage disposal. To make matters worse, the dumped chemicals and oil in the lake tend to float to the surface and also catch fire intermittently, thus adding to air pollution. This level of pollution in our water bodies raises pertinent questions about the role and efficiency of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)

that are primarily installed to treat the water and ensure that the pollution remains in a controllable range in our water bodies and rivers. In 2014, the Ministry of Environment and Forests stated that 70 per cent of India's STPs were dysfunctional and the main reason for this was the high cost of maintenance and the ever-growing gap between the sewage to be treated and the capacity of the STP to handle it. Six years down the line, the situation is not any different. The facts present a grim picture and a break for India's long-suffering rivers seems far off as nearly 70 per cent of the sewage treated in India does not meet the acceptable standards and there is a 78.7 per cent gap between sewage generation and the STPs installed capacity to treat it. Even if the additional 1,742.6 million litres a day (MLD) of sewage treatment capacity is factored in, that is either in the planning stages or under construction, there will still be a gap of 72.7 per cent in the sewage treatment capacity in the country.

The situation is expected to get

worse, as according to a report by the CPCB, sewage generation in India is 61,000 MLD or enough to fill 24,800 Olympic-sized swimming pools daily. Against this, we have a paltry sewage treatment capacity of 23,277 MLD.

Adding to the problem is the absence of a centralised sewerage system that allows for correct channelling of sewage output. The 12th Five-Year Plan Report on Urban Development highlighted that a shocking 4,861 cities and towns in India do not have a basic central sewerage system. Large cities such as Bengaluru find themselves in this list as nearly 50 per cent of the city's households do not have a proper sewerage system that is connected to a central system. This naturally means that these households channel their sewage to the nearest water body.

The impact of all this pollution on water bodies is devastating to say the least. Aquatic life and biodiversity suffer irreversible damage and so do humans who are dependent on the water bodies for their livelihoods.

There is an urgent need for the Government to set up special action

committees that can look at the underlying causes for the inoperable STPs and those that require repairs to be functional again.

To save our rivers, there is a need to attach top priority to the establishment of new STPs that can increase the current 37 per cent treatment capability to at least 80 per cent of the sewage generated. This can be done by opening the STP sector to entrepreneurship platforms and providing the necessary technical expertise, funding and subsidies on encouraging terms. This will serve the twin purpose of creating employment-generating enterprises, besides also narrowing the gap between sewage generated and sewage treated. India needs an action-oriented initiative to turn around the urban rivers and water bodies that are plagued by pollution such as the toxic white foam seen on the Yamuna's surface. Till such action is taken the white foam on our rivers will be a reminder that we have failed our rivers.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



MAPPING OPTIONS

Repression, custodial killings, internet blackout, whichever way one looks at it, India has truly lost the people of Kashmir. Does Pakistan have policy options to address this situation? Marches and highway re-namings are all fine but insufficient to be dressed up as strategic policy. The challenge for the foreign policy establishment is clear — and it is not situated inside the comfort zone. (Dawn editorial)

CAPSULE



Rupee settles flat at 74.94 against US dollar

MUMBAI: The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day on a flat note at 74.94 against US dollar after the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday kept interest rates unchanged. At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit had opened strong at 74.82 against the greenback, but lost ground during the day and finally settled at 74.94 against the American currency, unchanged from its previous close. During the session, it had witnessed an intra-day high of 74.77 and a low of 74.96 against the greenback. The RBI kept interest rates unchanged to help tame inflation that in recent times had surged past 6 per cent mark, and said that economy is in an extremely weak condition following pandemic.



Gold rises Rs 225, silver jumps Rs 1,972

NEW DELHI: Gold prices rose by Rs 225 to Rs 56,590 per 10 gram in the national capital on Thursday, in line with a strong rally in international price of the precious metal, according to HDFC Securities. Silver prices also witnessed a strong upward trend, as it jumped Rs 1,932 to Rs 75,755 per kg from Rs 73,823 per kg in the previous trade. The precious yellow metal had closed at Rs 56,365 per 10 gram in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices for 24 carat in Delhi rose by Rs 225 with strong rally in international prices," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst Tapan Patel said. According to Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, "International gold and silver extended gains on Thursday as investors continue to remain buyers of the metals amid worries about recovery in the pandemic-ravaged global economy."



Paytm appoints Bhavesh Gupta as CEO of lending biz

NEW DELHI: Fintech major Paytm on Thursday said it has appointed Bhavesh Gupta as the chief executive officer of its lending business. Gupta will develop and expand Paytm's lending services to strengthen the company's vision of financial inclusion for 500 million Indians, a statement said. Under his leadership, the company will continue to simplify, innovate, and bring new credit products to millions of Indians and SMEs in partnerships with other banks and NBFCs, it added. He will report to Paytm President Amit Nayyar. Most recently, Gupta served as the founding member and CEO of Clix Capital, earlier known as GE Capital India. Prior to that, he was founding member and head — SME and Business Banking at IDFC First Bank and has also spent more than a decade at ICICI Bank where he played a senior role across retail banking.

Inflation to remain elevated in Q2FY21: RBI Guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said the country's headline inflation is expected to remain elevated during the second quarter of the current fiscal year and may subside thereafter.

Domestic food inflation remains elevated across most economies since the onset of the pandemic, Das said in his statement while unveiling the central bank's bi-monthly monetary policy review.

Supply chain disruptions on account of COVID-19 persist, with implications for both food and non-food prices, as per RBI's Monetary Policy Statement, 2020-21.

"Volatility in financial markets and rising asset prices also pose upside risks to the outlook. Taking into consideration all these factors, headline inflation may remain elevated in Q2:2020-21, but may moderate in H2:2020-21 aided by large favourable base effects," it said.

Keeping the key repo rate unchanged at 4 per cent in Reserve Bank's bi-monthly policy review, RBI Governor Das said the decision on repo has been taken while "ensuring inflation remains within the target". Das, however, did not give any range on inflation expectations.

RBI has set the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation or retail inflation of 4 per cent within a band of +/- 2 per cent, while supporting growth.

A more favourable food inflation outlook may emerge as the bumper rabi harvest eases prices of cereals, especially if open market sales and public distribution off-take are expanded on the back of significantly higher procurement," as per the policy review by the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the RBI. Nonetheless, upside risks to food prices remain, he said, adding that the abatement of price pressure in key vegetables is delayed and remains contingent upon normalisation of supplies. Protein-based food items could also emerge as a pressure point.

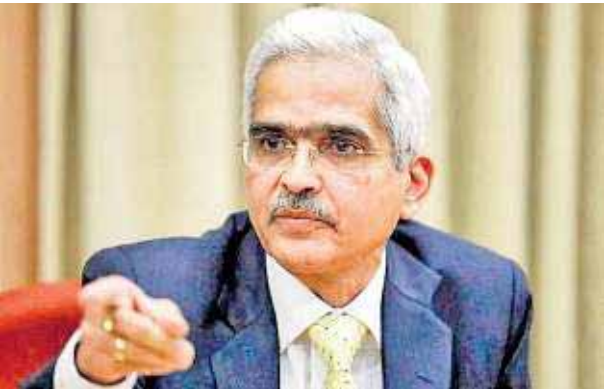
Higher domestic taxes on petroleum products have resulted in elevated domestic pump prices and will impart broad-based cost push pressures going forward, Das said further.

RBI hits pause button on interest rate cut; allows loan restructuring

The Reserve Bank on Thursday kept interest rates on hold to contain elevated inflation, even as it allowed banks to restructure some corporate and individual loans as part of efforts to revive the economy that faces its first contraction in more than four decades.

It also raised the limit of loans that can be availed against gold ornaments and jewellery and announced additional liquidity measures over and above those that have already been taken to reduce the asset-liability challenges in the NBFC sector over the last 3-4 months.

After reducing the interest rate by a total of 115 basis points since February, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted unanimously in favour of the status quo, leaving repo rate at 4 per cent, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on the three-day deliberations of the panel. The committee expects inflation to remain elevated in Q2 (July-September), ease only in the second half of 2020-21 fiscal. The 115 basis point rate cut this year was on top of the 135 basis points reduction in an



easing cycle last year.

"Given the uncertainty surrounding the inflation outlook and extremely weak state of the economy in the midst of an unprecedented shock from the ongoing pandemic, the MPC decided to keep the policy rate on hold," he said.

Das said the central bank would remain "watchful for a durable reduction in inflation to use the available space to support the revival of the economy."

The committee, however, unanimously decided to continue to keep its accommodative policy stance "as long as

necessary to revive growth".

The RBI allowed banks to restructure loans of companies that were not in default for more than 30 days as on March 1, 2020. Lenders can grant loan extensions of as long as two years with or without a freeze on repayments.

Banks will however need to set aside higher provisioning for such a recast.

There will be separate windows available for a restructuring of loans of Small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) and individual borrowers who have been impacted by the pandemic.

RBI TO ALLOW OFFLINE PAYMENTS THROUGH CARDS ON PILOT BASIS

The Reserve Bank on Thursday announced a scheme on pilot basis for offline retail payments using cards and mobile devices to encourage customers to go for digital transactions even in those places that lack internet connectivity.

"The Reserve Bank has been encouraging entities to develop offline payment solutions. It is, therefore, proposed to allow a pilot scheme for small value payments in offline mode with built-in features for safeguarding interest of users, liability protection, etc," it said in 'Statement on Developmental

and Regulatory Policies'.

The instructions in this regard will be issued shortly, it added. The central bank said that based on experience gained, detailed guidelines for the rollout of the scheme will be announced in due course.



Observing that lack of internet connectivity or low speed of internet, especially in remote areas, is a major impediment in adoption of digital payments, the RBI said "against this backdrop, providing an option of offline payments through cards, wallets and mobile devices is expected to further

RBI announces special liquidity facility of Rs 10K cr for Nabard, NHB

The Reserve Bank on Thursday announced an additional special liquidity facility (ASLF) of Rs 10,000 crore equally split between Nabard and the NHB to help small financiers and home loan companies amid COVID-19 difficulties. The liquidity facility to both the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) and the National Housing Bank (NHB) will be offered at the policy repo rate, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said.

It can be noted that higher share of moratoriums are being availed by the retail borrowers which has created the need for such liquidity support to lenders



in order to meet their repayment commitments. The RBI has announced similar moves in the past as well.

Das said ASLF of Rs 5,000 crore will be given to the NHB to 'shield the housing sector from liquidity disruptions and augment the flow of finance to the sector through housing finance companies (HFCs)'. Similarly, Rs 5,000 crore will

be given to Nabard to "ameliorate the stress being faced by smaller non-bank finance companies (NBFCs) and micro-finance institutions in obtaining access to liquidity".

The RBI has also announced to harmonise the present differential system of capital allocation dictating banks' investments in debt mutual funds and debt exchange traded funds, which will result in substantial capital savings for banks and give a boost to the corporate bond market.

On the priority sector lending front, guidelines have been reviewed to give an incentive for banks to address the regional disparities in the flow of priority sector credit, Das said.

Start-ups to be under priority sector lending category

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday decided to broaden the scope of Priority Sector Lending (PSL) by including start-ups and enhancing borrowing limits for renewable energy sectors. The central bank would also increase the targets for lending to 'small and marginal farmers' and 'weaker sections' under the PSL.

The eligible entities get access to credit on easier terms from banks under the PSL. Banks are required to assign 40 per cent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure, whichever is higher to priority sector, including agriculture and micro-enterprises, it said. The PSL guidelines were last reviewed by the central bank in April 2015.

"With a view to align the guidelines with emerging national priorities and bring sharper focus on inclusive development, the guidelines have been reviewed after wide ranging consultations with all stakeholders," the RBI said. The revised guidelines also aim to encourage and support environment-



friendly lending policies to help achieve SDGs. Broadening the scope of PSL, it has been decided to include 'start-ups; increasing the limits for renewable energy, including solar power and compressed bio gas plants; and, increasing the targets for lending to 'Small and Marginal Farmers' and 'Weaker Sections', the central bank said. To address the regional disparities in the flow of priority sector credit, an incentive framework has already been put in place for banks. While higher weight would be assigned for incremental priority sector credit in the identified districts where credit flow is comparatively lower, a lower weight would be assigned to incremental priority sector credit in identified districts where the credit flow is comparatively higher.

'Innovation Hub' to promote financial inclusion

The Reserve Bank on Thursday said it will set up an 'Innovation Hub' in the country for ideation and incubation of new capabilities which can be leveraged to deepen financial inclusion and promote efficient banking services. "The Innovation Hub will support, promote and hand-hold cross-thinking spanning regulatory re-mits and national boundaries," RBI said in its 'Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Policies'.

The Hub, it added, will act as a centre for ideation and incubation of new capabilities which can be leveraged to create innovative and viable financial products and/or services to help achieve the wider objectives of deepening financial inclusion, efficient banking services, business continuity in times of emergency, and strengthening consumer protection, among others.

Observing that the Reserve Bank has constantly endeavoured to encourage responsible innovation by entities in financial services sector, it said the central bank earlier took various initiatives for setting up Regulatory Sandbox.

RBI Guv says easy liquidity policies have helped NBFCs, pvt companies

PNS ■ MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday defended the easy liquidity stance of the central bank, asserting that the private sector entities have benefited out of the policy.

Das said the measures, which got adopted with deep rate cuts, have also ensured faster transmission of the policy rates into the actual lending by banks, in turn helping the economy. At present, the overall excess liquidity is at over Rs 5 lakh crore.

There has been a criticism

that the excess liquidity framework helps lower the cost of borrowing for the government as the yields on bonds go down. Among others, former deputy governor Vimal Acharya had recently advocated keeping the system in small liquidity deficit.

"I thought it necessary to point out some of these aspects which are known, which are obviously available in the public domain, but I often hear questions being raised in the public space," Das said while reading out his policy statement on Thursday. "Transmission of the rate cuts by the MPC would not

have been possible to the extent achieved so far without creating comfortable liquidity conditions," he added.

He said large amounts of liquidity were infused in and out of the system through injections and absorptions through the liquidity adjustment facility and added that easing of financial conditions has enhanced monetary policy transmission and also effectiveness of the Monetary Policy Committee's actions.

"It is worthwhile to see who is benefiting from RBI's actions," Das said, listing out the benefits

of the measures to the non-bank lenders segment which was starved of liquidity following the IL&FS crisis.

He said the long-term repo operations and the 'operation twist' carried out by the RBI have helped narrow the spread between corporate bonds and government securities of the same tenor as the illiquidity premium dissipated. Borrowing costs in the financial markets dropped to a decadal low on "abundant liquidity", and the lower costs led to a record primary issuance of bonds at Rs 2.09 lakh crore in April-June, he said.

Sensex surges 362 pts post RBI policy; Nifty tops 11,200

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Domestic equity benchmark Sensex surged 362 points on Thursday after the RBI left interest rates unchanged but maintained an accommodative stance to boost growth.

After rallying 558 points during the day, the BSE Sensex ended 362.12 points or 0.96 per cent higher at 38,025.45. The broader NSE Nifty jumped 98.50 points or 0.89 per cent to 11,200.15.

Tata Steel was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising



around 4 per cent, followed by Infosys, Bajaj Finance, TCS, HCL Tech, ICICI Bank and Tech Mahindra.

On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, M&M, L&T and Axis Bank were among the laggards.

Earlier in the day, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), headed by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, left the benchmark repurchase (repo) rate unchanged at 4 per cent.

Consequently, the reverse repo rate will continue to earn 3.35 per cent for banks for their deposits parked with the RBI.

Das said the MPC voted for keeping the interest rate unchanged and continued with its accommodative stance to support growth.

Glenmark introduces higher strength of FabiFlu

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, a research-led, integrated global pharmaceutical company, today announced that it will introduce a 400 mg version of oral antiviral FabiFlu[®], for the treatment of mild to moderate COVID-19 in India. The higher strength will improve patient compliance and experience, by effectively reducing the number of tablets that patients require per day.

A higher pill burden has

been associated with lower adherence to therapy, the latter affecting viral suppression and overall treatment outcomes. Also reducing the pill burden has been a demand from doctors and patients to enable adherence. The 200 mg dosage of FabiFlu[®] required patients to take 18 tablets on Day 1 (nine in the morning



and nine in the evening), followed by 8 tablets each day thereafter for a maximum of 14 days. With the new 400 mg version, patients will now have a more relaxed dosage regimen, with 9 tablets required on Day 1, and thereafter 2 tablets twice a day from Day 2 till end of the course.

Explaining the significance of this development, Dr.

Monika Tandon, Vice President & Head, Clinical Development, Global Specialty/Branded Portfolio, Glenmark Pharmaceuticals Ltd., said, "Being the first company to launch Favipiravir in India, we continue to innovate and seek new treatment options for COVID-19 patients. Introducing this higher strength of FabiFlu[®] is in line with these efforts to ensure a smoother experience for patients, by reducing their daily pill burden." Glenmark

has also commenced a Post Marketing Surveillance (PMS) study on FabiFlu[®] to closely monitor the efficacy and safety of the drug in a large pool of patients prescribed with the oral antiviral Favipiravir, as part of an open label, multicenter, single arm study. Glenmark is also conducting another Phase 3 clinical trial to evaluate the efficacy of two antiviral drugs Favipiravir and Umifenovir as a combination therapy in moderate hospitalized adult COVID-19 patients in India.

Aquaconnect launches 3 centres in Andhra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aquaculture technology startup Aquaconnect on Thursday opened three more centres in Andhra Pradesh for offering various services including facilitating bank loans to fish and shrimp farmers.

The three 'HUBS' were opened in Bapatla, Ongole, and Avanigadda coastal cities of Andhra Pradesh. With this, the company is operating a total of five HUBS in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

HUBS are physical centres that offer services to promote sustainable aquafarming. Farmers can buy inputs and avail technology and market linkage support.

"We are experimenting service innovations with the aquaculture sector in India. We have got good response in the first two HUBS, that is what has prompted us to launch more centres," Aquaconnect co-founder and CEO Rajamanohar



Somasundaram said at the virtual launch of the HUBS.

The company plans to open total 25 HUBS in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and West Bengal by the end of this fiscal and aims to engage more than 45,000 farmers, he said adding that fresh funds are being raised to aid this growth target.

According to Aquaconnect, the HUBS will also enable direct connection to banks for farmers to secure loans.

"The banks and insurance firms are presently hesitant to lend aqua farmers due to lack of proper data to mitigate risks. We are going to provide that data and help secure loans to farmers. We have already partnered with three banks," Somasundaram added.

Transport sector likely to contract by 18-20 pc in FY21: Icra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The domestic road transport sector is likely to contract by up to 20 per cent on account of COVID-19 pandemic-induced challenges, rating agency Icra said on Thursday.

It has also revised the outlook on the logistics sector from 'Stable' to 'Negative', given the prevailing circumstances and its impact on the industry metrics.

The rapid rise of COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent

restrictive measures implemented by the central and state governments to contain the disease have adversely impacted the prospects of the Indian logistics sector, especially the road freight transportation movement, Icra said in a statement.

The implementation of the 40-day nationwide lockdown aggravated the prevailing softness in the Indian economic activity, resulting in a decline in freight availability during Q4 FY2020, which further con-



tracted sharply in Q1 FY2021, it said.

"In FY2021, Icra expects a contraction of 18-20 per cent

year-on-year in aggregate revenues of its sample of logistics companies.

Additionally, the near-term profitability metrics are anticipated to remain under pressure given the subdued fleet utilisation levels in light of muted freight availability, and continued high fixed costs such as driver salaries, truck EMIs and maintenance costs," the agency said in the statement.

Accordingly, the outlook on the sector has been revised

to 'Negative' from 'Stable', it added.

"The implementation of nationwide lockdown to contain the Covid-19 spread resulted in disruption in supply-chains across sectors, restrictions on cross-border movement and dearth of availability of drivers and thereby led to contraction in revenue of the logistics sector in Q4 FY2020; and subsequently in Q1 FY2021," Shamsher Dewan, Vice President, Icra Ratings said.



Several people and organizations have been going out of their ways to help different people of the society to keep them healthy and sane during the pandemic. But one of the groups that has been missing out on attention from such volunteers have been kids with special needs, finds K RAMYA SREE



Tele-rehabilitation widely practiced abroad can retrieve the situation and provide the much needed solace to such children and their parents. It's not been popular in our country due to lack of or poor tele-connectivity, but with COVID-19, we along with the world, have seamlessly moved online and tele-rehabilitation becomes a real possibility. This enables not just the children in cities but even those in the remotest part to access and benefit from the therapies

Children with special needs LEFT BEHIND DURING PANDEMIC

Ten-year-old Madhav (name changed), attends school, but is non-verbal. He used to spend his days learning from a special education teacher, interacting with peers and working with speech, physical and occupational therapists. The 10-year-old's moods worsened and his distractions only grew as the days passed by, after his school shut in March due to the Coronavirus outbreak. This behaviour of his perturbed the family and they were worried to no end. Though Madhav eventually calmed down after a few weeks, the family was at its end to make sense of his erratic behaviour.

A lot of kids with disabilities find comfort in routine, and when that routine gets disrupted, their anxiety goes up and they tend to behave differently. The pandemic disrupted the lives of children across the board, but it caused immense stress for those with disabilities, especially the hearing and speech impaired and children with Autism and other sensory processing disorders. Parents and child

experts alike are definitely worried about their emotional state in these intense times, compounding the concern is the impact of lack of in-person instruction on children with special needs in the long run.

These Special Children have unique needs and deserve greater personal attention, continuous engagement and more consistent care. Extraordinary situations like the current one leading to closure of schools and non-emergency

therapies, result in loss of skills the special kids assiduously acquired over a period of time. Lack of daily therapies in such children actually lead to overall backsliding. Since these kids need full-time care and they are not going back to their routine at the earliest impacts the family's social and financial fortunes, with several working parents busy with their daily routines while struggling to make ends meet.

However, tele-rehabilitation widely practiced abroad can retrieve the situation and provide the much needed solace to such children and their parents. It's not been popular in our country due to lack of or poor tele-connectivity, but with COVID-19, we along with the world, have seamlessly moved online and tele-rehabilitation becomes a real possibility. This enables not just the children in cities but even those in the remotest part to access and benefit from the therapies, says Dr. Garima Vegivada, Clinical Director, Speech Language Pathology, Hear 'N' Say Clinic.

Tele-practice is backed by over 40 years of research,

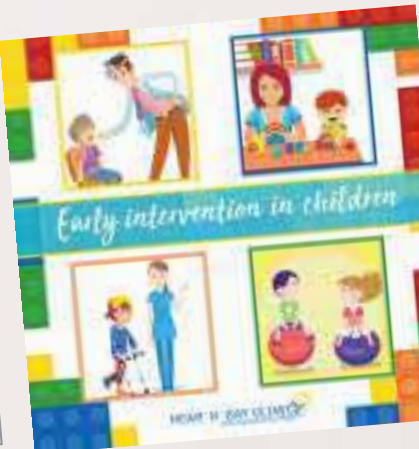
officially approved by ASHA (American Speech and Language Association) in 2005, and more than 27 studies and articles show it is as effective as in-person therapy. It may not be suitable for every child or adult, but the majority of the special needs persons can benefit. Tele-practice, also known as "online speech therapy" involves video conferencing, interactive activities, assessments, and progress tracking. Keeping the child's interest in mind, systematic plans are discussed with parents before the session and children are encouraged to perform activities using toys and household items which are

easily available at home and more, through a private and secure virtual classroom. The patient gets the therapy right at his home from a certified therapist over the Internet.

Eight-year-old Viren, who was a regular for one-

to-one session at a therapy clinic, had an abrupt disruption due to lockdown. As he started showing severe behavioral changes, his parents explored options, to their delight they hit upon the online speech therapy. By then, a handful of trained Hearing and speech therapists adept at tele-practice started offering the highly skillful service. Initially his parents were apprehensive about the quality and the child's attention span for it. But the therapist specially trained for online therapy made his sessions so interesting and engaging that the child hasn't missed even a single session since then. Because the therapy is being rendered in the precincts of their home, the entire family got involved and the child has shown enormous improvement. The parents too are immensely relieved, as they are spared of regular long commutes to the clinic involving time and effort.

This need-of-the-hour treatment option however needs greater awareness for more and more children and parents in distress and those in the remote areas with no access to such therapies, to benefit.



Falling for the shorter format

Short films, despite not taking a lot of time to tell a story or give a message, have always been neglected by a majority of us. The lockdown, however, has made a lot of people consume and create content

for the shorter format. Talking to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about his relationship with short films and where does he see its progress in the upcoming years is Ajit Nair, a filmmaker, and actor from Hyderabad



Have you watched the Shruti Hassan-starrer *Devi* or Farhad Delaram's *Tattoo*? These are just a few examples of the many amazing short films that released recently. While this is a sad reflection of how neglected short movies have been over the past 50 years, we still do see a ray of hope! 10's of millions of short films get made each year. While most might only have a limited appeal, technology has made short filmmakers out of many of us. The lockdown itself has inspired many filmmakers to create interesting content for short films. One such filmmaker and actor belonging to the mesmerizing city of Hyderabad is Ajith Nair, who debuted

with *Bro Book Ayyudu*. With his latest short film on women's safety to be released soon, Ajith believes short films have created their own squeaky little space and precisely know how to attract content with the help of springing up of social media and digital marketing techniques. He believes they can be unfamiliar titles but are very accessible and realistic films having the power to change the audience's perspective apart from escaping the double-dealing of studios. "Big-ticket cinema is of course rising due to rapid developments in the digitisation of our country and A-listers directors. But filmmakers like Tharun Bhascker, Sujeeth Reddy, Anil Ravipudi rose to fame through shorts! The magic

lies in the director's mind — they are the stepping stones to your debut in a mainstream film industry. Enormous promotions on social media help as well. They can make viral your piece of work in minutes by creating hype in viewer's minds around the launch," adds this artist who began his acting career as a child artist on *Doordarshan* television, Telugu.

Interestingly, some of the films in the last few years that make the biggest impression have a shorter running time. A filmmaker wants to show everyone everything — their vision, hopes, dreams, or aspirations, while also dealing with time constraints. OTT is also becoming a thing, but a short film's authenticity remains on YouTube channels!

Short filmmakers are doing a tremendous job in these unprecedented times by releasing message-oriented films and audiences are keen to watch them. If government authorities talk about the directives, chances are they might listen, nevertheless, a film would push them to rethink the least.

AJITH NAIR
FILMMAKER



To encourage more and more budding directors who choose to move away from the limelight, there are many online short film contests held every year to highlight the creative zeal. There is a bonanza of talent out there who want to set a benchmark on the artistic front.

Chandulal, a debutante actor by passion, and junior scientist by profession, didn't allow constraints to harness his pool of oozing talent into short filmmaking. He strongly trusts the representation, monetisation, and communique of this medium, entertainment being its driving force towards success to date. "It's not about how short, it's rather about how impactful it will be. You can either have a great laugh or it can persuade you to think over the ugly realities of the society. This medium holds the power to generate responsible conversation after it ends," adds the actor whose upcoming short film is all set to release.

Short films are an excellent opportunity for filmmakers to tell stories, they rely on festival exhibitions. Festivals like these allow short filmmakers to showcase their work and also give room for interactions between filmmakers within the film industry, including short-film buyers. Feature-length movies stay grounded.

"Short filmmakers are doing a tremendous job in these unprecedented times by releasing message-oriented films and audiences are keen to watch them. If government authorities talk about the directives, chances are they might listen, nevertheless, a film would push them to rethink the least. It will stay in people's minds," Ajith Nair states with confidence.



Caring for the elderly

The Rotary Club of Secunderabad Sunrise embarked on a novel and need-of-the-hour project called 'COVID Care For The Elders' as a mark of gratitude and concern for the elderly.

The project was formally flagged off by President of the club Vijay Rathi along with the District Governor, NV Hanmantha Reddy and Rotarian Kamal Jain, Assistant Governor of Rotary District 3150. As part of this project, the club distributed medical equipment and medicines to Home for the Aged to fight against the COVID-19 battle. A vehicle with these supplies was on its way to all the 40 Homes to handover the much needed medical supplies and preventive medicine and equipment. The total number of beneficiaries of this project is over 2,000 inmates belonging

to 40 homes located at various places in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Sister Kathleen and Sister Josephine of Home for the Aged, said the donation gave them the much needed relief in times like this. The distribution kits include Oxygen Concentrators, Oximeters, BP Machines, Nebulizers, contactless sanitizer dispensers and assorted medicines among others. "A rigorous enquiry was conducted before identifying the beneficiary Homes and their needs were ascertained before raising the funds required for the purpose," shared Vijay Rathi. "This was taken up under the 'Disease Prevention and Treatment' project, one of the seven focus areas of the Rotary International. This is us doing our tiny bit to care for our elders," informed Rotary District Governor NV Hanmantha Reddy.

NCW issues fresh notices to Bollywood celebs in sexual assault case

The National Commission for Women has issued fresh notices to Bollywood director Mahesh Bhatt, actors Urvashi Rautela, Esha Gupta, Mouni Roy and TV actor Prince Narula to record their statements against an accused for alleged blackmail and sexual assault of a number of women under the pretext of providing modelling opportunities through his company.

The fresh notices come after these celebrities, who allegedly promoted the company — IMG Ventures — failed to appear at the hearing before the commission which it had scheduled for August 6.

“NCW has taken serious note of their non-appearance. The meeting has been adjourned to the next date, i.e., on August 18 at 11.30 a.m. You will be sent formal notices again and non-appearance will be followed by action as per our procedures,” the commission said while initiating action on Thursday.

Initially, the commission had also summoned Bollywood actor Sonu Sood. However, a fresh notice was not issued to him as the actor responded to the commission clarifying his stand on the issue. Responding on Twitter, NCW chief Rekha Sharma tweeted, “He did come back to us and is cooperating.”

Speaking to IANS over the phone, People Against Rapes in India (PARI) founder Yogita Bhayana, who filed the complaint, said, “I want to convey that if these people can unofficially ask IMG Ventures to remove their videos from their website why did they not answer or reply to NCW in today’s hearing?”

“They are double-faced people who want to disassociate with Sunny Verma and his bad deeds and at the same time are afraid to say that they were associated with him in the past,” the social activist said.

The complaint mentions that to make it look genuine, his company was also charging an entry fee of Rs 2,950. Once the girls applied, they were allegedly persuaded by the female accomplices of Sunny Verma to submit their nude pictures in order to get better opportunities.

“After receiving the nude pictures and sometimes even before, Sunny used to get in touch with the girls to push them for completely nude pictures and videos. He also used to ask them to submit to his sexual desires if they were interested in modelling as a career or wish to win the contest,” the complaint said. The complaint claimed that once Sunny Verma established a physical relationship with the girls, he used to blackmail them for regular sexual favours.

Many girls from across the country have suffered sexual assault and mental harassment by Sunny and his accomplices.

In her complaint, Bhayana said, “I have now received several letters, texts and audio clips from several girls as proof of this modus operandi of Sunny Verma and IMG Ventures. The girls have given details of sexual harassment under the condition that their names and identities will not be revealed. They have also shared their chat screenshots and audio call records with Sunny Verma. The chats are full of demands of sexual favours from Sunny Verma.”

“We request NCW to take cognisance of our complaint and take appropriate action against Sunny Verma, his female accomplices, the partners of the company as well as against the Bollywood stars who are promoting IMG Ventures in spite of knowing everything,” it said.

According to the complaint, the accused Sunny Verma, promoter of IMG Ventures, had been blackmailing and sexually assaulting a number of women on the pretext of providing them modelling opportunities. “Many TV and film actors are also promoting his company in a video advertisement,” Bhayana’s complaint had said.

Bhayana in the complaint had also named various Bollywood celebrities including Mahesh Bhatt, Sonu Sood, Urvashi Rautela, Mouni Roy, Rannvijay Singh,

The fresh notices come after these celebrities, who allegedly promoted the company — IMG Ventures — failed to appear at the hearing before the commission scheduled for Aug 6



Rohit Shetty pitches in to help cine workers

Filmmaker Rohit Shetty is pitching in to support cine employees in Bollywood. The filmmaker, who also hosts *Khatron Ke Khiladi*, has decided to use a portion of his remuneration from the currently-airing special edition of the adventure reality TV show to support workers such as the junior artistes, background dancers, stuntmen, lightmen and others, by directly sending money to their accounts.

He started shooting for the special edition, titled *Khatron Ke Khiladi: Made In India*, from Sunday. The season will be shot entirely in Mumbai, unlike past seasons that were mostly filmed in exotic foreign locales. The season will witness champions from previous seasons in action.

Contestants of the India edition include: Karan Wahi, Rithvik Dhanjani, Harsh Limbachiya, Rashami Desai, Nia Sharma, Jasmine Bhasin, Aly Goni and Jay Bhanushali. It started airing from August 1.

Earlier this year, Shetty contributed to FWICE and the photographers who were homebound due to the lockdown caused by the Covid pandemic.

‘No’ discharge plans for Abhishek Bachchan from hospital yet



There are no discharge plans yet for actor Abhishek Bachchan, who is undergoing treatment for Covid-19 in hospital for over 26 days now, going by a picture he shared on social media.

Abhishek took to Instagram, where he shared a picture of his *My Care Board* placed in his room in the hospital. The board details Abhishek’s diet, doctors treating him, and discharge plan among many other things.

The word “No” is written next to the word “Discharge”. Also, according to the board, Abhishek is having a “normal” diet.

Captioning the image, he wrote: “Hospital day: 26, Discharge plan: NO! Come on Bachchan, you can do it!! #believe”

Abhishek, along with his father Amitabh Bachchan was hospitalised in Mumbai with Covid-19 in July. On Sunday Big B was discharged but Abhishek continues to be in the hospital.

CAPTAIN MARVEL sequel gets a director



Filmmaker Nia DaCosta will direct the sequel to the 2019 superhero hit, *Captain Marvel*.

With the sequel, DaCosta will be the fourth woman, and the first Black woman to direct a Marvel Studios film, following Boden, Cate Shortland (*Black Widow*), and Chloé Zhao (*Eternals*).

DaCosta is currently gearing up to release her upcoming directorial, the horror reimagining of *Candyman*, and will call the shots on *Captain Marvel 2* for Marvel Studios, reports *variety.com*. The 30-year-old filmmaker replaces Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, who helmed first film starring Brie Larson as Carol Danvers, and grossed \$1.13 billion worldwide. Larson will return as the titular hero.



FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

1	2			3	4	5
			6			
7				8		
			9			
10						
11					12	
			13			
14						
15					16	
17						
18						

ACROSS

- The least dangerous
- Become larger
- A great river in Egypt
- A black symbol on playing cards
- Quicker
- Extreme fear
- An archer fires at this
- Do a sketch
- The capital city of Italy
- Every twelve months

DOWN

- and daughters
- Extremely dirty
- Very impolite

SOLUTION

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

With Ramesh Varma travelling with *Rakshasudu* for a year, he has cracked the idea for a sequel. Sreenivas and producer Koneru Satyanarayana gave their stamp of approval to it, finds NAGARAJ GOUD



RAKSHASUDU SEQUEL IN THE WORKS

One of Telugu cinema's super hits last year, *Rakshasudu*, which told the story of a cop (Sreenivas) who attempts to track down a serial killer in a gripping way, is set for a sequel soon. Fronted by Bellamkonda Sreenivas and Anupama Parameswaran and directed by Ramesh Varma, the film, which stayed true to the original Tamil version, *Ratsasan*, has recently celebrated one of its release, with Ramesh Varma and Sreenivas cutting a cake to mark the occasion.

The sequel, however, will be an original screenplay, according to a source close to the development. "With Ramesh Varma travelling with *Rakshasudu* for a year, he has cracked the idea for a sequel, Sreenivas and producer Koneru Satyanarayana gave their stamp of approval to it. The director and his team of writers will flesh it out into a full-fledged script over time. However, the film may roll in the second half of next year as both Ramesh and Sreenivas have other commitments to oblige up next," the source says.



When contacted, Ramesh Varma confirmed the development, saying, "To remake a film in the first place is difficult and to make a

sequel from your own script is a tall order. But I'm up for the challenge. My idea for the sequel has the potential for a thrilling edge-of-the-

seat emotional entertainer, with the tempo similar to that of the first part. I believe the sequel has to be better than the first part to

attract the audience. I understand that the expectations will be huge but the plan is to come up with a watertight script and later execute it in a way that it will be remade in Tamil."

But Ramesh's first precedence right now is his film with Ravi Teja, the source adds. If it wasn't for the lockdown, the film would've been in the final stages of production but the director is looking to have the cameras rolling in January next year. "The bound script is ready. After *Rakshasudu*, it will be another commercial success for the director," the source pointed out.

The source further added that Ramesh, who is the prime contender to man the director's chair for Hindi version of *Rakshasudu*, will also be making his passion project — a visual romantic drama — in Hindi. "A big actor has green-lit the script, with Satyanarayana and Nallamalupu Bujji loosely attached to produce it," the source noted. Speaking to us earlier, Ramesh had told about the London-set film, "The story span is huge and it is set on a large scale. It will be like a cool breeze."



COLOUR PHOTO teaser registers impressive numbers

Released by Vijay Deverakonda on Wednesday, the teaser of *Colour Photo*, featuring Suhas, Chandini Chowdary and Sunil in the lead roles, has gone viral, clocking one million views in 12 hours. With many celebs like Brahmaji, Maruthi, Sudheer Varma, Satyadev, Vennela Kishore and Priyadarshi among others raving it, the makers are a happy bunch.

A romantic comedy set in the backdrop of an engineering college in 1995, *Colour Photo* is a joint production venture between Sai Rajesh, Shravan Konka and Benny Muppaneni. Sunil plays the role of a cop who is averse to the love story of his sister Chandini and tries his best to end it.

Singer-musician Kaala Bhairava is the film's music composer, while debutant Sandeep Raj has directed it from a script by Sai Rajesh. The makers are looking to release the film on a prominent OTT platform.



Abhishek Nama to produce a spy thriller

Naveen Medaram, who directed Babu Baga Busy and web series *Sin*, has been signed on by prominent distributor and producer Abhishek Nama for his next directorial effort. Titled *Agent Vinod*, the film will be a spy thriller to feature a young actor whose name has been guarded. On Thursday, the makers revealed an interesting pre-look poster which has ancient artifacts like old books, keys, lantern, typing machine, pen etc on it, raising the curiosity surrounding the film.

While more details about the casting and the production date are awaited, the makers have announced that Harshavardhan Rameshwar will be composing the background score and soundtrack, with Jagadeesh Cheekati attached to be the director of photography.

Thiru game for challenging roles

After their earlier successful collaboration *Palasa 1978*, actor Thiruveer has joined forces with Karuna Kumar again for *aha's* anthology drama *Metro Kathalu* — set to drop on August 14th. Adapted from journalist and writer Mohammed Khadeer Babu's works, the drama narrates the bond and the emotions that four pairs go through, with Nakshatra (*Rajdooth* and *Palasa 1978* fame) and Thiru forming one story. "I play a software professional Chandrasekhar who reflects the present youth. What

he expects of a girl he wants to spend the rest of his life with forms the part's gist. It's a woman-centric story as Nakshatra has a major role while I support her. It's a part that will resonate with most youngsters," Thiru tells us with an air of confidence.

It's also for the first time that Thiru, who was mostly seen in beard and moustache until now for his supporting turns, has gone for a complete clean-shaven look and he credits Karuna for it. *Metro Kathalu* was shot in June when coronavirus cases in GHMC

limits began to surge and Thiru reveals that he wasn't a nervous starter. "By June, I've realised that if you take proper precautions, you can get on with your work without any hassles. On top of it, I wasn't shooting since the lockdown was first enforced in March, so there was a sense of excitement to report back to work although I was required only for a couple of days for the drama," he notes.

He admits that he trusts Karuna blindly and he "can take up director's offers any day." "As Karuna *garu* comes from a writing background, he has a strong grip over story and characters. Plus, he gives me carte blanche to perform the role the way I want; he explains the role and leaves it to

me. I also seek his suggestions when I'm in a fix career-wise," Thiru, who has done theatre earlier, points out, adding that he is looking for more challenging roles in the industry. "The roles I've got so far have challenged me in one or the other aspect but I'm craving for layered roles that leave me with a lot of prep to undertake and a sense of fear to get it right."

— NG



Shruti Haasan set to release original track 'EDGE'

Actress-singer Shruti Haasan has been spending her lockdown days working on new music. She is now ready to release an original track.

Titled *Edge*, Shruti's new original track will also be part of her EP, which she has been working on, and plans to release early next

year.

"Music has been my sanity," said Shruti, who has been juggling between her music and film careers over the past couple of years.

"Music is an integral part of my life and I feel blessed to be able to share it. *Edge* is an attempt at portraying and owning your inner chaos and loving parts of yourself that are imperfect.

When you stop looking at perfection in others, the journey of truly understanding and accepting yourself begins," she added.

Apart from penning and singing the song, she has also recorded and shot the track with Siddhi Patel, who is the editor and the director of the video.

The song is slated to release on August 8.

Vijay Deverakonda posts picture with his 'cute beast'

The latest social media post of Telugu superstar Vijay Deverakonda is all about beef and the beast.

In his new Instagram post, a shirtless Vijay stands holding his pet puppy Storm. The actor wears grey pants and his hair is tied back.

"My Cute Beast," he wrote alongside the image.

Last month, Vijay shared snapshots of his dog Storm with fans for the first time. "Introducing Storm Deverakonda," Vijay posted on Instagram.

Vijay's next is tentatively titled *Fighter*. He will also be seen alongside actress Ananya Panday in a multilingual film that will mark his Bollywood debut. The film is directed by Puri Jagannadh.



Most Read NEWS

Woman's belly grows 'uncontrollably'

A woman in China is having to endure a difficult life due to a mysterious health condition that has made her stomach swell up 'uncontrollably' to look like a giant balloon. Huang Guoxian, who is a mother-of-two, weighs 121 pounds but her belly's contribution is 44 pounds, that's almost 36% of the total body weight. She started suffering from the condition about two years back and her belly is still expanding. At that time, she sought medical help when she started experiencing pain. However, medicines from a doctor were able to reduce the pain but her stomach continued to expand. Despite several follow up trips to various hospitals in Anshun, her belly continued to balloon. In order to see a specialist who could help her with her condition, Huang recently made a plea through social media to raise \$4,320. She hopes the money will help her get diagnosed and treated properly. Before this, doctors had told Huang that she suffers from a number of ailments - liver cirrhosis, ovarian cancer, benign tumour, and an abnormal buildup of fluid in the abdomen and chest. However, none of the doctors were able to figure out why her stomach was ballooning.



Man's romantic proposal burns apartment down

A man's wedding proposal plan went horribly wrong as he ended up burning his house. The man had left hundreds of tea-light candles burning while he went to fetch his girlfriend from work. Albert Ndre left the lit tea-light candles in a room filled with balloons in his flat on Abbeydale Road in Sheffield. When he returned home, he found the flat enveloped in flames and the fire crew was on the way. Three fire engines reached the site around 8:30 pm on Monday. The fire service shared photos of the burnt room on social media to narrate the incident. "Look closely. What do you see? That's right, hundreds of tea light candles! Want to know what happened here? We thought you did. It involves a romantic proposal that didn't quite go to plan, and includes an important lesson around candle use," they wrote. The department said, "So here's the deal... Last night three crews were mobilised to a flat fire in Sheffield. They dealt with it quickly, as ever, before trying to establish what caused it. So, a quick chat with the occupant revealed that this room had been filled with 100s of tea lights."



Man breaks toes off 200-year-old statue!

Police in Italy have identified a 50-year-old Austrian man who broke three toes off a statue at a museum as he posed for a photo with the artwork. The 200-year-old plaster cast model of Antonio Canova's statue of Paolina Bonaparte was damaged in the incident on July 31 at the Gipsoteca Museum in Possagno, northern Italy. Treviso Carabinieri, the local law enforcement agency, told CNN. The man, whose name has not yet been released, was caught on a surveillance camera jumping up onto the statue's base to get a picture when the maneuver inadvertently snapped its toes. The damaged statue is the original plaster cast model from which Canova carved a marble statue that is housed in the Borghese Gallery in Rome. Canova was a revered sculptor who lived from 1757-1822 and was famous for his marble statues. Police told CNN that the man was with a group of eight Austrian tourists and broke away to take a selfie of himself 'sprawled over the statue.' In doing so, he broke three toes off the statue's right foot and 'there could be further damage to the base of the sculpture that the museum experts still have to ascertain,' according to investigators.



Satellites reveal hidden colonies of Penguins

Satellite images of penguin poop in Antarctica have revealed a number of Emperor penguin colonies living and breeding on the icy continent that scientists weren't previously aware of. Eight completely new communities have now been found in some of the most remote and inaccessible parts of Antarctica, and three additional colonies that were previously identified on the ground have also been confirmed from space. In total, we now know of 61 current breeding locations for the largest penguin on Earth, a 20 percent increase from before. This seemingly good news, however, hides a sinking truth: these populations reside on the precipice of a slowly-disappearing habitat. Most of the new colonies are already so small, scientists needed multiple, high-resolution images from above to make sure their guano stains, or droppings, were actually there. In the end, their numbers increased the overall population of emperor penguins by just five to 10 percent. It gets worse. Many of these colonies have been forced to the edges of their breeding grounds, which are highly vulnerable to climate change.



SINGLES

MERCEDES RETAIN BOTTAS FOR NEXT SEASON
LONDON: Valtteri Bottas has signed a new deal with Mercedes, keeping him at the Formula One team until the end of the 2021 season. Bottas, who was runner-up to Hamilton last year, joined Mercedes in 2017 and has so far notched eight wins and 12 pole positions with the team.

TOKYO BAY TEMPORARILY REMOVE OLY RINGS
TOKYO: The Olympic rings monument installed in Tokyo Bay for the 2020 Summer Games was temporarily removed for maintenance on Thursday and will return in December when Japan heads into the final stretch of preparations for the rescheduled event. The monument, which was installed seven months ago and stands 15.3m tall and 32.6m wide, will be cleaned and undergo a safety inspection before being re-installed.

MAN CITY SIGN AKE FROM BOURNEMOUTH
MANCHESTER: Manchester City have signed Dutch defender Nathan Ake from Bournemouth. Ake has put pen to paper on a five-year deal, keeping him at City until the summer of 2025. The 25-year-old said he is delighted to have joined City, a club he feels offers him everything he needs to win trophies and have a successful career.

FRIEDKIN GROUP COMPLETE ROMA TAKEOVER
ROME: US-based Friedkin group has reached an agreement with the current owners of Serie A club Roma to buy the former league champions for 591 million euros. Roma said in a statement that owner and club president James Pallotta has signed the necessary preliminary contracts to Dan Friedkin, the current chairman and CEO of The Friedkin Group, on Wednesday night.

GARCIA JOINS ATK MOHUN BAGAN FC
KOLKATA: Spanish mid-fielder Edu Garcia has signed a two-year deal with newly merged ATK Mohun Bagan FC, the franchise of the ISL announced on Thursday. Having represented Bengaluru FC in 2017-18, Garcia returned to the ISL for the second half of the 2018-19 with ATK and scored the winning goal against Chennaiyin FC to guide them to a record third title last season.

MCA WRITES TO CM SEEKING NOD FOR PRACTICE
MUMBAI: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) has written to Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, seeking his approval for its players' practice at the indoor facility of the Bandra Kurla Complex. The Maharashtra Government has so far not allowed any team sport to resume in the state and they have also not given a go-ahead for the resumption of training of individual cricketers.

LEDLEY KING HIRED AS MOURINHO'S ASSISTANT
LONDON: Tottenham has appointed former captain Ledley King to become an assistant manager under Jose Mourinho. The 39-year-old King spent his entire 13-year playing career at Tottenham and has been a club ambassador since retiring in 2012. The former center back made 323 appearances and lifted the League Cup as captain in 2008 which is the club's last major trophy. King has joined Mourinho's backroom team in place of tactical analyst Ricardo Formosinho, who has left the club.

KYRGIOS LIKELY TO PULL OUT OF FRENCH OPEN
MELBOURNE: Nick Kyrgios dropped a huge hint on Thursday that he will skip the French Open, saying the chances of him travelling to Europe this year were "slim to none". "It's a very slim chance I'll play in Europe. Almost slim to none to be honest," he said. The Australian last week pulled out of the upcoming US Open in New York due to the coronavirus pandemic.

'Babar belongs in league of Kohli, Smith, and Williamson'

MANCHESTER: Former England captain Nasser Hussain feels it's time the cricket world changes the moniker 'Fab Four' to 'Fab Five' by including Pakistan's Babar Azam in the same league as Virat Kohli and Kane Williamson. Australian run-machine Steve Smith and England captain Joe Root complete the quartet of modern day greats. "They keep going on about the 'Fab Four' (Kohli, Steve Smith, Kane Williamson and Joe Root) — it's the 'Fab Five' and Babar Azam is in that," Hussain said on *Sky Sports*. Babar, who has been Pakistan's best batsman in the past few years, started the first Test against England at Old Trafford on a bright note, scoring an unbeaten 69 off 100 balls by the time bad weather stopped play on Wednesday. "I think it is a real shame and it is in part a consequence of Pakistan playing away from home, playing in the UAE all the time in front of no one, Pakistan hiding in the shadow of Indian cricket, not going over and playing IPL cricket, not playing India." Babar's cover drives have some similarities with Kohli's and some consider him even better in his execution. "If this lad was Virat Kohli, everyone would be talking about it but because it is Babar Azam, no one is talking about it," Hussain said during commentary. "He is young and he is elegant. He has got all the swag-ger," he added.



BCCI, Vivo suspend IPL partnership for 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Thursday suspended the IPL title sponsorship deal with Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for the event's upcoming edition amid the Sino-India border face-off. The BCCI sent out a one-line statement, without giving any details, to say that Vivo will not be associated with the IPL this year. "The Board of Control for

Cricket in India (BCCI) and vivo Mobile India Pvt Ltd have decided to suspend their partnership for Indian Premier League in 2020," the press release stated. The company, on its part, stated that the association is being paused. "The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and vivo Mobile India Pvt Ltd have mutually decided to pause their partnership for the 2020 season of Indian Premier League," it stated. Vivo won the IPL title spon-

sorship rights for five years from 2018 to 2022 for a reported sum of ₹2190 crore, approximately ₹440 crore per annum. It is learnt that the two parties are now working out a plan in which Vivo might come back for a fresh three-year period starting 2021 on revised terms. However, a top BCCI official offered a divergent view. "Here we are talking about diplomatic tensions and you

expect that after November, when IPL ends and before the next IPL starts in April 2021, there would be no anti-China sentiment? Are we serious?" the veteran official said. The anti-China sentiment in the country peaked after the violent face off between the Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh. India lost 20 soldiers in the clash, while China also acknowledged unspecified casualties.



The stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) caused outrage across India with several calls for boycott of Chinese companies and products. The BCCI is now likely to float a tender for new IPL title sponsors as mandated by its constitution. However, the end of this (sponsorship) deal could spell losses for the franchises as they get a substantial share from the sponsorship pool. Half of the annual Vivo spon-

sorship money is distributed equally among eight franchises which comes to ₹27.5 crore. "As of now, it will be very difficult for the BCCI to match the sponsorship amount at such short notice. Therefore both BCCI and the franchises should be prepared to lose out on some money — BCCI more but each franchise from Vivo's exit will potentially lose 15 crore," the official said. "This year will be difficult for everyone but the show must go on," the official said.

Inter, Man Utd reach Europa quarters

AFP ■ GELSENKIRCHEN

Manchester United edged LASK 2-1 and Inter Milan beat Getafe 2-0 on Wednesday in rescheduled ties due to the coronavirus pandemic to clinch places in the quarter-finals of the Europa League. United had a 5-0 lead from their first leg played in March and will face Copenhagen who enjoyed a 3-0 victory on the night over Istanbul Basaksehir. Antonio Conte's Inter Milan will face either Steven Gerrard's Rangers or Bayer Leverkusen with the Germans holding a 3-1 lead going into Thursday's match. Despite United's comfortable lead from March 12's first leg, the visitors caused problems early on. Andres Andrade hit the crossbar with a powerful header after 10 minutes at an almost empty Old Trafford before Peter Michorl fired wide just after the quarter of an hour mark. The Linz-based outfit had to wait until the second half to break the deadlock as defender Philipp Wiesinger rifled into the top corner from outside the box after 55 minutes.



Man Utd's Jesse Lingard reacts during Europa League match against LASK

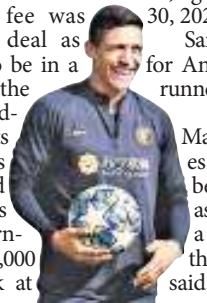
Their celebrations were shortlived as Jesse Lingard equalised on the counter-attack for United three minutes later. Anthony Martial claimed the match-winner with two minutes to go despite LASK goalkeeper Alexander Schlager getting a foot to the France striker's shot. Inter's meeting with the La Liga side was played over just

Sanchez joins Nerazzurri for free

AFP ■ MILAN

Manchester United's Chilean forward Alexis Sanchez has signed a three-year contract with Inter Milan, the Italian club announced on Thursday. No transfer fee was involved in the deal as United seemed to be in a hurry to offload the forward who couldn't reach the heights of his previous years at Old Trafford. He was also reportedly earning in excess of 500,000 pounds per week at

Manchester United. "Alexis Sanchez has joined the Nerazzurri on a free transfer," the Serie A side said in a statement. The 31-year-old, who had been on loan at Inter this season, signed a contract until June 30, 2023, the club added. Sanchez scored four goals for Antonio Conte's Serie A runners-up behind Juventus. "Everyone at Manchester United wishes Alexis Sanchez all the best in his future career as he joins Inter Milan on a permanent transfer," the Premier League club said.



after 33 minutes. The Spaniards were given a chance to take the game to penalties with 25 minutes remaining as VAR said Diego Godin had handballed in his own box but veteran centre-forward Jorge Molina missed the resulting penalty. Christian Eriksen made sure of Inter's spot after 84 minutes with his first touch after Dakonam Djene made a mess

of a clearance inside his own area. Elsewhere, 2009 champions Shakhtar Donetsk booked a last-eight spot against Basel or Eintracht Frankfurt after three goals within the closing four minutes clinched a 3-0 win over Wolfsburg. On Thursday Rangers head to Leverkusen, Wolves host Olympiakos, and Sevilla face Roma in Duisburg.

Shan's 156 drives Pak to 326

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Century-maker Shan Masood and Shadab Khan snatched the initiative for Pakistan from England with a 105-run partnership on day two of the first Test at Old Trafford on Thursday. Pakistan lost three cheap wickets and scored only 48 runs in the morning session, but Masood and Khan were transformed after the lunch break. They scored 27 runs in the first five overs after lunch, then England took the second new ball. But the Pakistan pair, especially Khan, was too confident to be confined again. They were positive and rotated the strike, and the runs flowed as Pakistan added 125 runs in the middle session and reached 312-8 at tea. Masood was a career-best unbeaten 151 and Khan was out for 45, one of three wickets to fall in the session. England pacer Jofra Archer had a hat trick ball but Shaheen Afridi handled it. Masood, on 77 at lunch, was comparatively zippy as he scored 23 runs in 26 balls to achieve his third century in three innings. The first century by a Pakistan opener in England in 24 years took 251 balls, with 13 fours. It followed his previous career-best 135 against Sri Lanka in December in Karachi and 100 against



Pakistan's Shan Masood raises his bat to celebrate scoring a century during the second day of first Test

Bangladesh in February in Rawalpindi. The partnership with Khan was aggressive and frustrating England until Khan came down the pitch at spinner Dom Bess, mis-hit and Joe Root took the catch at mid-on. Archer trapped Yasir Shah on 5 and Mohammad Abbas on the next ball for a duck. Knowing he was running out of partners, Masood attacked and moved to his best Test score with his first six of the innings,

1st Test, Day 3
Live from 3:30pm IST
SONY SIX NETWORK

sending Bess over midwicket, then smashing him back over his head for another six. Afridi was with him at tea on 1 not out.

NO PROBLEM IN TOURING PAK
England head coach Chris Silverwood has "no problem" in touring Pakistan for a short T20 series if it can be managed ahead of the side's scheduled visit to the sub-continental nation in 2022. England have avoided touring Pakistan since 2005-06 citing security concerns but of late the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has expressed hope of visiting the country in two years' time. "For me it's great that it's a topic of conversation again. We are looking to get back there," Silverwood told *Sky Sports* on the opening day of the first Test. "Personally, I'd have no problem going," he said. Silverwood hinted that things are on course for a reciprocal tour, saying England batsmen are raring to have a go at the placid wickets in Pakistan. "I've never been so it would be nice to go and have a look. And I know our batsmen are looking forward to batting on their wickets. We are getting there (in terms of planning)," he said.

PL revert to 3 substitutions

LONDON: The Premier League will revert to a maximum of three substitutions in matches next season with England's top division clubs deciding to no longer allow two additional changes. Clubs previously backed the use of five substitutions to deal with the congested schedule after the league's pandemic-enforced 100-day shutdown ended in June. Despite the International

Football Association Board allowing the temporary use of five substitutions next season, the league won't be adopting it. The rule had been seen to favor bigger clubs with more depth in their squads. A maximum seven substitutes will be allowed on the bench but only three can be brought on when the new season begins around Sept 12. AP



Mithali defends BCCI's stand, says foreign stars misjudged situation

NEW DELHI: India ODI captain Mithali Raj totally understands the frustration of foreign international players on overlapping of T20 Challenge and WBBL dates but firmly believes that BCCI "did its best" to fit in the four-match tournament in these unusual COVID-19 times. While the foreign players, led by Australian star player Alyssa Healy, questioned the timing of the exhibition games as it is clashing with the WBBL, the BCCI was also criticised for not going ahead with the women's tour of England in September. Asked about her thoughts on the two subjects, Mithali spoke her mind. "People tend

to judge quickly. The BCCI president (Sourav Ganguly), secretary (Jay Shah) and IPL GC chief (Brijesh Patel) have been very encouraging towards women's cricket. "I personally thought we may not even get to play the Challenger trophy (domestic event) because even the men's IPL was in doubt but these games are most welcome," Mithali said. On comments of top internationals like Healy, Suzie Bates, Rachel Haynes expressing their displeasure, the Indian legend tried putting things into perspective. "I know a lot of people (foreign

players) have questioned the timing of it but these are not normal circumstances. Normally, the IPL happens in April-May and doesn't collide with WBBL (in Australia). "But these are unusual circumstances, the window (tentatively November 1-10) was a short one and the BCCI did the best it could." The WBBL is scheduled from October 17 to November 29. "It (their frustration) is understandable. They (foreign players) also want to be part of the event. I too want the best players in the league. "But the situation is not normal. Right now, there is hardly any sporting activity in India and to have the matches before the men's IPL, it would require players to be in match mode. We are yet to start training.

