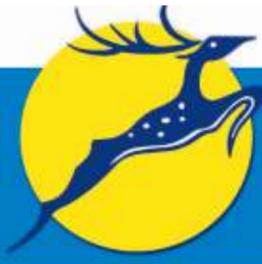


**ANALYSIS 7**  
IN THE NAME  
OF GOD

**MONEY 8**  
REAL ESTATE SENTIMENT  
ALL-TIME LOW IN APRIL-JUNE

**SPORTS 11**  
GENOA RETAIN  
SERIE A PLACE

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY AUGUST 4, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



# the pioneer

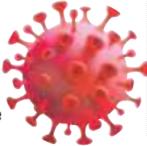
www.dailypioneer.com



VISHNU TO PLAY  
SIBLING TO  
KAJAL IN  
MOSAGALLU  
Page 12

## INDIA'S CASE TALLY CROSSES 18 LAKH, RECOVERIES SURGE TO 11.86 LAKH

India's COVID-19 tally crossed the 18-lakh mark on Monday, just a day after it went past 17 lakh, with 52,972 cases reported in a day, while the number of recoveries surged to over 11.86 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data. The number of COVID-19 tests carried out in India has also crossed the 2 crore-mark, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The total coronavirus cases surged to 18,03,695, while the death toll due to COVID-19 climbed to 38,135 with 771 people succumbing to the disease in a day, the data updated at 8 am showed.



## MAN ARRESTED FOR DISTASTEFUL COMMENTS ON AMIT SHAH'S HEALTH

A person has been arrested for allegedly uploading objectionable posts on Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who is infected with COVID-19, in the social media, police said on Monday. The man, who was held on Sunday night, claims to be associated with the Karnataka Congress social media unit, the police said. The accused has made derogatory comments on Shah's health condition and been booked by the police. Shah on Sunday said he has tested positive for coronavirus and is getting admitted to a hospital following doctor's advice. Meanwhile, state Congress president D K Shivakumar appealed to the party workers to not make defamatory statements against any political leader and said it was not the party's culture.



## 'REGRESSIVE': AMAZON FACES CRITICISM FOR SELLING RAKHI GIFTS WITH ADOPTION JOKES

E-commerce giant Amazon has come under attack from social media users and adoptive parents for selling merchandise bearing messages like "Tu toh adopted hai" (You are adopted) and "Tujhe na mummy, papa dustbin se utha ke laye the" (Our parents picked you from a dustbin) as Raksha Bandhan gifts. They said such "tasteless" jokes reinforce the stigma around adoption. Despite repeated attempts, Amazon could not be reached for comment. "One of the most hilarious dialogues exchanged between a bro-sis duo is 'Tu adopted hai'."



## RITUALS BEGIN IN AYODHYA, STAGE SET FOR RAM TEMPLE 'BHOOMI PUJA'

Religious rituals got under way in Ayodhya on Monday, two days ahead of the groundbreaking ceremony for a temple at a spot where devotees believe Lord Ram was born. Barricades are already in place in the temple town and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath issued an appeal, asking only those invited for Wednesday's bhoomi puja ceremony to come to Ayodhya. Adityanath spent hours reviewing the arrangements for the ceremony at the Ram Janmabhoomi, where the temple will be constructed following the go-ahead last year by the Supreme Court.



August 5, a red letter day

# Vizag land prices skyrocket over Executive Capital buzz

Property to cost more than Hyd's Banjara Hills after 27% hike from Aug 10

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Lands in Visakhapatnam, the officially anointed Executive Capital of Andhra Pradesh, will cost a bomb if the annual revised market value by the government is implemented. The unit rate of land in some pockets of the city like Mudasarlova are proposed to be increased by 27 per cent and this may make them even costlier than land prices in Banjara Hills of Hyderabad.

Land prices in Vizag have always been on the higher side and the proposed revision, if implemented, would place parts of the city among the costliest places to live in, in the country. Before implementing the revised unit rates of the land, the Registration and Stamps department has sought objection and suggestion from the public. People can give their feedback on the revised rate before August 10 on the department website.

The north of Vizag towards Vizianagaram and northeast of the city, Bheemili is expected to see major development as the state government is reportedly scouting for land in these areas where large tracts are available. Vizag District Registrar Manmadha Rao said that sub-registrars have revised the lands rates of areas coming under their jurisdiction on the basis of rationalisation.



# State scouts for consultant to rein in Vizag's pollution

SUMIT ONKA ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The State Government is scouting for a consultancy, based either in India or overseas, to study the pollution levels, and also suggest measures to improve environmental conditions in Vizag, the upcoming executive capital of AP. The consultancy will be required to study all available reports and studies done in past few years by various

agencies like CPCB, APPCB, Universities and others, to carry out additional environmental studies, to study the pollution related problems and suggest measures for mitigation and design a futuristic sustainable environment management plan for Visakhapatnam city as well as other industrial clusters in the district. APPCB has invited bidding for the project, but has already extended the last date twice. Once finalised, the consul-

tancy would be required to consult all stakeholders and elicit the opinion of the local people and to prepare a sustainable Environment Management Plan. The plan is not only to study the ambient air pollution but water including ground water, surface water, marine pollution, sewage system. Vizag city lies within two major hill ranges — Yarada and Simbachalam.

# AP ties up with top firms for economic growth of women

Amaravati

The Andhra Pradesh government on Monday signed a pact with three FMCG companies — Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL), ITC and Procter and Gamble (P&G) — for marketing and technology support for economic empowerment of women under two new schemes to be launched soon.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed in the presence of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy here. HUL Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Mehta, ITC Executive Director Sanjiv Puri and P&G India CEO Madhusudan Gopalan participated through a video conference. "Women empowerment and their self-reliance are very vital for strengthening the rural economy," an official state-



ment quoted the CM as having said in the meeting. The companies will help in handholding to women under the YSR Cheyutha scheme, to be launched on August 12, that aims to provide annual financial assistance of Rs 18,750 for next four years to women of 45-60 years age group belonging to SC, ST, backward class and minorities communities, it said. The companies will help in providing marketing opportunities and technology support to women under this proposed scheme benefiting 25 lakh women in the state. The government will spend Rs 4,500 crore for this scheme in the first year, it added.



'It's Lord Ram's will that I attend bhoomi puja'

# Naidu gives Jagan 48 hours to withdraw 3-capitals decision

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday challenged Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to either withdraw his decision to trifurcate the State Capital "within 48 hours" or dissolve the State Legislative Assembly to seek fresh mandate from the public. Addressing a press conference here, Naidu dared the Chief Minister to seek a fresh mandate if he possessed the courage and if he was fully confident of having the approval of the people for his decentralisation decision. "If the people vote for and return the YSRCP to power, the TDP would then humbly accept the mandate and would not object to the decision. If the CM does not come out with a proper response, the TDP along with the other



all the 5 crore people of the state by going ahead with his plan to shift the Capital without discussing or taking prior approval of the people. Jagan himself repeatedly uttered the election slogan that he would never break his promises and that he would worship his party manifesto like the Bible, the Bhagavad Gita and the Quran. Having sworn on the holy books, the Chief Minister was now relentlessly breaking his promises without any conscience," Naidu alleged. He recalled how YSRCP's 2019 Election Manifesto Committee chairman Ummareddy Venkateswarlu repeatedly assured the people at that time that the party would continue AP Capital in Amaravati alone and it would be developed into a well-equipped, good city.

# TDP's B Tech Ravi quits Council over three capitals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

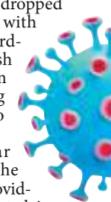
Telugu Desam Party (TDP) member Mareddy Ravindranath Reddy on Monday tendered his resignation to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, protesting the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government's decision to go ahead with three capitals plan. Ravi, alias B.Tech Ravi, said he has sent in his resignation to the Council Chairman M A Sharif. He was elected to the Council from the Kadapa Local Authorities Constituency in 2017 and had tenure till March 2023. Ravi is the first legislator to quit his post protesting the move to have three capitals for the state — the Executive Capital in Visakhapatnam, Legislative in Amaravati and Judicial in Kurnool.

# State records 7,822 infections, 63 deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a breather of sorts for Andhra Pradesh, the number of infections dropped significantly, with the State recording 7,822 fresh cases on Monday, taking the tally to 1,66,586. This is far lower than the 10,000-plus Covid-19 cases reported in AP the entire week gone by, and authorities are beginning to hope that the worst is over. While 5,786 patients recovered and were discharged from hospitals across the state on Monday, another 63 succumbed to the pandemic in

the last 24 hours, a government bulletin said. With a total of 88,672 recoveries so far, the number of active cases now stood at 76,377 and the total fatalities increased to 1,537, the bulletin added. In the last 24 hours ending 10 am on Monday, 45,516 samples were tested, including 18,088 for rapid antigens while the cumulative tests crossed 21,10,923. The infection positivity rate rose to 7.89 per cent after 39,520 per million population tests were conducted.



# 3 liquor addicts drink sanitiser cocktail, dead

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Mere days after the tragedy at Kurichedu in which 10 people died after consuming alcohol-based hand sanitiser in Prakasam district, one more such incident has come to light in YSR Kadapa district. Three men died after consuming alcohol-based hand sanitiser in Pendlimarri mandal of YSR district, Andhra Pradesh. At least eight people had consumed the sanitiser, police said. The deceased were identified as Chennakesavulu, Bheemaiah and Obulesh.



## TODAY

**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Shravana & Krishna Paksha Panchangam  
Tithi : PratiPad: 09:54 pm  
Nakshatram: Shravana: 08:11 am  
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)  
Rahukalam: 03:33 pm - 05:08 pm  
Yamagandam: 09:11 am - 10:46 am  
Varjyam: 12:24 pm - 02:05 pm  
Gulika: 12:22 pm - 01:57 pm  
Good Time: (to start any important work)  
Amritkalam: 10:32 pm - 12:13 am  
Abhijit Muhurttam: 11:56 am - 12:47 pm

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**  
Forecast: Mostly cloudy  
Temp: 33/26  
Humidity: 73%  
Sunrise: 05:56 am  
Sunset: 06:48 pm  
Current Weather Conditions Updated August 3, 2020 5:00 PM

## OBTUSE ANGLE



# Nod for phase 2, 3 human trials of Oxford vaccine candidate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has given nod to the Serum Institute of India (SII) for conducting phase 2 and 3 human clinical trials of the Oxford University developed Covid-19 vaccine candidate in the country. Government officials told PTI that the approval for conducting phase 2 and 3 clinical trials by the SII was granted by

DCGI Dr V G Somani late Sunday night after a thorough evaluation based on the recommendations of the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Covid-19. "The firm has to submit safety data, evaluated by the Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB), to the CDSCO before proceeding to phase 3 clinical trials," a senior official said. "As per the study design,



each subject will be administered two doses four weeks apart (first dose on day one and second dose on day 29)

following which the safety and immunogenicity will be assessed at predefined intervals," the official said. As a rapid regulatory response, the expert panel at the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on Friday, after a detailed deliberation and considering the data generated on the vaccine candidate in phase 1 and 2 of the Oxford University trial, had recom-

mended granting permission for phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of the potential vaccine, 'Covishield', on healthy adults in India, the officials said. Currently, phase 2 and 3 clinical trials of the Oxford vaccine candidate is going on in the United Kingdom, phase 3 clinical trial in Brazil and phase 1 and 2 clinical trials in South Africa.

# AUGUST 5, A RED LETTER DAY

August 5 will be a red letter day in the country's social and political history.

Abrogation of Article 370 granting special status to J&K was described by many as a historic event, but it's only a phenomenon with some decades of history behind it, while construction of a masjid at Ram Janma Bhoomi had taken place several centuries ago.

In this backdrop, laying the foundation stone on August 5 at the disputed site for a Sriram temple honouring sentiments of millions of people is not an ordinary matter.

There is a correlation between the desire to have a temple for Lord Sriram at his birth place and the seat of his administration between the mythological and historic past, national self-respect of Indians and spiritual quest deep-rooted in the soil of the country.

Millions of people go to many pilgrim centres, apart from Ayodhya, irrespective of caste, community, geographical and language considerations. Their belief systems,

faith, pujas and pilgrimages stand as symbols of national unity.

The mythological characters and those in the Ramayana influenced the people irrespective of time and geographical constraints. Why do people worship a particular deity? Why do people undertake pilgrimages knowing well that God is omnipresent?

To find answers to these questions, one has to delve deep into our rich and diversified cultural heritage. During the course of history, many temples have been vandalised and idols of Goddesses have been destroyed, devotees killed. In spite of this, they rose stronger from the ruins.

This denotes not only the cultural unity, unflinching commitment to faith and sentiments, but also national spirit that flows like an undercurrent.

It is inevitable to say that the national spirit ignites

**Lord Sriram and the Ramayana in people's lives and their impact over several centuries on the Indian psyche and moral values and hence it is working in tune with the prevailing sentiments. Not only Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, many Indians, including Muslims, regard Lord Sri Rama as a model ruler and a person having myriad of noble qualities**

social awareness with the building of a temple for Lord Sriram at Ayodhya. BJP knows the significance of Lord Sriram and the Ramayana in people's lives and their impact over several centuries on the Indian psyche and moral values and hence it is working in tune with the prevailing sentiments.

Not only Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, many Indians, including Muslims, regard Lord Sri Rama as a model ruler and a person having myriad of noble qualities. Noted Urdu and Persian poet Allama Iqbal described Lord Sriram as "Imam-e-Hind".

Mahatma Gandhi chanted the name of Lord Sriram all through his life with devotion. He did not regard Lord Sriram as a mere Hindu deity alone, but as a symbol of national unity and a divine power.

There is no exaggeration to state that building a temple for Lord Sriram, who is regarded as the collective psyche of Indians, unity and integrity, at his birthplace under BJP rule is a wonderful development that would leave a lasting impression on the collective Indian awareness.

Sardar Patel took measures to rebuild the vandalised Somnath temple soon after



Y SATYA KUMAR  
BJP National Secretary

India became Independent. In the same fashion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is taking all necessary measures to build the Ram temple.

Within four days of annexing the Junagadh princely state with Indian union in 1947, Patel declared that the Government would rebuild the historic Somnath temple at its place and reinstall the Jyotirlingam.

The task initiated by Sardar

Patel was accomplished by the KM Munshi, in spite of opposition from Jawaharlal Nehru. Munshi made it clear to Nehru that Government lending support to re-building the Somnath temple would gladden the collective Indian psyche.

Munshi invited Dr Babu Rajendra Prasad to declare open the rebuilt Somnath temple and to get the Jyotirlingam installed in it as per the religious rites. In spite of severe opposition from Nehru, Rajendra Prasad kept his word. He made it clear that he would not be able to be alienated from his religion. He described the Somnath temple as a symbol of national faith.

The temple which has risen from ashes makes it clear that no power on earth or a person in the world will be able to erase faith and love from

people's minds and hearts. Today, our efforts are not aimed at correcting history. Our goal is to redefine our bonding with our beliefs, faith and values inculcated by our religion since ages.

The Opposition parties are questioning Modi taking part in the foundation stone laying ceremony for the Ram temple in Ayodhya. It is better for them to recall the words of Rajendra Prasad.

Laying the foundation stone for rebuilding the temple at Ayodhya after five decades of rebuilding the Somnath temple is a historic development.

Veteran BJP leader LK Advani started his historic rath yatra from Somnath temple, treating building the temple at Ayodhya as continuation of the rebuilding goal.

When Advani embarked on rath yatra, Modi was then an ordinary party worker. Today, Modi is attending the

foundation stone laying ceremony in his capacity as PM. It is purely accidental and divine development.

Congress and other parties played havoc with the sentiments of the people of the country. They did not understand the sentiments of people and practised vote bank politics.

Had the Congress set its sights on Ram Janmabhoomi, the BJP would not have become a party to the Ayodhya movement. The people gave overwhelming support to Ayodhya Movement because of the pseudo-secularism practised by the Congress.

In 1989, the BJP adopted Ayodhya Resolution in Palampur expressing its willingness to relocate the disputed structure to another place. The verdict delivered by a Bench of the Supreme Court last year, reflected the spirit of the Palampur resolution of the BJP.

It clearly establishes how justified the BJP is in its desire. There is no doubt that the BJP would not only build the Ram temple but also establish Rama Rajya.

TRULY SPEAKING

## Jagan extends birthday wishes to Governor

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy conveyed his wishes to Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan on his birthday on Monday. Jagan called the Governor and extended birthday wishes to him, praying for healthy and long life. Taking to Twitter, the CM hailed Harichandan as a people's leader, who had spent his entire life in the service of people. Warm greetings to @governorap Shri Biswa Bhusan Harichandan ji on his birthday. A leader who has spent his entire life in the service of people; may the Almighty bless him with a long & healthy life.



## Malayappa Swamy rides Garuda Vahanam

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD has organised the Sravana Pournami Garuda Seva at Lord Venkateswara temple on Monday evening. The monthly festival was conducted in 'ekantham' inside the temple in view of Covid-19 restrictions. The majestically decorated with flowers and ornaments the utsava idol of Sri Malayappaswamy was seated at Ranganayakula Mandapam on his favourite Garuda Vahanam. Tirumala pontiff Chinna Jeeyar Swamy, CVSO Gopinath Jetty and VGO Manohar participated.

**HYDERABAD BULLION RATES**

GOLD	₹ 56,510 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 65,400 (1kg)
	₹ 400

**CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg**

Dressed/With Skin	₹173
Without Skin	₹196
Broiler at Farm	₹119

**EGG RATES ₹/100**

HYDERABAD	355
VIJAYAWADA	401
VISAKHAPATNAM	400
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.50

## NOVEL PROTEST STAGED

# Women leaders want Pawan to back pro-Amaravati stir

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The pro-Amaravati women leaders and activists staged an innovative rakhi protest demanding Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and Prime Minister Narendra Modi continue Amaravati as the only Capital of Andhra Pradesh.

Women tied rakhis to two persons, who were carrying the portraits of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy in a novel protest. They demanded justice to farmers, who sacrificed their livelihood to the capital city. They demanded that Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan join Amaravati agitations to protect the world-class capital city.

Amaravati Women JAC leader Penmatsa Durga Bhavani said that there is no chance to meet Chief Minister YS



Jaganmohan Reddy by pro-Amaravati farmers and women, hence, they had tied rakhis to their photographs in the unique protest. She alleged that both the State and Union government deceived Amaravati farmers by shifting the Executive Capital to Visakhapatnam.

Congress party leader and AWJAC leader Sunkara Padmasri welcoming the statement of K Pawan Kalyan seeking justice to Amaravati farmers had sought the latter to join Amaravati agitations to exert pressure on the

Central and State governments. She claimed that Jagan has no right to function from the Secretariat in Amaravati due to annulment of APCRDA.

She lamented that the Chief Minister backstabbed Amaravati farmers, while the BJP had helped the YSRCP government by joining the Amaravati capital conspiracy. She affirmed that AWJAC and Amaravati farmers will continue protest till cancellation of 3 capitals move and getting clear announcement from the government about continuation of Amaravati as the only capital of the State.

AWJAC leader and former Zilla Parishad chairperson Gadde Anuradha and Donepudi Rama Devi flayed Jagan for bringing tears and spoiling lives of women who pinned hopes on development of Amaravati.

## Ministers flag off 32 e-Vehicles in city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A fleet of 32 e-Vehicles, provided by Tamil Nadu-based VSL Industries, was flagged off by Ministers for Panchayat Raj Peddiredy Ramachandra Reddy and Minister for Civil Supplies Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) here on Monday.

The 32 vehicles, fully battery operated and non-pollutant worth Rs 1 crore, would be distributed 12 each to the panchayat raj and municipal administration departments besides four each to the medical and health and civil supplies departments. They were handed over to the government free of cost by Tamil Nadu-based VSL Industries.

While 15 vehicles would be used for lifting garbage from houses, four would be used for spraying disinfectants for con-



taining the Covid-19 pandemic, four others for testing Covid-19 and four for distributing food to the houses. VSL Industries Chairman Harikrishna was felicitated on the occasion.

Panchayat Raj Principal Secretary Gopal Krishna Dwivedi, Municipal Administration Commissioner Vijay Kumar, Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner Prasanna Venkatesh were among those present on the occasion.

## 'Provide medicines, food for those in home quarantine'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Urban Citizens Federation (APUCF) demanded here on Monday that the State government provide medicines, food and financial help to those in home quarantine.

Ch Babu Rao, convener of the Federation, addressing the media here on Monday, recalled that the government is suggesting people afflicted with Covid-19 should stay at home and get medical help. He alleged that officials are insisting on people to stay home for treatment though they have no facilities at home.

In spite of people staying home, officials are not supplying medicines to them and they are suffering since the medicines were not available in the medical shops.



Ch Babu Rao, convener of Andhra Pradesh Urban Citizens Federation

Representatives of APUCF brought this issue to the notice of officials at various districts like Vizianagaram several times, but in vain, he said.

The government says that it is spending Rs 500 per day for the afflicted persons in the Covid hospitals for providing food. However, it is sad that

the same facility or financial help was not being provided to those in home quarantine. Doctors are supposed to provide medical care to persons in home quarantine regularly but in many areas this is not being done, he pointed out.

Babu Rao sought intervention of the government, Minister for Health and higher officials in the issue and should provide medicines and food for those in home quarantine. They should also be given masks, sanitisers and Rs 7,000 for 14 days of home quarantine for food expenses, he suggested.

APUCF also demanded hiring of marriage halls, schools and others in all the Assembly constituencies to provide quarantine facilities to the persons who have no such facilities in their homes.

## Bandaru takes on Botsa over north Andhra development

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP former minister Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy on Monday asserted that if north Coastal Andhra was developed, it was under the leadership of former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, and not the YSRCP government.

Murthy deplored that instead of continuing the great projects like Adani Data Centre and Lulu Group's venture, which were brought by Naidu, the ruling YSRCP was driving them away to other States. The multi-crore Adani Data Centre has now gone to Telangana where thousands of jobs would be created for the youth.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, the TDP leader challenged Minister for Tourism Avanti Srinivas and Minister for Municipal Administration Botsa Satyanarayana and senior leader Dharmana Prasada Rao to tell the people what development they have brought in Visakhapatnam and surrounding areas in the past 14 months of their regime.

"The Templetion firm would have created lot of software jobs but it was also driven away to other States. The YSRCP leaders were now talking about development of north Coastal Andhra only to carry forward their evil designs to kill Amaravati Capital City," he alleged.

Satyanarayana Murthy told Chief Minister YS



The Templetion firm would have created lot of software jobs but it was also driven away to other States. The YSRCP leaders were now talking about development of north Coastal Andhra only to carry forward their evil designs to kill Amaravati Capital City

Jaganmohan Reddy that the north Coastal Andhra people were peace-loving and good-natured, who would not accept the food that was snatched and stolen from the mouths of some other region.

"One lakh families in Amaravati would be badly affected and they would lose their lands and livelihood due to the oppressive and vengeful action of the government. The Chief Minister has forgotten the fact that Rs 10,000 crore people's funds were already spent on Amaravati, which has all the potential to grow into a global city in future," he pointed out.

## Covid dampens Raksha Bandhan celebrations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said Raksha Bandhan celebrated the eternal bond of love between siblings. "To protect one another has taken a different meaning this year amidst pandemic but the festive spirit remains the same. Greetings and lots of love to all my dear sisters across the State," he tweeted.

The Raksha Bandhan was celebrated in the State and Telangana on Monday amid the Covid-19 pandemic. People were seen taking precautions while celebrating the festival, which signifies the bond between sisters and brothers.



Highlighting the importance of Coronavirus precautions, Telangana Congress MLA Danasari Anasuya gifted a mask

and sanitiser to party MP A. Revanth Reddy after tying rakhi on his hand. "Happy Raksha Bandha to my brother MP

Revanth Reddy. Gifted him a mask and sanitiser with rakhi," she tweeted.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's daughter and former Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MP K Kavitha tied a traditional rakhi on brother and Cabinet Minister KT. Rama Rao's hand.

The siblings were seen wearing masks during the celebrations at Pragati Bhavan, the Chief Minister's official residence. Kavitha's brother 'tilak' on the foreheads of his brother and sister-in-law and after tying rakhi touched his brother's feet. He gave his blessings.

"The sibling bond is the most

beautiful of all. Wishing you all a very happy Raksha Bandhan," Kavitha tweeted. Union Minister of State for Home K. Kishan Reddy visited his two sisters in Hyderabad on the occasion. "This festival gives every brother and sister countless memories to cherish forever," he said.

Telangana Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan greeted people on the occasion. "It (Raksha Bandhan) symbolises the great Indian tradition of the eternal bond between brothers and sisters. I wish the thread of love will bind the hearts and lives of all brothers and sisters and make their immortal bond of togetherness stronger," she said.

# Jagan launches e-Raksha Bandhan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy launched e-Raksha Bandhan, a month-long awareness programme on cyber-space, on Monday, from his camp office in Tadepalli, on the auspicious occasion Rakhi Purnima.

The government launched e-Raksha Bandhan, which is jointly designed by the Police Department and CID, for the safety of children and women in the State. Speaking on the occasion, Jagan assured that the government is taking all measures for the safety of women and to prevent crime against them.

He said that as a part of this month-long awareness programme, schools, colleges and working women will be trained online by cyber security experts through the YouTube channel. Experts on women safety will give suggestions to



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy launches e-Raksha Bandhan, an awareness programme, at Tadepalli on Monday

women on how they can protect themselves from cyber-crime.

He said the campaign would be conducted through short films, animations and reading material to create awareness among women over cyber-crime. He asserted that the cyber wing will collect all the

complaints lodged by distressed women through Disha app, Cyber Mitra, Disha Police Station and stern action would be taken against them.

Reiterating that the government gives utmost priority to women empowerment, he reminded that 50 per cent reservation has been given to

them in all sectors. He expressed pleasure that the government is distributing housing sites to around 30 lakh women beneficiaries.

He said that as part of liquor ban, wine shops in the State have been reduced by 33 per cent. On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, Home

The government launched e-Raksha Bandhan, which is jointly designed by the Police Department and CID, for the safety of children and women in the State.

The Chief Minister said the campaign would be conducted through short films, animations and reading material to create awareness among women over cybercrime. He asserted that the cyber wing will collect all the complaints lodged by distressed women through Disha app, Cyber Mitra, Disha Police Station and stern action would be taken against them

Minister Sucharita, MLA Vidadala Rajini, Women's Commission Chairperson Vasireddy Padma tied rakhi to the Chief Minister.

# Landmine planted by Maoists kills two tribals

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In an unfortunate incident, two tribals, who were returning home after tending their cattle, died in a blast triggered by a pressure landmine at Kondrum and Chintalaveedhi forest area under Pedabayalu police station limits in Vizag Agency on Monday.

The land mines were planted by Maoists targeting the security forces. The deceased have been identified as M Mohan Kumar (26) and M Ajay Kumar (20), both were tribals and cattle grazers and both residents of Chintalaveedhi village.

The incident took place on the final day of the Martyrs Week of Maoists (July 28 to August 3). The CPI (Maoists), who are observing the Martyrs Week, held up in this area sharing borders with the Odisha are reported to have fortified the area by planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on all routes approaching their hide-out.

Superintendent of Police of Visakhapatnam district B Krishna Rao said that the land-



Martyrs Week of Maoists is observed from July 28 to August 3

The land mines were planted by Maoists targeting the security forces. The deceased have been identified as M Mohan Kumar (26) and M Ajay Kumar (20), both were tribals and cattle grazers and both residents of Chintalaveedhi village

mine or landmines were planted by red-rebels targeting the security forces. He said that more than one landmine might have exploded and could have been a pressure activated landmine also.

The police said that since combing operation and surveillance have been enhanced due to the ongoing Martyr's Week, it has been the routine practice of red-rebels during the week to target security forces with landmines.

The bodies of the deceased have been shifted to the village and later the bodies will be shift-

ed to the government hospital for autopsy.

A few days ago the exchange of fire between the Maoists and the combing security forces reportedly left one Maoist dead on the Andhra Odisha Border (AOB). The exchange of fire took place in the forest area under Annavaram police station limits in Vizag Agency along the AOB.

The slain Maoist was Pangi Daya, a member of Pedabayalu Dalam of the banned outfit, and was a native of Vakapalle village under G Madugula Mandal in Vizag Agency.

## Three killed in accident

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Three persons died while eight others sustained serious injuries near Gurajala village in Pamidimokkala mandal of Krishna district on Monday.

The accident took place when the car in which they were travelling lost control and hit the divider on the Vijayawada Machilipatnam highway killing three and injuring eight. The incident took place while they were returning after celebrating Friendship Day at Machilipatnam beach. The deceased were identified as Amar, Yousuf and Sivaraj from Vijayawada.

# Minister challenges Naidu to seek reelection

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Asserting that the mandate was for five years, the YSRCP has asked N Chandrababu Naidu and his MLAs to seek reelection as it was TDP that has been opposing three capitals concept.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, Minister for Water Resources K Anil Kumar Yadav challenged Naidu to seek fresh mandate with his MLAs if he faults their decision on three capitals as the mandate given to them is up to 2024.

He slammed Naidu for trying to promote commercial activity by concentrating development only in Amaravati and to serve the real estate business of his cohorts.

He said that the TDP has no moral right to talk on the cap-



ital issue, or accuse Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy of bringing up decentralisation. He said that Naidu was seen more distressed towards the approval of three capitals than the State bifurcation.

Jagan had given consent for establishing capital in Amaravati, where he suggested going with degraded forest lands, or government lands instead of pooling agriculture lands, he reminded.

Jagan had given consent for establishing capital in Amaravati, where he suggested going with degraded forest lands, or government lands instead of pooling agriculture lands, he reminded.

In the five year's regime, Naidu had spent only Rs 10,000 crore and tried to push the State into debts to pool remaining Rs 95,000 crore, he pointed out.

In the five year's regime, Naidu had spent only Rs 10,000 crore and tried to push the State into debts to pool remaining Rs 95,000 crore, he pointed out. TDP leaders are misleading

the public with baseless allegations for gaining political mileage, he said and added that people, including the Coastal Andhra region, are hailing the concept of decentralisation and are confident with the vision of Jagan.

He assured that Amaravati is still a capital city (Legislative) and the government is very much committed to its development. In regard to this, Anil Kumar said that the Chief Minister had constructed house in Amaravati, but Naidu built a lavish house in Hyderabad and didn't dare to step in Amaravati for the past five months. He termed Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan as a confused man for demanding MLAs of Krishna and Guntur districts to resign in support of Amaravati.

# Naidu blames govt for death of Amaravati farmer

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday accused the YSRCP government of causing endless misery and painful deaths to Amaravati capital city farmers by following unconstitutional policies.

Naidu blamed the government's 3-capitals plan for the latest death of Nannapaneni Venkateshwar Rao, who took part in the capital city protests, till Sunday. In all, 65 Amaravati farmers and farm labourers died painful deaths amid ruthless treatment meted out by the ruling party leaders.

The TDP president, in a tweet, deplored that farmer Venkateshwar Rao had given away all his four acres of ancestral property for building a good capital city for the State. But he was subjected to harassment and anguish, which led to his death.

Naidu said even though farmers were succumbing one by one, there was nobody from the side of the government to come and



Naidu said even though farmers were succumbing one by one, there was nobody from the side of the government to come and console the bereaved families. The ruling party was following oppressive policies to break the hearts of farmers and local residents, he alleged.

It may be recalled that the Amaravati protests reached a new peak ever since the Governor signed the 3-capitals and CRDA Repeal Bills.

# AP ties up with top firms for women's...

Continued from page 1

Apart from YSR Cheyutha, the government said it plans to launch another scheme YSR Asara in September under which Rs 6,700 crore will be spent annually on 90 lakh women and 9 lakh self-help groups in the state.

The partnership with companies will push women across the state to obtain more employment opportunities that will provide a steady income," it said.

HUL's Sanjeev Mehta said the company has been running a programme called Shakti for women empowerment in Chittoor district and is happy to work with the state government, the statement said.

ITC's Sanjeev Puri said the company can extend cooperation in watershed programmes, social forestry, health and sanitation and post harvesting.

P&G's Madhusudhan Gopalan said, "We are happy to be part of the YSR Cheyutha which would generate employment opportunities."



Information and Public Relations Commissioner T Vijaya Kumar Reddy addresses officials through a video conference from Vijayawada on Monday

# Info of Covid officials to be provided to scribes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Information of nodal officers, medical and health department, Information and Public Relations officials' names and their phone numbers shall be provided to the journalists and their family members suffering from Covid, disclosed Information and Public Relations Commissioner T Vijaya Kumar Reddy.

Addressing the 13 districts I&PR officials through a video conference here at the Collector's camp office, along with Health and Family Welfare department Commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar, a circular was issued in this regard.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that during the Covid pandemic journalists are discharging their duties risking their lives and it is the responsibility to address their health issues by conducting tests, arranging beds in Covid hospitals and providing better treatment.

He said that the care and facilities being provided at Covid Care Centres and hospitals like food, drinking water, toilets and hygiene should be given publicity so that people shall get confidence on the treatment. He said that people, who are infected with Covid, should be bold and get treated as many are being successfully treated and discharged.

# 3 liquor addicts drink sanitiser

Continued from page 1

Chennakesavulu and Bheemaiah died at home, while family members of Chennakesavulu conducted his last rites without informing the police. Obulesh died while undergoing treatment at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Science (RIMS), said police.

The incident came to light after locals passed the information to the police. Police shifted Bheemaiah's body to RIMS hospital in Kadapa for post-mortem. Police are keeping tabs the health condition of the remaining five.

Earlier, 10 people died after consuming alcohol-based hand sanitiser in Prakasam district on July 31. Prakasam district Superintendent of Police Siddharth Kaushal said that the deceased had consumed sanitiser for over 10 days mixing it with water and soft drinks.

# Drugs Control Authority to get more teeth in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday said that the Drug Control Authority would be strengthened and fake medicines be weeded out in the interest of public health.

Chairing a review meeting here, the Chief Minister said that labs would be strengthened, Vigilance and Intelligence Wing be started and defaulters penalised.

The State government would take tough action against manufacturing and marketing of fake drugs besides strengthening the drug control authority with better infrastructure and manpower, he said.

The Chief Minister took a serious note on fake drugs and ordered the officials to develop an action plan within a month for starting 'Drug Control Vigilance and Intelligence' wing.

He emphasised on developing the lab infrastructure and to increase the testing facility in order to control fake drugs in the market. He directed the officials to frame strict guidelines for



eradicating malpractices in the production and sale of drugs.

To ensure safety of the public, officials were told to take strict action against those who violate the rules and not to compromise on public health.

The Chief Minister instructed the officials to increase the testing capacity in the labs of Vijayawada, Kurnool, and Visakhapatnam, where almost 13,000 samples can be tested.

In addition to this, the Chief Minister also directed the officials to lay special focus on conducting periodical inspections on the 34,000 drug stores across the State and also put a display showing the details of 'how to lodge a complaint' at every outlet and store all the complaints received in a digital database.

# In AP 7,822 cases, 63 deaths recorded

Continued from page 1

Government data also revealed that the recovery rate increased to 53.23 per cent while the mortality rate slipped marginally to 0.92 per cent.

After easing a little in the last couple of days, East Godavari once again recorded the highest number of 1,113 cases, now aggregating 23,314, while Visakhapatnam registered 1,049 fresh cases, taking its cumulative to 14,196.

Visakhapatnam now has the highest number of 10,124 active cases, the bulk of which came in the last week.

Anantapur district also continued its upward trend with 953 new cases, reaching 17,476 so far.

Kurnool inched closer to the 20,000-mark, aggregating 19,679 with the addition of 602 fresh cases. West Godavari district reported 11 fresh casualties in the last 24 hours, followed by Visakhapatnam nine, Prakasam eight, SPS Nellore and Srikulam districts seven each.

# Vizag land prices skyrocket, further hike proposed

Considering the demand in areas such as Anandapuram, Yendada, Pendurthy, lands abutting Vizag-Anandapuram national highway, Madhavadhara, Murali Nagar, Kurmannapalem, Mindi, M a d h u r a w a d a , Bakkannapalem, Kommadi and Paradesipalem, the revision of rates range from 5 per cent to 10 per cent and 10 per cent to 20 per cent.

The government fixed market values of lands where new layouts are developed in the GVMC limits have been revised. Rates in villages abutting roads have been revised from 6 per cent to 12 per cent in Saripalli and Rampuram areas, the revision was 15 per cent and in Bheemili mandal 13 per cent to 15 per cent.

Meanwhile, CREDAI chairman P Koteswara Rao suggested postponement of revision of land value by at least one year citing the difficulties arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic and other reasons. This would help attract prospective

# State scouts for consultant to rein in Vizag's pollution

Continued from page 1

These two hill ranges cause inversion conditions particularly during the winter season. Major habitation and industries co-exist in the bowl area. The focus will be to study the bowl area.

The point, line and area sources of emissions from the industries, service sector and vehicular pollution which are likely to have impact on the air quality of the study area due to prevailing meteorological

buyers, he said. He also expressed concern over how the further increase in rates or land, which already costs a bomb in Vizag city, will dash the dreams of middle-class families to own a home.

He also highlighted how land or apartments in some areas in Vizag city (like CBM Compound) are costlier than

conditions shall be identified and comprehensive source data of pollutants shall be obtained. Static non-point sources like cargo heaps and fuel heaps in various facilities shall be identified.

Moreover, the consultant would submit recommendations like short-term measures (to be implemented within 3-6 months), medium term measures (1-2 years) and long term measures (in 4-5 years).

Banjara Hills, one of the affluent neighbourhoods in Hyderabad.

The realty sector is the second largest provider of employment after agriculture and the present crisis in this sector would have an adverse impact on employment opportunities and hundreds of daily workers would be jobless, he said.

# Naidu gives Jagan 48 hrs ...

Continued from page 1

Incidentally, Venkateswarlu hails from Guntur district where Amaravati is located. YSRCP Mylavaram MLA Vasanta Krishna Prasad went to the extent of taking a vow that he would resign if Amaravati was discontinued as a permanent capital. Krishna Prasad hails from Krishna district which is close to Amaravati Capital.

"The YSRCP Government was going forward to kill Amaravati Capital much against the will of the people in just the same way that the then Congress Government approved the bifurcation bill by shutting down TVs and closing the doors of the Parliament.

Eventually, the AP people had taught a bitter lesson to the Congress. Even now, Capital shifting was taken up much against the opinion of the people. If Jagan was thinking he had public support, he could as well get a proper mandate for the same by going for election," the TDP supremo said.

# Centre issues protocols for ...

Continued from page 1

For the first time since the coronavirus lockdown came into force on March 25, the government has allowed opening of yoga institutes and gymnasiums from August 5 as part of the 'Unlock 3' phase.

"Yoga and physical activity being important for health & well-being, it has been decided to open yoga institutes and gymnasiums from August 5," the guidelines said.

The document outlined various generic precautionary measures to be adopted in addition to specific measures to be taken at yoga institutes and gymnasiums to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The guidelines state that at the entry point at all such facilities, it is mandatory to have hand hygiene (sanitiser dispenser) and thermal screening provisions.

"Only asymptomatic persons (including staff) be allowed in the premises. All

persons to be allowed entry only if using face cover/masks," it said.

"All members, visitors and staff may consider using Aarogya Setu application for risk identification at all times inside the yoga institute/ gymnasiums," the guidelines stated.

It also stated that prior to exercising in gymnasiums using equipment for cardio, strength training, etc, middle finger be sanitised with alcohol swab and oxygen saturation be checked using pulse oximeter. Those having oxygen saturation below 95 per cent should not be allowed to exercise, it said.

Call central/state helpline/ ambulance and refer such persons to the nearest health facility, the document added.

It calls for ensuring a minimum distance of six feet at all times in queues and proper crowd management in parking lots, corridors and in elevators — duly following social distancing norms.

# TDP's B Tech Ravi quits Council ...

Continued from page 1

On July 31 the state government notified the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020, and the AP Capital Region Development Authority (Repeal) Act, 2020, immediately after Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan gave his assent to the two controversial laws.

The state Legislative Council did not clear the two Bills and had referred them to Select Committees for deeper examination but the committees never took shape.

As per the provisions of the Constitution, the Governor gave assent to the two new laws, paving the way for the government to go ahead with its plans of having three capitals for the state.

All opposition parties have been staunchly opposing the three capitals idea, demanding that Amaravati be continued as the full-fledged capital of the bifurcated state.

SHORT READS



**UDF in Kerala protests online demanding CM's resignation**

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** The Congress-led United Democratic Front in Kerala on Monday organised a half-day online sit-in following COVID-19 protocol as part of protests against the Left government and demanding resignation of chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan in the recent gold smuggling case involving diplomatic baggage. The UDF leaders joined the protest, titled 'Speakup Kerala', from their homes and offices across the State and the agitation was inaugurated by All India Congress Committee general secretary in charge of Kerala, Mukul Wansik. Opposition Leader Ramesh Chennithala, who sat on protest at his official residence, reiterated his demand for a CBI probe. "With this gold smuggling case, the current government in the state has tarnished the image of Kerala worldwide," Chennithala alleged.

**Women Cong MLAs tie Rakshis on CM's wrist**

**JAISALMER:** Women Congress MLAs of Rajasthan celebrated the festival of Raksha Bandhan by tying Rakshis on the wrist of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. Minister Mamta Bhupesh and legislators Shakuntala Rawat, Ganga Devi and others tied Rakhi on the wrist of the chief minister and offered him sweets. The women MLAs also tied Rakhi on the wrists of other legislators including Sanyam Lodha. The festival was celebrated in Hotel Suryagarh in Jaipur where the MLAs have been made to stay to save them from the alleged bids to make them ditch the Gehlot government. They are expected to stay here till the assembly session begins on August 14.

**Lok Sabha MP Karti Chidambaram tests positive for COVID-19**

**CHENNAI:** Lok Sabha MP and son of senior Congress leader P Chidambaram, Karti, on Monday said he has tested positive for COVID-19. "I have just tested positive for Covid. My symptoms are mild and as per medical advice I am under home quarantine. I would urge all those who have recently been in contact with me to follow medical protocol," he said in a tweet. The Congress leader represents Sivaganga Lok Sabha segment from Tamil Nadu.

**Customer finds dead lizard in bowl of 'sambar', in Delhi**

**NEW DELHI:** A customer reportedly found a dead lizard in a bowl of 'sambar' at a popular South Indian restaurant in Connaught Place here, police said on Monday. The incident took place on Saturday night, they said. According to the police, Pankaj Agarwal, a resident of Fatehpuri area in Chandni Chowk, visited the restaurant along with his two friends. They ordered 'dosa' and 'sambar' for dinner. When Agarwal started eating, he found a dead lizard in his bowl of 'sambar'. He captured the sight in his mobile phone and questioned the restaurant staff following which the manager assured him that it will not happen in future, they said.

**Two-thirds of migrants returned to cities: survey**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly two-thirds of migrant workers, who had left for home due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown, have either returned to cities or wish to do so in absence of skilled employment in villages, according to a new study that surveyed 4,835 households.

The collaborative study on 'How is the hinterland unlocking' was carried out by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India), Action for Social Advancement, Grameen Sahara, i-Saksham, PRADAN, SAATHI-UP, Seva Mandir and Transform Rural India Foundation.

The study is based on a rapid assessment survey of 4,835 households across 11 states in 48 districts carried out in the period of June 24 to July 8.



The study found that 29 per cent of migrants, who had left for villages, are now back in cities, while 45 per cent want to return to cities.

"Absence of skilled employment in villages is reflected in the fact that nearly 2/3rd of returned migrants have either migrated again or wish to do so," it said.

The study also found that migrants who returned are engaged mainly in labour work in villages - more than 80 per cent of them - which reflects absence of skilled employment in villages.

**The study found that 29 per cent of migrants, who had left for villages, are now back in cities, while 45 per cent want to return to cities.**

"More than one-fourth of the migrant workers are still searching for work in villages," the study found.

It also found that one in 4 households is thinking of taking their child out of school (24 per cent).

"Though distress is still considerable, structural changes are not yet visible and the health risk of COVID-19 in rural India is rising," the study warned.

**No intention to allow street vendors to resume biz: Govt to HC**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Monday told the Bombay High Court it does not intend to permit street vendors and hawkers to conduct their businesses amid the COVID-19 pandemic as it is not possible to regulate them.

The government filed an affidavit in response to a public interest litigation filed by one Manoj Oswal, raising concerns of street vendors being without income due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

Oswal in his plea argued that since hotels and restaurants are allowed to operate, street vendors should also be allowed to conduct their business activities.

"Considering the present ground realities and the affect that the COVID-19 pandemic



has caused on businesses and commercial activities, the state government does not intend to permit street vendors or hawkers to commence their businesses amid and post the lockdown, the government said in its affidavit. The affidavit filed by Kishor Nimbalkar, secretary, disaster management, relief and rehabilitation department, said street vendors and hawkers fall in an unorganised sector and thus, it is very difficult to regulate their business.

"The state government presently does not intend to per-

**Oswal in his plea argued that since hotels and restaurants are allowed to operate, street vendors should also be allowed to conduct their business activities.**

mit street vendors or hawkers to conduct their businesses even in non-containment zones or areas that are not in lockdown, mainly because it is difficult to implement conditions, if any and if at all, imposed on them to conduct their business, the affidavit said.

**Raj govt transfers 88 IFS, RAS officers**

PNS ■ JAIPUR

The Rajasthan government has transferred or redesignated 57 officers of the Indian Forest Service (IFS) and 31 officers of the Rajasthan Administration Service (RAS).

IFS Shruti Sharma has been posted as Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Jaipur whereas in the transfers of RAS, Narendra Gupta has been posted as Additional Divisional Commissioner, Jaipur, as per an order of the Department of Personnel issued on Sunday night.

Earlier on July 31, the government had transferred or redesignated 97 RAS officers.

**No party at Sushant's home day before his death: Mumbai CP**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh on Monday said no party was held at the home of actor Sushant Singh Rajput on June 13, a day before he was found dead at his Bandra apartment here.

Talking to media, Singh also said no politician's name has come up during the investigation by Mumbai police.

There is no question of non-cooperation with the Bihar police team which is in the city in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput death case, Singh said, adding Mumbai police are seeking legal opinion on the matter.

Bihar DGP Guptheshwar Pandey on Sunday claimed that Vinay Tiwari, the IPS officer from Patna who is in Mumbai to probe a case related to the Bollywood actor's death, has been "forcibly



quarantined" by civic authorities in the metropolis.

The investigation by the Mumbai police is in the right direction, he said, adding the case was being investigated from all possible angles.

The Commissioner of Police said it was found the actor had bipolar disorder, and was undergoing treatment and taking medicines for it. "What circumstances led to his death is the subject of our investigation," he added.

After registering an Accidental Death Report

(ADR) in the case, the investigation is in progress and till now statements of 56 persons has been recorded by Mumbai police. The statements of Sushant's sisters have also been recorded, he said. Sushant was upset after he was linked with the death of his former manager Disha Salian on June 8, he said.

"No politician's name came up during the probe so far. There is no evidence against any politician from any party," Singh said, referring to a query on the name of a prominent young Maharashtra politician being mentioned on social media.

"The FIR by Bihar police says Rs 15 crore were siphoned off from Sushant's account. During the probe, we found he had Rs 18 crore in his account of which around Rs 4.5 crore are still there," he said.

**Cooperating with Bihar police: CP**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai: Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh on Monday said there is no question of non-cooperation with the Bihar police team which is in the city in connection with the Sushant Singh Rajput death case. Talking to media, Singh said the investigation by the Mumbai police is in the right direction, and added that the case was being investigated from all possible angles.

The Commissioner of Police said there are reports that the actor had bipolar disorder, and was undergoing treatment and taking medicines for it. "What circumstances led to his death is the subject of our investigation," he said. After registering an Accidental Death Report (ADR) in the case, the investigation is in progress and till now statements of 56 persons has been recorded by Mumbai police.

**Rhea not missing, hasn't got summons**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Actor Rhea Chakraborty's advocate on Monday refuted Bihar Police's claim that she was "missing", and said till date she has not received any summons from them in connection with the case of actor-friend Sushant Singh Rajput's death.

The Bihar Police last week lodged an FIR against Chakraborty for allegedly abetting Rajput's suicide.

The complaint was filed by Rajput's father K K Singh against Chakraborty and other members of her family. The Bihar Police earlier said their team had failed to locate Chakraborty.

However, her advocate Satish Maneshinde in a statement said, "The contention of Bihar police that Rhea Chakraborty is missing is not correct. Till today, no notice or summons has been



Actor Rhea Chakraborty

received by her from the Bihar police." Chakraborty's statement has already been recorded by the Mumbai Police, Maneshinde said.

"She has cooperated with the police as and when called, the statement said. Maneshinde in the statement reiterated that the Bihar Police do not have jurisdiction to probe the case and hence, Chakraborty has filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking transfer of the case to Mumbai.

**IMD issues red alert for Mumbai warns heavy rains**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The India Meteorological Department issued a red alert for Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts in Maharashtra for Tuesday after upgrading its earlier rain forecast from "heavy-very heavy" to "extremely heavy".

An IMD official on Monday said the "extremely heavy" forecast means Mumbai, Raigad, Thane, Pune and



Ratnagiri may get more than 204.5 millimetres of rain in a period of 24 hours.

Tuesday and Wednesday. Raigad has a similar forecast between Monday and Wednesday," he said.

"The probability of the forecast is very likely, which means 51 per cent to 75 per cent of actualisation," the official added.

Neighbouring Palghar district would get heavy to very heavy rains at a few places on Tuesday and the intensity would increase on Wednesday, the IMD said.

**Girl dies while trying to save friend**

PNS ■ TURA

A 13-year-old girl in Meghalaya died after falling into a river while trying to help her friend who was slipping into a waterfall, police said on Monday.

The incident took place at 2:30 pm on Sunday when the girl along with three of her friends went to the waterfall at the Daram Gurakol stream near Rongkuchong village, they said. The girl, identified as Mima Patiasa K Sangma, saw one of her friends losing balance and slipping into the water while they were standing near the edge of the waterfall.

**Lata Mangeshkar, Amritanandamayi wish PM Modi on Raksha Bandhan**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Singer Lata Mangeshkar and spiritual leader Amritanandamayi posted Raksha Bandhan messages for Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday which he said would inspire him and give him strength.

Praising Modi's efforts as the prime minister, Mangeshkar, 90, posted an audio note accompanied by a video montage of her pictures with the PM on Twitter.

The singer said she couldn't send a rakhi to him because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"I couldn't send rakhi today, the reason for which the entire



country forward. "Today, millions of women in India won't be able to tie you a rakhi. But you can understand. If possible, then on this day of rakhi, promise us to take India ahead. Namaskar," she added.

In his response, the PM said the singer's message has filled him with fresh energy.

"Lata didi, on this auspicious occasion of Raksha Bandhan, this emotional message from you has filled me with immense inspiration and energy. With the blessings of millions of mothers and sisters our country will reach greater heights and achieve success," Modi tweeted.

**Delhi HC dismisses plea on 50% PG medical seats**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has dismissed a petition challenging the decision of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIU) to reserve 50 per cent state quota of PG medical seats to MBBS graduates from its own colleges.

Justice Jayant Nath said GGSIU is following the dicta of the Supreme Court in various cases which have approved 'institutional reservation' upto 50 per cent of the post graduate seats.

"In view of the stated legal position, this is clearly permissible. The pleas of the petitioners are clearly without merit. There is no merit in the pre-



sent petition. The same is accordingly dismissed," the court said in its 32-page judgement.

In the petition, various MBBS graduates and students from Jamia Hamdard University had challenged the policy of GGSIU of allocating the entire 50 per cent state quota of post graduate medical college seats to MBBS graduates from colleges affiliated only to itself by way of 'Institutional Preference'.

**3 held for harbouring Lankan gangster**

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

Three people have been arrested on the charge of producing false documents to help a Sri Lankan gangster stay here illegally, police said on Monday. This came to light when the gangster Maddumage Lasantha Chandana Perera alias Angoda Lokka had died of a heart attack in the city and the three approached the police to cremate the body in Madurai. On investigation, Sivakami Sundari of Madurai, Dyaneswaran of Erode and a Lankan woman Amani were held here on Sunday night based on information, a press release from the police said.

**Delhi BJP to organise live telecast of Ram temple groundbreaking ceremony**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lighting of 11 lakh earthen lamps, a mega laser show, and live telecast of the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya through LED screens across the city are some of the events being planned by the Delhi BJP to make the occasion "memorable".

Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta said on Monday that Lord Rama lives in the hearts of crores of people and the BJP has been at the forefront of the movement for construction of his temple in Ayodhya which is why it wants the occasion to be remembered by generations

to come. "It is a matter of great pride and joy for us that after 500 years, the dream of Ram temple is going to be realised on August 5.

We have planned a series of events to make the 'bhoomi puja' ceremony a memorable moment for everyone in Delhi," he said.

**On Raksha Bandhan, President Kovind describes nurses as saviours**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind celebrated Raksha Bandhan with members of the nursing community at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday and described them as saviours who are risking their own lives in the line of duty to save others.

The nurses offered rakhis to the president and narrated their experience in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a statement.



The president felicitated the nurses, saying they have been performing the role of front-line COVID warriors and their commitment to duty earns respect.

Traditionally, on Raksha Bandhan, sisters seek their

brothers' protection, but in case of nurses it is they who through their dedication and commitment extend a helping hand to their brothers and ensure protection for all people, the president said.

Referring to two members of the Military Nursing Service, who tested COVID-19 positive while dealing with patients but recovered soon and resumed duty with renewed vigour, he thanked the nursing fraternity for their dedication during the pandemic.

**TN govt rejects three-language formula in new NEP, says will follow 2 language policy**

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government on Monday rejected the Centre's three-language formula proposed in the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and said there will not be any deviation from the two-language policy being followed in the state.

Taking strong exception to the proposal for the three-language formula in the NEP, Chief Minister K Palaniswami after a chairing a meeting of Cabinet colleagues at the Secretariat here, said the state has been following the two-



Chief Minister K Palaniswami

language policy for several decades and there will be no change in it.

**Palaniswami said there will be no change to the two-language formula which the state had adopted decades ago.**

"Tamil Nadu will never allow the Centre's three-language policy. The state will continue with its dual language policy (of Tamil and English)," the chief minister said. "The three-language for-

mula in the NEP is painful and saddening. The Prime Minister (Narendra Modi) should reconsider the three-language policy," he said, adding the Centre should allow the states to implement their own policy on the subject.

Palaniswami said there will be no change to the two-language formula which the state had adopted decades ago.

Teaching up to class 5 in mother tongue or regional language and lowering the stakes of board exams are part of the sweeping reforms in the new NEP unveiled last week.

**Maha govt committed to Maratha quota**

PNS ■ NAGPUR

The Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government is committed to providing reservations in jobs and education to the Maratha community and would leave no stone unturned to place its view in the Supreme Court on the issue, said state revenue minister and Congress union chief Balasahb Thorat on Monday. Addressing a press conference here, he refuted allegations leveled by Shiv Sangram Party leader Vinayat Mete who had said the state government was not putting its side in the apex court effectively.

SHORT READS



**Rajya Sabha member Amar Singh cremated in Delhi**

**NEW DELHI:** Rajya Sabha member Amar Singh was cremated at the Chhatrapur crematorium here in the presence of family members and relatives on Monday, two days after he died in a Singapore hospital. The last rites took place around 11:30 am. His two daughters consigned his mortal remains to flames. Due to COVID-19 protocols, Singh's last rites were performed in the presence of a limited number of people, including actor-turned-politician Jaya Prada, who considered him her 'godfather'. Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia, and Jaya Prada were among the first ones to pay floral tributes to the former Samajwadi Party leader at his Chhatrapur farmhouse.

**Bihar SP quarantined, Cong's Nirupam attacks BMC, Mumbai cops**

**MUMBAI:** Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam on Monday lashed out at the BMC and Mumbai police for placing a senior Bihar police officer who had come to probe the Sushant Singh Rajput death case in quarantine and asked whether the two agencies had gone "mad". Patna City SP Vinay Tiwari was quarantined by the BMC till August 15 at the State Reserve Police Force camp in Goreganj after he arrived in the metropolis on Sunday. "Looks like the BMC and Mumbai Police have gone mad. They have quarantined till August 15 IPS officer Tiwari who arrived here to probe the Sushant Singh suicide case. How will the probe go on? The chief minister must intervene immediately," Nirupam, a former city Congress chief, said in a tweet in Hindi.

**Covid: MP CM's 9th day test positive, hosp stay continues**

**BHOPAL:** Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan will undergo further hospitalisation after a COVID-19 test conducted on the 9th day returned positive, health officials and a state minister said on Monday. Chouhan has been in Chirayu Medical College and Hospital in Bhopal since July 25 undergoing treatment for COVID-19. A health bulletin from Chirayu Hospital said, "CM's RT-PCR test for SARS-Cov-2 on 9th day was positive. His medical parameters are normal." MP Home Minister Narottam Mishra confirmed the development to reporters and said the CM will stay in hospital for now, adding that the state cabinet meeting scheduled for Tuesday would be a virtual one.

FOR AUG 5 CEREMONY

**Special dress with 9 gems with golden thread for Ram Lalla**

PNS ■ AYODHYA

For the past three and a half decades, brothers Shankarlal and Bhagwatlal 'Pahaadhi' have been stitching clothes for Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. Their dedication will be manifest in the splendid dress they have meticulously crafted for the deity to wear on August 5, during the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram temple.

Operating from their shop named after their late father Babulal and located in the city's Badhi Kutiya area, the brothers stitch clothes for only deities and seers.

"My father late Babulal started stitching the clothes of Ram Lalla in 1985. He used to carry our sewing machine to the Ramjanmabhoomi and stitch the clothes with me and my elder brother in tow," Shankarlal, 54, told PTI on



Monday. "The three of us used to make the clothes of Lord Ram. The dresses were made and stitched virtually in front of the deity. Since then, our work is continuing," he said. Shankarlal said that for Wednesday, the day of bhoomi puja to mark the beginning of the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, two sets of dresses have been made -- one is green, while the other is orange. "The clothes are made using soft material such as 'makhamal' (velvet). After all, they are for Ram Lalla who is a child. The green dress has been made keeping in mind the day-specific colour, while orange is considered auspicious," he said.

On Wednesday, the green dress will be worn first and the orange one later, Shankarlal said.

The special dress for the ceremony has nine gems stitched in golden thread. "There is grandeur in the clothes of the Lord as well," he said.

On Sunday, the dresses were handed over by the tailors, said Acharya Satyendra Das, the chief priest of the Ram temple.

"A day-specific colour scheme is followed for the dresses worn by Lord Ram. On Monday the dress is white, on Tuesday it is red, while on Wednesday it is the turn of the green dress for the Lord," Shankarlal said.

On Thursdays the idol is dressed in yellow, Fridays are for cream-coloured dresses, on Saturdays it is the turn of blue clothes while on Sundays pink clothes adorn the deity.

**Digvijaya requests PM to defer temple 'bhoomi puja'**

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to defer the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday, saying the occasion is inauspicious.

The 'bhoomi puja' of the Ram temple is scheduled to be held on Wednesday at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh and is expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a series of tweets on Monday, Singh said, "I again request Modiji postpone the ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram temple on August 5. After a struggle of hundreds of years, the occasion for the construction of the temple has come. Don't allow your arrogance create obstruction in the way." Jagat Guru Swami Swaroopanandji Maharaj



Digvijaya Singh

(Shankaracharya of Dwarka Peeth) had said that August 5 was an inauspicious muhurat for the ground-breaking ceremony of Ram temple. For the convenience of Modiji this inauspicious muhurat was fixed," the Rajya Sabha member claimed in a tweet in Hindi.

"This means that Modiji is above the Hindu beliefs of thousands of years. Is this Hindutava?" the former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh said in another tweet.

He also claimed that some leaders tested positive for coronavirus as they ignored the tenets of the Sanatan Dharma.

Result of overlooking Sanatan Dharma's tenets- 1 All the priests of Ram temple tested coronavirus positive 2 Uttar Pradesh Minister Kamla Rani Varun died of coronavirus 3 UP BJP chief tested positive, admitted to hospital 4 Union Home Minister Amit Shah tested coronavirus positive 5 MP chief minister and state BJP president tested positive 6 Karnataka BJP chief minister tested positive, admitted in hospital, Singh tweeted.

"Modiji, how many more people you want to send to hospital by laying the foundation stone of the Ram temple. Yogiji (Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister) advice Modi. In your presence, the tenets of Sanatan Dharma are being broken? What is compelling you to allow all this to happen?" he sought to know in another tweet.

**Thackeray unlikely to attend Ram temple 'bhoomi puja'**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray is unlikely to visit Ayodhya for the bhoomi puja for Ram temple construction there on August 5 owing to the serious COVID-19 situation in the Uttar Pradesh town, senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut indicated on Monday.

"It is important that the PM is going. The chief minister (Thackeray) can go there anytime, Raut told reporters here while extending good wishes for the ceremony.

The 'bhoomi puja' of the Ram temple is scheduled to be held on Wednesday at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh and is expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Raut reiterated the Shiv Senas contribution in the Ram temple construction campaign, and said the party has given Rs



**Raut reiterated the Shiv Senas contribution in the Ram temple construction campaign, and said the party has given Rs one crore for the purpose of building the temple.**

one crore for the purpose of building the temple.

"The outbreak of COVID-19 in Ayodhya and surrounding areas is a matter of concern...Uttar Pradesh's minister Kamal Rani (Varun) lost life (due to the disease), while three other ministers are infected," Raut said.

"I think as less people as possible should go there and the ceremony there be held. It is

important that the PM is going.

The chief minister (Thackeray) can go there anytime, the Rajya Sabha member said.

Asked if Thackeray has not been invited for the ceremony, Raut said, "Nobody is waiting for the invitation."

He said the chief priest of the temple and security guards there have been quarantined.

**Yogi visits Ayodhya to see preparations**

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday visited Ayodhya to review preparations for Ram temple 'Bhoomi Puja' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5.

The Chief Minister reached Ayodhya in the afternoon and visited the Ram Janmabhoomi site where the Bhoomi Puja is to be held.

He also visited Hanuman Garhi temple and was seen giving various directions to the senior officers.

Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanish Kumar Awasthi, Ayodhya District Magistrate Anju Kumar Jha and DIG Deepak Kumar also accompanied the CM during his visit in which he also sought details of seating and other arrangements for the event, a senior official said here.

**'It's Lord Ram's will that I attend bhoomi puja'**

PNS ■ AYODHYA (UP)

Iqbal Ansari, who was a litigant in the Ayodhya land dispute case, has decided to gift a 'Ram namo' stole and a copy of the Ramcharitmanas to Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he attends the bhoomi puja ceremony for the Ram temple here on Wednesday.

"Yes, I have received the invitation from Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust for the bhoomi puja ceremony. I will certainly attend it. The dispute is over now after the court's verdict," Ansari, 69, told PTI.

"Our Prime Minister is coming. I will meet him and give him a 'Ramnamo' stole (with Ram's name written on it) and Ramcharitmanas as a present," Ansari said.

His father Hashim Ansari, the oldest litigant in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi land dispute case, died at the age of 95 in 2016 after which the son started pursuing the case in the court.



Iqbal Ansari

Talking about Wednesday's ground-breaking ceremony to mark the beginning of the construction of a grand Ram temple here, Ansari said, "I belong to Ayodhya. All this (temple's construction) will change the fate of Ayodhya. We all want our child to get better opportunities".

He further said, "I respect sadhus and saints. I am happy to have received the invitation for the ceremony. I think it is Lord Ram's will that I attend it".

**Modi 'fulfilled' dream of Hindus: Ayodhya MP**

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As the man on ground zero, BJP MP Lallu Singh from Ayodhya has been a part of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement long before it caught popular imagination in 1990s and believes that Ram temple's construction will change the national politics in the same big way the agitation for it once did. Singh (65) names many, from VHP's late patriarch Ashok Singhal to veteran BJP leader L K Advani and several saints, when asked of the movement's success while asserting that it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who finally 'fulfilled' the dream that the Hindu samaj nursed for long. Speaking to PTI, the second-term Lok Sabha member said he was confident that the temple would be finally built at the disputed site in Ayodhya, the ground zero of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, since Modi came to power for the first time in 2014.

**Covid tests in India cross 2-cr mark**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The total number of tests for detection of COVID-19 has crossed the two-crore mark in India, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) data.

A cumulative total of 2,02,02,858 samples have been tested up to August 2 with 3,81,027 samples being tested on Sunday, the ICMR said.

The total number of tests for detection of COVID-19 had crossed the one-crore mark in India on July 6.

There are now 1,348 testing labs in the country comprising 914 in the public sector and



434 private labs.

Having started with one single laboratory at the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune and then expanding to

100 laboratories around the beginning of the lockdown, the ICMR on June 23 validated the 1000th testing lab.

India's COVID-19 tally

crossed the 18-lakh mark on Monday, just a day after it went past 17 lakh, with 52,972 cases reported in a day while the number of recoveries surged to over 11.86 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The total coronavirus cases surged to 18,03,695, while the death toll due to COVID-19 climbed to 38,135 with 771 people succumbing to the disease in a day, the data updated at 8 am on Monday showed.

Various steps taken by the central government have paved the way for enhanced testing for COVID-19, the health ministry had said earlier.

**6 staff at Kar CM office hit by virus**

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Six employees at the Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa's office have tested positive for COVID-19, official sources said on Monday.

After the Chief Minister tested positive, his office and residence were sanitised. Besides, contact tracing was done during which the six of his staff members were confirmed to have contracted the virus, the sources said.

However, Governor Vajubhai Vala and Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai, whom the Chief Minister had



B S Yediyurappa's

met on July 31, have tested negative.

Officials said random tests were conducted at the Chief Minister's premises and the six were found infected. They

included a gunman, a driver, and house-keeping staff.

They have been sent to the COVID-19 care centre set up at the Bangalore International Exhibition Centre (BEIC) as they were asymptomatic, sources said.

Yediyurappa's personal residence Dhavalagiri has been sanitised, the officials said, adding that entry would be restricted to the Chief Minister's home and office.

He was admitted to Manipal hospital here on Sunday night after testing positive.

The hospital has said the Chief Minister was doing well and clinically stable.

**No infighting in Bengal BJP, TMC spreading canards**

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Amid reports of infighting in the BJP unit of West Bengal, the party's state president, Dilip Ghosh, on Monday asserted that all was well in the organisation, and charged the TMC with spreading canards against the saffron camp.

The senior BJP leader also said that a section of media was trying to mislead the people of the state with "false" information about his party.

"The TMC and a section of the news media are trying to

**Media reports also suggested that a few leaders in the West Bengal unit of the BJP are unhappy with the state leadership**

spread canards against the state unit (of the BJP) to create confusion among the cadres and malign the image of the party. "I want to make it very clear that reports of dispute in



Dilip Ghosh

the party are untrue. We are united and will fight together to defeat the TMC in next elections," Ghosh said during a press meet here.

Speculation is rife that some BJP leaders may switch over to

the TMC, ahead of the 2021 assembly polls. Last week, former MLA Biplab Mitra quit the saffron camp to return to the state's ruling party.

Media reports also suggested that a few leaders in the West Bengal unit of the BJP are unhappy with the state leadership. The reports claimed that differences had cropped up between Ghosh and a section of state leaders, who had moved to the BJP from the TMC over the last few years, during an organisational meeting in New Delhi.

**Chouhan urges people to light lamps at home for Ayodhya event**

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has appealed to people to light lamps at their homes on Tuesday and Wednesday and recite 'Sunderkand' and 'Hanuman Chalisa' to mark the 'bhoomi puja' for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Chouhan made the appeal on Monday in a video from a city-based hospital where he has



been undergoing treatment for COVID-19 since the last 10 days. The ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram temple is scheduled to be held on Wednesday at Ayodhya in Uttar

Pradesh and is expected to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "I appeal that we all light lamps and light up our houses with decorative electric bulbs on the night of August 4 and August 5 to express our happiness for the construction of the temple (at Ayodhya). Celebrate by staying at home, recite 'Sunderkand' (part of the epic Ramayana) and 'Hanuman Chalisa', Chouhan said in the video.



**On Sanskrit Day, PM thanks those involved in promoting**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday thanked everyone involved in promoting, teaching and using Sanskrit language.

Sanskrit Day is observed every year on the full moon day of the Hindu calendar month of Shrawan.

In a tweet in Sanskrit, the prime minister described Sanskrit as a beautiful language which has made India a repository of knowledge for many years.

He urged everyone to work towards making Sanskrit more popular.

**Will soon get back to work after recovery: CM**

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, who is currently undergoing treatment for COVID-19 at a hospital here, on Monday said there was no need for anyone to worry and he will soon get back to work after recovery.

In a video released by his office, the Chief Minister said the health of the people of the state was his priority and requested them to follow

measures like maintaining distance and wearing masks to control the spread of virus. "Last night around 8:30-9:00, as soon as I got to know that I was corona positive, I came to the hospital and I'm undergoing treatment.

Doctors after tests last night and this morning have said that there are no issues and I will recover and go out soon," Yediyurappa said in the video message.

**Doctors to decide on admission, discharge of patients**

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Aiming to free up private hospital beds for COVID-19 patients requiring emergency treatment, the West Bengal Clinical Establishment Regulatory Commission in an advisory said that only the doctor will decide on admission or discharge.

The decision of the examining doctor taken without any extraneous consideration or recommendation will be deemed final, it said.

If the number of waiting patients is more than the number of vacant beds, the doctor



on duty would examine each patient and allot beds to the

most deserving ones ignoring any extraneous considerations

or recommendations. The decision of the doctor on duty will be final and binding upon all, said an advisory from the Commission.

The examining doctor will also take the final call on shifting a patient from the general bed to the ICU or ITU, the advisory stated.

We have noticed that patients refuse to go home without a confirmatory coronavirus negative report though the discharge guidelines state that clinically fit patient can now be sent home even without testing negative. Following this we have decided on this

new advisory so that patients who need to be hospitalised do not have to wait as they do get any vacancies, one member of the Commission said.

If the patient wants he/she can shift to a safe house after being discharged from the hospital but will not be allowed to occupy a bed pending a negative COVID-19 report, he said.

In West Bengal there are 55 private hospitals so far treating COVID-9 patients.

With 37.88 per cent occupancy there are at the moment 11,552 beds for patients of the pandemic in West Bengal.

## A long haul

As talks for pullback continue, they are just a diversion as it isn't easy for China to give up Pangong Tso



As the Chinese are reluctant to significantly pull back from Pangong Tso, fortifying their positions around it, and making concessional retreats at other sites just to keep talks going, India should be prepared for the long haul. And though a Siachenisation at the heights would mean a waste of man and resources on both sides, China seems to be preparing for a stakeout this winter at least. For all the diplomacy around eastern Ladakh, it is just a diversionary tactic as the Chinese will not forfeit what they have gained in Pangong Lake and Depsang areas. That's because this geographical wedge between

Gilgit-Baltistan in the west (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir), where China is heavily invested in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and Aksai Chin in the east, is an irritant to its regional supremacy, strategically and economically. And it wants an unhindered run of the highway from Xinjiang to Tibet, 179 km of which is under Indian shadow. So far, its contiguous hold on Central Asia, Pakistan and beyond was a low-cost, undemanding exercise, playing as it did on smartly interpreting its version of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the ground. As it is unmarked and fluidic, it has justified its salami slicing to perceptual differences and pre-empted counter-attacks by heaving down with military presence and developing border infrastructure, the scale of which has held India back from a robust counter-challenge for years. But now that we have ramped up our border infrastructure, China is extremely uncomfortable about the proximity of the Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) road to sensitive areas and strategic highways to the north of the Karakoram Pass. And as Galwan has shown, our troops are more than capable of bloodying noses in high altitude warfare. So China simply won't give up the spurs it has now because it doesn't want to compromise its edge in the Karakoram. Already, it has browbeaten India at the talks table by calling for a buffer zone, which means our forces cannot patrol up to the points they used to because of the Chinese insistence on a no man's land. This would allow it to build resources on its side unmonitored and reverse any disengagement move made so far at short notice. This clause also makes Indian vigilance difficult besides burdening soldiers with knife-edge preparedness at all times. China is hoping that it will be able to renegotiate the status quo at Pangong Tso by wearing out our troops and patience, particularly during a long, hard winter. If anything, the "push and extract" policy might continue even as nominal concessions are made to show that it is committed to the dialogue process. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) cannot be written off simply because it has had a history of winter offensives, be it the occupation of Tibet or the incursion of 1962.

For China, the loss of troops at Galwan is a loss of face. And the fact that it has maintained somewhat of a radio silence on casualties means that it will strike back. Right now, tainted by the Wuhan virus, China may have stretched itself too thin in using the pandemic to reshape its imperial dream of colonising the world. But it won't acknowledge India's neo-assertiveness by withdrawing. Instead, it will consolidate, given that it will be the only economy to register growth, even if it is as low as one per cent, and will bet big on fighting for Asian pride against a US-dominated West. Despite the US opposition, it has already got aggressive in the South China Sea, claiming islands, setting up bases and enveloping South and Southeast Asians with its transactional economic largesse and debt-trapping. Many have given in to the bullying but India hasn't. Besides, with the US using us as its proxy, we will increasingly become a pawn in the game of two big powers for world domination. If China loses its stakes in India, the second biggest Asian power, how would it be able to convince other Asian nations to go with its hegemonic vision? So there will be need-based engagement all right but coercion will be constant. India may not match up to its economic and military might as yet and while it develops self-sufficiencies of its own, it has to take on a partnering role with both Western and regional countries. It can challenge China in the Indian Ocean region, get more active in the Quad initiative with US and Japan and use its international goodwill as a nation that respects "rule-based order" to build a case against China's aggressive tactics. And it must now confront the boundary question, insist on marking the LAC. For years of denial and yielding to the Chinese template of working around the boundary dispute have only left us with trade dependencies and a deficit. Today, it is eastern Ladakh but if the territorial push in Bhutan is any indication, China may very well expand its claim lines in Arunachal Pradesh now, just to stretch us beyond our extremities. We should be wary of the fact that the PLA, which has been pitching tents, building roads and marking territories since 2013 and which directly takes orders from Chinese President Xi Jinping himself, may lie low but not go silent.

## All wasn't lost

Chennai techie finds Pragyan, the rover on-board Chandrayaan-2, intact while assessing NASA images



In some good news for India, which is grappling with the twin woes of an ailing economy and the deepening coronavirus crisis, a Chennai-based techie has claimed that the rover on-board Chandrayaan-2, the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO's) moon mission, is intact on the lunar surface and had even moved a few metres. India's second mission to the moon had ended in disaster as a last-minute software glitch led to the Vikram lander crash-landing on the lunar surface, just 500 metres short of touchdown. Yes, we were ambitious to land on the dark side of the moon, which bigger space-faring nations have not attempted, but the rover's presence is reassurance that while we need to refine our efforts, they have all not gone to waste. And ISRO needs to follow through the Chandrayaan series in mission mode.

Since the failure of the Chandrayaan-2 last year, things have not gone too well for ISRO, with its GISAT-1 launch being mysteriously called off on March 4, a day before take-off citing an ambiguous "technical reason." Plus, the space agency, which had a very busy schedule for this year — with around two dozen launches, including Aditya, India's first solar probe — is having trouble keeping its commitments. Due to the pandemic playing spoilsport, ISRO, too, had to go into a lockdown mode. India's ambitious human space flight programme Gaganyaan, is in trouble because the astronaut training of the four test pilots of the Indian Air Force has been stopped. Besides over 100 manufacturing units in the private sector, that are contracted to manufacture components for ISRO's missions, are shut and the work of producing rockets, satellites and scientific instrumentation is on hold right now. But what is most encouraging is that the rover was found by a Chennai techie, Shanmuga Subramanian, from NASA's images. He had earlier helped NASA find the debris of the Vikram lander, earning him plaudits from the space agency and the gratitude of an embarrassed ISRO. His persistence should be a reason for inducting him and others like him in our space-faring projects. Space nerds should be identified from school and encouraged. It was difficult to detect the rover because it was on the South Pole of the Moon, which is not always well-lit and was missed by the NASA flyby on November 11 possibly for this reason. Not just this, it seems that the rover uploaded commands to the lander, which could not relay them back. Is some data stored there? But with the Vikram lander going silent, we will never know. Whether this translates into any gains for ISRO, only time will tell. But for now, there is something to cheer about in the Indian space community.

# Checkmating China

If Trump can be persuaded to see the Baloch quest and Iran as potential allies that could take the Makran coast away from China, it would put a powerful brake on the latter's ambitions



SANDHYA JAIN

Indian analysts seem indifferent to the threat of India losing the railway line from Iran's Chabahar port to Afghanistan and Central Asia and suggest that New Delhi should focus on ties with Arab countries that provide energy security and jobs to millions of Indians. The view that India must choose between the Sunni Arab world and Shia Iran is myopic and contrary to established Indian diplomacy. Certainly, lakhs of Indian Muslims annually visit Saudi Arabia for hajj/umra but the lockdown imposed in March revealed that thousands of citizens visit Karbala and Najaf that are sacred to the Shias. Many work in Iran. Indeed, Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav (ret'd) is believed to have been abducted from Chabahar and pushed across the border into Pakistan.

The stalemate in India-Iran ties is due to US sanctions that cover countries engaging with Tehran commercially. India secured an exemption for the Chabahar port, which may not cover the railway, and stopped buying the light Iranian crude suited to its refineries after the six-month grace period ended. The freeze on its oil revenues seriously hurt Iran's economy, forcing it to seek ways to end its economic and diplomatic trauma.

Tehran moved cautiously, leaking "news" about a \$400 billion deal with China, which seemed credible given Beijing's huge investments across the globe. An unverified 18-page document gave the details of a 25-year Iran-China agreement that Chinese President Xi Jinping had proposed during a visit to Iran in January 2016. It mentioned a \$280 billion investment in Iran's oil and gas industry and \$120 billion across various sectors. Beijing would receive crude oil and gas at discounted prices for 25 years.

New Delhi was alarmed at the possibility of China funding the railway and depriving India of its coveted alternate route to Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan. Envoy Gaddam Dharmendra rushed to meet Iranian Speaker Bagher Ghalibaf and Vice Minister of Roads and President of the Railways, Mohsen Pourseyed Aghaei, to salvage the Chabahar-Zahedan (and possibly Zarang) line. Also at stake is a free trade zone to serve the landlocked Central Asian states. Further, the Farzad-B gas field was discovered by ONGC Videsh in 2012 but its development has been



stuck in wrangling over Iran's desire for two pipelines as opposed to India's insistence on a single pipeline. This is purely a commercial dispute and Tehran needs to be reasonable.

But for Chabahar and related projects, India will have to pioneer some deft diplomacy to break the deadlock between Washington and Tehran or sacrifice its regional ambitions forever. It is no secret that Islamabad is now firmly in Beijing's sphere of influence; its deafening silence on the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang and refusal to bring its citizens back from Wuhan after the pandemic in order to save China's face leave no scope for doubt on this score. India did not blame China but rushed to bring its students back from Wuhan; now, the Chinese aggression in Ladakh has dramatically altered the situation.

An independent Balochistan offers a way out. At the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, American scholar Selig Harrison had the prescience to realise that the turmoil in Kabul would bring Pakistan's Baloch problem to the forefront (*In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations*, 1980). Till his death in 2016, Harrison urged

Washington to support Baloch independence in pursuit of its own interests in the region but successive administrations from Nixon-Kissinger remained invested in Islamabad.

Now, the China-Pakistan axis has eroded Washington's relationship with its non-NATO ally. Baloch resistance to Islamabad's unceasing atrocities and resentment against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that encroaches upon their land and resources give America an opening. For, Balochistan is the geostrategic region without which Pakistan is just a landlocked landmass, of no use even to the Army that controls it.

As Italian scholar Valeria F Piacentini observed in 1945, Balochistan is at the crossroads of two "axes", east-west and north-south, of three macro-regions: Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean basin. It forms the hinge between the Indian sub-continent, Central Asia and the Euro-Asiatic steppes and the Iranian plateau; as also the link between regions that gravitate towards the Indian Ocean and its western "sea routes"; the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea.

This is why London want-

ed Balochistan to be part of Pakistan and nudged MA Jinnah after the Khan of Kalat proved obdurate. Balochistan was annexed in 1948. The CIA-MI6 operated from Balochistan to overthrow the then Iranian Prime Minister M Mossadegh after he nationalised the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Washington used Balochistan for its proxy war against Soviet forces in Afghanistan and opened war against the Taliban.

Gwadar Port, China's big prize and *raison d'être* for the CPEC, belongs to Balochistan. Chabahar is part of the same Makran coastline. If US President Donald Trump can be persuaded to see the Baloch quest and Iran as potential allies, that could take the entire Makran coast away from China (depriving it also of the military base it is building in Jiwnani peninsula off Gwadar). It would put a powerful brake on China's relentless acquisition of ports and bases across the Indian Ocean littoral.

Iran is a catch for Beijing because like Pakistan, it can join the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by land and sea, giving it access to staggering geostrategic space. Tehran could link Beijing with Ankara, which offers access to the

Mediterranean Sea and the nations of North Africa, Central Europe and Europe that comprise its littoral. The Mediterranean Sea opens into the Atlantic Ocean via the Strait of Gibraltar; this could bring Beijing closer to Washington than ever envisaged by the State Department or Pentagon. Beijing in Chabahar would also have access to the Arabian Sea, Strait of Hormuz and Sea of Oman, besides a shortcut to its military base in Djibouti. A US-friendly Balochistan and Iran would end this dream run.

Interestingly, in June 2020, Moscow arrested Valery Mitko, president, Arctic Academy of Sciences, for allegedly giving China information about submarine detection, a reflection of Moscow's anger at Chinese ambitions in the Arctic region. Washington has also arrested citizens in prestigious institutions working covertly for China. It should investigate whether the tales of Russian interference in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections originated from "friends" in institutions that received lavish Chinese funding. Perhaps Russian President Vladimir Putin has signalled as much.

(The author is a senior journalist. Views are personal)

## SOUNDBITE

Swami Swarupnanand had warned that August 5 was inauspicious for the stone-laying of Ram temple. This date has been fixed in accordance with Modi's convenience.



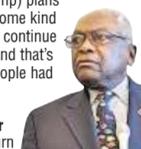
Congress leader —Digvijaya Singh

It's (*Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl*) my film, too. Everyone has a right to their opinion, but people are spitting fire against one another. The flak is unfair.



Actor —Angad Bedi

I believe that he (Trump) plans to install himself in some kind of emergency way to continue to hold onto office. And that's why the American people had better wake up.



Top Democrat leader —Whip James Ciyburn

While people boycott Chinese products, cellphone makers in China will continue as title sponsors of the IPL. No wonder China is thumbing its nose at us.



NC leader —Omar Abdullah

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Liquor deaths

Sir — It is unfortunate that more than 85 people died and many others were taken ill due to the consumption of spurious liquor in Punjab. The sale of illicit liquor is a thriving business not only in Punjab but in many parts of the country. In fact, India remains one among the countries with the highest number of alcohol-related deaths. And whenever such a tragedy unfolds, Governments react by imposing a ban on the sale of liquor. They fail to either bring tighter regulations or crack down on dens, which operate without a licence as they fulfil a demand while making huge profits.

People take to illicit liquor as they cannot afford to buy licensed brands. Spurious liquor does not attract taxes or duties and, thus, comes cheap. The Punjab Government must set a precedent by constituting a Special Investigation Team which must track down all bootleggers in the State. The Union Government, too, must come up with a multi-pronged plan to curb the sale and consumption of toxic alcohol.

Ramesh G Jethwani  
Bengaluru

### Plain truths about Rafale

Before the arrival of the Rafale jets, their acquisition process went through many twists and turns. It was in 2000, during the initial years of NDA-I, when the Indian Air Force (IAF) initiated a proposal for the acquisition of 126 Mirage 2000-IIs from Dassault Aviation (DA) for induction from 2004-05 onwards. According to the CAG, the Defence Procurement Board (DPB) discarded the proposal after protracted deliberations till 2004. When the UPA Government came to power, it issued a Request for Proposal for the acquisition of 126 advanced versions of MMRCA in 2007. As per the delivery terms, 18 aircraft were to be supplied in flyaway condition and the balance 108 were to be manufactured by HAL. The RFP was withdrawn based on a report by the Ministry of Defence, which reportedly carried out a statement saying that "the price bid of DA was non-compliant as it was incomplete and not in the prescribed format" yet again. And the NDA-II Government signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) in 2016 for 36 fighter jets at a price aligned to the earlier "incomplete" offer. Delivery of the first batch of 18 Rafale aircraft was to be completed within 53 months and the balance 18 within 67 months from the date of signing of the IGA. The agreement put a lid on the original proposal to manufacture 108 Rafale warplanes by HAL.

Exactly two decades into the process, the ruling Government has landed on the indigenous builder now



to meet the initially projected requirement. The Air Chief Marshal has now confirmed that an order for another 83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), Tejas MK IA, from HAL was being fast-tracked. In a nutshell, IAF initiated a proposal for 126 Mirage 2000-II from DA in 2000 and the Ministry is still preparing to place an order for 83 Tejas MK IA with HAL in 2020. During the intervening 20 years, India has acquired just five Rafale fighter jets out of the 36 ordered and that, too, at a phenomenal cost. Yet, the irony is that confirmed jingoists hit the streets in jubilation on the arrival of the foreign-made Rafales but found no reason to applaud the Tejas, the indigenously designed and built Light Combat Aircraft.

Haridasan Rajan  
Kozhikode

### Education revamp

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "New curriculum" (July 31).

The new National Education Policy (NEP) promises a transformational shift, infusing an element of joy and purpose in learning. The new guidelines, if

implemented, will offer students a flexible academic journey where they can pick and choose instead of remaining confined to set patterns. The

loftier goals are to mainstream about two crore out-of-school children. Before and after 1947, matriculation was the requirement for entrance to higher education in colleges. Then, 10+2 streams brought more changes but NEP, 2020, promises the much-needed reforms. Though challenges remain, the new NEP can be a game-changer as it promises to bestow flexibility, improve the skills of the students and grant more autonomy to educational institutions.

Abhijit Roy  
Jamshedpur

### Exercise in futility

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "New curriculum" (July 31). NEP, 2020, is an exercise in futility. It wasn't debated in Parliament. Increasing the tenure of undergraduate courses makes no sense as postgraduate programmes have been watered down. The only redeemable feature is that it does not disturb the three-language formula system.

Ratnapriya  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

**FIRST COLUMN**

## Of slavery and history

Judging people for the past is a distraction from the business at hand, which is to clear up the ghastly heritage of racism that slavery has left



GWYNNE DYER

Assessing the people of America's past by today's standards would compel us to cast the majority of our heroes as villains. That seemed to be the line taken by Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas in his opinion piece for *The New York Times*. It caused great outrage, the Opinion Editor had to resign and Cotton was roundly abused for "defending slavery." He probably deserved that. What he actually said was that the "Founding Fathers" of the US saw slavery as the "necessary evil upon which the Union was built." That would sound all right in a classroom, if you then explained that otherwise the slave-owning southern states would not have agreed to a federation of all 13 colonies.

It sounded less well coming out of the mouth of a senator who wants to ban federal funding for a project to improve the teaching of the history of slavery in American schools. Senator Cotton is one of President Donald Trump's loyal soldiers, trying to whip up a white racial panic and consolidate the boss's "base." But that's not the point. The point is that I changed one word in that quote, and that it wasn't Cotton who said it. It was Nigerian journalist and novelist Acha Oluoma, and what she actually said, in an opinion piece for the *BBC*, was this: "Assessing the people of Africa's past by today's standards would compel us to cast the majority of our heroes as villains."

She was talking specifically about her great-grandfather, Nwaubani Ogogo Oriaku, who was a widely respected trader in tobacco, palm oil, and slaves in south-eastern Nigeria in the early 20th century. The Atlantic slave trade had been banned by the European empires a century before but slavery was still a flourishing domestic business in Nigeria and many other African countries. Her great-grandfather became famous by defying the British colonial authorities, who were trying to stamp out slavery within Nigeria. They had confiscated some of his slaves and he marched right up and demanded them back, waving a trading licence that dated back to the previous century.

They were taken aback, apologised and returned his slaves. Indeed, they were so impressed by his boldness and self-confidence that they subsequently appointed him "paramount chief" of his region. So he became a local hero in his own day and is still a hero to Acha Oluoma's family. Slavery was normal in most pre-modern societies, including almost all the kingdoms and ethnic groups of sub-Saharan Africa. Africans had sold slaves north to various Islamic empires in the Middle East for centuries before Europeans showed up on the coast in ships. They were just another set of customers buying in the same market.

Most enslaved Africans didn't travel more than a few hundred kilometres from home, of course. It is estimated that in the 18th century, one-third of the people in what is now Senegal were slaves who belonged to other Senegalese. But the ones who were sold to foreigners probably suffered even more.

Historians believe that around one-fifth of the ten million Africans transported to the Americas over more than three centuries died on board ships. The fatalities among the estimated 17 million African slaves sold to Arab traders and forced to walk across the Sahara or carried around the Indian Ocean in ships during ten centuries were probably just as high. What awaited the survivors when they arrived was pretty appalling too.

But Acha Oluoma is right. The past is a different country and it's pointless to judge people by standards they would not even comprehend. Judging people for past history is a distraction from the business at hand, which is to clear up the ghastly heritage of racism that slavery has left in America.

It is noteworthy that there is no comparable heritage of guilt and racism in the African countries that sold the slaves. Everybody, slaves and masters, was from the same group, and everybody was involved one way or another. We used to do it, now we don't, end of story. Why is it so different in the European countries, and above all in the US? My guess is that it's because slavery, uniquely in the world, had completely died out in Europe by a thousand years ago. When 16th-century Europeans reached West Africa, it was quite new to them.

They took to slave-owning readily enough but they had no traditional framework in which to think about it. Nwaubani Ogogo Oriaku didn't need to justify owning slaves by telling himself they were inferior. He'd bought them fair and square. What's the problem? Whereas American plantation owners had to come up with bizarre racial fantasies to explain to themselves why it was right to own other people — and their great-great-grandchildren are still struggling with those fantasies today.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work'.)

**NONE OF THE ILLICIT LIQUOR (DEATH) CASES FROM THE LAST FEW MONTHS HAVE BEEN SOLVED BY THE PUNJAB POLICE. —DELHI CHIEF MINISTER ARVIND KEJRIWAL**

**POINTCOUNTERPOINT**



**WHY DON'T YOU ASK YOUR PUNJAB UNIT FOR DATA AND FIGURES FIRST AND THEN COMMENT ON OUR WORKING. —PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER AMARINDER SINGH**

# In the name of God

The BJP has already made the construction of the Ram temple a political issue that will hold good for 2024. Ayodhya city has been painted in saffron hues



BISWAJEE BANERJEE

The innocuous-sounding statement of the General Secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, Champat Rai, that the construction of the Ram temple, whose foundation will be laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 5, will be completed within three-and-a-half-years, has political overtones which no one can miss.

"We will try to complete the construction by three years but we have six months extra in case we fail to meet the deadline because of any eventuality. But, mark my words, the temple will be ready with its pristine grandeur by the end of 2023 or early 2024," Rai had said when announcing that Modi would be the chief guest of the ground-breaking ceremony for the Ram temple's construction.

For those who need it to be spelled out, the timing of the completion of the temple is crucial — end of 2023 or early 2024. The Lok Sabha elections are expected by March 2024. This means that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would again use the Ram temple to play the Hindutva card and propel the party towards victory. This time the BJP will go to the masses saying "jo kaha, woh kiya (we did what we said we would do)." The common refrain of BJP leaders and campaigners will be, "We promised the people that the Ram temple would be built in Ayodhya and we fulfilled that promise." I would not be surprised if the party takes a miniaturised model of the Ram temple across villages or puts up such models before the Model Code of Conduct comes into play in every gram Sabha. The process has already begun as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has asked for funds from the people for temple construction. The VHP has set a target of reaching over 10 crore families in five lakh villages across India with an appeal to donate at least ₹100 voluntarily for the temple's construction. It is set to start from Uttar Pradesh (UP) and will then spread out across the country.

The VHP's plan does not end here. The Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, the temple trust which is entrusted with the task of constructing a temple at the Ram Janmabhoomi Complex, in collaboration with the VHP, plans to kick-start the 'Akhand Bharat Week' after the *bhoomi puja* (ground-breaking ceremony). The week will be celebrated from August 16 to August 23 when the Parishad volunteers will go to the villages and tell the masses about the Ram Mandir construction and how this temple will ensure the "akhandata" (integrity) of the country.

The BJP has always used the temple issue to meet its political aims. It has always found a mention in its election manifesto, whose nomenclature has changed with the passage of time. The BJP election manifesto is now called 'Sankalp Patra'. After the famous Rath Yatra carried out by Lal Krishna Advani along with Pramod Mahajan in 1989 from Somnath to Ayodhya, with Narendra Modi accompanying the yatra from Somnath till the border of Gujarat, the BJP saw the potential of the issue to propel the party to great political power.

When the yatra was stopped in Samastipur in Bihar by the then Lalu Prasad Government and Advani was arrested, the whole of India was drenched in the spirit of Hindutva. The rath was stopped on October 23, 1990. This set off a string

FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT TO BE SPELLED OUT, THE TIMING OF THE COMPLETION OF THE TEMPLE IS CRUCIAL — END OF 2023 OR EARLY 2024. THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS ARE EXPECTED BY MARCH 2024. THIS MEANS THAT THE BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY WOULD AGAIN USE THE RAM TEMPLE TO PLAY THE HINDUTVA CARD AND PROPEL THE PARTY TOWARDS VICTORY



of events that shaped the country's politics in years to come. Advani's arrest triggered massive protests across the country, sparking communal riots across several towns, especially in north India. Hundreds of *Kar Sevaks* (voluntary workers) marched towards Ayodhya to liberate the Ram Janmabhoomi. Exactly a week after Advani's Rath Yatra was stopped — on October 30 — as many as 28 *Kar Sevaks* were killed in police firing while trying to storm the Babri Masjid. Even before the *Kar Sevaks* had entered Ayodhya, then Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav had claimed that "parinda bhi par nahi maar sakta (not even a bird can enter there)." Mulayam Singh still justifies the police action.

The events that unfolded then only benefited the BJP as its political clout grew exponentially and it grabbed the opportunity with both hands. In the 1991 election, for the first time the party gave the slogan of "Mandir wahin banayenge (we will build the temple there only)" but it was only in 1996, that for the first time, the BJP mentioned the Ram Mandir in its manifesto.

The party reiterated its commitment to facilitate the construction of a magnificent Ram temple at the *Janmasthan* (birthplace) in Ayodhya after coming to power as "this is the dream of millions of people in our land. The concept of Ram lies at the core of their consciousness."

The words remained the same in manifesto after manifesto and in 2019 it said: "We reiterate our stand on the Ram Mandir. We will explore all possibilities within the framework of the Constitution and make all necessary efforts to facilitate the expeditious

construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya."

That commitment was fulfilled in November 2019 when the Supreme Court paved the way for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and allowed the construction of a mosque, which incidentally will come up 30 kilometres away from the complex where the original mosque stood.

With the completion of one aim, the BJP has already got ammunition for the elections — which is powerful and emotive. And the subsidiary props can come from more communal pitches like cow vigilantism and the anti-citizenship law protests. Emotion is a very important quotient for winning or losing elections in a democracy. Corruption, religion, nationalism, caste *et al* are some of the issues which have an emotive appeal and can unite people in no time. This is not limited to India only. Even in the US, the slogan "America First" did wonders for Donald Trump. Similarly, in 2019, Balakot supplied the required emotive quotient in the form of nationalism and the BJP and Modi swept the Lok Sabha polls. The BJP has already made the construction of the Ram temple a political issue. Ayodhya city has been painted in saffron hues. Students of the arts faculty of Saket Degree College have drawn pictures of Ram, Laxman and characters of the *Ramayana* on the walls around the city — not even leaving the walls of the Sulabh Shauchalaya toilet complex.

In the backdrop of the COVID-19 guidelines, people have been asked not to go to the Ram Janmabhoomi site where the main function will be held. But the BJP has plans to put up LED screens all across Ayodhya so that peo-

ple can witness the ground-breaking ceremony and watch the Prime Minister lay the foundation stone of the temple on August 5. They argue that it is natural for people to want to witness this historic moment at the Ram Janmabhoomi Complex but because of COVID-19 guidelines they cannot be allowed entry there, hence they can watch it on big screens near their *mohallas* (localities).

The VHP has done its part and has asked people across India to decorate their homes, *mohallas* and *mandirs* and watch the live telecast of the grand ceremony together while singing *bhajans* (hymns). Milind Parande, Secretary General of the VHP, had issued a statement saying that the live telecasts should be accessible to the community on big screens or at auditoria. "People should decorate their houses, neighbourhoods, villages, markets, monasteries, gurdwaras and *ashrams* and distribute *prasad* and also light lamps after sunset," the VHP leader had said in that statement. "Use all means of publicity to make this grand programme available to more and more people in society," he had further said. The paraphernalia is ready. The BJP and its right-wing organisations are all set to milk the situation for political gains. The Unlocked 3.0 guidelines may have asked people to desist from organising religious functions but the BJP Government and the party are ready for such a big event. After all, it is all politics. And an investment made today will hold good later. One wonders if COVID-19 management could be pursued with such intent. Lord Ram would have wanted that.

(The writer is Executive Director, News, Lucknow edition)

# No more a matter of public interest

We must act against those misusing PIL, which is considered the most important tool in delivering speedy justice to the underprivileged and the poor



J GOIKRISHNAN

The seeds of the Public Interest Litigation (PIL) germinated in India during the time of Justice Krishna Iyer in 1976 and subsequently in 1979, when the inhuman conditions of 50,000 undertrial prisoners led to their release. The idea that emerged in a movement that was steered by Justice PN Bhagwati was to ensure speedy justice as a fundamental right, which was never within the reach of the poor and the underprivileged.

From being a potent weapon meant to check the failures of the legislature and the executive, the PIL slowly and steadily became a domain

to nurture and pursue private interests. It offered a political theatre for guerrilla warfare in a layered style. It soon became the Frankenstein's monster that could make the legislature and the executive shiver. And this year, the PIL industry wants to achieve its final goal and that is to dictate terms to the Supreme Court (SC) of India.

There has been so much degeneration that Justice Arijit Pasayat underscored that the 'P' in PIL stands for politics, *paisa*, publicity or private interest. This position has been adequately reiterated by the SC in the Ashok Kumar Pandey case. However, the litany of frivolous petitions over a period of time has become so big that PIL activists have started issuing integrity certificates to serving and retired judges and bureaucrats.

"Why is your shirt not buttoned and why are your collars open?" the Chief Justice of India (CJI) asked a PIL lawyer in the ongoing proceedings in Court No 1, following the murder of eight policemen on duty and the subsequent encounter of

Uttar Pradesh's (UP) notorious gangsters Vikas Dubey and his associates by the police.

The single-member commission of enquiry appointed by the Government of UP was undone following certain PILs filed before the apex court. This was done even after the SC has ruled in the Bharati Tamang and State of West Bengal Vs CPDR cases that a PIL for seeking a commission of enquiry is maintainable only in exceptional circumstances.

It was further qualified in the *Zahira Habibulla Sheikh and Common Cause Vs Union of India* case that such "exceptional circumstances", justifying a relief-seeking court-appointed enquiry, arise only where deficiency in a probe is visible or there is *prima facie* evidence of abuse of power, which casts any doubt on the independence of the commission. The SC further held that even in such cases, a third party can seek remedy through a PIL only when the allegations of such abuse of power or deficiency in enquiry are

borne out of records, as laid down in the *Rajiv Ranjan Singh Lalan* case.

However, the PIL action continued. The first round was followed by objections to the appointment of a particular retired judge of the Supreme Court even after the CJI cleared the name. The "bias" of the retired bureaucrat in the commission was mocked. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the State under the Additional Chief Secretary was challenged. Value and virtue certificates from an invisible, point-based human rights curriculum were exchanged and exhibited before the Bench.

How far should the court go to satisfy the petitioners — especially when they have no track record of representing the public at large in any matters of grave concern — and those who attack the reputation of retired judges, whose contribution to the legal system for decades is in the public domain?

How did the apex court deal with such frivolous petitions in the past? In the *Mathews Nedumpara* case, the

SC in 2019 initiated *suo motu* contempt proceedings and, after taking into consideration the objectionable conduct of the petitioner, including his acts of filing frivolous petitions, sentenced him to three months' jail and a suspension of the sentence if he undertook that he would never browbeat a judge. He was additionally barred from practising before the SC for one year.

Further in the case of *Suraz India Trust v Union of India*, the court ruled that the petitioner be precluded from filing any case in public interest before any court in this country and imposed a penalty of ₹25 lakh.

When one thought that the SC-appointed commission would finally get to work on why the mockery of rule of law in the gory death of policemen should not be repeated, another bunch of petitions was filed, this time based on a media article. The PILs again questioned the integrity of a commission that collectively brings to the table 150 plus years of service to the nation.

Should these petitions and their

consequent dismissal, as bland as it may appear, soaked in the semantics of apology, not be considered one more assault on the mutilated bodies of the policemen who died on duty?

Keeping aside differences on political or ideological leanings, misgivings or otherwise concerning the judiciary, the police force and the graver grouse we have developed towards the criminal justice system, we need to pause and introspect.

The commission is expected, as per the terms of reference, to enquire into the nexus between the criminals and the police/establishment and make suggestions to ensure such events do not recur in the future. How long do we wait for the commission to function and make appropriate recommendations to fix a broken system? A system in which a history-sheeter with more than 60 heinous offences was out on bail.

A system in which "insiders" appeared to have tipped off the criminals. A system in which there is no speedy trial or regular hearings. A system in which the criminals run a

racket from within the jails. A system in which the families of policemen murdered are looking at a long and hard road to justice. A system in which endless aspirations for the idea of justice are only soaked in the body of hope. Just because hope is the only feeling stronger than fear and it is with that hope that we look up to Court No 1 to dispense justice now.

It is time to move beyond simple dismissals and imposition of costs. In spite of settled laws, the tyranny of frivolous petitions is not just obstructing the functioning of the apex court by eating up precious time and resources but is mocking at the very idea of justice. It is time to ensure that just because the highest court has opened its doors to justice, it cannot be converted into a platform for enabling the agenda of one particular section of activist lawyers. It is time to act against those misusing the PIL, which is considered the most important tool in delivering speedy justice to the underprivileged.

(The writer is a Special Correspondent of The Pioneer)

CAPSULE



**SpiceJet operates repatriation flight from Amsterdam**

**NEW DELHI:** SpiceJet said it operated its maiden long-haul charter flight from Amsterdam to Bengaluru and Hyderabad on Sunday carrying 269 Indians. The low-cost carrier said in a press release it had chartered a wide-body A330neo aircraft from Portuguese airline Hi Fly for this flight from Amsterdam in the Netherlands. While the Amsterdam-Bengaluru leg of the flight had the Hi Fly's call sign 5K471, the Bengaluru-Hyderabad leg had the SpiceJet's call sign SG471. "The flight arrived in Bengaluru at 8.58 am IST and the same aircraft then proceeded to Hyderabad with the remaining passengers," SpiceJet said. The twin-aisle A330neo aircraft used by SpiceJet has a configuration of 353 economy and 18 business class seats.



**Iran's stock market hits record high amid Covid**

**TEHRAN:** The Tehran Stock Exchange closed at a record high on Sunday, crossing 2 million points for the first time, even as US sanctions, unemployment, inflation and low oil prices batter the Iranian economy. The exchange's website showed it closed at 2,011,492 points, up some 50,000 points from Saturday. Government authorities also offered additional shares of state-owned companies onto the market on Sunday. The Tehran Stock Exchange has seen sharp increases this year, even as Iran struggled with one of the first serious coronavirus outbreaks outside China. Encouraged by a government eager to privatize state-owned firms, average people now have access to the market and can trade shares, earning returns they'd never see in a savings account or a certificate of deposit.



**Crude oil futures decline on low demand**

**NEW DELHI:** Crude oil futures fell 1.22 per cent to Rs 2,986 per barrel on Monday as participants reduced their positions on low demand. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for August delivery fell by Rs 37, or 1.22 per cent, to Rs 2,986 per barrel with a business volume of 3,945 lots. Crude oil for September delivery was quoting lower by Rs 38, or 1.24 per cent, at Rs 3,027 per barrel with an open interest of 73 lots. Globally, West Texas Intermediate crude oil was trading 0.99 per cent lower at USD 39.87 per barrel, while Brent crude was trading down 0.76 per cent at USD 43.19 per barrel in New York.

**NK Singh: India needs to grow much faster over next decade**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to grow much faster over the next 10 years with the use of technology and reforms in order to become an important global player, 15th Finance Commission Chairman N K Singh said on Sunday.

To achieve the potential growth rate of 7-8 per cent, India has to improve factor productivity and reduce incremental capital output ratio, he said.

Singh said technology, coupled with significant reforms in areas like health, education and maintenance of infrastructure, can make a decisive difference. "If we wish to become important global player, we have to obviously grow much faster over the next 10 years than we did in the past decade," he said at IIT Jodhpur Foundation Day event.



Only technology solutions can enable the realisation of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', he added.

Singh said the coronavirus pandemic has exposed several fault lines in the country's public health care system.

In 2018-19, public health expenditure in India was 0.96

per cent of GDP. This is one of the lowest among peer group countries. Out of this, about 70 per cent of the expenditure on health is undertaken by the states, while only 30 per cent is spent by the union government.

"It has become evidently clear with the current pandem-

ic that investment on health is not just social sector spending, but a great investment in India's economic growth and development. Investment in technology can ameliorate these issues in the health sector," he said.

Singh suggested use of e-learning, electronic medical records, electronic systems for disease surveillance, radiological assessments and readings, and laboratory and pharmacy information systems to significantly reduce inefficiencies and lack of resources for affordable access to health-care.

Talking about use of technology in education sector, he said that in the coming years there would be need for a creative mix or a hybrid between online and offline education.

"Technology must determine the optimum mix of this hybrid," he added.

**GMR Infra to divest large part of non-core assets**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

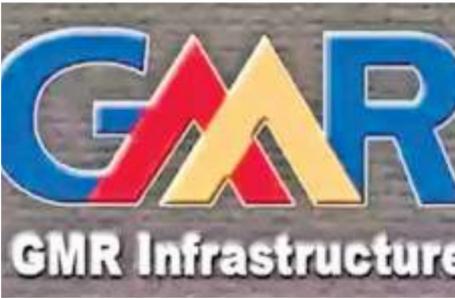
GMR Infrastructure is working on disinvestment of non-core assets including land and hopes to yield "significant value" even from 50 per cent of land monetization, according to a document.

The airport-to-port conglomerate in an investor presentation said land at strategic industrial locations will benefit from the possible manufacturing dislocation from China.

"Plan is to divest large part of other assets identified as non-core divestment initiative," the document said and noted that it has 10,500 acres of port and industrial land and "even 50 per cent land monetization" could yield significant value.

About its Kakinada Special Investment Region (SIR) in Andhra Pradesh, the group said that it is in discussion with a large number of clients for monetization of land.

"Government of Andhra Pradesh signed MoUs with Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd to set up a refinery cum petrochem project in 2,500 acres and with HPCL-GAIL consortium for Petrochem complex in 2,000 acres land,"



it said and added in addition pact has been inked with a stainless steel manufacturer for 500 acres and an Australian Lithium Refinery for 100 acres."

The port-based Kakinada SIR in the Krishna-Godavari basin has plans for an all weather multi-purpose deep-water port, a logistics park, a petrochemicals cluster and an eco-industrial park, it said.

As per the document, 4,650 acres area there has been notified as SEZs and utility and environment approvals are in place. In Kakinada SEZ in Andhra Pradesh, however, the company has continued its efforts for various government

approvals and technical studies and added that demand for industrial parks is expected to revive to pre-COVID-19 levels.

The group said Infrastructure has not been much affected in the region due to COVID-19 as the company was able to re-mobilise and commence work quickly as the workers hailed from neighbouring areas and Hosur.

About Krishnagiri SIR (Tamil Nadu), the company said Infrastructure development in 275 acres is in progress with all approvals in place.

GMR Infrastructure Limited's consolidated net loss for the quarter ended March 31.

**Bank accounts opened under Jan Dhan crosses 40-cr mark**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 40 crore bank accounts have been opened under the government's flagship financial inclusion drive Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), launched about six years ago by the Modi-government.

As per the latest figure, there are 40.05 crore beneficiaries of this scheme and deposits in Jan Dhan bank accounts are in excess of Rs 1.30 lakh crore.

"Another milestone achieved under world's largest financial inclusion initiative, PMJDY: Total accounts opened under the scheme crosses 40 Cr. mark. Committed to take financial inclusion to the last mile," Department of Financial Services said in a tweet.

Accounts opened under PMJDY are Basic Savings Bank Deposit (BSBD) accounts with additional features of RuPay debit card and overdraft. There is no requirement of maintaining minimum balance in BSBD accounts.

**Global shares mixed amid Covid waves, recovery hopes**

PNS ■ TOKYO

Global shares were mixed on Monday as investors weighed risks from rising coronavirus cases with hopes for a recovery in some places like China.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's weekend comments that President Donald Trump plans to take action on what he sees as a broad array of national security risks presented by software connected to the Chinese Communist Party added to market jitters.

Pompeo's remarks followed reports that Microsoft is in advanced talks to buy the U.S. operations of TikTok, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance and is seen as a source of national security and censorship concerns by the Trump administration.

France's CAC 40 added 0.3% in early trading to 4,797.41, while Germany's DAX surged 1.3% to 12,475.63. Britain's FTSE 100 shed 0.3% to 5,879.46. U.S. shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures dipping 0.3% at 26,248.0. S&P 500 futures were down 0.1% at 3,259.38. In Asian trading, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained 2.2% to finish at 22,195.38.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was flat at 5,926.10. South Korea's Kospi edged 0% higher to 2,251.04. Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 0.6% to 24,458.13, while the Shanghai Composite index jumped 1.8% to 3,367.97. Investors were also watching the Caixin manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index, a private survey which showed China's manufacturing activity grew in July, rising to a higher than expected level of 52.8 on a 0-100 scale where 50



**Sensex tanks 667 points; Nifty ends below 10,900**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Slumping for the fourth straight session, equity benchmark Sensex plunged 667 points on Monday following a selloff in index-heavyweights Reliance Industries, HDFC twins and Kotak Bank as soaring COVID-19 cases kept investors jittery.

The rupee too sank 20 paise and settled below the 75 per US dollar mark.

The BSE Sensex ended 667.29 points or 1.77 per cent lower at 36,939.60, while the NSE Nifty tumbled 181.85 points or 1.64 per cent to 10,891.60.

Kotak Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, falling over 4 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, ONGC, HDFC

Bank, Bajaj Auto and Reliance Industries (RIL).

On the other hand, Titan, Tata Steel, HCL Tech, L&T and SBI were among the gainers.

According to traders, massive selling in index majors RIL and HDFC duo dragged the key indices lower.

Further, foreign fund outflows and concerns over rise in COVID-19 cases across the world kept investors on edge, they added.

The number of cases around the world linked to COVID-19 has crossed 1.8 crore, while the infection count in India has crossed 18 lakh. Globally, however, Bourses in Shanghai, Tokyo, Seoul settled on a positive note, while Hong Kong ended in the red.

**Tata Motors shares jump over 8%**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Tata Motors on Monday jumped over 8 per cent after the company's first quarter earnings were better than estimates.

The stock rose by 8.30 per cent to Rs 113.40 on the BSE. On the NSE, it jumped 8.45 per cent to Rs 113.50.

The results were subdued,

but better than estimates. Standalone Q1 EBITDA was also better than expected, Emkay Global Financial Services said.

"Tata Motors continues to outperform on balance sheet as well as cost control initiatives," according to a report by

Edelweiss Research. The homegrown auto major on Friday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 8,443.98 crore for the first quarter ended June 2020.

The company had posted a net loss of Rs 3,679.66 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Total income from operations during the period under review stood at Rs 31,983.06 crore as against Rs 61,466.99 crore in the corresponding quarter of the last fiscal.

The company's British arm Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) reported a 44 per cent dip in net revenue at 2.9 billion pounds during the first quarter.

**Lord & Taylor is latest retailer to file for bankruptcy**

PNS ■ NEW YORK

New York landmark retailer Lord & Taylor has filed for bankruptcy, joining a growing list of retailers flummoxed by the pandemic.

The company, which was sold to the French rental clothing company Le Tote Inc. last year, filed Sunday for bankruptcy protection

in the Eastern Court of Virginia.

In an announcement on its website the company, one of the oldest American department stores, said it was looking for a new owner.

Like many retailers, Lord & Taylor was already struggling with the shift to online shopping even before the pandemic struck this spring.

**'Will continue discussions to buy TikTok in US'**

PNS ■ NEW YORK

Technology giant Microsoft has said it will continue talks to purchase the popular Chinese-owned video-sharing app TikTok's American business after its India-born CEO Satya Nadella and President Donald Trump had a conversation.

The statement from Microsoft came days after Trump said that he could use

the emergency economic powers or an executive order to ban TikTok in the US over national security issues.

Redmond-headquartered Microsoft, in a statement on Sunday, said that following a conversation

between Nadella and Trump, it is prepared to continue discussions to explore a purchase of TikTok in the US.



"Microsoft fully appreciates the importance of addressing the President's concerns. It is committed to acquiring TikTok subject to a complete security review and providing proper economic benefits to the United States, including the United States Treasury," the statement said.

Microsoft will move quickly to pursue discussions with TikTok's parent company ByteDance in a matter of weeks and will complete these discussions in any event by September 15, it said.

"During this process, Microsoft looks forward to continuing dialogue with the United States government, including with the President," the company said.

**Real estate sentiment all-time low in April-June**

**Stakeholders remain pessimistic for 6 months: Survey**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The sentiments in the country's real estate sector hit an all-time low during April-June due to the COVID-19 pandemic and remain pessimistic for the next six months even as stakeholders see slight improvement, according to a survey.

According to 25th survey by property consultant Knight Frank and industry bodies Ficci and Naredco, the current sentiment index fell to 22 in April-June from 31 in the previous quarter. "The current sentiment is recorded to be at the lowest," Knight Frank India



said in a statement. The future sentiment index improved to 41 from 36 during

the period under review but remained in the pessimistic zone.

"With continued economic stress and ambiguity regarding recovery, the current sentiments of the real estate stakeholders in India have been recorded at a low 22 in Q2 2020 (April-June)," Knight Frank India said.

This survey, covering the April-June 2020 period, was conducted in the first two weeks of July 2020.

The survey covers key supply-side stakeholders, which include developers, private equity funds, banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs).

A score of 50 represents a 'neutral' view or status quo, a score above 50 demonstrates a 'positive' sentiment; and a score

below 50 indicates a 'negative' sentiment.

Knight Frank India Chairman and Managing Director Shishir Bajjal said, "With some of the macroeconomic indicators showing marginal improvement and with the impending festive season in the second half of the year, the stakeholders have shown improved sentiments compared to the previous quarter, albeit they have remained in the pessimistic zone."

He added that at this juncture, the lockdown is expected to ease further by the advent of the festive season, helping to revive economic activity and propel conversion of the pent-up demand.

Bajjal said the central bank and the government have announced stimulus measures that have provided much-needed reprieve to the economy in these testing times.

"However, there is a need for further demand-boosting measures to improve sentiments in the economy," he said.

For the real estate sector in particular, Bajjal said there is a need for measures such as additional tax benefits for buying or renting a house, added incentives for affordable housing, easing of cravability for the sector and a one-time restructuring of developer loans to help the sector recover from this crisis.

**Bank of India Q1 net profit rises over 3-fold to Rs 844 cr**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of India (BoI) on Monday reported over three-fold rise in net profit to Rs 843.60 crore for the quarter ended June 30, as pressure of bad loans eased.

The bank had registered a net profit of Rs 242.60 crore in the April-June period of 2019-20. The total income during the period under review increased to Rs 11,941.52 crore, from Rs 11,526.95 crore in the year-ago period, BoI said in a regulatory

filing. On the assets front, the bank witnessed improvement with gross NPAs declining to 13.91 per cent of the gross advances as on June 30, 2020 as against 16.50 per cent in the same period a year ago. Similarly, net NPAs or bad loans too declined to 3.58 per cent, from 5.79 per cent in the corresponding period last year. As a result, the provisioning for bad loans declined to Rs 766.62 crore during April-June of this fiscal, from Rs 1,873.28 crore in the same period a year ago.



## AN UNCONVENTIONAL SOLO RIDER BREAKING STEREOTYPES



When I say riders, I am referring to those who hold the spirit. Not those who just do occasional 10-20km rides and come for meets. So if we are looking at riders who have done some remarkable rides, they are hardly 1%. Support for female riders could be better

**M**otorcycling has evolved over the years. It is no longer a male-dominated space and over the past few years, we have observed quite a lot of women increasingly choosing motorcycles as their best companion. And when you are a woman solo rider, you not only face the odds on the roads, but also the repercussions of going against gender norms. There are challenges which most of the female bikers face like the lack of toilets on the road and mountains and fueling up after sunset, getting accommodation in remote places, etc. However, taking these issues in stride and staying focused on being better motorcyclists, exploring more uncharted territories, and lastly, relaying it to the world through the

power of social media is Kiran Mortha, a Hyderabad-based female rider. She recalls her incredible first ride to Kanyakumari which coincided with the world motorcycling day. She mentions that she cruised herself up to Kanyakumari through the rains. Her eagerness was to reach Kashmir by July 18 as it happened to be her birthday. She covered approximately 14,000 km in her maiden ride to become the first woman from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to have covered Kanyakumari to Kashmir in her first solo trip. A psychologist by profession and a voracious reader who would want to own a mini library at her

place, Kiran, from an early age, has only listened to her heart. She feels that Motorcycling is an art and believes that riding can be both liberating and meditative. Speaking of how women are faring in motorcycle riding and the kind of support they receive, Kiran says, "When I say riders, I am referring to those who hold the spirit. Not those who just do occasional 10-20km rides and come for meets. So if we are looking at riders who have done some remarkable rides, they are hardly 1%. Support for female riders could be better." She goes on to add, "India is not an equal society. Crime against women is high and sexual harassment is everywhere. It's a challenge for women. But as women proved it time and again,

there will be a few of us who will beat the system and thrive." Taking us through her journey, she says, "I picked up a love for the motorcycle quite early. My father owned a Yezdi and every time he would work on his bike, I would be his assistant mechanic assisting in opening little screws and nuts, cleaning, oiling, applying shellac and gasket, to placing piston rings - I was probably 7 or 8 when I embarked on this journey. As far as I can recall, I learned to ride at the age of 16. My first ride to

With female motorcyclists having to face repercussions of choosing to tread paths that break gender stereotypes, Hyderabad-based Kiran Mortha, who happens to be the first woman from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to have covered Kanyakumari to Kashmir in her first solo trip talks to **K RAMYA SREE** on her journey, challenges, and more

Kanyakumari to Kashmir coincided with the World Motorcycling Day." Kiran's convenient escape on her Watson (her Royal Enfield Thunderbird motorcycle) is the mountains in Coorg, Madikeri, and the Western Ghats. She rode solo to Khardongla and is the second woman in India to have achieved this feat. What message does Kiran want to give to girls who want to get onto the bike but are restricted from family or because of other external factors? "If you want to do it, the only one who is stopping you is yourself. But when you are becoming a rider, keep in mind: Be a rider in your spirit. Not a Social Media rider. Motorcycling is an art, learn it, love it. Adhere to traffic rules and always stay safe. Be alert and never race on civilian roads. Learn to fix a bike, be your own first mechanic. Always avert danger, be precautionary. Your family will eventually come around," she signs off.

## Tech Addiction: Boon or bane amid pandemic?

The pandemic brought in a plethora of changes to our lifestyle — change in eating habits, work, daily routines, sleep cycle, etc. What it also did to the kids, as they're locked in, is increase their screen time. Juhi Kaul, a broadcast auditor and former media instructor and Shivani Wadhwa, an educationist and counselling psychologist discuss the harmful effects of this addiction to the screen, ways to tackle it and more with *The Pioneer's* **SHIKHA DUGGAL**



**W**ith the country under lockdown, children are spending a significant part of the day in front of the television, computer or mobile screens. This has been the story of students in many parts of India including Hyderabad which is better served by technology. "The lockdown has brought us closer to the dependency of digital gadgets to the extent that we can't function without them anymore. However, balance plays a key role here because an excess of anything leads to a major disaster. Technology is an addiction — the uncontrollable urge to consume something that's taking over your life. Strangely, smartphones in today's age are as

important as the need to have salt in your food," says Juhi Kaul, broadcast auditor and former media instructor to defence forces of India. But what can be the possible red flags for technology addiction? There are several signs or symptoms that can indicate an addiction to screens or technology. These signs can be useful in helping one decide whether a problem might need professional assessment or not. As parents, a major red flag to look out for is when your child starts passing up opportunities for socialisation. If a child's only interactions are through screen activities, they're missing out on a tonne of learning opportunities. Anxiety develops when the child is away from the internet. Adding to these, there is an increase in non-responsive behaviour, less attentive nature, there's no proper time for meals, and health disorders tend to arise. "A techie addict will stop worrying about what's happening to his/her body, they hardly give a damn about their hygiene or temperamental issues. They hate to attend online classes but love surfing online as they have made their default activity as social media. Either you will find them texting, playing, or binge-watching," adds the media trainer. Parents are posting happy pictures of

children sitting with mobile phones, whereas mental health professionals sound a word of caution. An educationist and counselling psychologist from Hyderabad, Shivani Wadhwa believes digital technologies are aggravating feelings of anxiety, depression, causing loss of social skills, disturbing kids' sleep patterns, leading to cyber-bullying and distorting body image issues. "It is important to monitor and limit their time screen. Children should take as much responsibility — whether it's reporting about cyber-bullying cases or developing pro-active coping strategies such as not engaging with unwanted messages and fact-checking all the information available on the internet. I request kids to use technology to learn and develop their skills, be more engaged in science, and show productivity on while on their respective smartphones," she says. Some other practical tips to tackle technology addiction include making it a rule that you can't be online if the sun is shining when you're at home, avoiding aimless browsing, giving your time online a purpose, challenging yourself to read at least 30 pages of a great book before you check your computer or mobile device, and compiling a list of one-hour evening tasks.



## Fitness industry could revive with care, better technology

**T**hough India has entered Unlocked 3.0, the pause in the fitness industry is likely to last longer. The new normal is here to stay as gyms will not be re-opening to the world as they used to be. It has become important for the fitness industry to be very careful, maintain proper hygiene and use technology to avoid any contact that could lead to the transfer of the virus. COVID-19 has created a 'new normal' everywhere and the focus has shifted to health and safety like never before. As the industry heads towards this new direction, the fitness enthusiasts are sitting on the fence — anxious to return yet nervous. "Gyms will have to reassure their members that they have taken all the preventive measures to safeguard them from unnecessary exposure. In Unlocked 3.0, a contactless gym experience with integrated technology at the core of reopening strategy is the only way forward to reduce the risk of any transmission," says Amaresh Ojha, Founder & CEO, Gympik. Every gym irrespective of their scale needs technology for a safer phased exit from the lockdown. "We have upgraded our software to offer a contactless all-in-one gym management to our clients. Be it app-based slot booking, contactless

member check-ins to touchless payments and virtual training, we are committed to supporting our fitness partners to bring back members safely - with minimum upheaval and complete peace of mind. We have also recently released an e-book - 'Gym owner's playbook to survive the Covid-19 challenge' to help the gym owners sail through the crisis," adds Ojha. While gym owners wait for the official guidelines from the government, many of them have modified their SOPs and trained staff on all Covid proof safety and sanitization plans. But getting back to the business at this time may seem like starting afresh, feels Arun Chaudhary, Gym Owner, Sweat Fitness. "We support stringent safety standards at the gym. We have put in place a lot of protocols with the help of technology to ensure social distancing is maintained and each member gets a healthy workout space." "Things have changed completely for us in Unlocked 3. Unlike earlier, members can't simply walk into the gym," he said. Viraj Ramesh Trivedi, Gym Owner, Micky Mehta's Gym Borivali conducted by V.R. Fitness, said, "We have eliminated the biometric access control with a simple touchless QR code-based mobile check-in via our member app."

## SUSHANT SINGH RAJPUT SEARCHED FOR 'PAINLESS DEATH' ON INTERNET

Late actor Sushant Singh Rajput, who was found hanging at his Bandra residence on July 14, had googled several words related to death and mental disorder towards the end, said Mumbai police on Monday.

Sushant searched for words like "painless death", "schizophrenia" and "bipolar disorder" on Google, according to Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Commissioner Singh revealed these details while interacting with the press on Monday. Sharing the information, celebrity photographer Viral Bhayani posted on Instagram: "Commissioner Param Bir Singh today revealed few things to the press."

"Sushant would search for articles and his name on Google to

find out what was being written about him. He would also search for "painless death", "schizophrenia" and "bipolar disorder". During the press conference, the Mumbai Police Commissioner also said, "All bank statements from January 2019 to June 2020 have been analysed. There were around Rs 14.5 crore credit in the account." The top cop also mentioned that there is a fixed deposit of 4 crores too.

"Till now statements of 56 people have been recorded, all angles are being investigated be it a professional rivalry, financial transactions or health. It has come to surface that he had bipolar disorder, he was undergoing treatment and taking medicines for it. What circumstances led to his death is the subject of our investigation," he said.

## Bihar cop heading Sushant probe forcibly quarantined

Bihar Poice IPS officer Vinay Tiwari who has been tasked with heading the probe into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case by DGP Gupteshwar Pandey has been quarantined by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation hours after he arrived in the city to expedite the investigation.

Bihar DGP Pandey has tweeted that Tiwari was forcibly quarantined on Sunday even before the IPS officer could initiate his probe.

Pandey tweeted, "IPS officer Vinay Tiwari arrived Mumbai today on official duty to lead his police team from Patna but he was forcibly

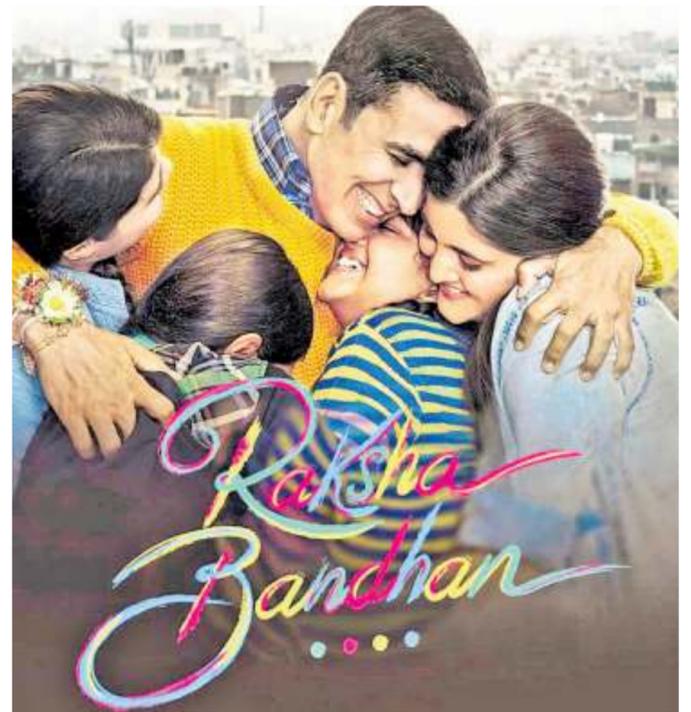
quarantined by the BMC officers at around 11 p.m. Earlier, he was not given a place in the IPS mess when he said that he is staying in a guest house in Goregaon."

Tiwari arrived in Mumbai on Sunday afternoon. He was received at the airport by his four colleagues, who have been in the city for the past few days trying to make headways into the probe that has been with the city police for the last over 45 days.

At the airport itself, Tiwari had said that the investigation into Sushant's death was moving in the right direction.

He then went to a guest house in Goregaon with the other four where he had a long chat with them. On Monday, he was to meet DCP Abhishek Trimukhe of Bandra Zone-9. Trimukhe is looking after the case.

Now, Tiwari will be quarantined till August 15. The BMC, however, did not disclose his whereabouts.



## Akshay Kumar announces new film Raksha Bandhan, dedicates it to sister Alka

On the occasion of Raksha Bandhan, Akshay Kumar has announced his new film titled Raksha Bandhan, which will celebrate the 'most special bond in the world'. The actor dedicated the film, that will be directed by Aanand L Rai and written by Himanshu Sharma, to his sister Alka. The actor is also collaborating with Rai for Atrangi Rai, co-starring Dhanush and Sara Ali Khan.

Sharing the news on Twitter, Akshay said that Raksha Bandhan was the 'quickest' he has ever said yes to a film. "A story that touches your heart so deeply & so instantly, it's the quickest I've signed a film in my career. Dedicating this film, #RakshaBandhan to my sister, Alka & to the

most special bond in the world...that of a brother and sister. Thank you @aanandrai, this one is very special," he wrote. The film will be presented by Alka and Rai.

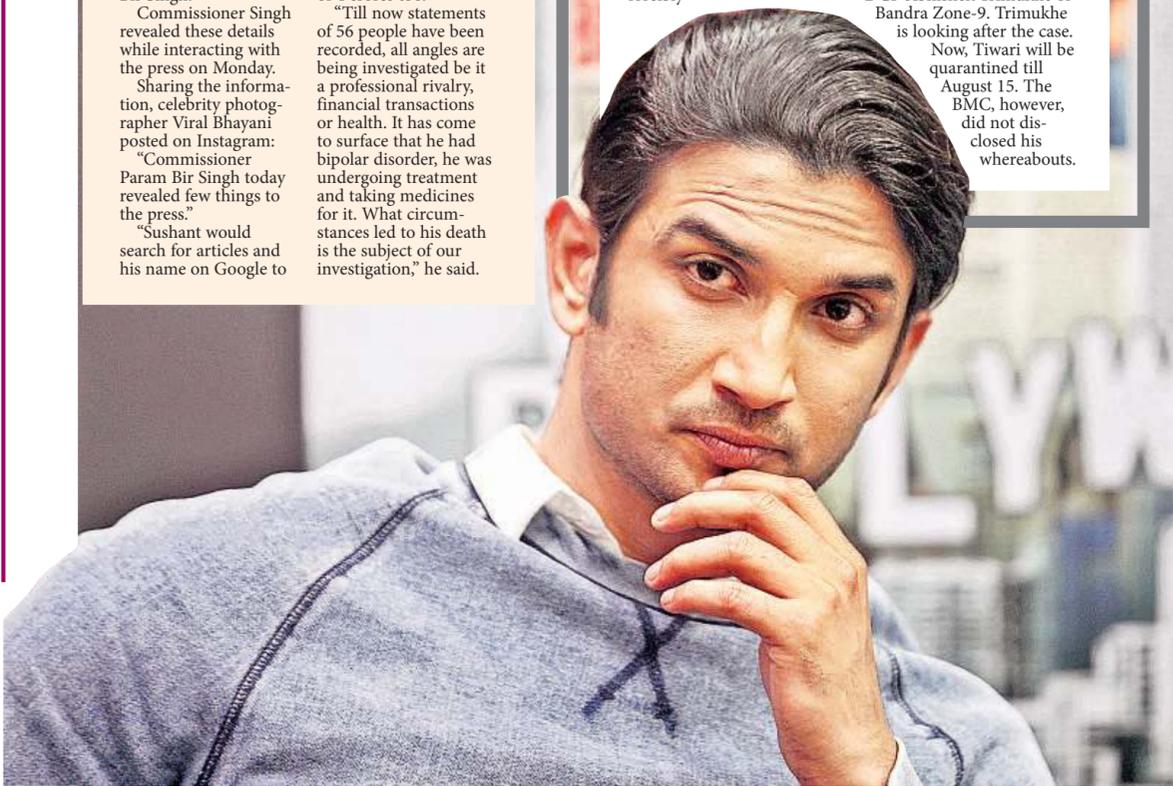
"Directed by @aanandrai. Written by #HimanshuSharma. Produced by #ColourYellowProductions @cypplOfficial in association with #CapeOfGoodFilms. Presented by #AlkaHiranandani & Aanand L Rai, in theatres on 5th November 2021. #SirBehneDetiHai100Per centReturn," he added in another tweet.

In 2017, Alka revealed the 'greatest gift' that Akshay (whom she affectionately calls 'Raju'), gave her. She said in a video, "Mummy-Daddy would insist that if I had to stay out late or attend a late night party then I'd

have to ask Raju to accompany me. He would never go with me and always say, 'You have to take care of your own safety.' And I would be like, 'Why?'" She added that she missed many parties because of this.

Alka talked about the void in their lives when their father passed away and how Akshay 'quietly' took over his responsibilities. However, he continued to maintain that she should be able to take care of herself.

It was only when Alka's daughter Simar grew up and went to the US for higher studies that she realised the importance of what Akshay would say. "This has been the greatest gift my brother has given to me and my daughter - The strength to be self-sufficient. Thank you, Raju. I love you," she said.



### FUN

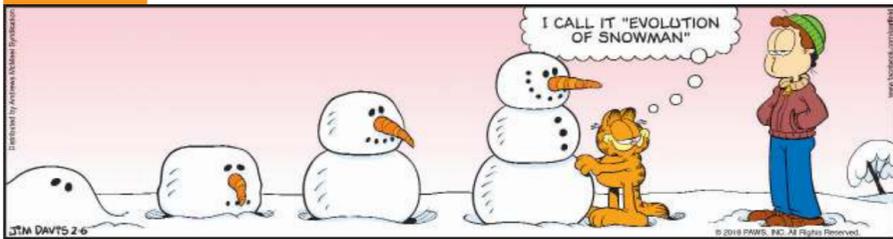
#### ARCHIE



#### CALVIN AND HOBBS



#### GARFIELD



#### REALITY CHECK



#### SPEED BUMP



#### CROSSWORD



#### NANCY



#### SUDOKU

8	4		5		
7		8			2
9	5	6		4	8
	5			8	
	2	1		9	8
		2			4
7	9			3	6
1			9	3	
	3			9	7

Yesterday's solution

4	2	9	8	1	7	6	3	5
1	8	5	9	6	3	4	7	2
3	6	7	5	4	2	1	9	8
6	5	3	1	8	9	2	4	7
2	7	4	3	5	6	8	1	9
9	1	8	7	2	4	5	6	3
7	4	6	2	3	8	9	5	1
5	3	2	6	9	1	7	8	4
8	9	1	4	7	5	3	2	6

- Rules
- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
  - The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

- ACROSS**
- A tank for live fish
  - Mix this with yellow to get green
  - Stopped doing something
  - A pale purple colour
  - A crown-wearing woman
  - A female relation
  - Workers sit at these in offices
  - Hot coals left after a fire
  - A list of restaurant meals
  - People who work in classrooms
- DOWN**
- An emergency vehicle
  - Normal
  - A feeling that makes you want to scratch
  - Check the length of
  - A female sheep
  - Large extinct animals
  - Very old
  - A person from Sweden
  - The largest continent
  - Adult males
- SOLUTION**
- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| L | E | F | E | R | S |   |   |   |   |
| G | O | V | E | R | N | M | E | N | T |
| D | N | E | A | P | E | R |   |   |   |
| N | I | G | H | T | P | A | N | D |   |
| G | O | U | C | N |   |   |   |   |   |
| A | P | P | R | O | A |   |   |   |   |
| A | P | P | R | O | A |   |   |   |   |
| T | R | A | N | C |   |   |   |   |   |
| F | I | R | E | G | O | O |   |   |   |
| A | S | T | R | A | B | E | R |   |   |
| S | T | R | A | B | E | R |   |   |   |

#### GINGER MEGGS



Most Read NEWS

Dadar gets female figures on signage

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has installed signs at a traffic junction in the Dadar area of Mumbai with female figures to promote gender equality in the city. Maharashtra's environment and tourism minister Aaditya Thackeray shared photos of the newly-installed signs at the junction in Dadar on Twitter Saturday. "If you have passed by Dadar, you will see something that will make you feel proud. @mybmcWardGN is ensuring gender equality with a simple idea - the signals now have women too," he tweeted. According to reports, Mumbai's civic body will change road signs and pedestrian signals at 13 junctions on Cadell Road, a 4.5-km arterial stretch in Mumbai's Dadar and Mahim. This road has Siddhivinayak Temple, Mahim dargah, Mahim church, BR Ambedkar's memorial Chhatyabhoomi and the proposed site for the memorial of Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray. The initiative has made Mumbai the first Indian city to have female symbols on road signages. Many cities in Germany and the Netherlands and Switzerland's Geneva already have female signs on traffic lights. Authorities in Australia's Melbourne have been using female figures to promote gender equality since 2017.



UK considering coin to commemorate Gandhi

The United Kingdom is considering minting a coin to commemorate India's independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, amid growing interest in recognising the contributions of people from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic (BAME) communities. UK's Finance Minister Rishi Sunak asked the Royal Mint Advisory Committee (RMAC) in a letter to pursue recognition of individuals from those communities, the UK Treasury said in an emailed statement late on Saturday. "RMAC is currently considering a coin to commemorate Gandhi", the Treasury said. Gandhi, who was born in 1869, advocated for non-violence throughout his life and played a key role in India's struggle for independence. His birthday, October 2, is observed as the International Day of Non-Violence. Often referred to as India's "father of the nation", he was assassinated by a Hindu radical on January 30, 1948, just a few months after he led India to freedom from British rule. As part of a global reassessment of history, colonialism and racism triggered by the death in May of a Black man, George Floyd, in the United States after a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes, some British institutions have begun re-examining their past.



Magazine cover signed by Steve Jobs sold for \$16k

Apple and Steve Jobs related memorabilia have always found a special place among the collectors. These artefacts have fetched thousands of dollars in the past. Earlier this week, another such memorabilia fetched over \$16,000 (₹11.99 lakhs approximately) in an auction. A Fortune magazine cover signed by late Apple founder Steve Jobs went on auction earlier this week on Nate D Sanders auction site at a starting price of \$11,000. It was sold at a price of \$16,638. What's special about this magazine cover, other than the fact that it is signed by the legendary Apple founder is the back story associated with it. According to the auction site, the magazine signed by Steve Jobs is the Fortune magazine cover from 9 October 1989 issue. It was published shortly after the launch of Jobs' new company NeXT. "Jobs signs in black ink, 'To Terry / Steve Jobs', with his characteristic lower case signature, next to a photo of the charismatic technology icon," the auction site wrote. The auction site shared that the recipient, Terry, was one of Jobs' chauffeur drivers for several years before asking Jobs to sign this magazine. Although Jobs signed the magazine cover, he subsequently called the limousine company to complain about the autograph request.



NASA crew back to earth in first splashdown in 45 years

Two NASA astronauts returned to Earth on Sunday in a dramatic, retro-style splashdown, their capsule parachuting into the Gulf of Mexico to close out an unprecedented test flight by Elon Musk's SpaceX company. It was the first splashdown by US astronauts in 45 years, with the first commercially built and operated spacecraft to carry people to and from orbit. The return clears the way for another SpaceX crew launch as early as next month and possible tourist flights next year. Test pilots Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken arrived back on Earth in their SpaceX Dragon capsule named Endeavour, less than a day after departing the International Space Station and two months after blasting off from Florida. The capsule parachuted into the calm gulf waters about 40 miles off the coast of Pensacola, hundreds of miles from Tropical Storm Isaias pounding Florida's Atlantic coast. "Welcome back to planet Earth and thanks for flying SpaceX," said Mission Control from SpaceX headquarters. "It's a little bit overwhelming to see everybody here considering the things that have gone on the last few months since we've been off planet," Hurley said after arriving back home in Houston Sunday evening where they were greeted by a small masked-gathering of family and officials.



GENOA RETAIN SERIE A PLACE

AP ■ ROME

Genoa secured safety on the final day of the longest-ever Serie A season, while Lecce dropped down to the second division.

Genoa beat Hellas Verona 3-0 to finish four points ahead of Lecce and ensure a 14th consecutive season in the top Italian league on Sunday.

Lecce lost 4-3 to Parma, Brescia and Spal had already been mathematically relegated.

LONGEST SEASON

The coronavirus-delayed season ended almost 12 months after it started on Aug. 24, 2019.

"The longest season in history ends today, in our country's most difficult year in recent memory," said Vincenzo Spadafora, Italy's sports minister. At the start of the lockdown in March, Italy was the epicenter of the pandemic in Europe and has now registered more than 35,000 deaths from COVID-19.

"During those weeks we really thought that the season should be stopped," Spadafora said.

"But thanks to the series of precautions we took and the seriousness of the protocols put in place by the Italian soccer federation, the season was not only able to restart but also be completed."

Due to the virus, the season was suspended for more than three months between March and June.

Juventus sealed a record-extending ninth straight title last weekend.



Genoa players celebrate at the end of the match with coach Davide Nicola after a serie A football match between Lecce and Parma

GENOA SAFE

Antonio Sanabria scored twice for Genoa, which also got a goal from Cristian Romero. Still, it was a nervous finish with Genoa losing

two players to red cards and ending with nine men to Verona's 10.

Lecce, which needed to win and hope that Genoa didn't, fought back from two goals down to equalize by

halftime. But then Andreas Cornelius and Roberto Inglese restored Parma's two-goal lead before Gianluca Lapadula pulled one back for Lecce.

OTHER RESULTS

Udinese beat eighth-place Sassuolo 1-0, Fiorentina defeated last-place Spal 3-1 to finish 10th, and Bologna drew 1-1 with Torino.

Talent is not the problem in our country, says Chhetri

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Birthday boy and iconic Indian football team captain Sunil Chhetri on Monday said talent is not the problem in the country and all stakeholders need to ensure that the next crop of players are well looked after.

"Talent is not the problem here. We could have plenty of Olympic gold medals. I know how hard the AIFF works to get a bigger pool of players. It is very important to give the young talented players the right food, training and so on. When all this is done, it can be a monumental growth," Chhetri, who turned 36 on Monday, said during the E-Delhi summit organised by Football Delhi to celebrate the occasion of his birthday.

All India Football Federation (AIFF) President Praful Patel lauded the Government of Odisha for setting an example of how a state government can help sports thrive in a particular region.

"I think states like Odisha need to be commended. They have actively supported every sport. That is something that other state governments should follow too," Patel said. Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju, AFC General Secretary Dato Windsor John, Jagdish Mitra, Chief Strategic Officer, Tech Mahindra, Football Delhi President Shaji Prabhakaran were also present in the virtual meet, as was talismanic captain Chhetri.

Patel, during the discussion highlighted the progress that the All India Football Federation has made forward together over the last decade.



"We have come a long way. Globally FIFA now acknowledges that Indian football has to be supported and strengthened for the sport to grow in the region. FIFA and AFC have made it clear that football has to be commercially viable and it has to support the overall ecosystem around it," he opined.

"That is why it is important to professionalise the sport. The I-League was the first step towards that. Now, the ISL has taken it further and made more additions to Indian football."

Sports Minister Rijiju lauded the AIFF for bringing FIFA events to India (2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup and the 2021 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup).

"I complement AIFF for engaging with FIFA to bring this tournament. With such tournaments being hosted in India we will have a brilliant situation where the sport will further mature," he said. "We will ensure that the U-17 Women's World Cup is one of the most successful FIFA events in India."

India get easy draw in Thomas & Uber Cup final

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India have been handed relatively easy draws in the twice rescheduled Thomas and Uber Cup Finals slated to be held from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark.

The Indian men's team has been placed in Group C alongside 2016 champions Denmark, Germany and Algeria, while the women's side has been clubbed with 14-time winners China, France and Germany in group D in the draw which was staged at BWF headquarters in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

Both the men's and women's team are seeded fifth in the tournament, according to the BWF release. Indonesia, 13-time former champions, and six-time former winner Japan will headline as the top seeds for the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup respectively.

The prestigious event was originally scheduled to be held from May 16-24 but was postponed to August 15-23 before finally rescheduling it in

October due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

No tournament has been possible since BWF had shut down their World Tour and other sanctioned tournaments following the completion of the All-England in March due to the global health crisis.

BWF Chief Operating Officer Stuart Borrie said: "We acknowledge the many disruptions this year to our calendar but we would like to assure you that the BWF continues to monitor the ongoing developments surrounding COVID-19 and to plan for a safe return to international badminton."

"We trust everyone within the badminton community is keeping safe and well and preparing for the return to international competition."

In Thomas and Uber Cup Final, the top two teams in each group at the end of the group stage will make it to the knock-out round.

The Indian men's and women's teams had failed to reach the knockout stage in the last edition in 2018.

Ramandeep inspiration for young players: Arshdeep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian junior men's hockey team core probable Arshdeep Singh wants to take a leaf out of senior player Ramandeep Singh's book on how to manage injuries in his bid to seal a place in the national side.

The 19-year-old Singh missed out on the Six-Nation Championship in Spain last year due to a knee injury. He is inspired by the way Indian men's hockey team forward Ramandeep has dealt with injuries in his international career.

"It was really disappointing to miss out on the Six-Nation Championship in Spain last year. However, I have realized that injuries will be a part and parcel of any sportsperson's career. I look up to the way Ramandeep Singh has dealt with injuries in his career," Singh said.

"He (Ramandeep) is an inspiration for all young hockey players in India. One needs a lot of determination to come back from injuries and now I know how important it is to ensure that I keep checking



on how my body is reacting in every situation," said the young forward in a Hockey India release.

Singh, who has attended several junior men's national coaching camps, said he has been focussing on his fitness in the last few months.

"The last few months have been a huge challenge for all of us. However, I have taken the time to focus on my fitness. I know I am close to receiving an opportunity to play for Indian junior men's team in the near future and I don't want to miss the chance due to an injury."

"I have been practicing yoga to become mentally stronger as well. I have to be

absolutely ready to grab my opportunities whenever they are presented to me," said Singh.

Talking about his future goals, Singh said there is nothing bigger than playing for the country. "Playing for senior team is always going to be my biggest goal. However, I have to first perform at the junior level and get recognized as a skilful player. I will keep working towards my goal in whichever way I can."

"I am sure one day I will walk out on the pitch with the senior Indian team. I will work very hard to ensure that I get a chance to contribute to India's famous victories in the future."

Swann criticises selectors for dropping Broad

PTI ■ LONDON

Former off-spinner Graeme Swann has slammed selectors for splitting England's most successful new-ball pairing of Stuart Broad and James Anderson during the recently-concluded Test series against the West Indies, saying "you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly".

England paid the price for dumping Broad in the first Test as they lost by four wickets at Southampton. With Jofra Archer missing the second Test due to a bio-secure breach, Broad returned to take six wickets as England bounced back with a 113-run win. In the third Test, Broad was awarded the man of the match after he took 10 wickets to cross the 500-wicket mark and also scored a crucial 62 with the bat as England sealed the series with a 269-run win.

The experienced Anderson, on the other hand, was included in the first Test but rested in the second match before finally joining his long-time partner Broad in the third Test.

"How stupid did it look to break up England's most successful bowling partnership of all-time when we lost that first Test match?" Swann, who has taken 255 wickets in 60 Tests, was quoted as saying by 'Mirror.Co.UK'.

"Jimmy and Broady have formed one of the most-successful bowling double acts Test cricket has known. Why would you want to chuck it out



before its sell-by date? I can understand the attraction of 90mph pace, and both Jofra and Woody are huge assets."

"But I'm sorry, you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly," Swann said.

Broad and Anderson have captured 1,090 wickets between them, with 895 of those scalps coming in the 117 Tests they have played together.

"Jimmy and Broady go together like Morecambe and Wise or Bonnie and Clyde," Swann said.

Swann, a three-time Ashes winner, added that England should not mess with the two experienced bowlers and give them an equal opportunity to try and make it to the 2021 Ashes in Australia.

Trott appointed Poms batting coach

PTI ■ LONDON



Former batsman Jonathan Trott has been appointed England's batting coach for the upcoming three-Test series against Pakistan, starting Wednesday.

The 39-year-old, who scored 3835 runs in 52 Tests between 2009-2015 for England, will be joined by former New Zealand spinner Jeetan Patel and Warwickshire seamer Graeme Welch, the 'BBC' reported.

Trott, who played 68 ODIs and seven T20 matches, has scored 18,662 runs in first class cricket.

England and Pakistan will lock horns in a three-match Test series starting Wednesday at the Old Trafford in Manchester, followed by the next two games in the Ageas Bowl in Southampton.

Azhar, Babar aim to make progress in rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Skipper Azhar Ali and his Deputy Babar Azam will be aiming to move up the ladder in the ICC Test rankings when Pakistan take on England in the three-match series starting on Wednesday.

According to latest rankings, Azhar, presently 27th among batsmen, will be hoping to regain the form that lifted him to a career-best sixth in December 2016,

while Babar will be hoping to progress from a career-best aggregate of 800 rating points.

Babar is currently sixth after having occupied a career-high fifth place in February. Asad Shafiq (18th) and Shan Masood (33rd) are other Pakistan batsmen to have enjoyed higher rankings in the past but will have to contend with a sharp bowling attack in order to move up again.



In the bowling department, pacer Mohammad Abbas (13th) and experienced leg-spinner Yasir Shah

(24th), who have in the past, been ranked third and first, respectively, and left-arm fast bowler Shaheen Afridi (32nd) are other Pakistan players to watch.

For England, Stokes displaced West Indies captain Jason Holder from the top of the all-rounders' list during their last series and formerly top-ranked Broad rose to third position in the bowlers' list, currently led by Australia fast bowler Pat Cummins.

Woakes happy being away from the spotlight

PTI ■ MANCHESTER

Pacer Chris Woakes on Monday is happy staying away from the spotlight and says he just wants to churn out match-winning performances for England.

Woakes' performances often go unnoticed as the likes of Stuart Broad, James Anderson and Jofra Archer steal the spotlight.

"I honestly really don't mind. I'm not one for being centre of attention," Woakes was quoted as

saying by 'Sky Sports'.

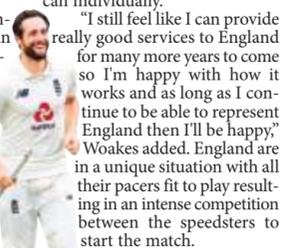
"Don't get me wrong, I want to go out on the field and perform and I want to make match-winning performances for England but it really doesn't bother me if I'm first choice to write about or not, to be brutally honest," he added.

The 31-year-old, who has 106 wickets from 35 Tests, feels while he can't join compatriots James Anderson and Broad in the 500 wickets elite club, he still has a lot

to offer. "My stats have been mentioned and they're very good in England, I want to keep working on those, keep improving on them and making them as good as they can be," Woakes said.

"At my age and where I am now at 31, it's unlikely that I'm going to go on and get 500 Test wickets like Jimmy and Broady but I still want to go on and get as many as I

can individually. "I still feel like I can provide really good services to England for many more years to come so I'm happy with how it works and as long as I continue to be able to represent England then I'll be happy," Woakes added. England are in a unique situation with all their pacers fit to play resulting in an intense competition between the speedsters to start the match.



# Vishnu to play sibling to Kajal in **MOSAGALLU**

**W**hen it comes to playing each other's love interest, it is a known fact that every actor and actress is chosen to radiate the right chemistry. But when it comes to on-screen siblings, very few actors have managed to share glorious chemistry on screen as brother and sister.

In the forthcoming Hollywood-Indian project *Mosagallu*, the two talented lead actors Vishnu Manchu and Kajal Aggarwal are being paired as siblings in the movie and share fantastic chemistry. They hope to portray a never-seen-before sibling pair.

Kajal Aggarwal, the actress known for her commitment to her roles in the movies she works, went through a special workshop for *Mosagallu*.

"Familial relations in Indian movies are rare when it comes to a leading actor or an actress playing siblings on-screen," says a close source. It's very rare to see star lead actors being paired as siblings in movies. Very few actors like Sharukh Khan and Aishwarya Rai in *Josh* and down south legendary actors NTR and Savitri played each other's siblings onscreen.

The movie which is based on one of the biggest I.T. scams in history is currently under-post production.

Bollywood actor Suniel Shetty, Ruhi Singh, Naveen Chandra, and Navdeep are playing very important roles in the film.

Jeffrey Gee Chin from Los Angeles is donning the director's hat for *Mosagallu*.

Talented Hollywood cinematographer Sheldon Chau is said to be pushing his own limits for *Mosagallu*.

Produced by Vishnu Manchu under 24 Frames Factor in association with AVA Entertainment, the film was originally scheduled for a worldwide release this summer; but couldn't happen as planned due to the pandemic. The revised date for its release is expected to be announced soon.



## Celebs going green with #GreenIndia Challenge

**A**ccepting her co-star from the film *Ee Nagarani Emaindi* Abhinav Gomatam's #GreenIndiaChallenge, actress Simran Choudhary planted saplings at her home in Kompally on Monday. The actress further nominated her friends including playback singer Vedala Hemachandra, Shreya Rap, Sri Nitish among others, to take up the challenge. She also urged her fans and followers to do their bit to make this world a greener place to live. Actor Rupesh Kumar too, of 22 fame, took part in the #GreenIndiaChallenge and planted a sapling in his garden on the occasion of his birthday. He thanked Rajya Sabha MP Joginipally Santosh Kumar for the great initiative, while also asking fans on twitter to take up the challenge.



## Shweta Basu Prasad: My brother and I are like friends

**A**ctress Shweta Basu Prasad has revealed her Raksha Bandhan plans this year. Shweta said that her brother Rahul is good at gifting and the siblings are very close.

"My brother and I are like friends. We both love mithai but we are also health conscious so we try to feed each other mithai (sweets) because we know we are not supposed to be having," she said.

The *Kotha Bangarulokam* actress is also happy that her play is being slated for Raksha Bandhan. The play is available on Tata Sky Theatre.

She said, "In the play, I have a lot of relationships but the one between my brother and me is one of the most beautiful relationships."

## Saaho director Sujeeth ties the knot

**A**fter actors Nikhil Siddharth and Nithiin, another personality from the Telugu film industry has tied the knot during the lockdown. *Saaho* director Sujeeth Reddy got hitched to fiancée Pravallika over the weekend in Hyderabad. It was a close-knit ceremony with only family members in attendance.

Photos from the mehendi event and wedding are doing the rounds on social media. While the 29-year-old director opted for a traditional dhoti and kurta for his big day, the bride looked beautiful in a pink zari saree. Pravallika is a dentist by profession.

On June 10, the couple got engaged in an intimate ceremony. They were in a relationship for the past few years. While the engagement took place at a hotel in Hyderabad, the wedding happened at a private resort in the outskirts of the city.

Sujeeth made his directorial debut with *Run Raja Run* at the age of 23. Starring Sharwanand, Seerat Kapoor and Adivi Sesh in lead roles, the comedy-thriller was a success. His second film was the highly anticipated *Saaho* with big names from the Indian film industry — Prabhas, Shraddha Kapoor, Jackie Shroff, Neil Nitin Mukesh, Arun Vijay, Chunky Panday, Tinnu Anand and others.



## Bigg Boss 4 contestants under quarantine

**H**ere's big news on one of the most awaited announcements on the small screen for Telugu audiences. The most controversial yet loved show Bigg Boss is back on Star Maa with its 4th season!

Being one of the costliest reality shows for Telugu audiences, like always, there is huge buzz regarding the show.

The announcement was made recently by Star Maa that the reality show will hit the screens soon. Not very long ago, Tollywood actor Nagarjuna shot for the promo of the show as well.

According to the latest update, 16 participants have been finalized for the show out of the filtered 30 candidates. All the 16 participants have undergone COVID-19 tests and tested negative. As a precautionary measure, they are have been put under quarantine under the supervision of the Bigg Boss management.

They will be tested again right before the show begins and only then they will enter the sets of Bigg Boss. The show is going to start on August 30 at a grand level and the promo is expected to be out in a couple of days.

## Sonu Sood pledges support to woman whose home was ravaged by rains

**A**ctor Sonu Sood has pledged support for a family in West Bengal, whose home was ravaged by the rains. A Twitter user brought Sonu's attention to the family's plight.

Sharing a video on Twitter, the person wrote in Hindi, "Sonu Sood sir, this family is in Jalpaiguri. The woman's husband is dead. She has a small child but nothing to feed it. The rains have added to their woes. You are her last hope. Please save this family if you can, Sonu sir."

The actor replied to the tweet, and wrote, "Let's help our sister out on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. Let's build her a new house."

Sonu's gesture was met with warm appreciation by his fans. The actor has already found immense love for his sustained efforts to help migrants and the poor during the lockdown period. He started by arranging for buses and trains for migrant workers, and has now begun arranging flights for those stranded overseas. Priyanka Chopra recently called him an inspiration.

