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BCCI, VIVO SUSPEND IPL  
PARTNERSHIP FOR 2020

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

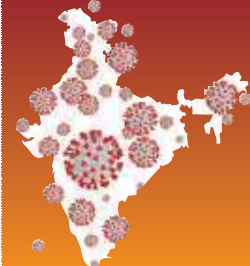


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RAKSHASUDU  
SEQUEL IN THE  
WORKS

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CORONA  
Cases in  
INDIA

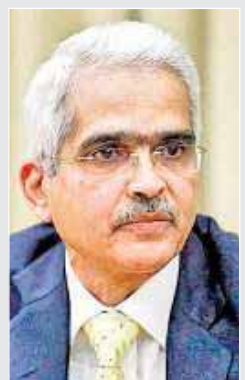
20,25,338

Recover  
13,77,384Deaths  
41,634NEP 2020 –  
What it means  
for school  
education

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TV actor Samir  
Sharma found  
hanging in  
Mumbai home

5

Inflation  
to remain  
elevated in  
Q2FY21: RBI Gov

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TODAY

ALMANAC

Month &amp; Paksham:

Shravana &amp; Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

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

Nakshatram: Purva Bhadrapada:

01:33 am

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start

any important work)

Rahukalam: 10:46 am – 12:21 pm

Yamagandam: 03:32 pm – 05:07 pm

Varjyam: 12:13 am – 01:59 am

Gulika: 07:36 am – 09:11 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: NIL

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

VIJAYAWADA  
WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy

Temp: 34/26

Humidity: 73%

Sunrise: 05:57 am

Sunset: 06:46 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated august 6, 2020 5:00 PM

## Location of Capital is State's prerogative, Centre tells HC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant development, the Union Home Ministry on Thursday filed a counter affidavit in the Andhra Pradesh High Court on the three capitals issue.

The Central government, in its affidavit filed before the HC, categorically stated that the final decision on the establishment of state capital comes under the purview of the state.

In its counter affidavit, the MHA made it clear that the issue of creation of a state capital was a matter within the purview of respective state governments and the Centre has no role to play in the decision on three capitals in Andhra Pradesh.

The MHA was also of the opinion that the Bills that were passed by the State legislative Assembly after discussion in the House would not come under the judicial review of the courts.

The MHA filed the counter affidavit in connection with a writ petition (20622/2018) filed in the High Court challenging the State Government's decision to decentralise administration through the creation of separate executive, legislative and judicial capitals in the state.

It said that the Justice Sivaramakrishnan Committee was set up in 2014 as necessitated by Section 6 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014. After conducting a detailed study, the panel submitted a voluminous report on the question of where to come up with the state capital on August 30, 2014.



## HC seeks expenditure details on Amaravati

● Construction works worth Rs 52,000 cr completed, court told

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Thursday sought complete details on the funds spent for the construction of the capital city in Amaravati so far.

Counsel for the Amaravati farmers Unnam Muralidhar brought to the notice of the court that construction projects worth Rs 52,000 crore were in various stages of completion in Amaravati region and all this money would go down the drain if the executive capital was shifted to Visakhapatnam.

Counsel produced an expenditure statement of AP Capital Region Development Authority in the High Court to support his argument.

The three-member bench of the High Court took serious note of this statement and sought to know from the state government as to how much money had been spent on Amaravati capital so far and what works have been halted. The bench wondered whether this huge amount of public money would go waste if the capital was shifted.

"Is it not a drain on the state exchequer? How many buildings have been completed? How many have come to a halt? How much money was spent on these structures? How much money is still to be paid to the contractors?" the bench asked.

## MHA affidavit says Rs 22K-cr released to AP

The Centre on Thursday informed the Andhra Pradesh High Court that it has released Rs 22,111.88 crore as post-devolution revenue deficit grant and another Rs 16,510 crore under different heads, including capital city development, to the state during 2014-20.

In a counter-affidavit on a petition seeking grant of Special Category Status to AP and implementation of the provisions of AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs said the issue of grant of SCS was considered keeping in view the larger interest of the nation.

The 14th Finance Commission did not make a distinction between special and general category states.

Its approach was to fill the resource gap of each state to the extent possible through tax devolution and, if such devolution alone could not cover the assessed gap, for certain states a revenue deficit grant was provided, it said.

Assistant Solicitor General N Harinath filed the counter-affidavit before a division bench of justices Rakesh Kumar, AV Seshu Sai and M Satyanarayana Murthy, opposing the petitioner's plea.

The Centre said the Finance Commission recommended a total award of Rs 22,113 crore to AP for the five-year period (from 2015). Out of this, Rs 22,111.88 crore have been provided to the state, it added.

## Colleges in AP to reopen on Oct. 15: Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has said that the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education should go up drastically with the State providing fees reimbursement and Vasati Devana incentives while colleges would reopen on October 15.

During a review meeting on Higher Education held here on Thursday, the CM said the GER should go up from the present 32.4 per cent to 90 per cent as the financial assistance in the form of fees reimbursement, and Vasati Deevana is being provided timely.

## With 10,328 fresh cases, AP nears 2 lakh infections mark

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Racing closer to the two lakh mark, the Covid-19 tally in Andhra Pradesh reached 1.96 lakh on Thursday as another 10,328 cases were added for the second consecutive day.

The Covid-19 toll in the state rose by 72 to 1,753 while another 8,516 patients had been discharged from hospitals in the last 24 hours, the latest bulletin said.

A 105-year-old woman in Kurnool recovered from the infection and had been discharged from hospital on Thursday, much to the delight of her family members.

"I was not scared when I got infected. Happy that I got cured," the woman, who has eight children, said on returning home.

After a total of 1.12 lakh coronavirus patients recovered so far, the state now has 82,166 active cases, the bulletin added.

## 82,116 active cases, but only 14,991 of 40,227 beds filled

SUMIT ONKA  
■ VIJAYAWADA

The real time data of the State Government's online portal shows that only 14,991 Covid positive persons are being treated in various hospitals, while there are 40,227 beds available, meaning availability of 25,236 beds.

However, the number of active cases in the State is 82,166 at 9 pm on Thursday.

With the total count of the Covid positive cases reported is 1,93,894, the number of patients discharged is

1,09,975 and deceased is 1,753.

People can get the details of bed availability in government and private hospitals on the dashboard [http://dashboard.covid19.ap.gov.in/ims/hospbed\\_reports/](http://dashboard.covid19.ap.gov.in/ims/hospbed_reports/)

The real time data on dashboard also explains that 82 per cent of the Covid affected people are either taking treatment at homes or in Covid care centres.

On paper, this is very healthy indicator. However, complaints of unavailability of beds at Covid hospitals are coming to fore and the Chief Minister has been insisting the authorities concerned to allot beds within 30 minutes.

The infection positivity rate climbed further up to 8.56 per cent after a total of 22.99 lakh samples were tested till date.

The state showed an increase in recovery rate at 57.36 per cent while the mortality rate slid marginally by

0.01 per cent to 0.89 per cent.

Worsening further, East Godavari reported another 1,351 cases in the last 24 hours, followed by Kurnool 1,285 and Anantapur 1,112.

## 105-year-old woman defeats Coronavirus

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

When the world shudders at the thought of getting infected, a 105-year-old woman, B Mohanamma, has shown how to conquer Covid-19 infection, with minimum fuss.

The centenarian has not only completely recovered from the infection and was discharged from a hospital in Kurnool recently, she has been gleefully flashing the victory sign in a show of self-confidence and courage.

Mohanamma tested positive for Covid-19 on July 19 and was rushed to the isolation ward of the Kurnool Government General Hospital for treatment.

She spent the mandatory 14-day period in the MM ward of the hospital where



doctors treated her with special care. Mohanamma's husband Madhava Swamy died in 1991. She has three sons and five daughters.

When she was admitted to the hospital, she was diagnosed with mild symptoms of Covid-19. But, as she developed difficulty in breathing, she was put on oxygen support.

## TTD priest on deputation in shrine dies of Covid-19

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

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

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

However, the TTD is yet to officially declare the demise of the priest.

It may be mentioned here that a former head priest of the TTD died of Covid-19 last month.

## Corona spread contained: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday asserted that the spread of coronavirus has been contained in the country, citing how half the total cases are from three states only and another 30 per cent from seven others.

His remarks come as the country is inching towards the grim mark of two million cases. It has already logged over 40,000 deaths and is recording more than 50,000 daily cases since the past few days. Speaking at a virtual meeting of WHO's Regional Director, South East Asia,

Poonam Khetrpal Singh with Health Ministers from the region on maintaining essential health services and public health programmes in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, Harsh Vardhan alluded to the efficacy of the government's containment strategy.

## 1 more child trafficked by Srusti Hospital staff traced

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

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

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

The racket through the IVF hospital came to light a few



days ago and that followed arrest of six people, including

two doctors, Dr P Namrata, MD of Universal Srusti

Hospital, Dr Tirmala an employee at the same hospital and six others for selling off a baby boy to a Kolkata-based couple. Digging into the case further, the police and medical officers carried out searches at Universal Srusti Hospital and also Padmaja Hospital.

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

Vizag city police chief RK

Meena said that they received a complaint from Chandaka Venkata Lakshmi of Chodavaram on July 30.

In her complaint, the woman stated that while pregnant, she visited Dr Jagga Rao Hospital at Chodavaram in Vizag district for a medical check-up in November 2019 where one Nooka Ratnam had informed Venkata Lakshmi that she knew a doctor at Srusti Hospital in Vizag and assured to perform the operation free of cost.

## Explosion in SPY Agro plant leaves worker dead

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

One person was killed and two others injured when a boiler heater exploded in the plant of the SPY Agro Industries Ltd, Kurnool district on Thursday.

This is the second incident in the same plant in a span of just over a month.

On June 27, an ammonia gas leak in the company, which belongs to former MP SPY Reddy, left the general manag-

er dead and three others injured.

According to reports, three people were working in the firm when the heater exploded.

Police, district officials, medical and fire personnel rushed to the plant immediately and initiated rescue operations. The injured were shifted to Nandyal government hospital for treatment.



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

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

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

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

# NEP 2020 – What it means for school education

tudes, substitutes for substance.

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

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

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

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

plans too.

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

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

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

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



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

to be seen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Student develops UV-E SAFE kit to check Covid

PNS ■ JAIPUR

A 23-year-old student, K Goutam Kumar, has developed an UV-E SAFE kit that helps in sanitising money, documents, files and other belongings within a minute. Kumar is pursuing entrepreneurship skills training from Bharatiya Skill Development University (BSDU).

Taking about his invention, Kumar said: "In times of a global pandemic like Covid-19, a sudden need to sanitise our belongings has emerged. These belongings could be mobiles, laptops or anything that we carry. We were also worried how academic material could be exchanged without the fear of infection. This was the reason behind this invention."

Describing the device, Prof Achintya Choudhury, President, BSDU, said, "It is a sanitation device that sterilises money, notes, documents, files and many more things that otherwise are impossible to sanitise through conventional means. The use of ultraviolet ensures that up to 99.9 per cent of bacteria and pathogens are killed in a minute.

"We cannot avoid carrying items such as mobile phone, jewellery, laptop, or an innocuous appearing letter and all are possible carriers of the pathogens they come in contact with. It is not always possible to clean these things with a sanitizer. Hence, UV E-SAFE kit could prove a great boon."

### VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES

<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 57,820 (10 gm)	
₹ 1,010	▲
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 71,500 (1kg)	
₹ 6,450	▲

### CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

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

### EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	365
VIJAYAWADA	405
VISAKHAPATNAM	405
<b>RETAIL PRICE</b>	<b>₹4.25</b>

# State tops in Corona cases in the country, alleges TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP government is not making any efforts though the Coronavirus threat was increasing day by day across the State, alleged TDP official spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhiram.

Pattabhi deplored that the State has now become Number 1 in the country in Covid tally and also fatalities rate. Andhra Pradesh's daily cases tally was put at an alarming 6.11 per cent as against 1.95 per cent in Maharashtra, 2.4 per cent in Telangana and 3.95 per cent in Karnataka.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, the TDP leader said that over 400 deaths took place in the last one week with the daily fatality rate put at 4.46 per cent in the State when compared to 1.69 per cent in Maharashtra, 3.67 per cent in Karnataka and 2 per cent in Telangana. Every 10 seconds, a Covid case was being reported in the State indicating the seriousness of the situation. At the same time, the State was standing at ninth



● TDP official spokesperson Kommareddy Pattabhiram said that over 400 deaths took place in the last one week with the daily fatality rate put at 4.46 per cent in the State when compared to 1.69 per cent in Maharashtra, 3.67 per cent in Karnataka and 2 per cent in Telangana

● Every 10 seconds, a Covid case was being reported in the State indicating the seriousness of the situation. At the same time, the State was standing at ninth position in recoveries. The State recovery rate was just 55.9 per cent as against 65 per cent in Maharashtra, 78 per cent in Tamil Nadu, 89.9 per cent in Delhi and 71.3 per cent in Telangana

position in recoveries. The State recovery rate was just 55.9 per cent as against 65 per cent in Maharashtra, 78 per cent in Tamil Nadu, 89.9 per cent in

Delhi and 71.3 per cent in Telangana.

Pattabhi slammed the Jaganmohan Reddy's regime for making 'bogus claims' on

testing. "As per the latest data released by the Centre, Andhra Pradesh has conducted just 13.09 lakh tests by August 4, while the State government's health bulletin claimed to have conducted a total 21.75 lakh tests by that time. When the Central list exposed bogus claims of AP earlier, Special Chief Secretary Jawahar Reddy clarified that it was a technical mistake. Now, it would not be possible to make similar excuses for the second time," he pointed out.

Pattabhi said that the online dashboard maintained by the government was also displaying wrong figures. "It showed 21,000 hospital beds and 86,000 quarantine beds as unoccupied. But the field level situation was that the virus positive patients were waiting and dying in cars and on the staircases at the hospitals for lack of Covid beds. Instead of making false claims, the government should at least create hope by giving better facilities and food at quarantine centres and conduct tests on time," he suggested.

# Government aims at providing better healthcare: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Putting at rest the criticism and reiterating the commitment of the government towards healthcare, Minister for Medical and Health Alla Krishna Srinivas (Nani) visited an isolation ward at the SVIMS hospital in Tirupati on Thursday.

Wearing personal protection equipment (PPE), he went around the ward and interacted with the Covid-19 patients and took their feedback about the facilities, services and grievances.

During his visit to the hospital the minister enquired about the medical services, food, drinking water and sanitation being provided in hospitals.

The State government is spending Rs 500 per day on each patient for providing a healthy diet and almost Rs 350 crore every month is being spent on Covid patients, he informed.

Tirupati Covid hospital inspection was as per the directive of the Chief Minister and to take direct feedback from the patients, he said. He stated that Coronavirus cases



● Alla Nani visits Covid-19 isolation ward at the SVIMS hospital in Tirupati and interacted with patients

● The State government is spending Rs 500 per day on each patient for providing a healthy diet and almost Rs 350 crore every month is being spent on Covid patients, the minister informed.

were declining in Chittoor district and asserted that doctors were taking precautions and providing better treatment. Andhra Pradesh is the

only State conducting over 50,000 Coronavirus tests every day and taking the best measures to contain the virus, he disclosed.



# 7 hills reverberates with rhythmic chants of Sundarakanda

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The environs of Tirumala resonated to the rhythmic chants of Sundarakanda akhanda patanam organised with grandeur at Nada Neerajana Mandapam on Thursday. With this fete, the Mantra Parayanam mullied by TTD has entered 119th Day, while Sundarakanda 57th Day.

Akhanda Sundarakanda patanam comprised 227 shlokas from dwitiya sarga (second chapter) to saphama sarga (seventh chapter) and on the shlokas from sasta sargas (six chapters) were recited by nearly 200 Vedic scholars, which provided a feel good experience to devotees. At the beginning of the programme, Additional EO AV Dharma Reddy said that TTD has mullied this sloka parayanam to protect the humanity from Covid-19 pandemic.

Speaking on the occasion, KS Avadhani, principal of Dharmagiri Veda Vignana Peetham at Tirumala, who is the prime lead of the recitation of shlokas, said, "In the entire epic of the Ramayana, Sundarakanda

holds a special place as it deals with the determination of Hanuman, who leaves for Lanka in search of Sita Devi.

The events in Sundarakanda bring confidence and hope from all angles. It shows the triumph of truth over evil. On July 7, we have recited 211 shlokas from pradhama sarga and today 227 shlokas from six chapters during akhanda patanam. We are confident that the recitation of shlokas in Sundarakanda will end the pandemic of Covid-19 soon," he added.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of the programme, Annamacharya artists presented Rama Dasa Kriti 'Charanamule Nammiti' and concluded by rendering a famous note penned by saint poet Annamacharya on Lord Hanuman, "Periginadu Choodaro Pedda Hanumanudu" in a melodious manner. Vice-chancellor of SV Vedic Varsity S Sudarshana Sharma, Vice-Chancellor of Rastriya Sanskrita Vidya Peetham Muralidhara Sharma, Annamacharya project director Dakshinamoorthy and other officers were present.

## ‘Take precautions to keep Corona at bay’

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada South Zone ACP S Suryachandra Rao appealed to people to take precautionary measures to keep the Covid-19 at bay. The ACP launched Nanova Hygiene Plus Sanitiser and Spray products here on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that due to the pandemic people are facing various problems to attend their daily routine.

To avoid falling prey to the deadly virus one should follow the guidelines prescribed by the government by using sanitisers, wearing masks and washing hands regularly and contain the virus from spreading.

# 3 kids lock themselves in car by accident, asphyxiated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry has changed the way hotel businesses function and manage their operations. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and OYO have come together to develop and design an online training and certification course specifically for the hospitality industry.

The course will focus on redesigning the sanitisation protocols and minimising person-to-person contact for a hotel in line with the standard operating procedures announced by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The certification course will help thousands of individual budget, mid-segment, boutique hotels and home stays in the country as well



as hospitality professionals to maintain and improve their safety and hygiene standards in line with government and industry benchmarks and best practices. Commenting on the development, Dilip Chenoy, Secretary-General FICCI, said, "The hospitality industry in India has both thousands of unorganised and organised players, who are vital contributors to both economic

opportunities as well as local tourism. Covid-19 has forced changes in operating procedures for all kinds of businesses across the globe and the hospitality industry is no exception to it, hence, any support to this large set of professionals and hotels will not only help them navigate the uncertainties better but also drive business and revitalise the tourism potential"

## Triple riding proving to be fatal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Triple riding has become a common phenomenon in the city. Especially the youth are indulging in triple riding. Police said that the Tuesday's triple riding incident in which two persons were killed on the spot was caused for driving in an inebriated condition. Lives of many youth are getting snuffed in the middle because of rash driving in a drunken state.

Generally, one of the triple riders gets down at the traffic intersections and catch the vehicle after it crossed the police. In fact, automobile companies manufacture two-wheelers for travel by two. It specifies clearly that only two persons should travel on it. In fact, engines of the motorcycles are designed for only two persons to travel.

# ‘Covid should be treated as acute inflam disease’

IANs ■ NEW YORK

In a comprehensive analysis of worldwide Covid-19 data, researchers have identified the key strategies to develop the effective therapeutics. The study, published in the Journal of Immunology, suggests that Covid-19 should be treated as an acute inflammatory disease and that the severity of infection is associated with the dysregulation of inflammatory immune responses and subsequent inability to develop protective immunity from the virus.

"Drugs that target the virus or suppress inflammatory immune responses have produced inconsistent results and might not be the best treatment



for patients with Covid-19," said study researcher Masoud Manjili from the Virginia Commonwealth University in the US.

"Instead, the use of drugs that modulate inflammation without compromising the adaptive

immune response could be the most effective therapeutic strategy," Manjili added. The majority of people infected with Covid-19 show flu-like symptoms and survives the disease. However, individuals with susceptibility factors, including

age (65 years and above), sex and underlying health complications are significantly more vulnerable to the infection because their immune response is in disarray.

"Although over 90 per cent of the infected individuals are asymptomatic or manifest non-critical symptoms and will recover from Covid-19, those with critical symptoms are in urgent need of treatment options," Manjili said.

Because viral loads are similar in symptomatic and asymptomatic patients with Covid-19, it appears that a dysregulated immune response is the primary cause of death as opposed to viral load, according to the study. The most serious consequences of Covid-19 are sep-

sis-like cytokine storm (a severe overreaction of the immune system), blood clots and respiratory or cardiovascular complications. In response to injury or infection, the immune system will normally react with an immediate inflammatory response to limit the infection and help develop a long-lasting, protective immunity against the virus within 7-10 days.

"However, when inflammation is not modulated or resolved after serving its purpose, it turns into hyperinflammation or becomes chronic and results in the inhibition of adaptive immune responses, tissue damage or organ failure, as evidenced in many cases of novel Coronavirus," the team said.



## Kesineni takes a dig at TDP leaders

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After keeping low for a few months, TDP MP from Vijayawada Kesineni Srinivas (Nani) is back at taking a dig at his own party leaders, including party president N Chandrababu Naidu.

After keenly watching his party leaders, particularly Naidu, making a hue and cry over the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government's orders forming three capital cities, Nani reacted sharply on Thursday accusing the TDP leaders of confining to mere statements and press conferences.

"We have to realise our own dreams. It is foolish to expect that our rivals would fulfil our dreams. Amaravati was the dream of Chandrababu Naidu for the future of the State. If it has to become a reality, the TDP should come to power in 2024. All the party leaders should strive in that direction. There is no use in conducting press meets and issuing paper statements," he said in a tweet on Thursday. It appears that Kesineni's comments are aimed at some party leaders like his rival Buddha Venkanna and Bonda Uma, who have been making aggressive statements against the capital shift.

# YSR Cheyutha, a game-changer for empowerment of women in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In yet another initiative that is intended to usher the State in an era of self-reliance through promotion of entrepreneurship among women for their economic empowerment, the government is all set to launch its game-changing scheme YSR Cheyutha on August 12.

The scheme will directly benefit about 25 lakh women belonging to SC, ST, BC and Minority communities in the age group of 45-60 years and is touted as one of the most important steps the government has been taking to revamp and fortify rural economy and women's empowerment in the State.

Each of the eligible beneficiaries of the scheme will be directly paid a total amount of Rs 75,000 in four years at the rate of Rs 18,750 per annum. Thus, the government will spend Rs 18,750 crore on the scheme.

YSR Cheyutha is the brain-child of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, who had gained first-hand information about the problems being faced by the womenfolk during his epic walkathon - the Praja Sankalpa Yatra. He was moved by the plight of women, who had apprised him of their



■ The scheme will directly benefit about 25 lakh women belonging to SC, ST, BC and Minority communities in the age group of 45-60 years and is touted as one of the most important steps the government has been taking to revamp and fortify rural economy and women's empowerment in the State

■ The primary objective of YSR Cheyutha is to improve the lot of women by helping them register economic progress. The government would provide marketing and technical assistance to women, who evince interest in investing the amount in businesses

unencumbered bank accounts for any business activity. They are free to invest the amount they receive for setting up small and medium-scale businesses.

The primary objective of YSR Cheyutha is to improve the lot of women by helping them register economic progress. The government would provide marketing and technical assistance to women, who evince interest in investing the amount in businesses.

The government, which has already entered into Memorandums of Understanding MoUs with national and international industry majors like Procter and Gamble, Anand Milk Union Limited (AMUL), Hindustan Uniliver Limited (HUL) and India Tobacco Limited (ITC), aims to strengthen rural economy armed with YSR Cheyutha and YSR Asara.

The companies will equip women with marketing and technical knowhow apart from providing them with capacity-building support to generate livelihood opportunities for them. The beneficiaries will be mapped with these companies based on their service locations. Training will be imparted to them on how to run retail business from inventory management to stock management.

## Bonda Uma flays Centre's affidavit on capital location

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The TDP objected to the Centre for filing an affidavit in the Andhra Pradesh High Court stating the capital of a State is decided by the respective State government and it has no role in it.

TDP former MLA Bonda Umamaheswara Rao on Thursday claimed that the Centre has a role since Amaravati was selected only based on the provisions of the Sivaramakrishnan Committee recommendations as per the Reorganisation Act -2014.

Addressing a press meet here on Thursday, Umamaheswara Rao strongly objected to the Central government filing a counter affidavit in the Andhra Pradesh High Court that it had no role in the Amaravati issue as the Capital decision was in the exclusive domain of the State government.

He pointed out that at the time of passing the AP Reorganisation Act-2014, the then ruling party and the opposition party at the Centre came together and separated Andhra

■ TDP former MLA Bonda Umamaheswara Rao on Thursday claimed that the Centre has a role since Amaravati was selected only based on the provisions of the Sivaramakrishnan Committee recommendations as per the Reorganisation Act -2014

■ Umamaheswara Rao also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for Amaravati when he promised all expected support such that Amaravati would be developed into a vibrant capital that would surpass even Delhi in grandeur and scale



■ The TDP leader reminded that already the High Court was established in Amaravati as per the Presidential order that was issued in consultation with the Supreme Court and the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court arrived and inaugurated the AP High Court

Pradesh with 13 districts out of the total 23 districts of united AP.

Umamaheswara Rao also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for Amaravati when he promised all expected support such that Amaravati would be developed into a vibrant capital that would sur-

pass even Delhi in grandeur and scale. He reminded that already the High Court was established in Amaravati as per the Presidential order that was issued in consultation with the Supreme Court and the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court arrived and inaugurated the AP High Court.

## 1 more child trafficked ...

Continued from page 1

Believing Ratnam, Venkata Lakshmi visited Srusti Hospital and gave birth on January 31, 2020. However, Ratnam along with Ramakrishna, Dr Tirumala, Dr Namrata, Dr Sarojini informed her that the baby was stillborn, and covered the child in a white cloth.

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

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

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

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

## Botsa ridicules Naidu's remarks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ridiculing the challenges and the subsequent remarks of TDP leadership, Minister for Municipal Administration Botsa Satyanarayana alleged that N Chandrababu Naidu has always put his personal interests ahead of peoples' interests.

Speaking to the media here on Thursday, he said, the TDP leader has flouted every law in the book to benefit himself and his coterie and concentrating all development in Amaravati was no different. If a political party differs with any policy of the ruling party it the turn of the opposition party to seek a reelection on the issue it has raised, he opined.

But here Naidu has raised an issue of their interests and spoken incoherently and has been passing remarks that the ruling party went back on his challenge, which is ridiculous. "It was TDP, which has been demanding for Amaravati being the sole capital and all development being concentrating there while our government under the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, has been advocating for a decentralised development. He has been trying to create a new world for himself and maintaining double standards with his double talk. Why anybody from YSRCP should



**"The TDP chief has flouted every law in the book to benefit himself and his coterie and concentrating all development in Amaravati was no different. If a political party differs with any policy of the ruling party it the turn of the opposition party to seek a reelection on the issue it has raised," Minister for Municipal Administration Botsa Satyanarayana opined**

resign, who was democratically elected," he asked.

If anybody has a problem, he must first quit and then argue, he said. Naidu's gimmicks are being watched by people and they know how to keep him in his place, he added. He is known to be patented to talk lies whenever required, he said and added that it was clear that the Chief Minister was bent on the development of all the regions equally.

He said the government was functioning in accordance with laws of the land and there was

no scope for any deviation as Amaravati would be the Legislative Capital of the State by all means. "We have declared in the Assembly that Amaravati would be developed. There is no going back on the word, then what is Naidu against," is the question posed by the Minister.

"The Sivaramakrishnan Committee was set up by the Centre but its recommendations were not emulated by the Naidu government. People of Vizag wanted development of their region, so also the people

of Vijayawada. It is not just the 29 villages of Amaravati that need to be developed but all-round development of the whole state that YSRCP government is aiming at," he said.

The Minister said those who want to join the YSRCP are welcome as far as they go by the party stand. He said the opposition party was going against the government stand of providing lands to the poor. He said the TDP was against providing land to the landless. It was against development of the region from Vizianagaram to Srikalaulam. He said Naidu was working for his own community than working for society on the whole.

Meanwhile, MLA Kolusu Parthasarathy challenged TDP leaders to come clean on their statement over spending Rs 52,000 crore towards the development of Amaravati and asked them to give details of where the money was being spent. He stated that Naidu had spent only Rs 7,000 crore for Amaravati and allocated the valuable lands to the real estate agents, cheating the farmers and Dalits. The previous government utterly failed to provide plots to the farmers who gave up their lands and neglected basic infrastructure development like constructing drains, laying roads and power lines.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry has changed the way hotel businesses function and manage their operations. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and OYO have come together to develop and design an online training and certification course specifically for the hospitality industry.

The course will focus on redesigning the sanitisation protocols and minimising person-to-person contact for a hotel in line with the standard operating procedures announced by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. The certification course will help thousands of individual budget, mid-segment, boutique hotels and home stays in the country as well as hospitality professionals to maintain and improve their

safety and hygiene standards in line with government and industry benchmarks and best practices.

Commenting on the development, Dilip Chenoy, Secretary-General FICCI, said, "The hospitality industry in India has both thousands of unorganised and organised players, who are vital contributors to both economic opportunities as well as local tourism. Covid-19 has forced changes in operating procedures for all kinds of businesses across the globe and the hospitality industry is no exception to it, hence, any support to this large set of professionals and hotels will not only help them navigate the uncertainties better but also drive business and revitalise the tourism potential. This course has been designed to help develop a uniform set of self-regulating guidelines and create supporting mechanisms and frameworks for our industry."

## 1 more explosion SPY plant...

Continued from page 1

Doctors of the Nandyal government hospital referred one of the three workers Dakshina Murthy to Kurnool Government Hospital as his condition was critical. Murthy died while receiving treatment at the hospital. The

other two workers recovered and were discharged from the hospital. It may be recalled that on June 27, one died and three others were injured after inhaling ammonia gas that leaked from a pipe in the plant. The general manager of the factory, Srinivasa Rao died in this gas leak.

## Priest on deputation ...

Continued from page 1

Chittoor District Administration has been enforcing Corona rules strictly in view of increasing cases in Tirumala. Because of the curbs, the intensity of the cases has come down, say the district authorities.

In fact, 170 TTD employees have so far tested positive for the virus. Some of them recovered from the virus and resumed duty.

## 105-yr-old woman conquers Covid with confidence

Continued from page 1

From there on, she was on the road to recovery gradually before getting herself completely cured of coronavirus.

Her will power and the innate courage to take on the dreaded disease has only complemented the treatment processes, making her recovery smooth and incident-free. Discharged from the hospital on July 31, she stands as a huge source of inspiration to draw confidence

from, for the many who are panicking at the very thought of being infected with the disease.

Born in 1915, Mohanamma boasts of great physiological endurance and superior body resistance.

Speaking about her recovery, she said that she had never seen an infection like Covid-19 before. She said that she was able to recover from the virus due to a healthy routine which also includes her daily dose of yoga and meditation.

## With 10,328 fresh cases, AP nears 2 ...

Continued from page 1

Worsening further, East Godavari reported another 1,351 cases in the last 24 hours, followed by Kurnool 1,285 and Anantapur 1,112.

Guntur registered 868 fresh cases, West Godavari 798, SPS Nellore 788, Visakhapatnam 781, Chittoor 755, Srikakulam 682 and Kadapa 604 till 10 am on Thursday.

East Godavari and Anantapur districts also reported 10 Covid-19 deaths each,

## 82,116 active cases, but only 14,991 of ...

Continued from page 1

The case fatality rate has also dipped below 1 per cent to 0.9 per cent if the latest data available is taken into consideration. It is quite intriguing to see the number of beds remaining vacant despite the state recording around 10,000

cases every day. The state also claims to be conducting over 60,000 tests daily. The dashboard also displays details of ventilators, oxygen beds, general beds and ICU beds across the State

The dashboard contains the data of total beds, beds occupied and beds available in all

categories. The dashboard gives real time data which gets auto-updated every time there is an admission or discharge from the hospital.

If the dashboard serves right data, only 18 per cent of the active cases are being treated at the hospitals.

Guntur nine and Chittoor eight. Krishna, SPS Nellore and Prakasam reported six casual-

ties each, Visakhapatnam four, Kadapa, Vizianagaram and West Godavari three each.

Kurnool and Srikakulam accounted for two new death cases each.

## Corona spread contained: Centre

Continued from page 1

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

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

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

ing 140 people per million per day," he said.

Harsh Vardhan also said that the country was "preparing for the pandemic as soon as China informed the World Health Organisation on January 7", over three weeks before the first case emerged. India had reported its first coronavirus case on January 30 when a student from Kerala, who was studying in China's Wuhan University, came back to India and tested positive for the deadly virus.

Harsh Vardhan also stressed that earlier viral outbreaks like the Avian Influenza, H1N1, Zika and Nipah had provided institutional memory in designing containment and management strategies.

## Location of capital location is State's prerogative ...

Continued from page 1

After conducting a detailed study, the panel submitted a voluminous report on the question of where to come up with the state capital on August 30, 2014. In 2015, the then TDP government declared Amaravati as its capital. On July 31, 2020, the YSRCP government decentralised the administration through a gazette notification.

According to the gazette, Visakhapatnam will be developed as the executive capital, Amaravati as legislative capital while Kurnool will be the judicial capital.

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan on July 31 gave his assent to two crucial Bills, the Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive

## HC calls for expenditure details on Amaravati

Continued from page 1

It also sought to know why the completed buildings had not been used, as it would result in their dilapidation.

"Where has this money come from? And who will bear this loss?" the court asked. The bench asked the government to serve notices on the state accountant general to furnish all the details and posted the case to August 14.

Hearing a batch of petitions, a three-judge bench comprising

Justice Rakesh Kumar, Justice M Satyanarayana Murthy and Justice A V Seshu Sai asked advocate Unnam Muralidhar to submit the details over construction in Amaravati.

On his part, Muralidhar submitted before the court that so far Rs 52,000 crore had been spent as per the AP Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) records. He stated that the funds were spent on infrastructure, government buildings, water, power supply and other works.

Development of all Regions Bill and AP CRDA Repeal Bill to pave the way for developing the three capital cities.

Following that, the state government issued directions notifying the Amaravati Metropolitan Region

The High Court expressed deep concern over the money that had so far been spent on construction of the capital in Amaravati. The High Court asked a volley of questions such as how many buildings were completed, how much money was spent and the outstanding amount to be paid to the contractors. During the TDP rule, former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu had built buildings for Assembly, Secretariat, High Court and Raj Bhavan.

Development Authority (AMRDA). The AP government issued orders replacing the APCRDA with AMRDA.

## Released Rs 22,111.88 cr to AP, Centre tells HC

Continued from page 1

The Centre said the Finance Commission recommended a total award of Rs 22,113 crore to AP for the five-year period (from 2015). Out of this, Rs 22,111.88 crore have been provided to the state, it added.

It also said a sum of Rs 3,979.50 crore was released out of Rs 4,117.89 crore assessed as resource gap for the period June 2, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

For the multipurpose Polavaram project on river

Godavari, the Centre said a sum of Rs 8,614.16 crore had been released so far.

The Ministry of Finance sought clarification (from the state government) on the audited statement of expenditure and revised cost estimate of the project at 2013-14 price level, for further release of funds.

It said the Advisory Committee of Union Ministry of Jal Shakti had on February 11, 2019 approved the revised cost estimate for an amount of Rs 55,548.87 crore at 2017-18 price level.



SHORT READS



Parts of UP witness thunderstorm, lightning

**LUCKNOW:** Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning occurred at isolated places in Uttar Pradesh on Thursday, the Meteorological Department here said. Monsoon has been normal in the state, it said. Dudhi (Sonbhadra) recorded 5 cm rainfall; Jhansi and Bahari (Bareilly) 4 cm each; Kalpi (Jalaun) and Atra (Banda) 3 cm each; and Karvi (Chitrakoot), Chunar (Mirzapur), Lalitpur, Hamirpur and Basgaon (Gorakhpur) 2 cm each, according to the weather department. Etawah was the hottest place in the state with a maximum temperature of 36.8 degrees Celsius. Rain or thundershowers are very likely at many places over eastern Uttar Pradesh and at a few places over the western part of the state over the next 24 hours, the MeT department said.

Union Minister flags off 'medicine van' for Bihar flood victims

**NEW DELHI:** Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda on Thursday flagged off a 'medicine van' for the Bihar flood victims. Delhi-based Thakurdwara Trust has provided medicines worth Rs 15 lakh for flood-affected people. Around 2,000 volunteers have been working on the ground to help the flood victims, a statement from the tribal affairs ministry said. The minister lauded the efforts of retired IAS officer Bhore Lal and his teammates at the Thakurdwara Trust for their selfless service to society, it said. Floods have claimed nine lives in Bihar. More than 66 lakh people across 16 districts have been hit.

Veteran CPI(M) leader Shyamal Chakraborty dies of COVID-19

**KOLKATA:** Senior CPI(M) leader Shyamal Chakraborty died of COVID-19 at a hospital in Kolkata on Thursday, party sources said. He was 76. Chakraborty, the three-time transport minister of West Bengal from 1982 to 1996, was admitted to the hospital after he tested positive for COVID-19 on July 30. He was also a two-time Rajya Sabha member and a veteran trade unionist. "He died this afternoon. He was on ventilation for the last few days," a party leader said. Chakraborty is the second notable politician from the state to die of COVID-19. Trinamool Congress MLA Tamonash Ghosh succumbed to the contagion in June. On Wednesday, Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation councillor Subhash Bose also died of COVID-19.



Heavy rains pound Kerala's northern dists

**PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM**

Heavy rains lashed north Kerala on Thursday and a red alert was issued for Idukki and Wayanad districts with Nilambur town getting briefly flooded after the Chaliyar river overflowed.

In its bulletin, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said a red alert has been issued to

Malappuram district for August 7 and an orange alert in nine districts of Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod till

Article 370 nullification India's internal matter, says Venkaiah

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Thursday advised nations, including those in India's neighbourhood, to refrain from commenting on its internal matters and asserted that the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir was taken in the larger interest to protect the unity, integrity and sovereignty of the country.

He also said that India was a parliamentary democracy and the decision to abrogate Article 370 provisions, which accorded special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was taken after detailed discussion in Parliament and with the support of majority of the members.

He made these remarks while delivering the first Sushma Swaraj Memorial Lecture, organised by Panjab University, according to an official statement.

His comments come close



on the heels of China making fresh attempt to raise the Kashmir issue at the UN Security Council.

The Ministry of External Affairs has said that New Delhi "firmly" rejects Beijing's "interference" in the country's internal affairs.

According to the statement, "Naidu wanted other nations to mind their own issues rather than interfering in the affairs of other countries."

Referring to the feelings expressed by the late Sushma

Swaraj on Article 370 before her death, the vice president said that as the external affairs minister, she used to articulate India's position quite efficiently and in a "sweet and sober manner".

"But at the same time, she used to convey the stand of the country in a firm manner," the statement said quoting him.

Paying tributes to Swaraj, he described her as an ideal Indian woman. She was an able administrator who left an indelible imprint on every

position she had held, he said.

Urging young politicians to look up to her as a role model and emulate her qualities, Naidu said Swaraj was a wonderful human being, who was always considerate and prompt in her response to any request, be it friends, supporters or people at large.

"The fact that she was elected to Lok Sabha on seven occasions and to the assembly thrice shows how immensely popular she was with the people," he said.

Referring to her qualities, he said her wit, humane nature and promptness in responding to any problem were in full display on the social media when she was the external affairs minister. The vice president said she was loved by millions of countrymen and was one of the most popular Indian foreign ministers in recent times.

Naidu said she was a passionate nationalist and always expressed her views in a forthright manner.

EIA 2020: Setback for Centre

**PNS ■ BENGALURU**

The Karnataka High Court has directed the Centre not to publish the final notification of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) 2020 till September 7, observing that the draft was not publicised in vernacular languages.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreenivas Oka and Justice Ashok S Kinagi passed the interim order on Wednesday on a plea by United Conservation Movement, restraining the government from finalising the draft EIA 2020 unless wide publicity was given to it in local languages.

The bench also maintained that the Ministry should give reasonable opportunity and time to the citizens to file their objections and suggestions till the next date of hearing.



Oppn slams government

**BENGALURU:** As flood situation looms large in several parts of Karnataka, Leader of Opposition Siddaramaiah accused the state government of having 'failed' to come to the rescue of those affected and raised questions about its very existence. In a series of tweets, the former Chief Minister, who is currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital here urged Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa to immediately distribute the work to ministers and officers. "There is heavy downpour in various parts of Karnataka, disrupting livelihoods of many people. The govt has failed to come to their rescue. Do we even have an existing govt?" Siddaramaiah tweeted.

DCs to closely monitor the situation & take necessary measures. Also ordered immediate release of Rs 50 crores for emergency relief purposes," he tweeted last night.

A statement released by the CMO on Thursday said, Yediyurappa has directed the district in-charge Ministers to take precautionary measures in the wake of heavy rainfall across the state. He instructed the ministers to remain in their constituencies and tour the damaged areas and also directed them to undertake relief distribution and other necessary measures.

Rain batters several parts of K'taka, flood situation looms large

**PNS ■ BENGALURU**

Battered by torrential rains, several parts of Karnataka are facing a flood-like situation for the third consecutive year, putting lives and property at risk.

Several districts of the state's coastal, Malnad and north interior regions are receiving heavy rains and the showers are expected to continue, while there are reports of landslides in hilly areas of Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru districts.

With flood-like situation in several parts of the state, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, who is currently undergoing treatment for COVID-19 infection at a private hospital here, has ordered immediate release of Rs 50 crore for emergency relief. "In wake of heavy rains in several parts of the state, I have instructed the Chief Secretary to review the situation and issued instructions to

'No benefit of plasma therapy in reducing COVID-19 mortality risk'

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Convalescent plasma therapy did not show benefit in reducing mortality risk among COVID-19 patients, according to an interim analysis of a randomised controlled trial done at AIIMS here to assess the efficacy of this mode of treatment. The therapy involves taking antibodies from the blood of a person who has recovered from COVID-19 and transfusing those into an active coronavirus infected patient to help kickstart the immune system to fight back the infection. AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria told PTI on Thursday no clear mortality benefit of convalescent plasma therapy was seen during a trial conducted among 30 COVID-19 patients.

During the trial, one group of patients was given convalescent plasma therapy along with the standard supportive treatment while the other group only received standard



treatment. The number of fatalities recorded in both the groups was equal and there was not much clinical improvement in the condition of patients, he said.

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

He also underlined that plasma has to be tested for its safety and should have sufficient antibody to be useful to COVID-19 patients. The efficacy of convalescent plasma therapy in moderate to severe coronavirus-infected patients was discussed in the third National Clinical Grand Rounds (CGR) on COVID-19 held on Wednesday.

DMK asks govt to cancel 'e-pass' system in TN

**PNS ■ CHENNAI**

DMK President M K Stalin on Thursday asked the AIADMK government not to create an "artificial barrier" for travel by people and demanded immediate cancellation of the e-pass system for inter-district journey.

Applications seeking passes even for emergencies have been rejected many times though the government had said permission would be given for inter-district travel for medical emergencies, deaths and marriages, he alleged adding "the e-pass system in the AIADMK government is a big failure."

Citing news reports on alleged corruption in issuance of e-pass in places including Chennai, he said, "extending the system and hassling people



is inhuman and counter-productive." Since March 25, people could not make inter-district journeys even for emergencies and they were being harassed, he alleged. When the Central government itself has announced that e-pass is not compulsory, the "AIADMK government continuing to have it with an ulterior motive will not be a solution for the affected people," he said.

Woman killed; minor girl injured in elephant attack in C'garh

**PNS ■ KORBA**

A 25-year-old woman was killed and her five-year-old niece injured when a wild elephant attacked their house in Chhattisgarh's Korba district, a forest official said on Thursday.

The incident took place in Bodrapara village under Etmannagar forest range late on Wednesday night, said Shama Faruque, divisional forest officer of Katghora forest division.

A tusker tried to destroy a wall of a mud house and



attacked the family while they were sleeping, she said.

While a villager identified as Jaikaran managed to escape, the pachyderm picked up his wife Chandrika Bai and slammed her on the ground,

killing her on the spot, the official said.

The deceased woman's niece was injured while fleeing the spot and is currently undergoing treatment at a primary health centre, she said.

An instant relief of Rs 25,000 has been given to the kin of the deceased, while the remaining compensation of Rs 5.75 lakh will be released after the completion of formalities, the official added. The victim's family had also been evacuated, but they returned to their home recently, the official said.

TMC not keen on attending Parliament's monsoon session

**PNS ■ KOLKATA**

The Trinamool Congress is likely to give the monsoon session of Parliament a miss if it commences from August, a senior party leader said.

The party, however, would take a call on attending the session if it is held in September, he said.

Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned sine die on March 23, nearly two weeks before schedule, as the budget session was curtailed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Last week, the Lok Sabha speaker had called me regard-

ing the possibility of beginning the session in August. The party has told the speaker that it will not be able to attend the session if it starts this month," TMC Lok Sabha party leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay told PTI.

"We also won't be able to attend the meetings of the parliamentary committee this month," he added.

If the session commences from September, TMC would discuss the matter and take a call on it, Bandyopadhyay said.

"As per norms, there cannot be a gap of more than six months between two sessions.

Dalai Lama urges govts, individuals to work for achievement of peace

**PNS ■ DHARAMSALA**

The Dalai Lama on Thursday, the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, urged governments, organisations and individuals to work for achieving a demilitarized world and peace.

"Despite many great developments that took place during the 20th century, it was also

an era of violence in which some 200 million people were killed, including the horrific use of nuclear weapons. Now, in our increasingly interdependent world, we have a chance to make this a more peaceful century," said Dalai Lama in a statement. "On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the atom-



ic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I take the opportunity to urge governments, organizations and individuals to rededicate themselves to making the achievement of peace the centrepiece of our lives," he said. When conflicts arise they should be settled through dialogue, not the use of force, he further said.

Hospital fire: Brave attendant saves 3 elderly

**PNS ■ AHMEDABAD**

A 25-year-old attendant showed presence of mind and unflinching courage as he saved the lives of three elderly patients from a raging fire that broke out early on Thursday at an Ahmedabad-based hospital, where he works.

Eight other patients- five men and three women- who were being treated at the ICU ward of the COVID-19 designated Shrey Hospital in Navrangpura area of the city, died in the blaze, fire brigade



officials said.

The fire broke out around 3.30 am on the fourth floor of

the four-storey facility, which is one of the 60-odd private hospitals authorised by the

Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) to treat coronavirus patients.

When the fire broke out, there were 11 patients on the fourth floor.

According to police, a special ICU chamber was created on the fourth floor for critical COVID-19 patients.

Hospital attendant Chirag Patel, who risked his own life and saved three elderly patients from the blaze, said the fire was first spotted by another attendant on the fourth floor around 3 am.

"When I went to the fourth floor after that, I saw flames coming out from a monitor of some medical equipment near a patient's bed. Soon, that patient's hair caught fire. I doused it immediately," Patel told reporters after giving his statement to the police.

"Just as I pulled the bed away from the monitor, another attendant's PPE suit caught fire. Luckily, a doctor came upstairs with a bucket of water and poured it on the attendant and saved him.

157 new COVID-19 cases in Indore

**PNS ■ INDORE**

As many as 157 people tested positive for coronavirus in Madhya Pradesh's Indore district in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 8,014, a health official said on Thursday.

After the easing of restrictions in the last one month, there has been a spurt in COVID-19 cases in the state's industrial hub.

As many as 2,060 samples were tested in the last 24 hours and out of these, 157 came out positive for coronavirus. With this, the total number of cases in Indore has risen to 8,014, in-charge Chief Medical and Health Officer Poornima Gadariya said. In the last four months, 325 patients have died due to the disease while 5,729 people have recovered, she said.

As per official figures, COVID-19 cases here crossed the 7,000-mark on July 27, and nearly 1,000 new cases got added in the last 10 days. The death rate due to COVID-19 in the district stands at 4.05 per cent as against the national average of 2.07 per cent, as per an analysis of the data.



SHORT READS



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

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

UP CM asks officials to intensify fight against COVID-19

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

BJP leaders praise new Jammu & Kashmir LG Sinha

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

BSF constable held in cross-border smuggling case dismissed

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Ram temple ceremony historic, says Muslim body

PNS ■ BHOPAL

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

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

Day after Ram temple event, prayers offered at Hanumangarhi

PNS ■ AYODHYA

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

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

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

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

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

They might have waiting for



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

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

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

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

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

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

'Pak trying to sneak weapons into J-K'

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

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

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

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

Another modus operandi of Pakistan to dispatch weapons



Dilbag Singh

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

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

504 separatist leaders sign good behaviour bond

PNS ■ SRINAGARI

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

TV actor Samir Sharma found hanging in Mumbai home

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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



Samir Sharma

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

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

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

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

On July 27, Sharma posted

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

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

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

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

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

Maliwal pulls up police officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



Varsityies, colleges have been asked to share activities in this regard on the university activity monitoring portal maintained by UGC

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

Create awareness about NEP, varsities told

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

"There is need to create awareness about NEP amongst teachers, students, officials and other stakeholders in the higher education system. In this regard, you are requested to conduct webinars and related online activities to discuss various policy highlights and implications of the policy with various stakeholders," UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain said in a letter to Vice Chancellors.



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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Choice between 3 or 4 year undergraduate courses, multiple entry and exit options in degree courses, adding 3.5 crore seats in higher education institutions, which will now have a single regulator, discontinuation of M.Phil programmes and fixation of fees are among the higher education reforms outlined in the new NEP.

The policy has proposed setting up of a 'single overarching umbrella body for the entire higher education'.

The Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) will have distinct and independent bodies, which will each assume separate functions of accreditation, funding, and

academic standard setting. These bodies will replace autonomous bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

"Union Minister for HRD Ramesh Pokhriyal, Union Minister of State Sanjay Dhotre would also be participating in the event. A number of dignitaries, including the chairman and members, committee for the draft NEP as well as eminent academicians and scientists will speak on different aspects of the National Education Policy," the statement said.



## New L-G for Kashmir

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



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

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

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

## Monumental apathy

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



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

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

# Religion vs culture

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



PRAFULL GORADIA

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

explain the multiplicity of Hindu denominations. One of the few common factors that runs through all of them is *karma*, leading to *bhagya* or fate; deed causes destiny. This equation is as near as faith can get close to science or physics; for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

To illustrate the liberality of the inductive approach, let us take a hypothetical example. Let us assume four Hindus from four directions of India discussing the subject of "roses." The person from the east could claim that "roses" are always white. One from the west could contend that "roses" are always red and no other colour. The northerner would insist that he and his friends have only seen pink "roses." The south Indian would probably laugh and contradict all the three, saying "roses" are yellow and he has seen none other. The argument could go on for a while but would not lead to a quarrel. There would not be any agreement on the colour of the roses but the four would most likely to agree to disagree.

If a person worshipping an Abrahamic religion were present at the debate, he could insist that roses are red; the other colours are probably weeds or perhaps flowers other than roses.

This fundamental difference between the deductive and inductive approaches is clear and sharp. The former insists on its viewpoint and does not concede the opposite contention; hence fights and wars have been frequent. For the deductive to be at peace with the inductive is more difficult. This is the Hindu-Muslim syndrome

quent. For the deductive to be at peace with the inductive is more difficult. This is the Hindu-Muslim syndrome. While the Sultans and Nawabs ruled, there was no way the Hindus could riot. This violent civil phenomenon began after these rulers were brought down and an equalisation set in.

Remember that the dethroning work was performed by the British East India Company; Robert Clive in the east vanquished Nawab Sirajudduala in 1757. Lord Wellesley saw the conclusive end of Tipu Sultan in 1799 while Lord Dalhousie pushed out Nawab Wajid Ali Shah for the company to take over Awadh in 1856. These were the three corners of India. The western or fourth corner, comprising Rajasthan and Gujarat, remained mostly with the local principalities. Gwalior, Indore, Kolhapur and others survived as princely States until independence in 1947.

Uncannily, there have not been Hindu-Christian riots although there have been incidents of Muslims killing Christians, especially in Pakistan. What the circumstance is in that country we do not know. We do know though that we need domestic peace and there is no alternative but to co-exist respecting each other's limits than being confrontationalist. And to do so is not too difficult. As we are bound by Indic culture.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. Views expressed are personal)

## SOUNDBITE

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



Former England captain —Nasser Hussain

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



Actor —Janhvi Kapoor

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



US Defense Secretary —Mark Esper

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



Kerala Chief Minister —Pinarayi Vijayan

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Justice should prevail

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

Tushar Anand  
Patna

### Reality beyond temple

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

### Trolls and their impact on social media

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



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

M Pradyu  
Kannur

### Pakistan at it again

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

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

Devendra Khurana  
Bhopal

### Corona spiral

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

Shambhavi  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
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FIRST COLUMN

## Race to space is hotting up

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



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is a policy analyst)

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



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

# A rural Indian spring

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



MOÏN QAZI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is a well-known development professional)

# India is choking its rivers with sewage

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



KOTA SRIRAJ

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

The situation is expected to get

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is an environmental journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



## MAPPING OPTIONS

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



CAPSULE



Rupee settles flat at 74.94 against US dollar

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



Gold rises Rs 225, silver jumps Rs 1,972

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



Paytm appoints Bhavesh Gupta as CEO of lending biz

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

# Inflation to remain elevated in Q2FY21: RBI Guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

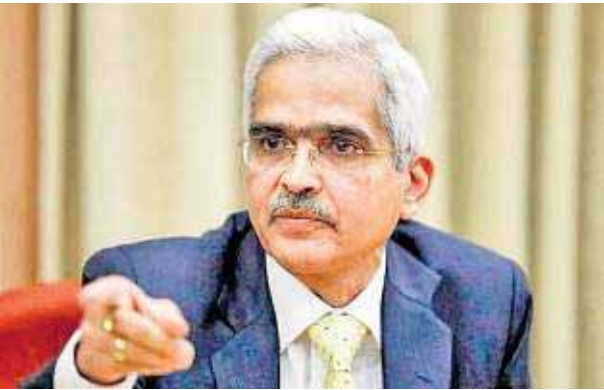
Higher domestic taxes on petroleum products have resulted in elevated domestic pump prices and will impart broad-based cost push pressures going forward, Das said further.

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

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

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

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



easing cycle last year.

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

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

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

necessary to revive growth".

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

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

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

## RBI TO ALLOW OFFLINE PAYMENTS THROUGH CARDS ON PILOT BASIS

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

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

and Regulatory Policies'.

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## Start-ups to be under priority sector lending category

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

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

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



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

## 'Innovation Hub' to promote financial inclusion

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

There has been a criticism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Glenmark introduces higher strength of FabiFlu

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

A higher pill burden has

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

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



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

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

## Aquaconnect launches 3 centres in Andhra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



Somasundaram said at the virtual launch of the HUBS.

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

The rapid rise of COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent

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

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



tracted sharply in Q1 FY2021, it said.

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

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

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

Accordingly, the outlook on the sector has been revised

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

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





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



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

## Children with special needs LEFT BEHIND DURING PANDEMIC

**T**en-year-old Madhav (name changed), attends school, but is non-verbal. He used to spend his days learning from a special education teacher, interacting with peers and working with speech, physical and occupational therapists. The 10-year-old’s moods worsened and his distractions only grew as the days passed by, after his school shut in March due to the Coronavirus outbreak. This behaviour of his perturbed the family and they were worried to no end. Though Madhav eventually calmed down after a few weeks, the family was at its end to make sense of his erratic behaviour.

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

experts alike are definitely worried about their emotional state in these intense times, compounding the concern is the impact of lack of in-person instruction on children with special needs in the long run. These Special Children have unique needs and deserve greater personal attention, continuous engagement and more consistent care. Extraordinary situations like the current one leading to closure of schools and non-emer-

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

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

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

officially approved by ASHA (American Speech and Language Association) in 2005, and more than 27 studies and articles show it is as effective as in-person therapy. It may not be suitable for every child or adult, but the majority of the special needs persons can benefit. Tele-practice, also known as “online speech therapy” involves video conferencing, interactive activities, assessments, and progress tracking. Keeping the child’s interest in mind, systematic plans are discussed with parents before the session and children are encouraged to perform activities using toys and household items which are easily available at home and more, through a private and secure virtual classroom. The patient gets the therapy right at his home from a certified therapist over the Internet.

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

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

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



## Falling for the shorter format

Short films, despite not taking a lot of time to tell a story or give a message, have always been neglected by a majority of us. The lockdown, however, has made a lot of people consume and create content for the shorter format. Talking to *The Pioneer’s* **SHIKHA DUGGAL** about his relationship with short films and where does he see its progress in the upcoming years is **Ajit Nair**, a filmmaker, and actor from Hyderabad



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

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

lies in the director’s mind — they are the stepping stones to your debut in a mainstream film industry. Enormous promotions on social media help as well. They can make viral your piece of work in minutes by creating hype in viewer’s minds around the launch,” adds this artist who began his acting career as a child artist on *Doordarshan* television, Telugu. Interestingly, some of the films in the last few years that make the biggest impression have a shorter running time. A filmmaker wants to show everyone everything — their vision, hopes, dreams, or aspirations, while also dealing with time constraints. OTT is also becoming a thing, but a short film’s authenticity remains on YouTube channels!

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

**AJITH NAIR**  
FILMMAKER



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

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

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

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



## Caring for the elderly

**T**he Rotary Club of Secunderabad Sunrise embarked on a novel and need-of-the-hour project called ‘COVID Care For The Elders’ as a mark of gratitude and concern for the elderly. The project was formally flagged off by President of the club Vijay Rathi along with the District Governor, NV Hanmantha Reddy and Rotarian Kamal Jay, Assistant Governor of Rotary District 3150. As part of this project, the club distributed medical equipment and medicines to Home for the Aged to fight against the COVID-19 battle. A vehicle with these supplies was has gone to all the 40 Homes to handover the much need medical supplies and preventive medicine and equipment. The total number of beneficiaries of this project is over 2,000 inmates belonging

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



# NCW issues fresh notices to Bollywood celebs in sexual assault case

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

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

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

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

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

"They are double-faced

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

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



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

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

Prince Narula and Esha Gupta.

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

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

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

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

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



## Rohit Shetty pitches in to help cine workers

Filmmaker Rohit Shetty is pitching in to support cine employees in Bollywood. The filmmaker, who also hosts *Khatron Ke Khiladi*, has decided to use a portion of his remuneration from the currently-airing special edition of the adventure reality TV

show to support workers such as the junior artistes, background dancers, stuntmen, lightmen and others, by directly sending money to their accounts. He started shooting for the special edition, titled *Khatron Ke Khiladi: Made In India*, from Sunday. The season will be shot entirely in Mumbai,

unlike past seasons that were mostly filmed in exotic foreign locales. The season will witness champions from previous seasons in action. Contestants of the India edition include: Karan Wahi, Rithvik Dhanjani, Harsh

Limbachiya, Rashami Desai, Nia Sharma, Jasmine Bhasin, Aly Goni and Jay Bhanushali. It started airing from August 1. Earlier this year, Shetty contributed to FWICE and the photographers who were homebound due to the lockdown caused by the Covid pandemic.

# 'No' discharge plans for Abhishek Bachchan from hospital yet



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

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

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

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

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

## CAPTAIN MARVEL sequel gets a director



Filmmaker Nia DaCosta will direct the sequel to the 2019 superhero hit, *Captain Marvel*. With the sequel, DaCosta will be the fourth woman, and the first Black woman to direct a Marvel Studios film, following Boden, Cate Shortland (*Black Widow*), and Chloé Zhao (*Eternals*).

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



ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

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SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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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

1 The least dangerous

3 Become larger

7 A great river in Egypt

8 A black symbol on playing cards

10 Alters

13 A bright red colour

16 An archer fires at this

17 Do a sketch

18 The capital city of Italy

19 Every twelve months

DOWN

1 \_\_\_\_ and daughters

2 Extremely dirty

4 Very impolite

SOLUTION

CONTINUED

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Most Read NEWS

Woman's belly grows 'uncontrollably'

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



Man's romantic proposal burns apartment down

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



Man breaks toes off 200-year-old statue!

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



Satellites reveal hidden colonies of Penguins

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



SINGLES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



BCCI, Vivo suspend IPL partnership for 2020

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

Inter, Man Utd reach Europa quarters

AFP ■ GELSENKIRCHEN

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



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

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

Sanchez joins Nerazzurri for free

AFP ■ MILAN

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

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



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

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

Shan's 156 drives Pak to 326

AP ■ MANCHESTER

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



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

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

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

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

NO PROBLEM IN TOURING PAK

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

PL revert to 3 substitutions

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

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



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

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

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

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





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



# RAKSHASUDU SEQUEL IN THE WORKS

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



## COLOUR PHOTO teaser registers impressive numbers

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

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

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



## Abhishek Nama to produce a spy thriller

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

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

## Thiru game for challenging roles

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

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

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

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

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

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

— NG



## Shruti Haasan set to release original track 'EDGE'

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

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

year.

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

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

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

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

The song is slated to release on August 8.

## Vijay Deverakonda posts picture with his 'cute beast'

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

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

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

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

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

