



## the pioneer

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VIJAYAWADA, SATURDAY AUGUST 8, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

CHIRU IN  
VEDALAM  
REMAKE?

Page 12

15 DEAD IN LANDSLIDE IN KERALA  
AFTER HEAVY RAIN, 12 RESCUED

At least 15 people have been killed after heavy rain caused a landslide in Kerala's Idukki district early Friday morning. Twelve others have been rescued so far and are undergoing treatment at Munnar's Tata General Hospital. Officials say the landslide happened in the Rajamalai area of the district, which is around 25 km from the tourist town of Munnar. Between 70 and 80 people lived in the area, officials said, adding that they do not know, at this point, how many more are trapped under the mud. Taluk officials said a connecting bridge was swept away yesterday, making access to the area difficult. Rescue teams have also been slowed by tough terrain.

PM TO INAUGURATE CHENNAI-ANDAMAN  
& NICOBAR SUBMARINE CABLE PROJECT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the Chennai-Andaman and Nicobar Island Submarine Cable System, which will provide better connectivity to the archipelago, on August 10, a senior BSNL official has said. A submarine communications cable is a cable laid on the seabed between land-based stations to transmit telecommunication signals across stretches of ocean and sea. The most-awaited launch of the Chennai and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (CANI) Submarine Optical Fibre Cable Connectivity project is finally over. The Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the project... on the 10th of this month," BSNL CGM, Andaman and Nicobar Telecom, Murali Krishna, wrote to the Union Territory.

PROF PRADEEP KUMAR JOSHI  
APPOINTED UPSC CHAIRMAN

Educationist Pradeep Kumar Joshi was on Friday appointed the chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which conducts the civil services examination to select the country's bureaucrats and diplomats, officials said. Joshi is currently a member in the Commission. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy by Arvind Saxena, the outgoing chairman of the UPSC, according to an official statement. Joshi joined the Commission as its member on May 12, 2015. Prior to joining the Commission, he was the chairman of the Chhattisgarh Public Service Commission and the Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission, the statement issued by the UPSC said.

HC QUASHES MAHA'S 'DISCRIMINATORY'  
ORDERS ON SENIOR FILM, TV ARTISTES

The Bombay High Court on Friday quashed the provisions of the two circulars issued by the Maharashtra government that barred TV and film artistes above 65 years of age from resuming shootings and related work during the coronavirus lockdown, terming them "discriminatory". A bench of Justices SJ Kathawalla and RI Chagla, while setting aside the GRs (government resolutions) issued by the state, held that such restriction was "discriminatory", and breached the fundamental rights of the artistes to practice their trade and earn a livelihood with dignity.

AP govt sets up panel  
to reorganise districts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday kick-started the process for reorganising the districts in the state from 13 to 25 for bringing the administration at the district-level closer to the people with the objective of improving the lives of the citizens.

Turning each Parliamentary constituency into a new district by dividing the existing one is an election promise of the ruling YSR Congress as the present districts "are large in size and have become unwieldy to administer."

Last month, the state Cabinet gave the go-ahead for the district reorganisation plan and, accordingly, a six-member committee headed by Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney was constituted on Thursday to study the various aspects involved.

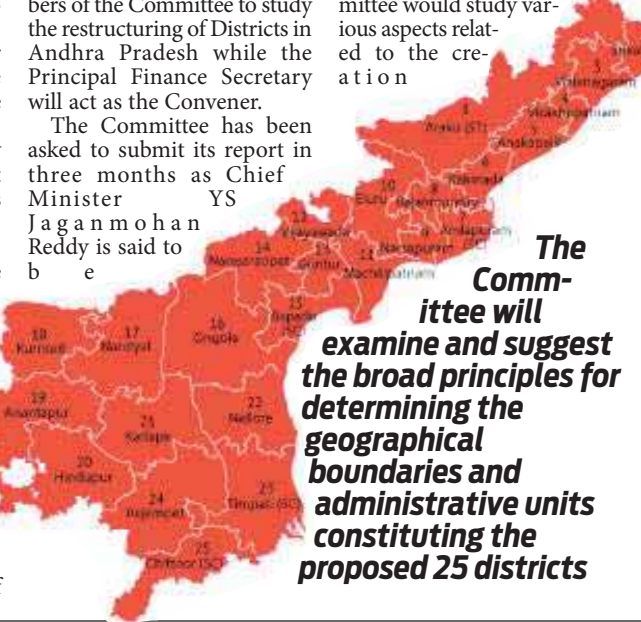
Chief Commissioner of

Land Administration, General Administration Secretary (Services), Planning Secretary, a representative from the Chief Ministers Office will be members of the Committee to study the restructuring of Districts in Andhra Pradesh while the Principal Finance Secretary will act as the Convener.

The Committee has been asked to submit its report in three months as Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is said to be

keen on completing the exercise by March 31, 2021, official sources said. Issuing an order in this regard, the Chief Secretary said the committee would study various aspects related to the creation

**The Committee will examine and suggest the broad principles for determining the geographical boundaries and administrative units constituting the proposed 25 districts**



of new districts and the measures to be taken to optimally utilise human and financial resources at all levels.

The Committee will examine and suggest the broad principles for determining the geographical boundaries and administrative units constituting the proposed 25 districts and the steps to be taken for ensuring that the expenditure (both one-time and recurring) is kept to the minimum.

Among others, it will also study the optimal use of existing infrastructure and existing human resources and redeployment at all levels for facilitating the smooth functioning of the restructured districts, the order said.

There has, however, been opposition within the YSRC to the formation of new districts with a Lok Sabha constituency as the base.

16 killed, many injured as  
AIE flight skids off runway

PNS ■ KOZHIKODE

Sixteen people were killed and several others injured when a Dubai-Calicut Air India Express flight with 191 passengers and crew on board overshot the runway here and fell into a valley, breaking into two portions, on Friday evening, police sources said.

The mishap occurred at 1941 hrs. No fire was reported at the time of landing, an AIE statement said.

Police said 16 people were killed in the accident.

The Civil Aviation Ministry said the flight IX 1344 operated by B737 aircraft from Dubai overshot runway at Kozhikode at 7.41 PM on Friday. "No fire reported at the time of landing," it noted.

There were 174 passengers, 10 infants, 2 Pilots and 5 cabin crew on board the aircraft, the ministry added.

"As per the initial reports rescue operations are on and passengers are being taken to hospital for medical care. We will soon share the update in



Deepak Sathe, Pilot

this regard," the ministry stated. Help centres are being set up in Sharjah and Dubai, the

statement said. A DGCA statement said after landing at Runway 10, the plane continued running till the end of the runway and fell into the valley and broke into two portions.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressed shock over the accident.

CMO sources said Chief Minister spoke to Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and the latter assured him all help and assistance from the Centre.



Indian Navy warships presence increased across Indian Ocean

4



Naidu asks young IAS to take lead in 'new India'

5



Sensex, Nifty end flat on muted global cues

8

**TODAY**  
**ALMANAC**  
Month & Paksham: Shravana & Krishna Paksha  
Panchangam  
Tithi : Panchami: 04:18 am (Next Day)  
Nakshatram: Uttara Bhadrapada: 04:12 pm  
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)  
Rahukalam: 09:11 am - 10:46 am  
Yamagandam: 01:56 pm - 03:31 pm  
Varjyam: 05:39 am - 07:26 am  
Gulika: 06:01 am - 07:36 am  
Good Time: (to start any important work)  
Amritakalam: 10:52 am - 12:39 pm  
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:56 am - 12:46 pm

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**  
Forecast: Cloudy  
Temp: 35/27  
Humidity: 66%  
Sunrise: 05:57 am  
Sunset: 06:46 pm  
Current Weather Conditions  
Updated August 7, 2020 5:00 PM

Mortality rate low but room  
for improvement, Jagan says

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Covid-19 positivity rate as well as the mortality rate in Andhra Pradesh is much lower than the national average and the State Government is extensively carrying out the tests, particularly in containment clusters.

This was the message that came across during a review meeting on Covid-19 here on Friday. Addressing the meeting, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said that about 85 per cent to 90 per cent of the total number of tests being conducted are in containment areas. He told officials to monitor the call



centres — 104 and 14410 — so that they function effectively.

The Chief Minister enquired about the steps being taken to further reduce the mortality rate. The officials informed Jagan that for people with severe respiratory problems

five to 10 beds are available at the Primary Health Centre (PCH) level and that clinical protocol is being strictly followed all over.

Patients with fever and low oxygen levels are being immediately admitted to hospitals. If the problems aggravates the patient is being shifted to Covid hospitals, the officials said.

While the national average of positivity is 8.87 per cent, the State average has been 8.56 per cent while in Karnataka, it is 9.88 per cent, Tamil Nadu 9.26 per cent, Maharashtra 19.36 and in Delhi it is 12.75 per cent.

265 prisoners in  
Rajahmundry jail test positive

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As many as 265 inmates of the Rajahmundry Central Jail have tested positive for Covid-19 till Friday.

As a precautionary measure, Rajahmundry collector Muralidhar Reddy has ordered jail authorities to conduct Covid-19 tests on prisoners, following which samples of 900 prisoners were taken on August 3.

The results which were received on Friday confirmed that 247 prisoners were infected.

## AP crosses 2 lakh mark; 89 more dead

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Riding on a rapid surge of infections, Andhra Pradesh on Friday crossed the two lakh-mark in the overall number of Covid-19 cases as another 10,000-plus cases (10,171 to be exact) were added afresh for the third consecutive day.

The state also saw 89 fresh coronavirus deaths, the highest number in a day so far, while 7,594 patients recovered from the pandemic. The state's Covid-19 tally on Friday showed 2,06,960 over all cases, of

which 84,654 were active, 1,20,464 recoveries and 1,842 deaths, the latest government bulletin said. After 23,62,270 sample tests, the infection positivity rate climbed further to 8.76 per cent, inching closer to the national average of

8.90 per cent. The recovery rate too improved to 58.21 per cent but was way below the national average of 67.98 per cent.

The Covid-19 mortality rate stood at 0.89 per cent against the national average of 2.05 per cent, according to the government data.

Sawhney's tenure  
as AP CS extended

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney's tenure has been extended for another three months, and she will now continue in office till December 31, 2020.

This is the second time that the tenure of Sawhney has been extended for three months.

She was scheduled to retire on June 30 but her tenure was

extended till September 30. The AP government once again sought extension of her services by another three months, and the request has been approved by the Centre. Principal secretary to the government (political) (FAC) Praveen Prakash issued GO Rt: 1242 on Friday night

issuing orders of extension of Sawhney's services beyond September 30.



## Central Tribal varsity location changed to Salur

■ State university to come up at Araku and engineering college at Kurupam

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The YSRCP government has finalised Salur in Vizianagaram district as the location for the proposed Central Tribal University.

While the TDP regime had identified Relli village under Kothavalasa mandal in Vizianagaram district as the site for the Tribal University, and also built a wall demarcating the boundaries of the campus, the YSRCP, soon after storming to power in 2019, had made it clear that it considered



Araku as a more suitable place for the varsity.

Now, the State Government has made it clear that instead of the Central Tribal University, it will set up a state tribal varsity in Araku and a tribal engineering college at Kurupam.

Salur. Jagan also gave approval for setting up a cluster university in Kurnool and university of architecture in Kadapa.

The CM directed the officials to commence work this year itself. Earlier, a compound wall was built in the land allotted in Relli village. In the Union Budget 2018-19, Rs 10 crore was allotted for the university and later, the MHRD sanctioned Rs 420 crore.

However, the funds lay unutilised, as the University didn't start operations. Even the State government

released Rs 50 lakh as start-up grant to begin the admission process.

Andhra University was entrusted with the responsibility of mentoring the new Tribal varsity. The varsity began operation from an engineering college of Vizianagaram as a temporary campus to commence academic session in 2019-20.

Earlier, the Tribal University had submitted a detailed project report to the Union MHRD department seeking Rs 952 crore for infrastructure development.





## CM Ramesh tests positive for Covid

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rajya Sabha member CM Ramesh is the latest politician to test positive for Covid-19.

Ramesh, upon slight discomfort, got himself tested for Coronavirus and the result returned positive. He then took to social media to confirm the news and say that he was doing fine and there was nothing to worry.

As he has no major symptoms, he has not been admitted to any hospital, but confined to home quarantine.

Ramesh tweeted, "I have tested positive for #COVID\_19."

Whilst I am doing fine, I am being under isolation on the recommendation of doctors."

# Convalescent plasma a ray of hope for Covid patients

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

"In the absence of a vaccine to fight against the Covid-19, transfusion of Convalescent plasma is a ray of hope for persons in critical stage of infection. Hence, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) permitted many government hospitals to conduct clinical trials of plasma transfusion. In our State, too, Kurnool, Tirupati, Vijayawada and Guntur GGHs are already doing this procedure and are getting encouraging results," disclosed BVS Kumar, Member of AP State Blood Banks Committee of Indian Red Cross Society.

Based on the successful recoveries in Covid patients, most of the State governments are encouraging plasma transfusions to combat the Covid deaths. The State government has even announced an incentive of Rs 5,000 for a plasma donor, said BVS Kumar.

Andhra Pradesh branch of Indian Red Cross Society is



contemplating in a big way to support the efforts of the State government in these plasma donations. Dr A Sridhar Reddy, Chairman of Indian Red Cross Society, AP State branch, has written to all District Collectors in the State to appoint Red Cross Society as a Nodal Agency for plasma donations.

Red Cross Societies in most of the districts started plasma donations, which were inaugurated by those District Collectors. The district branches of Red Cross societies will collect the list of the persons

discharged from Covid hospitals after recovering from infections and maintain a Data Bank of all these people, who are the potential plasma donors.

"As per the guidelines of ICMR, 400 ml of plasma will be taken from the donors, which can be given to a patient in two installments with a gap of 24 hours. This Convalescent plasma will accelerate the anti-bodies in the patient body and can successfully fight the virus. All recovered persons in the age group of 18 to 50 years can come forward and donate the Convalescent plasma and save

■ Red Cross to support government in encouraging plasma donations

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other persons, who are in critical stages of infection. Fortunately, we have a very high rate of recovery and all these persons are eligible to donate plasma," he said.

In Krishna district, people who need plasma can contact the Red Cross Society office on the following phone numbers 0866- 2570082 / 2570083 and 9989893346.

## CAPITAL CONUNDRUM

# MP Galla finds fault with Centre over 3-capital stand

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Centre filing an affidavit in the court stating that they do not have any role in the choice of capital for the State is just a way to shake off their responsibility, alleged TDP MP Galla Jayadev. He claimed that it was the Central government's decision to split the State, which forced the State to identify and develop a new capital.

Jayadev disclosed that it is clearly mentioned in the AP Reorganisation Act passed by Parliament that the Central government would fund the development of new capital in Andhra Pradesh. He further stated, "The amount provided by the Central government for the development of Amaravati capital city is public money. Is the Central government act like a mute spectator when its money goes waste," he questioned?

The TDP MP said that the affidavit filed by the Centre in the High Court is nothing but washing their hands of their responsibility and claimed that it amounts to criminal breach of trust. He recalled that during the foundation stone laying ceremony for Amaravati in 2015, the Prime Minister promised to develop Amaravati capital better than



■ JThe TDP MP defended that farmers of Amaravati came forward and donated their ancestral lands for the development of the new capital city by following the Constitutional and democratic process in the capital selection. He asserted that the fight for Amaravati will continue till it is declared the sole capital of Andhra Pradesh.

■ Jayadev claimed that Amaravati was not finalised as the capital unilaterally and Amaravati was based on the recommendations submitted by the K Sivaramakrishnan Committee, consent of all parties was taken and Acts were passed in the Assembly before the GO was issued to notify the same.

Delhi. He claimed that the Centre is duty bound to help the State develop a new capital, as mentioned in AP Reorganisation Act.

He pointed out that Act also mentions "a capital" and not three capitals. He questioned whether the Central government was willing to fund the development of three new capitals in the State, or not. He claimed that being a key stakeholder in the development of the capital of Andhra Pradesh, the Central government's responsibility is equal to that of the State.

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the capital unilaterally and Amaravati was based on the recommendations submitted by the K Sivaramakrishnan Committee, consent of all parties was taken and Acts were passed in the Assembly before the GO was issued to notify the same.

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# Online workshop for visually-impaired students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

"In the era of online education, students with visual impairment should not be left behind. Empowering them to use various mobile apps for reading, writing and collecting different information from online sources, accessing online library for reading is the aim of this month-long online training," said Shanti Raghavan, Founder and Managing Director of Enable India, Bengaluru. She, along with Moses Chowdary, the project director of Enable Vision, inaugurated the online workshop over MS Teams.

## Due to the pandemic, visually impaired college students are in need of getting literate on computer with screen readers

According to coordinator Dr G Sahaya Baskaran, there are 50 visually challenged students, studying in Andhra Loyola College, SRR College, AC College, Hindu College, Guntur, Sri Gayathri College, Acharya Nagarjuna University and Vijaya Mary School for the Blind joined the free training.

It is offered by trainers from Enable India, who are also visually challenged, under the

leadership of Jincy, Programme Lead, Digital Literacy for Blind.

Due to the pandemic, visually impaired college students are in need of getting literate on computer with screen readers. The training will focus on the solutions available through various Android mobile apps.

"Our plan is to conduct various computer courses in module wise in-order to fulfil their requirement in all the aspects

such as computer knowledge, life skills, mobility and employability, she said.

"We divided the batch into two groups-each batch with 25 candidates. Both the batches will have combination of students having laptop and not having laptop in order to enable peer learning model (25 people having laptops, 25 not having laptops). The course is designed for 44 hours (22 working days, two hours per day online classes).

Principal of ALC Rev Fr Victor Emmanuel, trainers and visually challenged students from Vijayawada and Guntur colleges participated.

## 'Dial Your EO' tomorrow

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The monthly 'Dial Your Executive Officer' programme by TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal will be conducted on August 9 between 9 am and 10 am at the Conference Hall at TTD administrative Building. During the programme, devotees could directly interact with the TTD EO on 0877-2263261 and give their suggestions and tell problems. The programme will be telecast live by SVBC.

## Online Kalyanotsava Seva begins at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Online Kalyanotsava Seva commenced at Srivari temple at Tirumala on Friday with 118 couples taking part in first of its kind Arjita Seva.

The kalyanotsavam is hitherto performed in 'ekantam' at the Srivari temple in view of Covid-19 restrictions since the closure of darshan on March 20. Ever since darshan resumed on June 8, Kalyanotsava Seva is being performed in 'ekantam' only.

Upon the request of the devotees, TTD has commenced online Kalyanotsava Seva. The online bookings commenced on August 6 and TTD enabled the bookings from August 7 till 31.

On the first day on Friday, 118 devotees, who booked online for Kalyanotsavam followed the instructions by priests of Tirumala, sitting right at their homes and participated in the holy event, which was telecast live by the SVBC.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 58,330 (10 gm)	₹ 500
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 73,500 (1kg)	₹ 2,000

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>

# IAS probationers get posting

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The IAS probationers of 2018 batch on completion of their Phase-II training are given posting orders by Chief Secretary to Government Neelam Sawhney on Friday.

Following are the newly appointed officers-Prudhvithej Immadi, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Kadapa Sub-Division, Kadapa district; Pratishtha Mangain, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Nuzvid Sub-Division, Krishna district; Himanshu Kaushik, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Amalapuram Sub-Division, East Godavari district; Amilineni Bhargav Teja, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Kandukur Sub-Division, Prakasham district; Vidheh Khare, IAS (2018) is posted as Sub Collector, Parvatipuram Sub-Division,



Neelam Sawhney

Vizianagaram; he will also hold full additional charge (FAC) of PO, ITDA, Parvatipuram, Vijayanagaram district; Narapureddy Mourya, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Narasipatnam Sub-Division, Visakhapatnam district;

Shrivasa Nupur Ajay Kumar,

## The IAS probationers of 2018 batch on completion of their Phase-II training are given posting orders by Chief Secretary to Government Neelam Sawhney

IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Narasaraopet Sub-Division, Guntur district; Anupama Anjali, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Rajamahendravaram Sub-Division, East Godavari district; Ganore Suraj Dhananjay, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Tekkali Sub-Division, Srikakulam district;

Medida Jahnavi, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Madanapalle Sub-Division, Chittoor district; Kalpana Kumari, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Nandyal Sub-Division, Kurnool district; Ketan Garg, IAS (2018) has been posted as the Sub-Collector, Rajampet Sub-Division, Kadapa district. On transfer, services of MS Murali have been placed at the disposal of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Department to post him as the Project Director, DRDA, Chittoor district.

It is informed that in view of the above postings, the Deputy Collectors working at Rajampet, Narasaraopet, Kandukur, Nuzvidu, Nandyal, Tekkali, Narasipatnam Sub-Divisions are hereby transferred and they are directed to report to the General Administration for further postings.

## Adivasi Day to be a low key affair

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Adivasi Day would be celebrated at all ITDA offices across the State on Sunday as per the information from the State Tribal Welfare Department on a low key note, said T Vijay Kumar Reddy, Ex-officio Secretary and Commissioner of Information and Public Relations Department.

He said in a statement here on Friday that the programme to distribute forest land rights to the Girijans would be held on October 2. The state-level Adivasi Day celebrations, which should have been held on Sunday, were postponed due to the pandemic. However, the tribal welfare department has issued instructions to all the ITDA offices to conduct at their respective offices in which district officials and people's representatives would participate.



# Drive against misuse of sanitisers conducted

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Officials of Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) have been conducting surprise checks as part of their special drive against misuse of sanitisers in the absence of liquor for the last three days.

As many as 345 vulnerable places where there is possibility of consumption of sanitisers in the absence of liquor shops were identified and 144 vulnerable people were identified and counselled.

During the special drive, sanitiser manufacturing units were inspected, including their licences, quality control and sales.

About 303 awareness campaigns were organised against consumption of sanitisers and their ill effects.

The special drive against consumption of sanitisers and enforcement work against ID manufacturing areas will be continued, according to SEB Commissioner Vinith Brijlal in a release issued here on Friday.

# Israeli Covid experts leave India after collecting samples

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The research team of top Israeli defence scientists and health experts on Friday returned home after collecting thousands of samples from Covid-19 patients in India.

The research team from the Directorate for Defence Research and Development, Ministry of Defence, accompanied by scientists from the Ministry of Health, arrived in India on July 27 to develop a rapid testing kit for Covid-19.

The joint research group has managed to collect over 20,000 samples from patients within nine days. The samples collected in India will be able to test and validate four Israeli diagnostic technologies.

"This cooperation against the Coronavirus as well as collaboration in other areas can bring good news to India and Israel, as well as to the whole world," Israel's Ambassador to



India, Ron Malka, said. "The relations between India and Israel continue to strengthen even under this global pandemic," he added.

According to the Israeli Embassy, the data collected in India will be corroborated with samples collected in Israel to find an effective diagnostic solution and help both countries in tackling the ongoing pandemic.

Over the next few weeks, the researchers will know if they have been successful in their quest for reliable rapid tests for the virus that will allow societies and economies to function until a vaccine is found.

Also, the Israeli envoy took to Twitter and wrote: "The most advanced Israeli med eqp't found effective 4 fighting COVID-19 is ready to be delivered 2 AIIMS hospital. As

■ According to the Israeli Embassy, the data collected in India will be corroborated with samples collected in Israel to find an effective diagnostic solution and help both countries in tackling the ongoing pandemic.

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always Israel is keen to share its most innovative technologies with its good friend India. The friendship between Israel and India is getting stronger under COVID-19 pandemic."



# Four die after consuming hand sanitiser in Tirupati

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In another freak incident involving sanitiser, four people died after consuming sanitiser to get high at Scavenger Colony in Tirupati on Friday.

About 40 people have died so far in the State consuming the sanitiser following the liquor sale regulation in view of Covid spread. Many such deaths go unreported, according to police. On July 31, just seven days ago, 14 persons had died after consuming sanitiser in Covid-19 hotspots of Kurichedu and Pamur in Prakasam district. While 11 persons, including two beggars, died at Kurichedu, three others reportedly died after consuming it at Pamur.

With the spate in Coronavirus cases, the sale of alcohol has been regulated in several districts in the State, causing desperate alcohol-dependent persons to drink harmful sanitiser in the hopes of getting high. Most of the sanitisers carry 70% of isopropyl alcohol as instructed by the government.



The deceased were identified as Veeraiah (50) working in the Tirupati municipality, Kumara Swamy (30) and other two people from the Scavenger Colony. All are addicted to alcohol, hence, consumed sanitiser to get high. Soon after, they fell sick and were rushed to nearby hospital where they died.

A case was registered by the East Town Police Station based on a complaint lodged by Veeraiah's wife Bharathi and Kumaraswamy's mother Jayamma. A case was registered and investigation was under-

way by East Town Police Station SI S Jayachandra.

Meanwhile, Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) officials conducted surprise inspections on sanitizer sales, belt shops and herbal manufacturing centers across the state. The team also identified 144 people who were drinking sanitizer and gave counseling.

Sanitizer manufacturing licenses were inspected and warnings were issued. SEB officials have registered cases against 76 people who were making sanitizers flouting the regulations

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## CM EXTENDS GREETINGS ON NATIONAL HANDLOOM DAY e-Platforms to boost handloom sector in State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh is one of the most important States in the handloom industry with the second-largest concentration of weavers in the country, said Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy in a tweet. Extending his greetings on the National Weavers' Day on Twitter on Friday, he said: "We are proud of our weaver community and are making efforts to preserve the rich textile heritage of the State. YSR Nethanna Nestham has provided annual assistance of Rs 24,000 to all eligible weaver families for two consecutive years, positively impacting the lives of all the weavers, especially during the Covid-19 induced lockdown."

As promised during his 3,648 km Praja Sankalpa Yatra, the Chief Minister launched Nethanna Nestham on December 21 to provide financial assistance of Rs 24,000 per year to weavers having a loom and successfully done in for two consecutive years. Under the scheme, every eligible weaver, who has a loom in the house received Rs 24,000 incentive benefiting 81,783



**As promised during his 3,648 km Praja Sankalpa Yatra, the Chief Minister launched Nethanna Nestham on December 21 to provide financial assistance of Rs 24,000 per year to weavers having a loom and successfully done in for two consecutive years**

families accounting for nearly Rs 200 crore per annum. Despite the Coronavirus outbreak in the State, the government didn't back out on the implementation of welfare schemes and for the second year in a row, aid was disbursed as part of Nethanna Nestham on June 20, which is six months prior to the actual dateline.

Apart from the financial aid, in the times of Covid pandemic, the State government had purchased cloth from APCO with an expenditure of Rs 109 crore and gave orders to women SHGs for making masks. The State gov-

ernment had also cleared the dues of the previous government to the tune of Rs 103 crore to APCO taking the total amount spent during the 13 months in office to about Rs 600 crore.

Besides taking up the welfare activities to boost the handloom sector in the State, the Chief Minister brought an idea of e-Platforms, through which marketing of handloom and handicrafts can be done easily. The State government is planning to launch the initiative on October 2 this year.

## Independent schools seek clarity on fees, online classes

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As there is a huge ambiguity over the school fees collection and online class rules, the Independent School Managements Association (ISMA) has sought clarification from Commissioner of School Education V China Veerabhadru. The association urged the Commissioner to issue instructions on collection of tuition fee and flexibility of number of online classes for Class VI and VIII students.

In a letter addressed to the Commissioner, President of the Association K Sreekanth Babu said member schools possessed adequate infrastructure, including playground, safety and hygiene to the best levels and that the majority of parents are from affluent families, with capability to pay the school fees. All the affiliated schools across the country are continuing transacting the syllabus as per the plan, but he feared AP students would fall behind if online teaching was not resumed.

## No ammonium nitrate in custody of Customs in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

There is no ammonium nitrate in the possession of Customs at Visakhapatnam- Gangavaram, Kakinada and Krishnapatnam ports, a top Customs official said here on Friday.

In the light of the explosion of the chemical in Beirut and the resultant fatalities and losses on Tuesday, storage of such substance in India has become a cause for concern. The Chief Customs Commissioner and Central Tax, Visakhapatnam Zone, Naresh Penumaka, said the import and storage of the chemical in Andhra Pradesh has been examined.

He said there was no ammonium nitrate in the custody of the Customs and that the ports in Visakhapatnam, Gangavaram, Kakinada and Krishnapatnam have no such cargo. Penumaka, however, said there are regular imports of ammonium nitrate at Visakhapatnam port and the entire import is bagged cargo



imported by manufacturers under licence

All the manufacturers have to obtain a pre-shipment import licence from Petroleum and Safety Organisations (PESO), Nagpur, for importing ammonium nitrate. On Thursday, Customs authorities in distant Chennai sought to allay fears over safety regarding the storage of nearly 700 tonnes of ammonium nitrate at a container freight station the city.

The chemical worth Rs 1.80 crore was seized from a Tamil Nadu-based importer, who

**In the light of the explosion of the chemical in Beirut and the resultant fatalities and losses on Tuesday, storage of such substance in India has become a cause for concern. The Chief Customs Commissioner and Central Tax, Visakhapatnam Zone, Naresh Penumaka, said the import and storage of the chemical in AP has been examined**

had allegedly declared it as fertiliser grade although it was an explosive grade, a Customs official had said. However, the consignment, imported from South Korea, was safe and an e-Auction process was on to clear it, he had said.

## ‘Central govt ignored minority rights in NEP’

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

While Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday hailed the New Education Policy (NEP) as the foundation of 21st century, Andhra Pradesh Christian Leaders Forum (APCLF) termed it as a clear saffronisation of education thrusting the ancient culture and ignoring the rights of minority and their suggestions.

To its dismay, the APCLF, which had raised an online petition with over 20,000 signatures against the drafts of the NEP found that many crucial elements of the NEP 2020, have been sugarcoated and rephrased in a bid to show it as an unbiased document.

"Many of the demands raised by APCLF and other minorities were overlooked. The word 'secular' has not been mentioned even once, leave alone the concept of fostering religious harmony and mutual acceptance - two vital components of the wellbeing of a nation," said APCLF chairman Oliver Rayi.

He pointed out that while



organisations affiliated to the RSS have openly claimed that at least 60 per cent of their suggestions have been accommodated, acknowledgement of contribution by minorities to education and the role of minorities in policy making were also ignored.

The new education policy, he said, did not make any mention of 'Minority Educational Institutions.' "This is nothing but clear encroachment over autonomy and role of minority institutions as NEP proposes to have various bodies, multi-level structures and overseeing authorities who will have final say to achieve the goals enshrined in the document," Oliver rued buttressing the fact that the rights for the linguistic and religious minorities are based on the Constitution.

## MEASURES TO CONTAIN CORONA UK diplomats all praise for AP govt

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The authorities concerned claimed that British diplomats lauded the measures being taken by the YSRCP government in public health and the effective manner in which tests are being conducted for containing the Covid-19. Officials said that the UK diplomats invited Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to Britain after normalcy returns.

During a video conference with the Chief Minister here on Friday, acting British High Commissioner Jan Thompson and Deputy High Commissioner for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Andrew Fleming appreciated the initiatives of the government in public health.

"The government has been doing well by conducting high number of tests and identifying the positive cases, while keeping the mortality rate low. New initiatives



like Telemedicine are being implemented and the State is taking effective measures in health, education and medical fields," they said.

The Chief Minister told them that the government is conducting about 62,000 tests per day and 90 per cent of the tests are in containment clusters, which results in higher number of cases. Tracing, testing and isolating them is being done quickly as a result of which the mortality rate is as low as 0.89 per

cent as against the national average of 2.07 per cent, he said.

The diplomats said that the MoU recently signed with AP Med Tech Zone for the manufacture of medical equipment will be useful for Covid containment. The UK will encourage start ups in this regard and will jointly work in containing Covid, they added.

The partnership with England's National Health Mission will help in maintenance and following the good practices in running 104 and 108 ambulance service and technology. They invited the Chief Minister to UK after the pandemic is over and normalcy returns.

In wake of the pandemic there is need for all countries to work in tandem and UK and India have been working together on this front with mutual cooperation in research, developing vaccine and formulation of medicines, they said.

## 265 prisoners in Rajahmundry jail test positive

Continued from Page 1

On August 1, Covid-19 tests were conducted on 75 persons, of which 24 prison staff and nine prisoners tested positive.

A total of 64 samples were tested on August 2, where nine prisoners were found infected with Coronavirus. There are currently 1,675 prisoners in the jail, out of which 265 prisoners tested positive for Covid-19.

A total of 24 prison staff who tested positive were being treated in home quarantine.

The jail officials arranged treatment facilities for the 18 prisoners

who tested positive on August 1 and August 2, in GSL Hospital. One of them had escaped from the hospital. Later, GSL hospital management discharged all prisoners and the jail authorities released eight prisoners on bail and the rest 10 were being treated at Rajahmundry Government Hospital.

Superintendent S Rajarao said that if 247 prisoners who were found positive in the tests conducted on August 3 were to be shifted to an outpatient hospital, there would be a security problem, so to avoid that a large number of beds will be arranged in the central jail for treatment.

## AP govt sets up panel to reorganise districts

Continued from Page 1

Leaders from Srikakulam district, including Assembly Speaker Tammineni Settarum, have voiced their opposition to the splitting of their district as it would lose three important Assembly segments.

They wanted the government to work out an alternative plan so that the existing geography of Srikakulam district is not disturbed even after the reorganisation.

Similarly, there is opposition over making Araku a new district as the existing Lok Sabha constituency is spread over four districts. There are several other Parliamentary constituencies that are spread over two districts, division of which could become a ticklish issue.

## JC Prabhakar, son arrested within hours of release

Continued from Page 1

Prabhakar Reddy and Asmith Reddy were released from the central jail on Thursday after their arrest in forging documents and wrongful registration of buses.

The two, besides a few others, are accused of fabricating documents to facilitate registration of buses besides illegally converting BS-III vehicles into BS-IV vehicles in Kohima of Nagaland using forged documents.

At the time of their release from jail, their followers gath-

ered outside the prison in large numbers created ruckus there, in complete violation of Covid-19 guidelines. In a show of open defiance of rules, the duo went to their home town Tadipatri leading a rally of his supporters.

During the rally, Prabhakar Reddy allegedly abused police inspector Devendra when the latter objected to their travelling in a procession involving many people. The temperamental leader not only behaved rudely with the Dalit inspector but even issued threats to him openly.

As part of their conditional bail, the father and son duo came down to One Town Police Station in Anantapur to present themselves and sign in the register there. The police officials were believed to have questioned about his rude behaviour with the Dalit inspector.

Security was beefed up in Tadipatri town to prevent any untoward incidents as there is a high probability of the police registering at least four more cases against JC Prabhakar Reddy and his followers in this connection.

## 16 killed, many injured as AIE flight skids off runway

Continued from Page 1

Vijayan informed him that rescue operations were in full swing, the sources said. Vijayan has also asked all government agencies to engage in rescue operations using all government facilities. The CM has deputed state minister A C Moideen to coordinate the rescue operations. An IG of police has been deputed to oversee the rescue operations. Fire and Rescue teams of two districts - Kozhikode and Malappuram have been engaged. According to information from Kozhikode medical college, seriously injured people have been admitted there. The condition of a mother and child injured in the accident was very serious, Health minister K K Shailaja said.

## Vijayawada to host official I-Day fete

Continued from Page 1

Initially, there were reports that Jagan would unfurl the National Flag on the Beach Road in Visakhapatnam on August 15 and address the gathering heralding the launch of the Executive Capital of the state. He was expected to later in the day lay the foundation stone for the executive capital somewhere near Kapuluppada area. There were also speculations that the CMO would also be partially shifted to Vizag on the same day.

However, with the state High Court granting stay on the shifting of offices till August 14 following a petition from the farmers of Amaravati, the Chief Minister is learnt to have dropped the idea of conducting Independence Day celebrations at Visakhapatnam and sticking to Vijayawada.

It may be mentioned that even for the Republic Day celebrations, the Jagan govern-

ment had made all the arrangements in Visakhapatnam.

The Navy officials had conducted trials for the Republic Day parade and several school children also took part in the practice sessions. However, the programme was cancelled at the last moment and the venue was changed to Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium in Vijayawada.

On Friday, State Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivas Rao, MLAs, along with district Collector A Mohammad Imtiaz and officials of various departments visited the stadium.

The minister told the media that the Independence Day would be celebrated without any pomp this year in view of the pandemic situation. The Corona protocol would be followed while preparing arrangements for visiting people and display of tableaux.

He said that he would visit

the stadium once visited on August 13 and 14 to fine-tune the arrangements.

The programme would be telecast live for the people all over the state.

The District collector said that there would be limited number of invitees in view of the corona. The tableaux would depict the activities that were undertaken to contain the pandemic. He ruled out the presentation of cultural programmes. Later, the officials discussed works to be undertaken in the stadium, protocol to be followed, the road map for the guests and other issues.

Talasila Raghuram, coordinator of the Chief Minister's programmes, MLA Jogi Ramesh, municipal commissioner Prasanna Venaktesh, police commissioner B Srinivasulu, DCPs Harshavardhan Raju and Vikrant Patil, I&PR joint director P Kiran Kumar and others were present.

## One capital will help all of AP develop: Naidu

Continued from Page 1

"But, now they are not even coming forward to accept the TDP challenge to go for a fresh mandate on three-Capitals decision. The YCP leaders have cheated AP people with their double standards. For this, they will pay a heavy price for a long time to come," Naidu said.

He said that at least now, the CM should realise how important it would be to move ahead with a vision for ushering in overall growth in the State.

The TDP chief pointed out that during his rule, while 132 projects were started in Amaravati, simultaneously 160 additional projects were begun in all the 13 districts from Srikakulam to Anantapur.

"Five clusters were visualised under the Visakhapatnam-Chennai

Industrial Corridor and another three clusters were planned under Chennai-Bangalore Industrial Corridor. Three mega cities, 14 smart cities, 3 international airports and ports were on the anvil," Naidu said.

He said that 12 out of the 15 Central government institutions were given to backward regions of Rayalaseema and North Andhra for balanced development in the State. "These included Indian Institute of Technology, Indian Institute of Management and so on. Seema was converted into a horticulture hub," Naidu said. The former chief minister asserted that decentralisation was not a new concept and Amaravati was actually visualised as a vibrant city to achieve the larger objective to ensure decentralised development in AP.



# Indian Navy warships presence increased across Indian Ocean

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With a considerable increase in the deployment of its warships in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Indian Navy is providing strategic support to its fellow services in the ongoing activities related to the border tensions with China. The Indian Navy is said to have increased deployment of warships in the IOR since the border tensions with China began, government officials said. Some estimates indicate that the increase is almost 25 per cent. The officials said that past 100 days have seen the Indian Navy operating from Ladakh (with its P-8I surveillance aircraft) in the north to Mauritius, 7,000 km to the south, and from the Red Sea in the west to the Malacca Strait in the east, a distance of nearly 8,000 km. Indian Navy deploys ships on Mission Based Deployments at key locations in the IOR so as to build a



**Indian Navy deploys ships on Mission Based Deployments at key locations in the IOR so as to build a comprehensive maritime picture and respond to developing situations**

comprehensive maritime picture and respond to developing situations. At any time, there are warships patrolling the Bay of Bengal, the Malacca Straits, the Andaman Sea, the southern and the central Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Persian Gulf. Additionally, following maritime security incidents, a combat-ready warship has also been deployed on Operation Sankalp since June 2019 for protection of Indian

merchant vessels passing through the Persian Gulf. "Being a network-enabled force, the Navy maintains total awareness of the IOR by using the IFC-IOR (Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region), ships on Mission Based Deployments, P-8I and Dornier surveillance aircraft and other high-end surveillance tools," a senior government official said. Near-coast surveillance is also coordinated by the Indian Navy by coordinating the

resources of nearly 20 government agencies to draw an electronic fence over our coastline, to deter any 26/11-type incident. After Chinese People Liberation Army's activities in eastern Ladakh increased in the months of May and June, culminating in June 15 clashes in which 20 Indian soldiers were killed, the chiefs of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force are meeting on a daily basis to coordinate the joint response.

# India's Covid management marked by rising recovery rate

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 management is marked by "two significant achievements" of continuously rising recovery rate among COVID-19 patients and a case fatality rate that has remained well below the global average, according to the health ministry. While the recovery rate among coronavirus patients has risen to a record high of 67.98 per cent, the fatality rate has gone down to 2.05 per cent, it said on Friday. "These two in tandem have enabled a higher and rising difference of more than 7.7 lakh between the number of recovered patients and active cases in India," the ministry said. With 49,769 patients recuperating from the disease in 24 hours, the number of recoveries have jumped to 13,78,105 on Friday. The recovery rate has increased from 51.08 per cent on June 15 to 67.98 per cent on August 7, while active cases which comprised 46.06 per cent of the total COVID-19 caseload



now account for 29.96 per cent, it said. "Ramped up hospital infrastructure and emphasis on efficient treatment of hospitalised patients through the standard of care incorporated in the Clinical Treatment Protocol issued by the Centre, have effectively ensured improvement in the recovery rate," the ministry said. It said the average daily recovered cases (seven day moving average) have increased from around 26,000 cases to 44,000 cases in the last two weeks. Sustained efforts by the

Centre, states and Union Territories through focused and coordinated containment, widespread testing combined with supervised isolation and effective treatment have ensured the decline in percentage of active cases and rise of the percentage of recoveries, the health ministry said. Registering a record 62,538 cases in 24 hours, India's COVID-19 tally galloped past 20 lakh on Friday, while the death toll climbed to 41,585 with 886 people succumbing to the infection in 24 hours, the ministry's data updated at 8 am showed.

## SHORT READS



### Army chief meets UP CM in Lucknow

**LUCKNOW:** Army Chief Gen MM Naravane met Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence here on Friday. "It was a courtesy meeting between the two. The chief minister presented a memento to the Army chief during the meeting," a state government official said. Naravane is in the state capital to visit the Army's Central Command Headquarters.

### Pak violates ceasefire, targets Indian positions in Naugam

**SRINAGAR:** Pakistani troops violated the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) in Naugam sector of Jammu and Kashmir on Friday by opening fire at Indian positions, an Army official said. He said a befitting response was given to the Pakistani aggression. "Pakistan initiated an unprovoked ceasefire violation (CFV) along the LoC in Naugam sector, in Kupwara (district of north Kashmir) by firing mortars and other weapons," the official said. There were no reports of any casualties so far.

### Like-minded anti-BJP parties should unite for Goa polls: Kamat

**PANAJI:** Goa Congress leader Digambar Kamat on Friday said that like-minded parties should come together to fight the 2022 state Assembly elections against the BJP. Kamat, who is the Leader of Opposition in Goa Assembly, said regional parties, like the Maharashtratrawadi Gomantak Party, the Goa Forward Party (GFP) along with the NCP can be considered for this union. The former state chief minister, however, said that it was his personal opinion. "As the chief of the Congress legislative party, I would be putting across to my high command that there should be an alliance of like-minded anti-BJP parties for the next assembly polls in Goa," he said. The Congress has already announced that it has begun the process to reorganise the party ahead of the 2022 Goa elections.

### Ghaziabad police arrests 171 criminals under special drive

**GHAZIABAD:** The Ghaziabad police has arrested 171 criminals, of which 100 have been absconding or had non-bailable warrants issued against them, a senior police official said on Friday. According to Senior superintendent of Police Kalanidhi Naithani, they were arrested under a special drive, 'Operation Prahaar', on Thursday night. One of them was listed among top 10 goons, he said, adding that 71 of them have been sent to jail under Section 151 of the CrPC. The SSP said 127 vehicles have also been seized for the violation of the traffic rules. All SHO's have been instructed to continue the drive, he said.

# NEP's nutritious breakfast idea a welcome step: V-P

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Centre accorded the highest priority for health and nutrition and the latest move to provide nutritious breakfast to school children announced in the new National Education Policy 2020 is a welcome step, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu said on Friday. The recently announced education policy has a provision to provide a nutritious breakfast to school children, the Vice President said inaugurating a virtual consultation 'Science for Resilient Food, Nutrition and Livelihoods: contemporary challenges' organised by the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation here. "This (announcement in the NEP) is a welcome step but much more needs to be done in the context of pandemic and problems of hunger," he added.



Among the Centre's health and nutrition initiatives are the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana which has benefited more than 98.16 lakh women, the POSHAN Abhiyan, and rotavirus vaccination, he noted. On farming techniques, the Vice President said, India is a treasure trove of traditional wisdom in the field of agriculture. "Instead of rejecting this wisdom as archaic, we must make every attempt to integrate the best of these techniques into agriculture along with modern technology,"

# Kejriwal launches Electric Vehicle Policy, says it will boost economy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday launched 'Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy' under which his government will waive registration fee and road tax, and provide incentive of up to Rs 1.5 lakh for new cars in the national capital. Addressing an online media briefing, he said the policy, which aims to boost the economy, create jobs and reduce pollution level, has been notified, adding that he hoped that after five years, Delhi's name will be taken when there is a discussion on electric vehicle in the world. The chief minister termed it a "progressive policy" of the country and said it also aims to constitute 25 per cent electric vehicles by 2024, which is currently just 0.29 per cent in the city. Under the policy, the Delhi



government will give incentive of up to Rs 30,000 for two-wheelers, autos, e-rickshaws and freight vehicles while for cars, it will provide an incentive of up to Rs 1.5 lakh, he said. He said the AAP government will also give low-interest loan on electric commercial vehicles. "After launching this policy, we expect five lakh new electric vehicles in the next five years...the Delhi government will set up dedicated 'EV Cell' to implement the policy," Kejriwal said. He said the government will also set up a 'State Electric Vehicle Board', adding that his government will set up 200 charging stations in one year and ensure that people driving these vehicles can get a charging station within the radius of three kilometers. The Delhi government will give a "scrapping incentive" under the electric vehicle policy, which will be first-of-its-kind in the country.

# Dialogue with people will start soon: new LG Sinha

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Pitching for peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir, the union territory's new lieutenant governor Manoj Sinha on Friday said the administration would soon initiate direct dialogue with the people to end the situation of uncertainty and the menace of terrorism. Talking to reporters after taking oath, Sinha termed August 5 an important day in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. "After years of isolation, Jammu and Kashmir has joined the national mainstream," he said. Discussing the priorities of the administration, the 61-year-old former Union minister said, "We need to establish a dialogue with the common people of Jammu and Kashmir. "We don't have any agenda in that, there will be no dis-



crimination against anyone. Constitution will be Gita in that," he said. Sinha, who was administered the oath of office at a simple ceremony in the Raj Bhavan, said the process of direct dialogue with the people will be start in a few days. "There should be peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir. The situation of uncertainty should end, terrorism should end. Achieving all this along with accelerated development will be our aim, our mission," the lieutenant governor said.

## BEFORE KANPUR RAID

# Slain Dy SP hints at links between now-suspended police officer and Vikas Dubey

PNS ■ KANPUR (UP)

Before he was killed along with seven colleagues during a raid on Vikas Dubey's hideout, Deputy SP Devendra Mishra had suggested that the then Kanpur SSP was "protecting" the then station officer of Chaubeypur who had links with the gangster, audio clips of his purported phone conversations show. Three audio clips of Mishra's purported phone conversations — one with then Superintendent of Police (Kanpur Rural) Brijesh Srivastava and two with Chaubeypur SO Vinay Tiwari — have surfaced on social media. After the killing of eight policemen during the July 2 raid in Bikru village, Tiwari was suspended and later arrested, while Kanpur Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) and Deputy DIG Anant Deo Tiwari was shunted



out. Asked about the audio clips as well. During his first conversation with SO Tiwari, DSP Mishra, who was posted as the Circle Officer (Bilaur), was being apprised about a complaint filed by Rahul Tiwari, a resident of Jadepur-Ghassa, Chaubeypur. In the clip, Mishra asks Tiwari "whether or not the crime occurred and charges levelled in the complaints were true or not".

check the veracity of the audio clips as well. During his first conversation with SO Tiwari, DSP Mishra, who was posted as the Circle Officer (Bilaur), was being apprised about a complaint filed by Rahul Tiwari, a resident of Jadepur-Ghassa, Chaubeypur. In the clip, Mishra asks Tiwari "whether or not the crime occurred and charges levelled in the complaints were true or not".

# No to lawyers' inclusion in essential services: HC told

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra government on Friday told the Bombay High Court that it has rejected the representations made by lawyers from the city seeking that legal services be recognised as essential services and that lawyers and their staff be allowed to travel by local trains. On August 5, the secretary of the state Disaster Management Relief and Rehabilitation unit had passed an order saying that it was not possible at this stage to permit lawyers and their staff to use local train services and to declare them as essential services, Advocate General Ashutosh Kumbhakoni said. He told this to a division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice A S Gadkari.

# Bihar IPS officer released from quarantine in Mumbai

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday said it has allowed Bihar IPS officer Vinay Tiwari, quarantined here after arrival to oversee probe in actor Sushant Singh Rajput death case, to return to his home state. Tiwari, Superintendent of Police of Central Patna, has been exempted from quarantine protocols and allowed to return to his home state, an official said. On Thursday, Bihar Police ADG wrote a letter to the Mumbai municipal commissioner, seeking the IPS officer's exemption from quarantine protocols and facilitate his return to Patna to resume his duty. Tiwari's presence is no longer required in Mumbai and his arrival period (in Patna) is within seven days, the letter said. Accordingly, the BMC informed the Bihar police that



they are exempting the IPS officer from quarantine norms. The IPS officer, who was under 'home quarantine' at SRPF guest house in suburban Goregaon for two weeks, is expected to return to Bihar later in the day. Tiwari had reached Mumbai on Sunday to oversee investigation into the FIR filed against actress Rhea Chakraborty in the Sushant death case. Rhea Chakraborty (28), girl-

friend of Rajput, was booked on abetment to suicide and other charges on a complaint filed by the late actor's father in Patna. On his arrival in Mumbai, he was asked to remain in quarantine till August 15 in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and was stamped as quarantined by the BMC. The IGP (Patna) had written a letter to the city municipal commissioner on Monday, requesting him to exempt Tiwari from home quarantine protocols. After this, the BMC had advised the Bihar officer to carry out his work using digital platforms. In a letter sent to the Bihar Police ADG on Thursday, the Additional Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai said it was unfortunate to note that a visiting senior officer, before proceeding to Maharashtra, has not acquainted himself with COVID-19 quarantine guidelines, the official said.

# Italy must pay compensation to close the mariners case: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court made clear to the Centre on Friday that it would not pass any order on the plea seeking closure of cases against two Italian marines, accused of killing two Indian fishermen, without hearing the victims' families who should be given adequate compensation. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde allowed the Centre to file fresh plea making the victims' family members parties to its application for seeking closure of Italian Marines case. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed the bench, also comprising Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian, that Italy has assured the Indian government that it would prosecute the Marines.



When the bench insisted that adequate compensation should be paid to the family members of the victims, Mehta said the Centre will ensure that maximum compensation is given to them. At the outset, the bench said it appreciates the steps taken by Italy to prosecute these marines but the court is on the issue of adequate compensation which should be paid to the victims' family.

# Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh may see temperature rise of 7 degrees by 2100: Study

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh may witness a temperature increase of up to 6.9 degrees Celsius by the end of the century due to climate change, according to a study which warns that the glaciers in this Himalayan region could shrink by 85 per cent if the projections come true. The study, published in the journal Climatic Change on July 29, predicted the impact of future climate change in the Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh Himalaya, by the end of the twenty-first century using an ensemble of 11 models under three greenhouse gas emission scenarios. It also highlights the changes in the distribution of the prevalent climate zones in the region. "The study has been carried



over the entire region of Jammu and Kashmir, including Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Aksai Chin and other regions across the Line of Control (LoC)," noted Professor Shakil Ahmad Romshoo, Dean of Research at the University of Kashmir. "The average annual temperature is projected to increase by 4.5 degrees Celsius, 3.98 degrees Celsius, and 6.93

degrees Celsius by the end of the twenty first century under three different scenarios, respectively," Romshoo, lead author of the research, said. The temperature increase of 6.9 degrees Celsius for the Jammu and Kashmir Himalayas is way more than the projected average rise in the global and national temperatures by the end of the century.

**"The average annual temperature is projected to increase by 4.5 degrees Celsius, 3.98 degrees Celsius, and 6.93 degrees Celsius by the end of the twenty first century under three different scenarios, respectively," Romshoo, lead author of the research, said**

Romshoo added that if the current emission rates of greenhouse gases are sustained, the global average temperature is likely to rise by nearly 5 degrees Celsius by the end of the twenty-first century under the worst case scenario.

# Bindra to take part in 'virtual run' to raise funds for Covid pandemic affected

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic gold medalist Abhinav Bindra is set to take part in the fund-raising initiative 'Sunfeast India Run As One', a "virtual event" which supports people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds collected from the registration fee of each virtual runner, will go on from August 15 to September 15. The initiative is aimed at providing support to vulnerable sections of society who have been distressed and have lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic. "Many of us have been lucky to have a phone or a laptop as we sit comfortably at home. Others across the country have not been so lucky," Bindra was quoted as saying in a media release. "With the 'Sunfeast India Run



As One' campaign, we have an opportunity to stand and run in solidarity with those who have lost their livelihoods or are in danger of losing their livelihoods," he added. The registrations for the event have already begun. The participation fee starts at Rs 99. Donations can be made beyond the registration fee.



SHORT READS



Jharkhand govt to encourage sports & sportspersons: CM

**RANCHI:** Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday said his government was committed to encourage sports and sportspersons and will bring a new sports policy soon. The chief minister said this after he received information in his twitter handle that international woman football player Sangita Soren was making leaf-plates for subsistence at Dhanbad's Baghmara area. Taking to Twitter, the chief minister asked the Dhanbad Deputy Commissioner, Uma Shankar Singh, to help her (Sangita) and her family with government aid. The chief minister said that his government will soon bring a sports policy to encourage sports and sportspersons. The CM was informed that the player was preparing paper plates for her livelihood.

Adhir questions Murmu's resignation as J&K LG

**KOLKATA:** Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Friday sought to know why G C Murmu resigned as the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir, and alleged the former IAS officer paid the price for 'venting his views'. The Election Commission had on July 28 taken exception to Murmu's reported remarks on the timing of polls in the union territory and said, in the constitutional scheme of things, only the poll panel is authorised to decide on such matters. Murmu, who quit as the Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, has been appointed as the new Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India. "The question is, why the 1st LG of UT J & K has tendered his resignation? Voluntary or instructed? Whether he has been failed to hoodwink the people that everything is going hunky-dory?" Chowdhury tweeted.

BJP leader questions Sushant's psychotherapist

**MUMBAI:** BJP leader Ashish Shelar on Friday accused Sushant Singh Rajput's psychotherapist Susan Walker Moffat of sharing details about the mental health of the late actor to the media in violation of law. Shelar also asked if Moffat, a foreign national, was practising in India illegally, and demanded that she be probed by various agencies. Rajput, 34, was found hanging in his suburban Bandra apartment on June 14, in what the police say was a case of suicide. "#Sushantsinghrajput Why Susan Walker Moffat illegally share Sushant's mental health details 2 media? 2 misguide police? Hide secrets? Her Practice illegal? Earning crores? Violated Mental health Act ! Police/CBI/ED/IT enquiry of Susan Walker MUST ! Justice Will b done!" Shelar tweeted.

Naidu asks young IAS to take lead in 'new India'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Friday urged young IAS officers to treat their vocation as a mission to bridge the rich-poor, and urban-rural divides and be pro-active change agents in building a "new India".

Addressing the valedictory ceremony of the two-year training programme for IAS officers of 2018 batch at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration through video, he said the socio-economic upliftment of marginalised sections should be their main goal.

Reminding the officers that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel dreamt of a civil service that would work zealously to create a new nation by fighting poverty and discrimination, the vice president asked them to be honest, disciplined, simple, responsible, transparent and accountable.

Calling former prime minister late Lal Bahadur Shastri as a remarkable leader, Naidu said his hallmarks were integrity and humility, empathy and quiet efficiency, national pride and indomitable courage.



Urging the officer trainees to keep learning, thinking and innovating, Naidu said "good governance is what we need today".

He stressed that governance has to be lean but efficient with a system that is transparent and responds to people's needs and aspirations. It has to be a system that delivers and creates conditions for growth and development.

The vice president said legislature may make a number of policies and laws, but ultimately it is the actual implementation of those policies on ground that matters.

A government will be remembered by the delivery of the services, he underlined and said that it was the duty of

**He stressed that governance has to be lean but efficient with a system that is transparent and responds to people's needs and aspirations. It has to be a system that delivers and creates conditions for growth and development**

civil servants to ensure that people get their entitlements without delay. Whatever post you hold, you should create a record in good work so that people will remember you later, he told the young civil servants.

Nadda attacks Cong over SC observations on PIL for probe into China pact

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president J P Nadda on Friday cited some observations of the Supreme Court on a PIL, which sought a probe into the alleged 2008 agreement between the Congress and the Communist Party of China, to seek explanation from Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party leader Rahul Gandhi.

"Even the SC is surprised at the MoU signed by the Congress party with the Chinese Gov.. Mrs Gandhi & her son, who led the signing, must explain. Does this explain donations to RGF and opening Indian market for the Chinese in return, which



affected Indian businesses?" Nadda tweeted.

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a PIL seeking NIA probe into the alleged 2008 agreement.

Won't attend mosque inauguration, says Adityanath; kicks up a row

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party on Friday sought an apology from Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over his remark that he would not attend the inauguration of the mosque to be built in Ayodhya, replacing the demolished Babri Masjid.

After the bhoomi puja for a Ram temple in Ayodhya, Adityanath had said on television that "as a yogi and as a Hindu" he couldn't go for the inauguration of a mosque.

Reacting to the remark, the opposition SP said he should seek an apology from the people of the state. When contacted, a UP Congress spokesper-

Serum Institute to produce 100 mn Covid vaccine doses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Serum Institute of India (SII) on Friday said it has entered into a new partnership with international vaccine alliance Gavi and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to accelerate manufacturing and delivery of up to 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines for India as well as other low and middle-income countries (LMICs).

"The collaboration will provide upfront capital to SII to help them increase manufacturing capacity now so that, once a vaccine, or vaccines, gains regulatory approval and WHO pre-qualification, doses can be produced at scale for distribution to India and LMICs as part of the Gavi COVAX AMC mechanism as early as the first half of 2021," SII said in a statement.

The company has set an affordable ceiling price of USD 3 (around Rs 225) per dose, it added. The funding will support at-risk manufacturing by SII for candidate vaccines from AstraZeneca and Novavax, which will be available for procurement if they are successful



in attaining full licensure and WHO prequalification, the statement said. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, via its Strategic Investment Fund, will provide at-risk funding of USD 150 million to Gavi, which will be used to support the SII to manufacture the potential vaccine candidates and for future procurement of vaccines for low- and middle-income countries via Gavi's COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), the statement said.

"In an attempt to make our fight against COVID-19 stronger and all-embracing, SII has partnered with Gavi and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to advance the

manufacturing and delivery of up to 100 million doses of future COVID vaccines for India and low- and middle-income countries in 2021," Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla said.

Through this association, SII seeks to ramp up constant efforts to save the lives of millions of people from this dreadful disease, he added.

Serum Institute has a long history of partnerships with Gavi and pharmaceutical companies to manufacture vaccines that protect against meningitis, severe diarrhoea, pneumonia and measles, the statement said. "We are very happy to see SII enter this global partnership to

**Through this association, SII seeks to ramp up constant efforts to save the lives of millions of people from this dreadful disease, he added**

responding to the global health crisis posed by COVID-19," Renu Swarup, secretary in the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India, said.

India has a proven track record of manufacturing safe and cost-effective vaccines not only for India, but for the world, she added. In a similar vein, Indian Council of Medical Research Director General Balram Bhargava said: "ICMR is deeply supportive of our cutting edge vaccine research and manufacturing prowess, of which SII is one prominent example. This partnership signifies yet another step in India's efforts to bolster the fight against this global pandemic."

PM to inaugurate Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Saturday inaugurate the 'Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra', an interactive experience centre on the Swachh Bharat Mission.

A tribute to Mahatma Gandhi, the Rashtriya Swachhata Kendra (RSK) was first announced by the prime minister on April 10 2017 on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of Gandhiji's Champaran 'satyagraha'.

After taking a tour of the RSK, located near Raj Ghat, Modi will interact with 36 school students from Delhi, representing the 36 states and union territories, at the amphitheatre of the RSK,



adhering to social distancing protocols, an official statement said.

This will be followed by his address. The installations at the RSK will introduce future generations to the successful journey of the world's largest behaviour change campaign, the Swachh Bharat (clean India) Mission, it said.

Flood-like situation, landslides continue to cause havoc in rain ravaged parts of K'taka

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Flood-like situation and landslides continue to cause havoc in several parts of Karnataka that has been battered by torrential rains.

Many places in Malnad, coastal and north interior regions of the state have been affected by deluge, putting life and properties at risk. While most of the rivers in these regions are swollen due to rising inflow because of showers continuing in the catchment areas, there are reports of landslips in hilly regions of Kodagu and Chikkamagaluru.

Flood like situation persists in the border regions of Belagavi district, with rising water levels in Krishna river and its tributaries due to rains in ghat areas of Maharashtra and water being released from the dams there.



Adding to this, the district too has been receiving rains, inundating low lying areas and crops. In Uttara Kannada and Shivamogga districts also there is similar situation of swollen rivers and inundation of low lying areas. Water is being released from several dams in the state including Alamatti and Kabinini by opening the gates as inflow has increased.

Tungabhadra dam in Hosapete has reached the brim. There have been reports of mudslides near Botlappa and other places in Kodagu, also along Charamadi ghat near Chikkamagaluru and Dakshina Kannada.

District in-charge Minister V Somanna has rushed to Kodagu that has been ravaged by floods and landslides.

Delhi govt's job portal gets 8.64 lakh applications

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Employment Minister Gopal Rai said on Friday that 8.64 lakh job aspirants have registered with the government's 'Rozgar Bazaar' job portal which has set up a 'new model of employment' in the national capital. Addressing a press conference, Rai said there were currently nine lakh vacancies available on the portal, where 6,271 companies, including Flipkart, Amazon and HDFC Bank have made registrations. The minister said around 22 lakh vacancies had been posted by employers at the job portal so far, out of which 3.5 lakh were cancelled by the department during scrutiny due to doubling or other reasons.

CVC shortens reconsideration time on punishing corrupt govt officials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has halved to one month the time for reconsideration of its advice against government officials accused of corruption in cases where the department concerned wants to have lenient or stricter view on the quantum of punishment recommended by it, according to an official order.

The move comes after it was noticed that such proposals were not received in the stipulated time period of two months, thus causing delay in processing of vigilance cases. The CVC is consulted by the government departments at two stages in vigilance cases -- advice is first obtained on investigation reports and second before a final decision is taken at conclusion of proceedings against



corrupt employees. Citing its earlier guidelines, the commission said government departments are required to approach the CVC for advice wherein a lenient or stricter view than that advised by it is proposed to be taken in the vigilance cases.

Further, it was also prescribed that such reconsideration proposals should be sent within two months from the date of receipt

of the commission's advice, said the order issued on Thursday. Considering the need for expeditious finalization of vigilance cases and to adhere to the timelines for its finalisations, the commission on review of the existing timelines, has decided that any proposal for reconsideration of its first stage advice should be made to it within one month of receipt of the first stage advice, it said.

Rhea Chakraborty appears before ED in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai: Actor Rhea Chakraborty, accused of abetting suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) here on Friday in connection with the money laundering case lodged by it. The ED has also summoned for questioning Shruti Modi, who is Chakraborty's business manager, and Rajput's friend and roommate Siddharth Pithani in connection with the money laundering probe stemming from a complaint filed by his father with the Bihar Police in connection with his death, officials said.

They said the two are accused in their case and their statements will be recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) once they appear on their scheduled dates for Friday and Saturday respectively.

Pithani is stated to be out of



Mumbai at present and he has said in various news channel interviews that he was present in the Bandra flat on June 14 when the 34-year-old actor hanged himself.

The IT professional, stated to be living with Rajput for about an year, had earlier recorded his statement with the Mumbai Police as part of their accidental death report (ADR) probe in the case.

Chakraborty (28), accused by Rajput's father of abetting

his son's suicide, appeared before the ED at the agency's office in Ballard Estate here on Friday after initially refusing to do so, citing her appeal pending before the Supreme Court.

"In view of the fact that the ED has informed the media that the request to postpone her attendance is rejected, Rhea has appeared before the ED office," her advocate Satish Maneshinde said.

She was accompanied by her brother Showik.

Air India allowing travel agents to sell seats only on select Vande Bharat flights: TAAI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India is allowing travel agents to sell seats only on select flights under the Vande Bharat Mission and "other inventories have been blocked", the Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has alleged.

Asked about the matter, Air India told PTI it has received several complaints from passengers about overcharging by agents or their sub-agents, especially on sectors with a high demand, and consequently, it has been "compelled to restrict access of distribution" on such sectors. In a statement late on Thursday night, the TAAI alleged that at a juncture when economies are trying to revive and come back on their feet, Air India continues to play "monopolistic".

"After our repeated request to your good-selves, agents were permitted to book on the GDS (global distribution system), but now inventories have



been blocked and selective sectors are only being permitted. This is totally unfair and biased," it added.

The TAAI has over 2,500 travel agent companies as its members. "We once again request you (Civil Aviation Ministry and Air India) to ensure that accredited member travel agents are given due respect and permitted to promote and sell airline seats...on all sectors that are being operated by Air India under the Vande Bharat Mission," it said.

Moreover, Air India should withdraw its statements asking the passengers to report any issue of overcharging by travel agents for flights under the Vande Bharat Mission, the TAAI demanded. "Such communications (of Air India) are demeaning to our member agents in the trade who you call 'Travel Partners'," it said.

The TAAI has written two letters on the matter -- one on July 30 and another on August 6 -- to the Civil Aviation Ministry and Air India.

Asked about the matter, Air India told PTI that it has been

**"We once again request you (Civil Aviation Ministry and Air India) to ensure that accredited member travel agents are given due respect and permitted to promote and sell airline seats...on all sectors that are being operated by Air India under the Vande Bharat Mission," it said**

operating the Vande Bharat Mission flights under directions from the government to evacuate Indian citizens stranded abroad due to the cessation of scheduled flight operations because of the COVID-19 pandemic. "This initiative is also serving Indians working/studying abroad to travel and rejoin

their companies/institutions from India," the national carrier said in a statement.

It added that it has also been keeping fares at a very reasonable level, in spite of the mounting costs due to several constraints in India and abroad during the pandemic.

"After opening sale of flights to travel agents, Air India received several complaints from passengers of overcharging by agents or their sub-agents, especially on sectors with high demand. To address the issue, Air India has been disseminating complete information on country-wise criteria and documents required for travel to make the exorbitant service charges unjustifiable.

"For this, Air India has been compelled to restrict access of distribution of high-demand sectors to agents with the sole purpose of safeguarding the interest of passengers in these trying times," it said.



## Big win for Mahinda

With the pro-China Rajapaksa clan in full control, India has to work on strategic engagement and economic alliances



The Sri Lankans have chosen stability over liberalism, performance over democracy in returning the Rajapaksa clan to power with a massive mandate in the nation's parliamentary elections. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's ruling party, the Sri Lanka People's Party (SLPP), won 145 of the 150 seats, that would now allow him to amend the Constitution, expand his executive powers and ensure that his elder brother, Mahinda, continues as Prime Minister. In short, the dynastic hold on Sri Lanka's politics is now absolute. And the brothers could overturn any reformatory attempts that have been made by previous Governments to consolidate their position. Sri Lankans, much like other nations around the world, including India, have voted for nationalist pride and muscular leadership in tough times. The Government's smart COVID-19 management has scored big with the voter, the island nation reporting just 11 deaths and managing the elections without any cluster outbreaks during the polling process. The Rajapaksa brothers are seen as strongmen and deliverers and seem to have consolidated their hold among the Sinhalese Buddhist majority in the aftermath of the Easter bombings, which showed how scattered IS modules were choosing virgin targets. And no matter how militarist Gotabaya may seem, the Sinhalese trust him to tackle terrorism as he cleaned up the Tamil movement ruthlessly, an operation that had earned him the moniker of the "terminator." For India, though, the return of Mahinda Rajapaksa is worrying as he has a hardliner approach to Tamils and has welcomed Chinese strategic interests and investment at our expense. In the past, he accused New Delhi of intervening in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, propping up his own protege Maithripala Sirisena against him and ensuring he lost the elections. Sirisena's SLFP and ally UNP, whose leader Ranil Wickremesinghe became Prime Minister, formed a coalition Government which was pro-India. The Indian establishment was also too overt rather than being covert about its interventions. So a hurt Mahinda never settled down, his party scoring on local elections till he forced a coup, subduing Sirisena, getting him to sack Wickremesinghe and becoming Prime Minister for 51 days. Gotabaya took charge of Defence and Security, kept the Tamil-majority areas under strict military vigil and put Indian diplomats under surveillance. It is this distrust that needs to be healed now for geo-strategic reasons if we don't want China to run ahead.

Little wonder then that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was one of the first dignitaries to wish Mahinda, with whom he has been in touch over regional COVID-19 management. India's diplomacy in the neighbourhood has to factor in the pragmatism by lesser neighbours, who have successfully played on its anxieties with China and are negotiating the best of both worlds given the competitive muscle-flexing by two Asian majors. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka are all happily walking the trajectory of "trade ties" with China and "historical linkage" with India to buttonhole both nations into giving concessions. Mahinda, too, seized the moment by calling India a "friend" with whom he had a "long-standing cooperation." The Modi Government is pushing proactive participation over historical assumptions in its Lanka policy. Yet, the Chinese are way ahead in Lanka. They have a 99-year lease on the Hambantota port after Sri Lanka's failure to repay loans and are using it to enhance their military arc in the Indian Ocean region all the way to east Africa. The Chinese have even created an island off Colombo, a new financial hotspot and a key conduit to East Africa, besides controlling the island nation's infrastructure sector, hospitality and supply chains. And while we may have halted Huawei's 5G technology, Sri Lanka has no security fears about the new-generation mobile telephony technology. India has, therefore, to do a very tightrope act with Sri Lanka if it wants to protect its strategic interests amid a Chinese swamp. That, too, without compromising too much on Tamil interests. We need to work on investment and project partnerships, encourage soft diplomacy via people-to-people contacts and strengthen an institution like BIMSTEC to ensure continuous communication. And we must take care to not appear exploitative or patronising.

## COVID spiral

As the virus spreads, India must ramp up its testing capacity, focus on the hinterland and come up with a standard protocol



The dreaded community spread has India well and truly in its grip because, from the time the pandemic began in the country, we had recorded 1.5 million cases till July 28 but have added a whopping 5,00,000 infections in just nine days. This is an average of 50,000 fresh cases recorded each day. India has breached the 20-lakh barrier and fatalities have touched the 41,000 mark. The country that has been fighting to rapidly ramp up its poor healthcare infrastructure is now snapping at the heels of Brazil, which has more than 2.8 million cases, and the US, which is leading the list of worst-hit countries with five million cases. And if experts are to be believed, the community spread has only just begun and the next million cases may take just a little over two weeks if infections continue to spread at the same rate at which they are now. Expert opinion has it that the country needs to shift its focus on the war against the pandemic to rural India, which has multiple challenges of a high population density, patchy administration and a tottering healthcare infrastructure.

Another area where the country needs to improve its performance is testing that has been dismally slow. Till August 5, the country had just tested 16,617 people per million, which is a paltry 1.66 per cent of the population. Compare this to other nations like the US, which has tested 18.8 per cent of its population, Russia 20 per cent, South Africa five per cent and the UK 25 per cent. The Government's excuses of overpopulation and being a poor country hold no water as even a country like Brazil, which has a much lesser GDP than ours, has tested 6.3 per cent of its population. Moreover, a small country like Iran has tested three per cent. If we are to beat the pandemic, we have to ramp up our testing and take it up to five per cent at least, which is around 32 million more people. Testing also helps us map the trajectory of the disease and prepare containment strategies or it would look like we are just flying blind as some Western experts are suggesting. Right now, while the urban centres are bending the curve, unexpected hotspots are emerging, which need to be contained lest they set off a ripple effect that can lead to a "viral" blast. Also, what is needed is a national protocol for a standardised response, better guidance and a balanced allocation of resources. The silver lining in the dark cloud is that the recovery rate in the country is continuously rising and the fatality rate has remained much below the global average. If the figures being bandied about by the Health Ministry are anything to go by, the recovery rate has risen from 51.08 per cent on June 15 to a record high of 67.98 per cent on August 7, while the fatality rate has gone down to 2.05 per cent. These two in tandem have enabled a higher and rising difference of more than 7.7 lakh between the number of recovered patients and active cases in the country, claims the Ministry. Of course, there is still a problem of unaccounted deaths and cases that may completely change the picture. Plus, we have come a long way from the time we faced a shortage of simple things like hand sanitisers to the more complex PPEs and ventilators. Now, after four months, we are actually exporting these to other nations. The two indigenous vaccines are showing promise and developers are preparing to begin simultaneous phase 2 trials that study immune response and additional safety in a large population. In some more good news, pharma major Lupin has launched its Favipiravir drug at a very reasonable price. So, while we may not yet be winning the COVID war, all is still not lost. India can live to fight another day. But we must stick to a mapping and tracking plan and not get complacent. More importantly, not let up. Given our population, we will have recurring waves.



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected human behaviour throughout the world, causing new focal points of irritation to emerge and the old ones to intensify, sometimes to levels where violence follows inevitably. This, in turn, is the result of the fear of catching the disease and boredom caused by prolonged confinement at home, either by choice or compulsion created by lockdowns. Moods marked by irritation and anger intensify old animosities and create new ones. An example is the resurgence of hatred towards stray dogs, who have been an integral part of India's urban and rural population centres since the time of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, if not earlier.

Directly or indirectly, animals and creatures that live in water or the sky feature prominently in the philosophy of the *Upanishads* and the narratives of the *Vedas*, *Brahma Sutra*, the *Puranas* and the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Examples are many, but two well-known ones merit a mention. In *Mahabharata's Mahaprasthanika Parva* (The Chapter of the Great Departure), a small brown dog began to follow the five Pandavas and Draupadi as they began their final journey out of this world. One by one, Draupadi and four Pandavas fell dead as they climbed Mount Meru. Yudhishthir, the eldest Pandava, and the dog marched on. Suddenly Indra, the king of gods, appeared in his flying chariot and said that he had come to take Yudhishthir to heaven in his mortal body. Assured that Draupadi and his four brothers were already there and well, he asked whether the dog could come with him. On being told that heaven had no place for a dog, he refused to go without the latter. It was then that the dog appeared in his true self as Dharma, the God of Virtue, and said this was Yudhishthir's final test. He would not have been able to enter heaven alive if he had agreed to abandon the dog.

This account is widely known and cited. Another incident is found in the Bengali translation of the *Saptakanda Ramayana* (The *Ramayana* in Seven Parts) by Krittibas Ojha. It happened when Ram, after defeating Ravan and sending Sita to sage Valmiki's hermitage, was holding court in Ayodhya with Lakshman guarding the entrance. A white dog with red eyes, lame in one leg and limping, with thick patches of congealed

# opinion06

## Being humane

Following the pandemic, there has been a resurgence of hatred against stray dogs who are left to fend for themselves. Not many understand how their lives have turned upside down



blood on his head, indicating that it has hit with a stick, came and touched Lakshman's feet. Asked why he had come, he said he would relate the cause of his sorrow to Ram if the latter granted him an audience.

Told of the dog's request by Lakshman, Ram asked for the dog to be brought before him forthwith. Arriving in Ram's presence, he began to sing the former's praise with folded hands and head bowed. Asked about the reason for his coming, he said, "A *sanyasi* (a mendicant ascetic who has renounced the world) has hit me for no fault of mine. Distressed and hurt after being hit, I have come to your court after starving for three days. The court should please ask the *sanyasi* what was my fault that he should have hit me with a stick?" Ram said that the *sanyasi* should be brought immediately before him so that the court could judge. How could a *sanyasi* be cruel to an animal? (All quotations are from *Saptakanda Ramayana* translated from Bengali to English by this author).

The dog, who accompanied Ram's messenger, identified the *sanyasi* as he was brought before Ram, who asked, "Why have you abandoned your *dharma* and are cruel to animals? One who perpetrates *adharma* has to live in hell. What kind of renunciation is yours when your body is so full of anger? Castigation of others and malevolence towards others are grave sins. A terrible hell is the punishment for a cruel and malevolent *sanyasi*. A sage who has

given up greed, illusion and desire, is respected in this world. And, though a *sanyasi*, you suddenly burst into anger! What was the fault of the dog that you hit him with a stick?"

The ascetic replied, "I went to the town for alms after reciting prayers on the banks of the Ganga during the whole day. Begging for alms, the whole body burning with hunger, I found the dog lying in front occupying the whole road. I loudly asked him to go give way but he pretended not to hear. He was asleep with one eye closed and looked at me with the other. I became angry and hit him on the head with a stick. Now that I have said all this before the court, you decide what punishment to give me."

On being asked by Ram about the punishment, the courtiers said that the *sanyasi* should be barred from bathing in the Ganges. At this, the dog said that he should not be punished but made the ruler of the kingdom of Kalinjar. The courtiers laughed as Ram made the *sanyasi* the king of Kalinjar. Climbing onto the back of an elephant, his splendour enhanced by the royal sceptre, the *sanyasi* began travelling happily towards Kalinjar as people laughed at his attire — a loin-cloth — with the royal umbrella over his head.

Asked by the courtiers as to why was the kingdom given to the *sanyasi* when the idea was to punish him, Ram directed them to the dog, who said, "Under a curse by Lord Shiva, death does not alter the king's destiny to be

reborn as a dog... I was the king in the previous birth and now I have been reborn as a dog and suffered much. But having seen you, I will now escape from my torment." While everybody said that the *sanyasi's* worldly possessions have now increased, the dog said, "Have no doubt, whoever becomes the king of Kalinjar becomes a dog in his next birth." He then did *namaskar* to Ram and walked slowly to Varanasi where he fasted to death and attained heaven because he had seen Ram.

Ram's statement that a "terrible hell is the punishment for a cruel and malevolent *sanyasi*" has an echo in a passage in Skanda V, chapter 26 of *Srimad Bhagavata: The Holy Book of God*. It reads, "God has given different forms of livelihood to creatures. Some of these may go against the interests of man. But man should not retaliate against these creatures for two reasons. They are not endowed with the capacity to know that they are doing injury to man; and next, man knows that they will be injured if he retaliates. A person who injures lower creations for selfish purposes goes to a purgatory called *Andhakupa* and there he will have to live in a low type of body, attacked by the creatures he had injured. In darkness, without sleep, and restless, he will have to drag on a wretched existence." (Translated by Swami Tapasyananda).

The passage quoted from *The Srimad Bhagavata: The Holy Book of God* applies especially to those who inveigh ceaselessly

about the "menace" posed by stray dogs. They can neither see the role the latter play as sentinels, whose barking alerts people against the arrival of thieves, robbers and terrorists/insurgents. Precisely for this reason, terrorists in some areas of Jammu & Kashmir and Maoists in parts of central India have asked villagers to kill all dogs in their areas.

In the present situation, how many of India's stray dog haters have tried to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the lives of these canines completely upside down? It has been said often enough to become common-place knowledge that the closure of hotels, *dhabas* and restaurants have deprived vast numbers of them of their food. It is not just the left-overs thrown into garbage bins that they miss. Many of them, who had been fed regularly by the staff and owners of these eating places, have now to fend for themselves — something to which they have grown unused.

Finally, how many haters of stray dogs have any idea of the love and loyalty that most dogs unconditionally lavish on people? Not surprisingly, Konrad Lorenz writes in *Man Meets Dog*, "The whole charm of the dog lies in the depth of friendship and the strength of spiritual ties with which he has tied himself to man." Author of the landmark book *On Aggression* and perhaps the best-known authority on animal behaviour, he should know.

(The writer is Consultant Editor, The Pioneer, and author)

## SOUNDBITE

I would have wanted more opportunities to play Test cricket. In those days, it was difficult to get a spot amid star players like Sachin and Rahul who started opening.



Former cricketer  
—Yuvraj Singh

From what I can tell you is that the equation of the industry has not changed. It's an equal playing field. You've to have a huge amount of luck and then things will fall in place.



Actor  
—Chunky Panday

What China did is a terrible thing. Whether it was incompetence or on purpose, it was a terrible thing that they did ... not only to the US, but to the world.



US President  
—Donald Trump

PM Modi congratulated 130 crore Indians during the *bhoomi puja* but India's population is over 138 crore. The omission of 8 crore people is worrying after CAA/NRC.



Congress leader  
—Shashi Tharoor

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Stand firm

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Now Pak in map war" (August 6). Close on the heels of Nepal's issuance of a map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura under its territory, Pakistan has released a territorially misleading map that includes the former princely State of Junagadh (Gujarat) and Kashmir. This prompted a quick response from India's Ministry of External Affairs, which termed it "an exercise in political absurdity."

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan claimed that the map represented the aspirations of the whole nation and all its political parties. It is likely that Pakistan has China's blessings in producing the map given similar border claims by Nepal recently. Pakistan has expressed its frustration through a series of steps that coincided with the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370. It had announced that August 5 would be observed as "day of exploitation" even as the Khan Government again failed to persuade the UN Security Council to come up

### Gold smuggling gets murkier

It is common knowledge that gold is smuggled into the country by land, sea and air. The Department of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 4,000 kilograms of gold worth ₹1,300 crore that was illegally brought into Gujarat. In February, DRI officials found about 15 kg of gold valued at over ₹6 crore on the sea bed at Mandapam off the Tamil Nadu coast. There are umpteen such instances. More recently, an influential gang smuggled nearly 230 kg of gold into Kerala, tucked stealthily in the diplomatic parcel bags couriered from Dubai to the Consulate General of the UAE in Thiruvananthapuram. On July 5, Customs officials intercepted the passage of a diplomatic bag, stated to be the 21st in line, which led to the seizure of 30 kg gold. The probe was assigned to the NIA as suspicion of illegal money being used for nefarious activities gained strength. However, the Opposition chose to focus on the association of M Sivasankar (IAS), the Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister of Kerala, with the accused. Swapna Suresh, and underplayed the issue through the diplomatic channel. In fact, it chose to hammer the Chief Minister. Even after days of interrogation by both the Customs officials and the NIA, it remains unclear if the officer was a victim of misjudg-



ment or had even the remotest role in the murky affair.

And the role of the consulate in the gold smuggling, particularly the attaché, is still shrouded in mystery. An argument doing the rounds is that the attaché is not bound to reveal his travel itinerary to the Government, he being a diplomat. The question here is: Can a diplomat aid terrorism and still leave the country quietly under the cover of diplomatic immunity from prosecution? Politically, the Opposition efforts to besmirch Vijayan's reputation have not registered much success. Meanwhile, the sleuths are preparing to travel abroad for investigations.

Haridasan Rajan  
Kozhikode

with a resolution on Kashmir despite having China on its side. The FATF has decided to keep Pakistan on the "grey" list as it failed to check the flow of money to terrorist groups. If it fails to fulfil the FATF's requirements, it

could be downgraded to the blacklist. India must firmly disprove the ridiculous claims made by its neighbours and reassert its territorial sovereignty.

Venu GS  
Kollam

### Tough questions

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "After Ayodhya" (August 6). The pomp and show displayed at a simple event such as the *bhoomi*

*mi puja* at Ayodhya was avoidable. The event has raised several questions. Was it correct for the PM to lay the foundation of the temple, one which remained embroiled in a long history of disputes? In a secular democracy, the PM is not expected to represent any particular religion or organisation. For a head of the state, religious affiliations should remain confined within the four walls of his home.

Sritama  
Via email

### Crisis within crisis

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Monumental apathy" (August 7). The massive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon couldn't have come at a worse time for Lebanon when the country has been battling one crisis after another. Nations across the world as well as international institutions must offer help to Lebanon so that it can overcome the catastrophe.

Prathna  
Via email

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

## Transparency is long overdue

The Centre has rolled out a robust and much-desired architecture for the online audit of Panchayati Raj Institutions



DEVENDER SINGH **ASWAL**

**T**ransparency and accountability in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been hanging fire for long. After much reflection, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has launched an AuditOnline application for scrutinising the accounts of over 2.50 lakh gram panchayats (GPs). To begin with, the accounts of at least 20 per cent or 50,000 GPs would be audited online for 2019-20. This was long overdue as the GPs have been endowed with substantial powers, authority and responsibilities with the enactment of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act. Following the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission (FC), ₹2,00,292 crore was transferred to the PRIs during 2015-16 to 2019-20. The 14th FC, and many others before it, had underlined the need for auditing panchayat accounts as the wisdom, faithfulness and propriety of expenditure were a matter of nagging concern. Guidelines were issued by the Finance Ministry in 2015 to the effect that the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) would examine the release and transfer of the grants-in aid and expenditure in Panchayats and municipalities.

The 15th FC, while recommending allocation of ₹60,750 crore for 2020-21 to the three tiers of the PRIs, comprising the district panchayats, block panchayats and GPs, laid emphasis on ensuring timely availability of audited accounts online so as to strengthen their financial management. Hence, AuditOnline facilitates online and offline checking of accounts of the PRIs with a view to improving transparency and accountability in the utilisation of public money. The accounts of 20 per cent GPs would be audited on a pilot basis and scaled up to 100 per cent in the financial year 2021-22. Owing to the online digital payment mechanism, now integrated with eGramSwaraj, the GPs were able to make online payments out of the 14th FC grants. In fact, 1.52 lakh GPs were on the platform and 1.04 lakh GPs made online payments during 2019-20.

Notably, AuditOnline will ease up access to records which can be monitored at the district, State and Union level. It can enable uploading of photos of the work done and geo-tagging of projects to facilitate physical inspection and remote verification of the assets. This will help reduce costs, ensure quicker reviews and sound documentation and enhance environmental sustainability. The timely availability of records was a major issue in the offline system but in the online audit system, the auditors will be able to see all documents related to work approval and payments.

AuditOnline also facilitates online and offline scrutiny of accounts and maintains the past records of the auditee. Plus, the information would be available in public domain. Fully configurable, it is capable of depicting any type of workflow and mapping seamlessly the auditor/auditee engagement and interaction and audit observation tags. Further, its Dynamic Form Designer allows drawing of the forms for case record and fact sheet easily and generation and download of various graphical reports for analysis and monitoring, based on customisable report templates. Another and yet more significant advantage is the fact that the monitoring authorities would get notified instantaneously via e-mail/SMS/System-based alerts at various trigger points, enabling concurrent analysis, mid-course correction and better monitoring. A greater responsibility has been given to the State Accountant General (AG) under AuditOnline rules. The AG, representative of the CAG, shall identify the District Local Fund Auditor (DLFO) for each area. The entire audit process — starting with the identification of the DLFO, audit planning, recording of entry and exit meetings by the auditor, concurrence and approval of the meetings, communication of the draft audit to the auditee, generation of audit report, review of the response and action taken there on, by the auditee with clear timelines — are all unambiguously outlined. The audit report shall be provided to the GP by December 31 every year for consideration and corrective action.

Despite numerous accruable benefits, there are apparent hurdles and technical glitches. How will the online audit take off if the books of accounts are not complete, leaving aside the issue of high-speed internet and uninterrupted connectivity? It's only when the money is spent, brought on account and the accounts closed, a prerequisite for any audit, that the online audit can be undertaken.

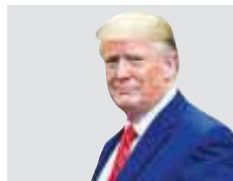
However, the Union Government has rolled out a robust and much-desired architecture for the audit of PRIs. In fact, 11 States (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Telangana, Tripura, and Uttarakhand) have already provided their configuration details and others will follow suit. Extensive online training and hands-on sessions are being carried out with the States. With the successful operation of AuditOnline, hopefully, the image of PRIs will improve with the expanded arch of accountability, encompassing all the three tiers of India's multi-layered and now expanding digital democracy.

(The writer is former Additional Secretary Lok Sabha and an author)

MOBILE APPLICATIONS DEVELOPED AND OWNED BY COMPANIES IN CHINA CONTINUE TO THREATEN OUR NATIONAL SECURITY, FOREIGN POLICY AND ECONOMY.

—US PRESIDENT  
DONALD TRUMP

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



CHINA URGES THE US TO CORRECT ITS WRONGDOINGS, STOP POLITICISING ECONOMIC ISSUES AND CRACKING DOWN ON RELATED FIRMS.

—CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESPERSON  
WANG WENBIN

# Embrace the circular economy

As nations move towards a post-pandemic fiscal recovery, they must adopt strategies for long-term sustainable development and create resilient economies



SHILPI KAPUR  
**BAKSHI**

PRAHLAD  
**TEWARI**

**T**he pandemic and the response to it by various governments around the world have posed unprecedented challenges, the effect of which would be felt for decades to come. People and economies are suffering not only due to the huge loss of lives but also from the slowdown of economic activities during the lockdown. According to the Union Minister of Road Transport Nitin Gadkari, the contagion is expected to cause a loss of over ₹10 lakh crore to India's economy. The World Bank, too, estimates that 12 million people in India could be pushed into poverty. While initially, the most visible impact of the crisis was on the healthcare sector due to shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), ventilators, critical medical supplies and healthcare professionals trained in the handling of a contagion, its impact is now being felt on the free movement of people, goods and services, too.

A circular economy is based on the principles of reducing our waste and pollution throughout the lifecycle stages, keeping products and materials in use for long and regenerating natural systems. Circular economy-based concepts, such as cascaded reuse of resources to design reusable masks to substitute single-use masks, supported by Government-formulated guidelines and awareness about the same, are steps in the right direction.

The global market for refurbished medical devices is also predicted to witness significant growth. Recently, fuel cell manufacturer Bloom Energy started to refurbish ventilators to meet the supply gap in hospitals in the US. Due to COVID-19, organisations preferred work from home (WFH) and educational institutes preferred to learn from home using virtual platforms for meetings and online classes, which led to an unprecedented surge in demand for refurbished laptops. This cascaded use of refurbished laptops would also be critical in filling the void that has emerged in supporting online education to rural and urban poor students. Measures like these will create new market opportunities, increase the use of existing assets and reduce the pressure on the environment created by the demand for virgin raw materials.

Integrating circularity in various governments' recovery agenda and strategies thus assumes importance. In April, the City of Amsterdam launched its Circular 2020-2025 strategy, which outlines the actions it would take to cut down the use of new raw materials to half by 2030. The local government also considers this strategy to be the basis for economic recovery from the effects of COVID-19. Similarly, the European Union (EU) and South Korea have both adopted "Green Deals" as central pillars to their economic recoveries, both leveraging regenerative models and circular economy principles. The deployment of idle railway coaches by Indian Railways as isolation wards during the surge of Coronavirus infections is adapting the approach to use existing infrastructure to an extent possible. This provides an opportunity for other governments to integrate resilience, low carbon and sustainable growth thinking into their recoveries by avoiding short-term emission-intensive projects.

Rethinking the mostly linear global supply chain systems by adopting a circular economy as a mode of production can help economies withstand supply disruptions like those experienced in the current pandemic. This was particularly visible in the case of stressed food production and distribution, which was experienced during the hastily-implemented lockdowns. By creating new and shorter supply chain connections between producers and con-

“THE TIME IS RIPE FOR US TO RETHINK OUR CONSUMPTION PATTERNS, TO BUILD IN RESILIENCE, CIRCULARITY AND AN EFFICIENT RURAL-URBAN CONNECTION TO REDUCE THE VULNERABILITY OF OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND MOVE TOWARDS AN ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT”



sumers, we can ensure a continuous supply of essential goods in vital sectors and help improve resilience through stock availability and competitiveness while not giving up the commitment to achieving the UN-set Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In order to support the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, newer ecosystems need to be envisaged that are based on local, shorter and more distributed supply chains via localised material sourcing. At the start of the pandemic in India, the availability of PPEs was critically low, owing to non-availability of local manufacturers, long gestation period to import their machines and the high cost. In line with the spirit of Vocal for Local and with various Government initiatives, India is today the second-largest manufacturer of PPE body overalls within a short span of four months. There is also a need to engage in collaborative consumption to share resources by replacing traditional ownership of products with lending, borrowing and the availability of repair services to facilitate reuse. This would help reduce panic buying. For instance, the assurance of the Delhi Government to provide "Pulse Oximeters" for monitoring oxygen levels of patients undergoing home isolation is a positive step in this direction. Acceptance of such "pay for services" rather than "owning facility options" would gain momentum if hygiene is ensured. Local waste sites can be turned into resource centres that undertake recovery and recycling of plastics.

Circular innovations can address manufacturing and supply chain shortages within the healthcare sector, too, where circular knitted fabric (washable and reusable) can be used to produce non-medical protective face masks. The need for investment in technology for designing responsible packaging solutions that maintain food safety and quality standards and prevent contamination can enhance the sustainability of the home delivery ser-

vices that people are increasingly relying upon. Such solutions could also help continue efforts to reduce the usage of plastics and styrofoam. Several initiatives by various Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies and collaborations involving various stakeholders have been done across the globe to minimise single-use plastics.

In addition, enhancing material productivity also plays a significant role in addressing the diminishing cost competitiveness of industries (such as the Indian automobile sector in comparison to China, Singapore, Indonesia, and Bangladesh) due to high material cost. The circular economy emphasises reuse, and through this has the potential to generate not only environmental benefits but cost benefits, too, and create new revenue opportunities. For example, the focus on manufacturing durable goods would help them to generate income from rentals, repairs and refurbishment while reducing the environmental footprint.

In the COVID-19 crisis, digital solutions have promoted virtual workspaces, a mobile Government and a multitude of platforms to monitor and trace infections. Digitalisation has not only been limited to medical solutions or WFH set-ups but has been an instrument in supporting online education modes, too.

Digital technology can play a role in creating city and village systems that are regenerative and restorative by offering dematerialisation opportunities, increasing our knowledge and understanding of data on the lifecycle of materials, people and external conditions, allowing for more informed decisions based on accurate data. This would help close the loop of material cycles and contribute to keeping products/materials in use for a longer period of time.

For example, digital technology can help aggregate local marketplaces dealing in secondary and alternative materials and formalise the informal sector waste-pick-

ers. Real-time tracking technologies provide information on where a product ends up and how it will be reused or recycled.

However, despite the many opportunities that circular thinking presents, ongoing efforts in this direction have been hit due to the pandemic. For example, in the waste management sector where significant work was done to manage plastic waste, many efforts have been halted during the lockdown, particularly in the private recycling space.

Recycling plants are mostly shut or are operating at limited capacity with a lot of the informal sector workers, who played the role of aggregators (such as the junk collectors) leaving urban centres for their native places. Procurement of recyclable waste has also become a challenge. Among plastics, virgin plastic may become even cheaper than secondary raw material plastic due to falling prices of hydrocarbon fuels resulting from the current low demand. This will also affect the economic viability of many plastic recyclers. Efforts would be required to stimulate the demand for recycled materials and close the price gap between virgin and recycled plastics.

As countries step towards economic recovery after COVID-19, they should undertake circular economy strategies for long-term sustainable development and for creating resilient economies. The BRICS nations recently acknowledged the heightening of social vulnerabilities and job losses due to the pandemic and have emphasised on the need for improving the environment and promoting the circular economy in national plans as steps towards recovery. The time is ripe for us to rethink our consumption patterns, to build in resilience, circularity and an efficient rural-urban connection to reduce the vulnerability of our economic and social systems and move towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

(Bakshi is Senior Fellow and Tewari is Fellow and Area Convenor, TERI)

# Maintain a healthy digital diet

During this period of social distancing, we should use technology to increase our independence and harness our inner potential



PRAKRITI **PODDAR**

**T**he Coronavirus pandemic has made social distancing the new normal and the majority of us are becoming increasingly dependent on digital technology. Pushed into an uncertain future, we are spending more time to digitally connect with people, work, shop, keep ourselves informed and even entertained.

While a digitally-mediated daily life can keep us safe from the risk of infection, too much exposure to it can harm our mental health. There has been a lot of awareness raised about the impact of exposing oneself to negative influences on social media and the news. The more information we receive

the more insufferable the pandemic becomes. We have seen people feel hopeless and helpless as a result of all the information they absorb and unfortunately, sink into deeper mental health issues.

Fake news and conspiracy theories can induce fear and lead us to either fight, freeze or fold up. If you are one of the fighters, the information on digital feeds will help you take action in serving others, hence, limiting your online time.

You may also minimise the understanding of the situation and label all those people, who err at the side of precaution, as hysterical and not abide by the safety rules. Thus, putting yourself and others in danger. If you freeze, then you will lock yourself down and if you fold, you will need support to uplift your mental health.

At all costs, people must keep their digital activity healthy during the outbreak. Let us take a look at three evidence-based tips for a healthy digital diet during the outbreak.

**Take control:** It is natural to feel

powerless and scared in the face of a pandemic but people can use digital technology to regain control and give themselves a degree of autonomy over their life.

This is critical as having control promotes emotional well-being. So, people must think about ways in which they can use digital technology to help them do it. It can be something as simple as using the technology at their disposal to make plans, manage their schedule, organise activities with others and even do online shopping at websites where they get to exert greater choice.

The key is to use digital technology actively instead of letting themselves get passively guided by algorithms. People must think of digital technology as a tool that allows them to extend their autonomy and makes it possible for them to develop strategies to cope better. For instance, people can consider limiting passive screen time and balance passive viewing with more interactive screen time — playing educational games, making

YouTube videos, coding a website — where they are in control.

**Nurture relationships:** While social distancing is good for our physical health, isolation is not good for our mental health. So, we must use this opportunity to digitally connect with old friends, family members or acquaintances that we somehow lost touch with. We must also nurture our existing relationships by scheduling regular chats online and using digital devices to spread positive news, express gratitude to the people serving us and helping others.

For instance, people can order food and groceries online for friends, family members and neighbours who are not digitally-enabled. Helping others can give life more purpose and allay anxieties. Organise group chats and regular virtual meet-ups — seeing a familiar face, even on a phone screen, can be reassuring. People must use this time as an opportunity to rebuild affiliations with those who matter.

**Be smarter:** Our well-being is also influenced by our competence, ability

to rise above challenges, take smart decisions and experience a sense of achievement and degree of success. Hence, people must use this opportunity to take online courses, learn new skills and do things that engage them. People must consider using digital technology to look after their body and mind during this period of confinement. They may not be able to hit the gym but they can use digital reminders and prompts to move and exercise more — even if they are confined inside a restricted environment. People can consider downloading a nutrition app, exercise, mindfulness or relaxation app. They must think about how they can use digital technology to improve exercise, sleep and diet regimes.

People can use digital technology to be smarter about their information diet, too. Use fact-checking services to counter conspiracy theories, unfounded rumours, urban legends and misinformation. Reduce information intake to one or two trustworthy sources. Most importantly, get infor-

mation from reputable sources instead of regurgitating what they read on social media.

**The way towards digital well-being:** Our increased digital dependency can be of benefit to our well-being instead of a hazard. We need to use our screens positively and promote greater autonomy, relatedness and competence. To be balanced, people must schedule their downtime, off-screen time, exercise time and fun time. This will form the core of their emotional well-being and hold them in good stead.

People must remember not to reach for their phone as soon as they wake up. They must give themselves the time to get ready, eat and then get to their device. We should use technology to increase our independence, further our well-being and harness our inner potential. Doing so will not only help us get through the pandemic but will also ensure that we emerge stronger from it.

(The writer is Director of a Wellness company and heads a foundation)



FOREIGN EYE



## YETI A BOON TO TOURISM

Taunting anthropologists and researchers, the elusive Yeti continues to confound science. Ecologist Daniel Taylor found a trail of footprints during a 1983 search of the Barun but eventually concluded that it is more likely to be a bear. Yetis still court controversy as we saw recently with the aborted Visit Nepal Year 2020 sculptures, but they also boost tourism. (Nepali Times editorial)



CAPSULE



Sobha Q1 profit plunges 93 pc at Rs 6.6 cr

**NEW DELHI:** Realty firm Sobha on Friday reported a 93 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at Rs 6.6 crore for the quarter ended June as sales and construction activities were stalled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its net profit stood at Rs 90.6 crore in the year-ago period. Total income fell to Rs 359.3 crore in the first quarter of this fiscal from Rs 1,193.1 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, the company said in a regulatory filing. Bengaluru-based Sobha is a leading real estate firm in the country. Shares of the company were trading at Rs 224.30 apiece, up 1.24 per cent from their previous close on BSE.



Gold futures rise on spot demand

**NEW DELHI:** Gold prices on Friday rose by Rs 75 to Rs 55,920 per 10 gram in futures trade as speculators created fresh positions on firm spot demand. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold contracts for October delivery traded higher by Rs 75, or 0.13 per cent, at Rs 55,920 per 10 gram in a business turnover of 16,468 lots. Fresh positions built up by participants led to the rise in gold prices, analysts said. Gold prices traded 0.14 per cent higher at USD 2,072.20 per ounce in New York.



DICV's BharatBenz Exchange for CV segment

**MUMBAI:** Daimler India Commercial Vehicles (DICV) on Friday announced the launch of used vehicle business 'BharatBenz Exchange'. Under this, a customer can exchange used commercial vehicles (CVs) of any brand for used or new BharatBenz vehicles at dealerships across India. BharatBenz Exchange will provide buyers with a carefully-picked pool of used trucks that have undergone thorough quality checks, made available through its nationwide dealership network, the company said. "As the number of BharatBenz owners rapidly increases, we feel it is the right time to tap the massive potential presented by the used commercial vehicle segment. We look forward to delivering BharatBenz's superior quality, service and total cost of ownership (TCO) to an even larger customer base," said Satyakam Arya, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO), DICV. The used vehicle business will supplement the company's existing new vehicle sales model by offering an exchange platform, DICV said. The experts at BharatBenz will also support used vehicle buyers (both individuals and companies).

# Global shares skid amid virus woes, China-US trade tensions

PNS ■ TOKYO

Global shares were mostly lower on Friday in lackluster trading, as trade tensions between the US and China overshadowed optimism about more fiscal stimulus for the ailing US economy. Investors were also awaiting a US report on jobs later Friday for another gauge of the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. US shares have been rising as investors wait for Congress and the White House to reach a hoped-for deal on more aid for the American economy. France's CAC slipped 0.2% in early trading to 4,873.55, while Germany's DAX edged up nearly 0.2% to 12,611.50. Britain's FTSE 100 inched



down less than 0.1% to 6,025.79. US shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures down 0.4% at 27,116. S&P 500 futures were also lower, down 0.4%, at 3,331.62. Asian benchmarks appeared to be still steeped in worries

about the growing number of coronavirus cases in some areas, and the painful impact of lockdowns, especially in Southeast Asia. "The hope is for a smooth recovery as lockdowns ease, but the fear is that global 'second wave' risks and rising US-China tensions may

throw a spanner at ... recovery in the works," said Hayaki Narita at Mizuho Bank in Singapore. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 slipped 0.4% to finish at 22,329.94, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 sank 0.6% to 6,004.80. South Korea's Kospi edged 0.4% higher to 2,351.67. Hong Kong's Hang Seng slipped 1.6% to 24,531.62, while the Shanghai Composite lost 1.0% to 3,354.04. Chinese technology shares were shaken by President Donald Trump's decision to issue executive orders banning the popular messaging app WeChat and short video app TikTok from the U.S. Shares in Tencent Holdings, owner of WeChat, plunged 10% but ended the day 5% lower.

# Sensex, Nifty end flat on muted global cues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Domestic equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty ended flat on Friday as muted cues from global markets and spiking COVID-19 cases in the country kept investors on the edge. After touching a low of 37,787.38 during the day, the BSE Sensex settled just 15.12 points or 0.04 per cent higher at 38,040.57. Similarly, the NSE Nifty rose 13.90 points or 0.12 per cent to finish at 11,214.05. Asian Paints was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging over 4 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank and Maruti. On the other hand, Titan,



HCL Tech, Infosys, Sun Pharma and M&M were among the laggards. According to traders, market sentiment turned choppy tracking weak cues from global indices amid reports that the Trump administration was considering a proposal to crackdown on Chinese companies listed in the US. Spiking COVID-19 cases

too kept investors jittery, they said. Registering over 60,000 cases in 24 hours for the first time, India's COVID-19 tally galloped past 20 lakh on Friday. The number of cases around the world linked to the disease has crossed 1.9 crore. Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tokyo ended in the red, while Seoul finished with gains. Stock exchanges in Europe were trading on a negative note in early deals. Global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.86 per cent lower at USD 44.70 per barrel. On the currency front, the rupee ended almost flat at 74.93 against the US dollar.

## NBU varsity to offer course on Tea Sciences

PNS ■ SILIGURI (WB)

North Bengal University (NBU) in Siliguri will introduce Tea Sciences as a full-time undergraduate course from this academic year, a senior official of the institute has said. No other university in the country, having general subjects in Arts and Science streams, has Tea Sciences as a subject and NBU is the trendsetter, Nupur Das, secretary of the varsity's undergraduate council, said. "The Tea Sciences course will help generate employment opportunities for students as several tea estates are located in north Bengal," she told reporters on Thursday. "This will set an example. We don't have any information about any other university in the country offering similar courses," she said.

## Coal India logs 22% growth in e-auction

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Coal India Ltd (CIL) on Friday said it logged a 21.5 per cent growth in coal allocation at 19.76 million tonnes (MT) under the four e-auction windows during the April-June quarter. In the corresponding quarter a year ago, the fuel allocation by the PSU under all the four windows of e-auction was 16.26 MT, a CIL statement said. The four categories of e-auction are spot e-auction of raw coal, special forward e-auction for power producers, exclusive e-auction for non-power sector and special spot auction. Booking by non-power sector, under an exclusive e-auction to it, witnessed a three-fold rise during April-June 2020 over the same period in 2019.



CIL has allocated a total of 6.66 MT during the referred period to this sector against 2.2 MT in the year-ago quarter, with a volume increase of 4.46 MT. Under spot e-auction, the maharatna coal miner had offered 24.4 MT during the first quarter of FY'21, up by 149 per cent from 9.8 MT in the comparable period of 2019. However, amid the COVID-19 led crimp in demand since March, the actual booking volume was marginally down at 6.9 MT as compared to 7.4 MT in the same quarter last year.

## Exim Bank extends \$250 mn to Mozambique

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) on Friday said it has extended a USD 250-million (about Rs 1,870 crore) line of credit (LOC) to Mozambique for improving power supply quality in the country. The agreement to this effect was signed on August 3 through exchange between Saroj Khuntia, general manager, Exim Bank, and Adriano Isaia Ubisse, national directorate of treasury, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Mozambique. Exim Bank has now in place 264 LOCs, covering 62 countries across regions including Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with credit commitments of around USD 25.98 billion, available for financing exports from India.

# Emami reports over 1 pc rise in Q1 profit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Homegrown FMCG firm Emami Ltd on Friday reported a 1.17 per cent increase in its consolidated profit-after-tax (PAT) to Rs 39.58 crore for the first quarter ended June. The company had posted a PAT of Rs 39.12 crore during the April-June quarter of the previous fiscal, Emami said in a regulatory filing. However, its revenue from operations during the quarter under review was down 25.79



per cent to Rs 481.34 crore as against Rs 648.64 crore in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal. "Emami posted a resilient

**The company had posted a PAT of Rs 39.12 crore during the April-June quarter of the previous fiscal, Emami said in a regulatory filing**

performance with improved margins in Q1FY21, defying the challenging times that the COVID-19 pandemic present-

ed," said Emami. According to the Kolkata-headquartered firm, supply chain, sales improved considerably in May and in June and revenues were even better with a high single-digit growth over the previous year. "During the quarter, Emami increased its gross margins by 230 bps at 66.5 per cent and EBITDA margins by 490 bps at 25.5 per cent. Profit-after-tax increased by 1 per cent and PAT margins increased by 220 bps.

# Murugappa Group to invest Rs 700 cr in CG Power

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Murugappa Group firm Tube Investments of India Ltd (TIIL) has agreed to invest Rs 700 crore in CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd for a 51 per cent stake, the scam-hit company said on Friday. Tube Investments of India Ltd will be issued 64.25 crore shares at Rs 8.56 apiece aggregating to Rs 550 crore, CG Power said in a regulatory filing. Also, TIIL will also invest Rs 150 crore in the company over the next 18 months in the form of buying warrants that can be converted into equity shares. The Rs 36,900-crore Murugappa Group, which also



had an engineering arm, had made a non-binding offer to invest in CG Power. The board of CG Power at its meeting on Friday approved the investment, the filing said. The investment is, however, subject to TIIL being declared the winner of the Swiss challenge process to be undertaken by the lenders of CG Power by August 28. Under the Swiss challenge,

**Tube Investments of India Ltd will be issued 64.25 crore shares at Rs 8.56 apiece aggregating to Rs 550 crore, CG Power said in a regulatory filing**

other potential investors can make a counteroffer subject to the first investor (TIIL) have the right to match the counter offer. The investment is also subject to lenders accepting one-time settlement and restructuring of debt, the filing said.

## Netflix now available in Hindi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Netflix on Friday launched its user interface in Hindi, saying the move will enable members who prefer the language to easily access their choice of Indian and international films as well as series. The Hindi user interface is available across devices on mobile, TV and the web, it said in a statement. "Netflix members can switch to the Hindi user interface from the Language option in the 'Manage Profiles' section on their desktop, TV or mobile browsers. On Netflix, members can set up to five profiles in each account," it said.

# Rupee settles nearly flat at 74.93 against dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee ended almost flat at 74.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday due to a caution prevailing in the forex market in view of mounting coronavirus cases and US-China trade tensions. Starting off on a tepid note, the rupee fell to a low of 75.04, but recovered slightly thereafter and moved in a narrow band throughout the session. It finally settled at 74.93, gaining 1 paisa over its previous close. On Thursday too, the rupee had closed steady after the



Reserve Bank maintained a status quo in its policy rates. Meanwhile, the US dollar index rose 0.32 per cent to 93.08. Analysts said forex market sentiment was mainly guided by growing US-China trade tensions and mounting coronavirus cases in the country.



## M&M Q1 profit falls 94 pc at Rs 55 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Homegrown diversified group Mahindra & Mahindra on Friday reported 94 per cent decline in consolidated profit at Rs 54.64 crore for June quarter 2020, adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The company had posted a profit after tax of Rs 894.11 crore in the same period last fiscal, M&M said in a regulatory filing. Revenue from operations during the quarter under review stood at Rs 16,321.34 crore as against Rs 26,041.02 crore in the year-ago period, down 37 per cent, it added. The automotive segment posted a revenue of Rs 6,508.6 crore in the first quarter, down from Rs 13,547.84 crore in the same period a year ago, the company said. Farm equipment segment's revenue was Rs 4,906.92 crore as against Rs 6,077.9 crore in the same quarter last fiscal. Revenue from financial services stood at Rs 3,031.69 crore as compared to Rs 2,822.03 crore in first quarter last year.

# Franklin Templeton MF's schemes receive Rs 4,280-cr since closure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund's six shut schemes have received Rs 4,280 crore from maturities, pre-payments and coupon payments since the announcement of their closure in April. The amount has been received without the ability to efficiently monetise assets, Franklin Templeton Asset Management (India) President Sanjay Sapre said in a letter to investors on Wednesday. The schemes will endeavour to accelerate monetisation post



the successful completion of the e-voting exercise and the unit holder meets, he added. "From April 24 till July 31, 2020, the schemes have received Rs 4,280 crore from maturities, pre-payments, and

coupons," Sapre said. Franklin Templeton shut six debt mutual fund schemes on April 23, citing redemption pressure and lack of liquidity in the bond market. As on July 31, while two schemes were already cash positive, the borrowing levels in the other schemes continued to come down steadily, Sapre said. Franklin India Low Duration Fund and Franklin India Credit Risk Fund now have an outstanding borrowing of only 1 per cent and 4 per cent of their AUM respectively.

# India's first 'Kisan Rail' flagged off

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union minister Narendra Singh Tomar on Friday flagged off the country's first 'Kisan Rail' train from Deolali in Nashik to Danapur in Bihar, through video-conferencing. Speaking on the occasion, the Union minister for agriculture and farmers welfare said Kisan Rail will help in transporting agricultural produce, especially perishable commodities, at cheaper rates and aid farmers in getting the right price for their crops. Tomar, who also holds Rural Development and Panchayati Raj portfolios, said the Indian



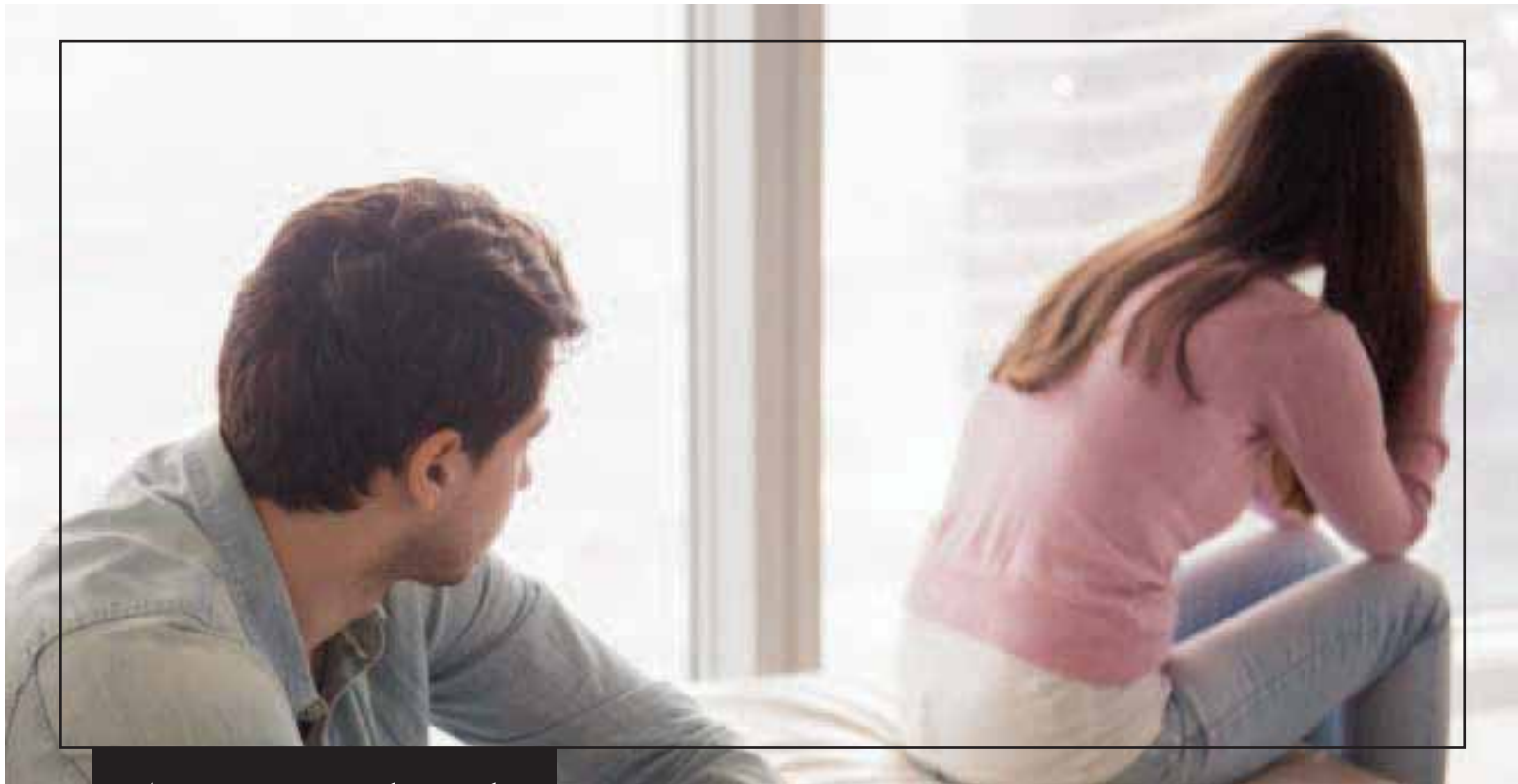
**The 'Kisan Rail' was flagged off from Deolali in Nashik to Danapur in Bihar**

Railways had operated 4,610 trains on 96 routes, ensuring supply of food items across the country amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Railway Minister Piyush Goyal, who presided over the

event, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had planned various measures to free farmers from years of bondage and these will make farmers of the country 'atmanirbhar' (self-reliant) and prosperous.

Minister of state for railways Suresh Angadi, Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra assembly Devendra Fadnis, Maharashtra Minister Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Chhagan Bhujbal were among the dignitaries who attended the virtual ceremony. 'Kisan Rail' is a weekly service that will depart from Deolali every Friday at 11 am and reach Danapur the next day at 6.45 pm. On the return journey, the train will depart from Danapur every Sunday at 12 pm and reach Deolali at 7.45 pm the next day.





A survey, conducted by a dating app, finds out the reasons behind infidelity during the lockdown

## THE UNLOCK DIARIES

A lot of love stories have blossomed in last few months of the lockdown and the new couples are eagerly waiting to meet their loved ones. From the outset, it's hard to judge when this global health crisis is going to leave the country but one thing is for sure, love is unhindered from the outside surrounding and blooming like never before. A dating app, Gleeden, conducted a survey after the beginning of 'Unlock 1.0' and found out that about 75 per cent of its users are willing to meet their love interests if provided an opportunity. The survey was rolled out among 1,000 of its newly joined users and was conducted across metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune. The findings from the survey are pretty exciting and it also addresses the untouched side of the reasons behind infidelity. Here is a glimpse of the same.

**THE HEART IS ALWAYS DICEY**  
Can you cheat on your

spouse and still love them at the same time? Well, the answer to this question is as tricky as the question itself and the users are no exception. About 45.6 per cent of



them think that their shared intimacy won't affect their current relationship, while 47 per cent of them believe that they cannot share the same level of emotions with two different people. A minute 7.4 per cent are indecisive about their stand on shared intimacy with their spouses.

Why partners cheat Infidelity is considered as a taboo worldwide and there are a lot of factors leading up to the same. Lack of intimacy and compatibility in a relationship are just the kick-starters to the ultimate fate. Interestingly, it has been found out that 37 per cent of

people cheat their partners because they want to try out something new or spice up their existing relationship. About 36 per cent of people commit infidelity because they are in love with someone else other than their spouses, while for the remaining 27 per cent, the decision of committing infidelity was taken when they realised that their current partner is not the right match for them both emotionally as well as physically.

### BLAME IT ON THE NIGHT

It has been found that people usually try to make new connections while attending a social gathering or at a club party; it can range from an office function to a reunion. About 23 per cent of the people admitted that they look for new relationships or flings in a party gathering, while 22 per cent of the people would prefer it on a vaca-

tion or while travelling. For 19 per cent of them, the best time is when their spouse is not at home or is out for a business trip. Also, about 12 per cent of the people are willing to find new connections within their office premises, while the remaining 24 per cent of the total users are willing to try out multiple measures to find out their love interest.

### KEEP IT CASUAL

It seems that casual relationships are the need of the hour for 38 per cent of the app users, who would like to get into a new relationship without making serious future commitments. About 23 per cent of the users still believe in the old school romance and are looking for future life partners. Interestingly, about 39 per cent of users are only interested in one-time affairs and are not looking for anything serious.

## From the scratch

Actor Tahir Raj Bhasin says that every project has taught him to focus on being true to the process

Actor Tahir Raj Bhasin is an outsider with no connections in the industry. He debuted with Mardaani to show his acting prowess as a villain and since then, Tahir is delighted about how his career has been shaping up. After making a mark in Mardaani, which earned him the Best Supporting Actor and Best Villain awards, Tahir decided not to look back. His powerful performances in the subsequent films like Manto, Chhichhore and many more made him grab projects like 83 and Loop Lapeta. He is thrilled about the fact that he has shaped his own destiny in the Bollywood.

"I'm very proud of the journey I've had in Bollywood. When you start from the scratch, you value the recognition that your work gets and the opportunities you've earned because they are built solely on the basis of your talent. I consider the parts I've done so far to be a personal collage of experiences," he says.

The actor credits the directors he has collaborated with for having faith in him. "I've been fortunate enough to work with some amazing film-

makers. This has led to my growth as an actor and as a person. Every project has taught me to focus on being true to the process. What matters is making a part fun to watch and authentic. The next exciting turn of my career is going to be equally challenging. Loop Lapeta is a thriller comedy and pairing up with a talent like Taapsee (Pannu) is something I really look forward to."

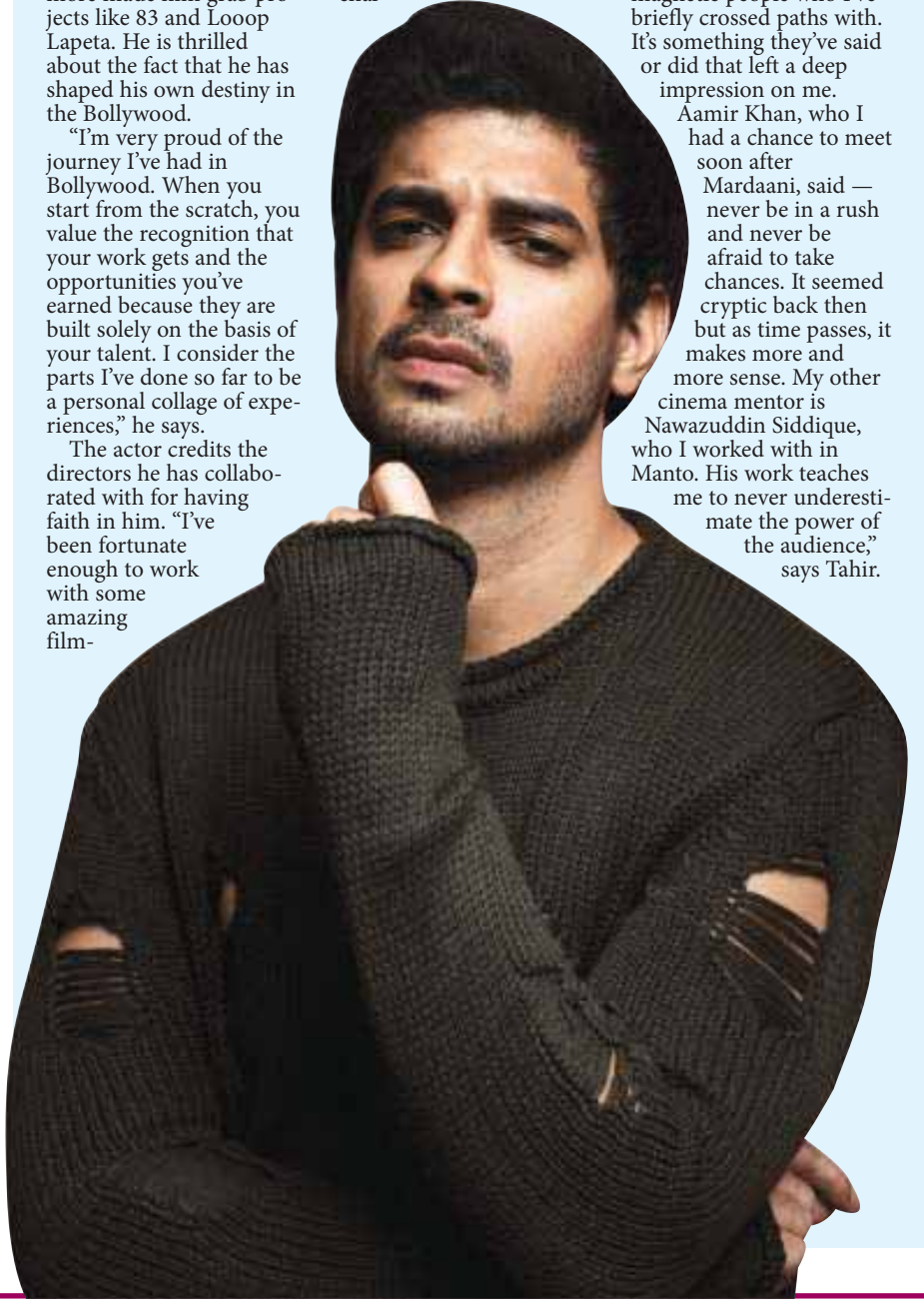
Tahir discloses his journey in cinema makes him proud. "The part in YRF's Mardaani

chal-

lenged me to stretch my abilities as I was a starting opposite an icon like Rani Mukerji. The uniqueness of the part made it a great one for me. From doing that to shifting gears in a light hearted college drama Chhichhore and now to a romantic lead in Loop Lapeta is incredibly fulfilling and gives me a sense of pride in the journey so far," he says.

Tahir also reveals who his biggest inspirations are. "People who I count as mentors in cinema aren't always the ones with me on a day to day but are magnetic people who I've briefly crossed paths with. It's something they've said or did that left a deep impression on me.

Aamir Khan, who I had a chance to meet soon after Mardaani, said — never be in a rush and never be afraid to take chances. It seemed cryptic back then but as time passes, it makes more and more sense. My other cinema mentor is Nawazuddin Siddique, who I worked with in Manto. His work teaches me to never underestimate the power of the audience," says Tahir.



## Starting out and slaying, young

The lockdown has been a time of reflection, rest, or procrastination to some. To a few others, it has been a time of introspection, the discovery of hidden talents, honing old ones, and more. Here's the story of a teenager who made the most of the lockdown to do what he does best — write!

While talking to *The Pioneer's* RACHEL DAMMALA, he shares about his latest novel, which also happens to be the first one yet on COVID across the globe, his passion to speak to youngsters and more



When you hear about someone who's a TEDx, Josh Talk Speaker, International Youth Mentor, and an awarded author, you would picture a man to be middle-aged, with a family, leading a group of youngsters. You're wrong! All of 18, Yash Tiwari is all that and more. His most recent feat is his having authored the world's first novel on the ongoing Coronavirus outbreak titled *PANDEMIC 2020 - Rife Of The Virus*.

The narrative he presents through the novel — a tribute to the warriors of the COVID-19, along with a lot many other aspects deserves accolades not just because it's one of the world's first novel based on the pandemic or because he authored it at the age of 18, but more because of the story it tells. And the final nail is that he has written the novel within a record 30 days, while his first novel was written within 22 days!

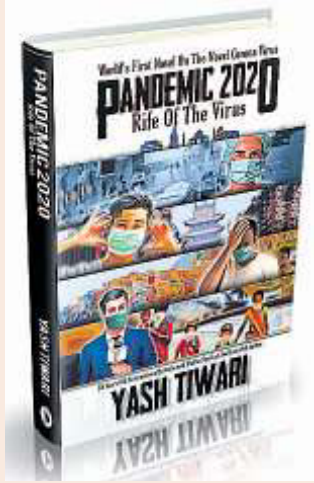
What exactly is the premise of the story? "The story is about an impoverished boy in China, a helpless doctor in the United States, a stranded traveler in Italy, and a blooming journalist in India," shares Yash Tiwari. *Pandemic 2020* is a harrowing look at how the pandemic

turned the lives of everyone around the world upside down. It presents an immersive perspective on the privations, atrocities, and horrors that the unanticipated global pandemic brought to the world. "The story is a globally-interconnecting tale, intriguingly blending majorly affected regions around the world through characters facing the severity of one common pandemic, COVID-19. It narrates the story of how important the platforms of media and news are in a time of the global pandemic, how medical workers sacrifice their lives in such horrendous situations, how the impoverished and poor ones suffer the most at the hands of such an ailment, and how the stranded travellers are unable to survive through the clutches of the outbreak right now," Yash adds.

Interestingly, the young author's first book, *A Celebration In Tribulation* was also based on a medical ailment — *The Creutzfeldt Jakob Disease*. For the same novel, Yash was awarded the 'Author of the Year award' by NE8x, '100 Inspiring Author Award' by T.I.A, was nominated for 'Best Debut Author' award by ICMR and was also bestowed with the coveted TCC REX 'Karamveer Chakra Award' and 'GYLF Fellowship' by iCongo in

association with United Nations.

What does the 18-year-old do when he is not writing stories? "I speak to young people. I have delivered four TEDx talks and Josh Talks, and frequently deliver International and National talks, sessions and workshops," Yash informs. As a young public speaker and youth mentor, he is frequently invited



to deliver talks and sessions in various schools, colleges, Literature Festivals, events, and seminars. He recently delivered an International webinar in Africa for the people of Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana, and other

regions. He also delivered a web-based interview recently in New York City on his journey. He has delivered talks in various states all around the nation.

On the response his new book has been receiving, Yash says, "I've no words to describe my gratitude for the way people have been accepting my novel and me with open arms.

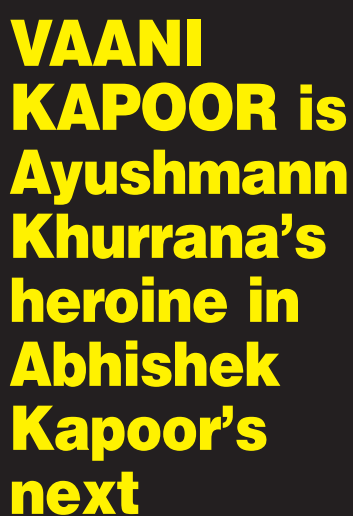
Positive reviews have been flooding in for some time in quite a good number, and all readers have been appreciating the fact that they're able to connect with the story very well."

He is currently working at MyCaptain as a mentor, at TheClimbers and IIM Bangalore incubated and United Nations recognised company, where he teaches youngsters from all walks of life including civil engineers, medical students, academicians, professionals, etc.

*Pandemic 2020 - Rife Of The Virus* is available Internationally in paperback as well as e-book edition On Amazon, Kindle, Google Play, iBooks, and Kobo and hardcover in India. The acclaimed theatrical trailer of *Pandemic 2020* is available to be watched on his website. So what are you waiting for? Go grab a copy of yourself, as Yash says, "rush", because they're selling like hot-cakes!



*what's brewing?*



The film casts Ayushmann as a cross functional athlete. It is set in north India, and shooting is scheduled to begin in October.

## 'Mumbai police supporting Rhea; didn't supply autopsy, FSL report, CCTV footage'



even without little support from the

in view of the provisions contained under section 179 Cr.P.C,” added the affidavit.

“The non-cooperation by the Mumbai Police with the Patna Police, who is already there in Mumbai for a probe, is very much clear from the fact that the Mumbai Police has not supplied any docu-

The state government contended that when IPS officer Vinay Tiwary reached Mumbai, he was forcibly



## Cameron opens up on why she quit acting

On Gwyneth Paltrow's series, *In goop Health: The Sessions*, Diaz

"I just decided that I wanted different things out of my life. I had gone so hard for so long, working, making films and it's such

"A peace. I got a peace in my soul. I finally was taking care of myself," she answered when she was asked about the changes

she witnessed in her life post quitting films. Diaz married musician Benji Madden in 2015. The couple have a daughter, Raddix, born in January 2020.

FUN

## ARCHIE



# CALVIN AND HOBBS



# GARFIELD



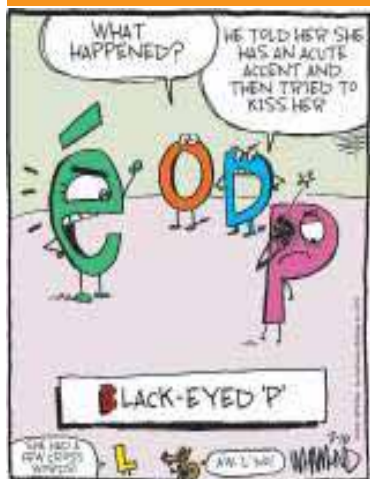
NANCY



## GINGER MEGGS



## REALITY CHECK



## SPEED BUMP



## CROSSWORD



# SUDOKU

		8	2					
	2		7		3			6
	1			5	9			
3		4				9	8	
8								1
	7	9				3		5
			1	3			4	
7			5		4		9	
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## Yesterday's solution

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

## 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**

- |    |   |    |                                     |
|----|---|----|-------------------------------------|
| 6  | San Francisco is in this American state     | 7  | very tasty to eat                   |
| 7  | Precise                                     | 8  | Make butter with this               |
| 8  | A kind of play where all the words are sung | 9  | A piece of material to cover a hole |
| 9  | At once                                     | 10 | Baby goat                           |
| 10 | Articles                                    | 11 | The organs of sight                 |
| 11 | Push roughly                                | 12 | Drinks little by little             |
| 12 | Having no night work                        | 13 | Black stuff in chimney              |
|    |   | 14 | Unlock                              |

## DOWN

- 1 Melted rock flowing from a volcano
- 2 Birthday present
- 3 A spinning toy on a string
- 4 A joint in your leg
- 5 Unable to move some or all of your body





Most Read NEWS

## Automated drones to check social distancing

Singaporeans, beware if you are standing too close to each other. Drones could be keeping an eye on you from above and targeting social distancing rule-breakers. Singapore police are testing two automated drones to help enforce social distancing guidelines. The machines are developed by Israel's Airobotics. "My name is Ran Krauss, CEO and co-founder of Airobotics. In the past six years me and my team have invented, designed and manufactured the world's first automated drone." The eye-in-the-sky robots weigh 22 pounds and are programmed to track anomalies such as gatherings and congregations and stream footage to the police. Airobotics says they can pinpoint locations and zoom into areas that might not be visible to police officers on foot or in vehicles. It's the first time automated commercial drones have been approved to fly over a major metropolis, according to the company. Airobotics has raised \$120 million in funding and invested some \$100 million to develop the drones. It's leasing them to Singapore's Home Team Science & Technology Agency and also for business and industrial use in Israel and the United States. Krauss said the company is in talks with other cities to deploy the new technology.



## Labourer finds diamonds worth Rs 35 lakh

A labourer became a millionaire overnight when he unearthed three diamonds worth Rs 30 lakh to 35 lakh at a diamond mine in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh, a senior official said on Thursday. While digging a shallow mine, the labourer, identified only as Subal, found three diamonds with net weight of 7.5 carat, Panna district's diamond officer RK Pandey said. Experts have valued the precious stones at anywhere between Rs 30 lakh to 35 lakh. The labourer has deposited the stones at the district diamond office and they will be auctioned as per government rules, Pandey said. After deducting 12 per cent tax, Subal will get the remaining 88 per cent of the sale proceeds, the official said. A few days ago, another labourer had managed to find a 10.69 carat diamond from one of the mines in Panna in the Bundelkhand region of Madhya Pradesh. Panna, otherwise located in a backward region, is world famous for its diamond mines.



## UK foreign office Cat retires from service

The resident cat at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London, dubbed "Lord Palmerston the Chief Mouser" in reference to its mouse-catching duties, is to retire from diplomatic service, the FCO said on Friday. Lord Palmerston, famed for regular territorial tiffs with neighbouring Downing Street mouse-catcher Larry, will see out his retirement in the English countryside, where he has been spending lockdown already at the home of a member of Foreign Office staff. Both cats have their own social media profiles and are very popular with news photographers on Downing Street duties. "In April 2016, a cat called Palmerston arrived from Battersea (dogs and cat shelter in London). I thought I was employing a mouser. What I got was a social media phenomenon, with 105,000 Twitter followers," said Sir Simon McDonald, the Permanent Under-Secretary and Head of the Diplomatic Service at the FCO, announcing Palmerston's retirement. "After four happy years, @Diplomog (Palmerston's Twitter handle) will retire: he's enjoyed lockdown life in the countryside so much, he's accepted an invitation to stay. Everyone at the Foreign Office will miss him (our mice less so). We wish him a long & happy retirement," said McDonald in a Twitter statement.



## Miner earns millions after second rare find

A miner who had become a millionaire overnight in June just inducted more money into his wallet. Talk about a double victory! In June, the miner had sold two rough Tanzanite stones valued at \$3.4 million. The one he sold recently is valued at \$2 million. Saniniu Laizer's third discovery of precious gems weighed around 6.3 kgs. Tanzanite cannot be found elsewhere in the world, and is one of the rarest gemstones on Earth. Geologists believe that it may disappear over the next 20 years. The gem dons various hues across the colour spectrum, red, green, purple, and blue. The rarer it is, the higher it will be prized. Essentially, its price depends on how rare it is and how clearly the colour is visible. Lazier, while referring to his newly found riches urged small-scale miners to work in tandem with the government, claiming it was a good experience for him. "Selling to the government means there are no shortcuts... they are transparent," he said in a mine in northern Mirerani. In June, Lazier had sold two stones weighing 9.2 kgs and 5.8 kgs respectively. The man, who has 30 children promised to hold a party in the aftermath of receiving money.



# India to host 2021 T20 World Cup

## Australia gets 2022; Women's 50-over WC now in 2022

PTI ■ DUBAI

India on Friday retained the right to host the 2021 T20 World Cup while Australia will conduct this year's postponed edition in 2022, the ICC announced on Friday after its board meeting, straightening out a schedule that went topsy-turvy due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This year's edition had to be postponed because of the raging pandemic, which has severely impacted all sports calendars globally. "The International Cricket Council (ICC) today (on Friday)

confirmed that the T20 World Cup 2020 that was postponed due to Covid-19 will be held in Australia in 2022. India will host the T20 World Cup 2021 as planned," the ICC stated in a press release. The global body also confirmed that next year's women's ODI World Cup in New Zealand has been postponed until February-March 2022 because of the impact the pandemic has had on cricket globally. ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney said: "We now

have absolute clarity on the future of ICC events enabling all of our Members to focus on the rescheduling of lost international and domestic cricket. "We will now proceed as planned with the Men's T20 World Cup 2021 in India and host the 2022 edition in Australia." The format of the 2021 T20 World Cup will remain as it was for 2020 and all teams that qualified for that event will now participate in India in 2021. A new qualification process will be started for the 2022 edition in Australia. "BCCI were never keen to host the 2022 event which

would have meant that they had to host back to back ICC events including the 50-over World Cup in 2023. That wasn't a viable option," an ICC Board member told PTI. However, it was a big setback for the women's game with the much-awaited World Cup being pushed by a year. Sawhney said the decision would "give players from every competing nation, the best opportunity to be ready for the world's biggest stage and there is still a global qualifier to complete to decide the final three teams. An ICC Board member said



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney pose with the Women's World Cup trophy @cricketworldcup/Twitter

that due to various countries facing different situations with regards to the Covid case load, it would have been difficult to hold the qualifiers in time.

The postponement also raises doubts about the future of India legends such as Mithali Raj and Jhulan Goswami, who probably would have played their last ICC tournament in 2021. The decisions were taken by the IBC (the commercial subsidiary of the ICC) following an extensive contingency planning exercise which took into account the health, cricket and commercial impact of Covid-19 around the world. The format of the postponed World Cup will remain as it was for 2021. Five teams have already qualified for the event and that will stand for 2022.

The original global qualification event to determine the final three teams to contest the event was scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka in July this year, but was postponed due to Covid-19. The qualification event will now be held in 2021.

"There has been no women's international cricket played since the conclusion of the women's T20 World Cup earlier this year and due to the varying impact of Covid-19 globally that is likely to

## Eng tour of India postponed until early 2021

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's white-ball series against England, scheduled at home in September-October, was on Friday postponed to early 2021 with both the boards citing the Covid-19 pandemic, which wrecked the international calendar and created space for the IPL during this window.

Both teams were scheduled to play three ODIs and as many T20s and the matches could now be held after the Test series between the two in India early next year. The series was to be a preparatory one ahead of the T20 World Cup, which was originally scheduled from October 18 to November 5 in Australia, but has now been postponed.

"BCCI and ECB are in consultation with a view to confirming the 2021 schedules for an all-formats England men's tour to India to run from late January to late March and for India's Test tour to England due in the summer of 2021," the BCCI said in a statement. BCCI secretary Jay Shah added: "The BCCI and ECB are working closely to finalise the day-wise schedule as we move towards the resumption of cricket.

The five-Test series to be hosted by India could be trimmed to four to accommodate the white-ball games next year.

remain the situation for a number of the teams," Sawhney spoke about the impact of the pandemic.

"Moving the event by 12 months gives all competing teams the chance to play a sufficient level of cricket...So the integrity of the tournament is maintained."



Wolverhampton Wanderers' Conor Coady embraces Olympiakos' Omar Elabdellauui after the Europa League match AP

## Wolves send Olympiakos packing

AFP ■ WOLVERHAMPTON

Wolves battled into the quarter-finals of the Europa League on Thursday while Sevilla, Bayer Leverkusen and Basel enjoyed far more comfortable victories in the matches that brought the Europa League round of 16 to a belated close.

Raul Jimenez scored the only goal from the penalty spot in the ninth minute and Wolves survived a series of scares to edge Olympiakos 1-0 at Molineux for a 2-1 aggregate win in a tie that began in Athens on March 13.

At Molineux, Bobby Allain, the visitors' Franco-Scottish goalkeeper, failed to control a back pass in the seventh minute.

Daniel Podence, who scored for Olympiakos at Tottenham in September but moved to Wolves in January, darted in and stole the ball.

Allain clumsily bundled his former clubmate over and Jimenez converted the penalty.

The Greek champions created a string of chances but were thwarted by good saves by Rui Patricio, a tight offside decision and their own inaccurate finishing.

Wolves, who began their Europa League campaign on July 25 last year against Crusaders in the second qualifying round, will next face Sevilla at Duisburg on August 11.

Sevilla were also in Duisburg on Thursday where they took the lead against Roma after 22 minutes. Captain and right back Jesus Navas switched play with a cross-field pass to left back Sergio Reguilón that caught Roma flat-footed.

Reguilón surged past two defenders and into the box before sliding a low shot past Spanish goalkeeper Pau Lopez's foot.

Sevilla added a second on the counter-attack in the 43rd minute.

Lucas Ocampos burst down the right and after Lopez failed to cut out the low cross, Youssef En Neysri finished into an empty net from close range.

Sevilla, coached by former Spain boss Julen Lopetegui, dominated as they stretched their unbeaten run to 18 games in all competitions and kept on course to add to their record five Europa League titles.

In Basel, defender Fabien Frei scored the only goal in the 88th minute as the home team won 1-0 to complete an aggregate 4-0 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt.

In Leverkusen, Moussa Diaby scored the only goal after 51 minutes to complete a comfortable victory for Bayer, who won 3-1 in Glasgow in March.

In the quarter-finals, Bayer will make the short trip to Dusseldorf to face Inter Milan on August 10, Basel will play Shakhtar Donetsk in Gelsenkirchen the next night.

## Pak opens 127-run lead

AP ■ MANCHESTER

England was bowled out for 219, a 107-run first innings deficit, after losing six wickets to Pakistan's leg-spinners on the third day of the first Test at Old Trafford on Friday. At tea Pakistan stretched its lead by another 20 runs to take control despite Shan Masood's duck.

Ollie Pope's 62 was as good as it got for the England batsmen, with the majority of those runs scored on day two, with Yasir Shah claiming 4-66 and Shadab Khan taking the last two wickets.

England resumed the day on 92-4 with Pope and Jos Buttler hoping to continue the rescue mission they had started the previous evening.

Pope had 46 to his name when he walked out but almost fell short of his half-century, deflecting Shaheen Afridi over the top of the stumps in an early scare. He got there soon after, off 81 balls, but the first hour was little more than a trial for the home side.

Just nine runs came off the bat in that time, outscored by the 10 extras Pakistan contributed, with the three-pronged pace attack of Shaheen, Mohammad Abbas and Naseem Khan working up a head of steam.

Buttler edged the third ball of Naseem's spell just short of second slip but after that it was a string of plays and misses. Somehow the duo reached the drinks break without any crucial nicks and when both hit their first boundaries of the day there was a small hope they had weathered the storm.

Tentatively, the fifth-wick-



England batsman Chris Woakes, right, is bowled out by Pakistan's Yasir Shah during the third day of 1st Test at Old Trafford on Friday AP

et stand crept up to 65, every run hard-earned, before Naseem produced a memorable delivery to claim his deserved reward.

Pope was hardly to blame, reeling back and fending to gully after the teenager got one to kick viciously off the surface. Barring an early blow to the helmet for new man Chris Woakes, the remainder of the session was better for England as they eased the score out to 159-5.

Buttler had scrapped his way through to 38 but fell to his second ball after lunch, leaving a gap between bat and pad that allowed Yasir enough room to part the stumps.

The experienced spinner was buoyed by the success and made short work of Dom Bess, producing the turn and bounce that left Asad Shafiq with a diving catch at slip. He claimed his

third wicket of the spell and fourth overall when Woakes lost his patience and his shape, bowled for 19 swinging hard to leg.

England were in turmoil at 170-8t but had Stuart Broad to thank for two tail-end stands that added 49 to the total.

He finished unbeaten on 29, with three boundaries in a row off Shaheen and a slogswept six off Yasir under his belt, but all-rounder Shadab did enough at the other end to see off Jofra Archer and James Anderson.

Broad then chipped in with the ball, getting Masood caught down the leg-side for a duck to go with his career-best 156 from the first innings.

Anderson should have made it two down by tea but Ben Stokes dived in front of Root and spilled the chance to leave Pakistan 20 for one.

## Barca may need youth to get past Napoli

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona coach Quique Setien says that he is ready to count on youngsters Ansu Fati and Riqui Puig to eliminate Napoli and advance to the Champions League final eight in Portugal.

Barcelona will be without midfielders Sergio Busquets, Arturo Vidal and Arthur for Saturday's second leg of their round-of-16 tie. The match will be played five months after the Spanish side earned a 1-1 draw at Napoli before the pandemic brought most sports to a halt.

"Both Rique and Ansu are ready to play," Setien said on Friday. "They have performed and played pretty well and could perfectly well start

(against Napoli). And if they do start, I am sure they will be guaranteed to play well."

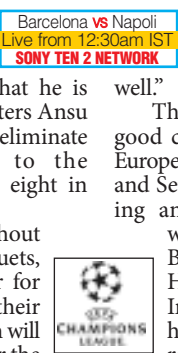
The 20-year-old Puig has a good chance to earn his debut in Europe's top-tier club competition and Setien values Puig's passing and ball-control skills, which remind some Barca fans of Xavi Hernandez and Andrés Iniesta, and rewarded him with a bigger role during the final stretch of the La Liga. Fati, 17, made a huge splash this season by becoming the youngest player to score in La Liga and the

Champions League, among other precocious scoring milestones.

With Lionel Messi and Luis Suárez set to start in attack, Fati could get picked over fellow forward Antoine Griezmann, who was cleared to play by team doctors on Friday after having recovered from a right thigh injury last month.

Clement Lenglet was also cleared by team doctors and will likely play with Gerard Pique in the center of the defence with Samuel Umtiti still injured.

With only 13 first-team players available, Setien has called up seven members of Barcelona's youth squad, including American Konrad de la Fuente.



# Sindhu, Praneeth & Sikki resume training

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World champion PV Sindhu, along with B Sai Praneeth and N Sikki Reddy, hit the courts for training on Friday under strict safety protocols at the SAI Pullula Gopichand Badminton Academy in Hyderabad, ending a four-month-long coronavirus-forced hiatus.

This was after the Sports Authority of India (SAI) decided to resume the national badminton camp for the eight Olympic hopefuls following Telangana Government's approval on August 1.

"I am very happy to have our elite shuttlers back for on-field training after this long break. We are fully equipped to resume training in a safe environment," Chief national coach



PV Sindhu poses for photograph after resuming practice at Pullula Gopichand Academy in Hyderabad on Friday Pullula Gopichand said.

The eight Olympic hopefuls also include London Bronze-winner Saina Nehwal, former world No 1 Srikanth Kidambi,

women's doubles player Ashwini Ponnappa and men's doubles pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj. Saina, who is based in Hyderabad, didn't train on Friday, while the others, who had gone to their respective homes in March, and are yet to return to the city.

On Friday, Sindhu was the first one to train with Gopi and foreign coach Park Tae-Sang separately.

"Sindhu trained today from 6:30am to 8:30am. Gopi and Park were also present. She will be training everyday at the same time this week. In the evening, she will have her fitness training at Suchitra academy for agility and endurance," the Rio Olympics Silver-medallist's father, P V Ramana said.

"She has been training at home so physically she is in

## Chirag-Satwik to wait for 2 weeks before deciding on attending camp

**NEW DELHI:** Wary of the Covid-19 threat, Olympic hopefuls Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy will wait for another couple of weeks before deciding on joining the national badminton camp, which resumed in Hyderabad on Friday.

The men's doubles pair is currently apart with Shetty at his home in Mumbai and Rankireddy lodged at his base in Amalapuram in Andhra Pradesh.

"It is great to hear that the

good shape but there are no tournaments till October, so she can afford to go easy, no point exerting too much. We

training camp has resumed but we will have to wait for a couple of weeks before we take a call on joining the camp," the 23-year-old Shetty, who along with Rankireddy won the Thailand Open and finished runners-up at the French Open last year, told PTI. Shetty said the coronavirus threat is real and he would not feel safe travelling at this point. Rankireddy is based closer to Hyderabad, which is just over 450km from his home town. PTI

have to be careful."

After Sindhu, Praneeth and Sikki also trained at the academy from 8:30 to 10:30 am.



# The story idea itself is tricky: NAG ASHWIN ON HIS NEXT WITH PRABHAS

**F**ilmmaker Nag Ashwin, who got the nod of Prabhas for a pan-India project, says that he is really excited to take it in front of the cameras. "Without revealing the story or the genre, all I can say is that it's going to be really exciting because I've been waiting for this for a long time. It's (the film) very experimental in terms of story. Forget about the budget and technical side, just the story idea itself is tricky. To narrate it properly so that it reaches everyone is a challenge," the director said in a recent interview. Earlier, speaking to *10 TV*, Ashwin said nobody other than

Prabhas could've featured in the story. "There is no other actor who can shoulder the story other than him presently. Not just budget-wise... I'm talking about someone headlining the story as it's filled with intense emotions," he had said. Touted to be a futuristic scientific-thriller set against the backdrop of an imaginary third world war, the as-yet untitled film was supposed to roll towards the year-end but with Prabhas' *Radhe Shyam* delayed due to COVID-19 outbreak, Ashwin's film, a Vyjayanthi Movies production, will begin next year. Deepika Padukone has been signed on to romance Prabhas in the film.



## Paruchuri Venkateswara Rao bereaved

**S**tar writer and actor Paruchuri Venkateswara Rao's wife Vijayalakshmi passed away in Hyderabad on Friday morning following a heart attack. She was 74. "With grief I announce the death of Paruchuri Vijayalakshmi due to a heart attack today morning," team Paruchuri Gopalakrishna tweeted on Friday. Gopalakrishna is Venkateswara Rao's younger brother and one

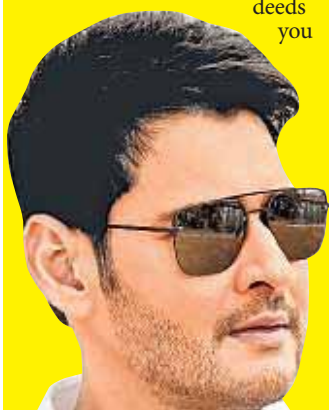
half of the celebrated Paruchuri Brothers duo. Megastar Chiranjeevi, who shares a long-standing working relationship with Paruchuri Brothers, upon knowing the bad news immediately rang Venkateswara Rao and expressed his condolences to the writer and his family. "I share a good bond with Venkateswara Rao's family. I wish Vijayalakshmi *garu's* soul rests in peace," he said. MAA too expressed its grief on her death.

## MAHESH BABU APPEALS TO HIS FANS TO AVOID SOCIAL GATHERINGS ON HIS BIRTHDAY

**L**ike his colleagues Ram Charan and Jr NTR sometime back, superstar Mahesh Babu has appealed to his fans to steer clear of large-scale social gatherings as they celebrate his 45th birthday this Sunday. The actor, who commands a following second to none, took to Twitter and underscored the importance of safety in view of the present times. "I feel blessed and thankful to have all of you. I truly appreciate all the good deeds you

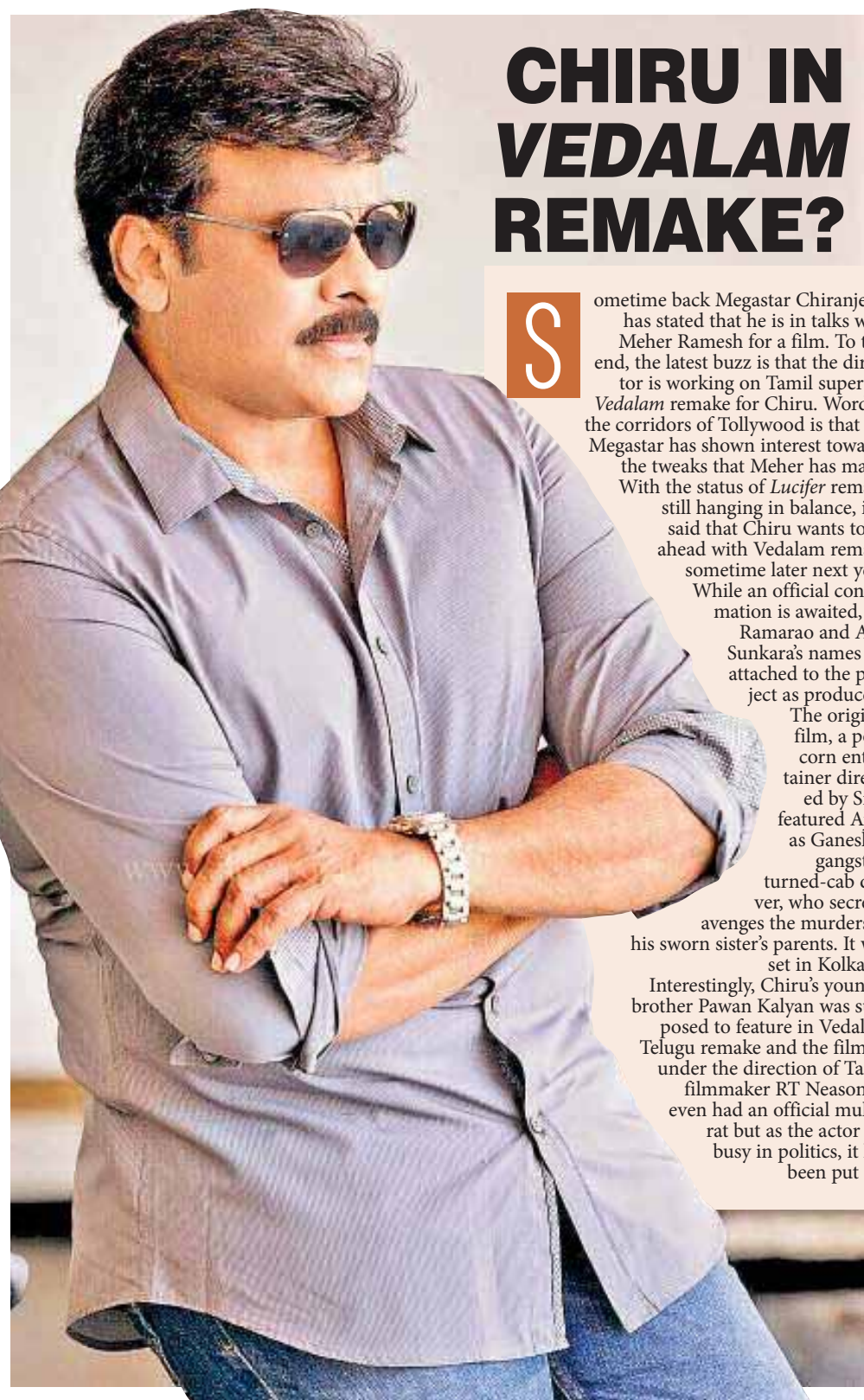
do to make my special day worth remembering. Since we are battling a global pandemic this year, safety is indispensable. I request all my fans to avoid any social gatherings on my birthday. Please stay safe (sic)," he wrote on Friday. He is likely to ring in his birthday with family and close relatives at his residence in Hyderabad.

On the work front, Mahesh will be next seen in Parasuram's *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*. Announced on his father Krishna's birthday on May 31 earlier this year, the project is a joint production venture between Mythri Movie Makers, 14 Reels Plus and GMB Entertainment. While story details regarding the film are under wraps, we've learnt that Parasuram drew inspiration from bank defaulters in the last five-six years and penned a fictional social drama peppered with action. "Obviously, the signature Parasuram humour will be in abundance. He's also presenting Mahesh in a romantic avatar," a source tells us. There's no production date attached to the project yet.



## CHIRU IN VEDALAM REMAKE?

**S**ometime back Megastar Chiranjeevi has stated that he is in talks with Meher Ramesh for a film. To this end, the latest buzz is that the director is working on Tamil super hit *Vedalam* remake for Chiru. Word in the corridors of Tollywood is that the Megastar has shown interest towards the tweaks that Meher has made. With the status of *Lucifer* remake still hanging in balance, it is said that Chiru wants to go ahead with *Vedalam* remake sometime later next year. While an official confirmation is awaited, KS Ramarao and Anil Sunkara's names are attached to the project as producers. The original film, a popcorn entertainer directed by Siva, featured Ajith as Ganesh, a gangster-turned-cab driver, who secretly avenges the murders of his sworn sister's parents. It was set in Kolkatta. Interestingly, Chiru's younger brother Pawan Kalyan was supposed to feature in *Vedalam* Telugu remake and the film — under the direction of Tamil filmmaker RT Neeson — even had an official muhurat but as the actor got busy in politics, it has been put off.



## Teja Sajja in Prasanth Varma's film on corona pandemic

**S**o far, filmmaker Prasanth Varma has managed to keep the lead actor of his next, a film on coronavirus pandemic, under wraps. But the cat is out of the bag finally as we've reliably learnt that his good friend of years Teja Sajja is headlining the film, which is in the final stages of production. "It was intentional from Prasanth's end to refrain from revealing the lead actor's name. He wanted to use it as a promotional ploy and announce the lead actor's name with the first look. The idea was to attract more eyeballs towards the project," points out a source.

This is the second time that Prasanth and Teja are teaming up for a feature project. The latter has already spearheaded a whacky love-story written by the former. Directed by Naruda Donaruda fame Mallik Ram, its filming is almost over. Prasanth's film on coronavirus pandemic has a lot of day-to-day funny life incidents incorporated into the narrative, making it a hilarious entertainer. The title will be unveiled today.



## Sree and Shashank's film headed for a web release

**T**he makers of *Pranavam*, featuring Sree Mangam, Shashank, Avantika Hari Nalva and Gayatri Ayyar in the lead roles, are looking for a direct-to-digital release for the film. A romantic thriller which marks the directorial debut of G Kumar, the film's songs are already out. Expressing her happiness on the product, S Thanuja, who produced the film under Charitha and Goutham productions banner, believes that Sree will prove himself as a lead actor with the film once again. "Although it's the first film of Kumar, he packed it with elements that audiences would take a fancy for. It has been shot without compromising on the budget. The first copy is ready and we will release it on an OTT platform shortly," she said. The likes of Gemini Suresh, Naveena, Jabardasth Baabi, Dorababu, Sameera among others have played supporting roles in the film, a Padma Rao Bharadwaj musical.

