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VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY AUGUST 13, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



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AND FAMILY
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COVID CASES HAVEN'T YET PEAKED OR EVEN PLATEAUED: AIIMS CHIEF

All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Director Randeep Guleria, one of India's leading medical experts, has asserted that the coronavirus cases in the country have not yet hit their peak or even plateaued. The remarks come at a time when the infections are racing ahead with the country adding at least a lakh new cases every two days. It has logged more than 23 lakh cases and over 46,000 deaths so far since the first case on January 30. "These are trying times. It has tested the resilience of the nation. We have not reached the peak or started plateauing as far as cases are concerned," Guleria, who is also the part of a core team monitoring the pandemic, said.



KAMALA HARRIS IS JOE BIDEN'S PICK FOR US VICE PRES CANDIDATE

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden on Tuesday picked Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., as his running mate, a historic decision that elevates the first Black woman and first Asian American woman to run for vice president at a moment when the country is grappling with its racial past and future. Biden's announcement, made in a text and tweet, aligns him with a former presidential rival whose most electric campaign performance came when she criticized his record on school integration during a debate.



Full Story on page 05

LINKEDIN SELLS SLIDESHARE TO DIGITAL LIBRARY LEADER SCRIBD

Microsoft-owned LinkedIn has announced to sell SlideShare, the US-based e-book and audiobook subscription service Scribd for an undisclosed sum. "On September 24, Scribd will begin operating the SlideShare business, its 100 million users, along with its presentation upload and hosting tools, and tremendous archive of presentations and documents," LinkedIn said in a statement on Tuesday. Scribd's premium subscription service offers over 1,000,000 professionally published ebooks, audiobooks and magazines, alongside over 100 million documents uploaded from its community.



MUSLIM MAN NAMED SON BORN ON JANMASHTAMI AS KRISHNA

In a rare example of communal harmony, Aziz Khan, a Muslim living in Madhya Pradesh's Indore, gave a Hindu name to his son about 12 years ago. The child, born on the day of Janmashtami, was named Krishna. Khan said that initially his family members protested against the name, but later they agreed to it. Talking to IANS, Khan said: "About 12 years ago on August 23, 2008, my wife delivered a baby boy. The doctor Praveen Jadia then asked for the baby's name to be filled in for the form. I immediately named our boy as Krishna, as the day was Janmashtami." "Although the doctors and other family members objected to it, but I told them that a father has the right to give any name to his child."



MCX market making in 'options on goods' in gold

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Jagan's dream housing project launch fizzles out

Supreme Court yet to dispose the petition challenging HC stay order

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The pet project of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to distribute free housing sites to over 30 lakh landless poor has fizzled out for the fifth time. The AP High Court stayed the housing project, forcing the State Government to challenge the order in the Supreme Court.

The Chief Minister was hopeful of getting a favourable judgment in the matter and had tentatively planned to launch the scheme on August 15. However, as the judgment is yet to come, the Government has reportedly postponed its



plans to October 2, Gandhi Jayanti.

Deputy Chief Minister who heads the Revenue Department Dharmana Krishna Das had earlier stated the house sites distribution was postponed from August 15. A fresh date will be fixed, he said.

The scheme - "Navaratnaalu-Pedalandiriki Illu," has been facing several hurdles right from the beginning and it has been postponed several times since March.

First, it was proposed to launch the scheme on a grand scale on March 25 coinciding with Ugadi festival, but the

scheme was deferred by State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar on the ground that there was model code of conduct in force for the local body elections.

Later, it was postponed to April 14, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, but because of Covid-19 pandemic, it was deferred again.

Meanwhile, the acquisition of lands for the house sites was caught in a legal wrangle.

The High Court stayed distribution of housing sites to over 54,000 landless poor in several villages of Amaravati capital region, following a petition by farmers of Amaravati.

Freedom fighters' valour, sacrifices should be highlighted: Naidu

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Tough cop Manish Sinha to head force in de-facto capital

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Government has signalled that it wants the police department in Vizag to be headed by a tough officer by appointing Manish Kumar Sinha, a 2000 batch IPS officer, as the Police Commissioner of the de-facto capital of the State.

Sinha is known for his style of working, having shaken the Delhi power-corridor by taking on national security adviser Ajit Doval and PMO while probing the FIR against Rakesh Asthana, the CBI's number 2 back then. Sinha who was working as Inspector General Police (Intelligence) replaced RK Meena, a 1995 batch IPS officer.

After the suspension of AB Venkateswara Rao as the Andhra Pradesh Intelligence



Sinha who was working as Inspector General Police (Intelligence) replaced RK Meena, a 1995 batch IPS officer.

Chief, Additional DG rank officer Kumar Viswajit was initially deployed for the role. But subsequently, he was named as the Principal Secretary (Home). Since then, the Intelligence Chief post had been held by Sinha.

The newly appointed Police Commissioner joined the IPS in 2000 and was allotted the Andhra Pradesh cadre where he worked for 13 years.

He joined CBI on deputation in November 2013 and has worked at various branches - ACB Bhubaneswar, Banks Securities and Frauds Cell, Bengaluru, with an additional charge of EOW Bhubaneswar; head of the branch of Anti-Corruption III at Delhi with additional charge of Bank Security and Fraud Cell, Delhi.

Modi to launch 'transparent taxation' platform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday will unveil the next phase of direct tax reforms aimed at easing compliance and rewarding honest taxpayers, as the government looks to rebuild the pandemic-hit economy.

"The Prime Minister will launch the platform for 'Transparent Taxation Honoring the Honest' via video conference on August 13, 2020," an official statement said on Wednesday.

While the statement did not give details of the reforms to be unveiled, the launch of the platform is expected to further carry forward the journey of direct tax reforms undertaken during last six years.

Sushant's MLA cousin slaps Sanjay Raut with legal notice

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YSRCP suspends leader for land grab

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The ruling YSR Congress Party on Wednesday suspended its senior leader and former chairman of Andhra Pradesh Technology Services Koyya Prasad Reddy from the party, following allegations of land grabbing using the name of Rajya Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy. The

disciplinary committee of the YSRCP, which heard large scale complaints against Prasad Reddy, announced his suspension from the party after due inquiry.

An official statement by the party said that the suspension of Prasad Reddy, who hails from Visakhapatnam, came into immediate effect.

Among the charges levelled

against Prasad Reddy was that he misused the name of YSRCP general secretary V Vijayasai Reddy to settle land deals in Vizag. In a stern warning, the YSRCP central office told all the party leaders to refrain themselves from land dealings and land grabbing and from misusing the names of the party MPs or any other leader.



Facebook post led to firing in Bengaluru, three deaths

PNS ■ BENGALURU

At least three people were killed after police opened fire to quell a mob that went on a rampage, irked over a social media post allegedly put out by a Congress legislator's relative, as a city locality witnessed arson and violence.

"Three people have died (in police firing)," Bengaluru Police Commissioner Kamal Pant told PTI. Further, 110 people have been arrested in connection with the incident at Pulakeshi Nagar here. Scores of persons, including around 50 policemen, were injured in the violence that erupted on Tuesday night and continued till the wee hours of Wednesday, apparently prompted by the 'communal sensitive' online post.

The Congress MLA's residence and a police station were among those targeted by the angry mob, prompting the government to issue a stern warning that rioting and law and order issues will not be tolerated.



A policeman takes notes next to burnt police vehicles. Prohibitory orders have been imposed while curfew was clamped in violence-hit parts of Bengaluru.

Prez comes to rescue of tonsured Dalit man

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Ram Nath Kovind has taken a serious view of the horrific incident in which a Dalit youth was tonsured by the police after being thrashed by them, in East Godavari district. According to details that emerged later, the youth was allegedly beaten up black and blue inside a police station at the behest of a YSRCP leader.

Following media reports and public outcry, the office of the President appointed Assistant Secretary Janardhan Babu as special officer to help the Dalit youth.

The relevant case file has been transferred to General



Administration Department, Government of AP.

The office of the President has asked the victim, Prasad, to meet Janardhan Babu and cooperate with him in the case. Following this, the youth will be meeting the officer soon with all evidence.

Cyberfraud starts singing

DURGAPRASAD SUNKU
■ HYDERABAD

Shocking details are emerging in the cyberfraud case involving 22-year-old Chaitanya who was picked up in Anantapur on August 4 on a complaint from Tollywood singer Sunitha, after he had claimed to be her nephew and collected money from several people on promise of getting them a "chance" to act in movies.

Subsequent investigations revealed that the accused had impersonated the singer, created fake social media accounts, and cheated a woman fan of the singer to the tune of Rs 1.7 crore.

9,597 fresh cases take tally past 2.5 lakh mark in State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Adding 9,597 to its tally of Covid-19 cases, Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday crossed the 2.50 lakh mark as the infection positivity rate continued to spiral, reaching 9.59 per cent, overtaking Tamil Nadu.

The state recorded 93 fresh coronavirus casualties while another 6,676 patients recovered and got discharged from hospitals across the state in the last 24 hours, the latest government bulletin said. The states cumulative Covid-19 tally touched

2,54,146 and now has 90,425 active cases after 1,61,425 patients recovered and 2,296 succumbed.

The cumulative number of coronavirus tests stood at 26,49,767 after 57,148 were done in the last 24 hours, according to the bulletin.

IMD warns of heavy rains in parts of AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heavy rains have been forecast for parts of Andhra Pradesh for the next four days.

According to a bulletin issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), heavy rains will lash parts of the State for the next four days as a low pressure area is likely to form over north west Bay of Bengal on Thursday.

Following the warning, State Disaster Management Authority has urged people residing in low lying areas to be alert and take necessary safety measures.

According to IMD, the cyclonic circulation will form between 4.5 and 5.8 km above mean sea level over northwest and adjoining west central Bay of Bengal, off Odisha and north Andhra Pradesh coasts.

The State Disaster Management Department stated that there is possibility of heavy rains on August 13 (Thursday) in certain places of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts while other places in the state are likely to receive light to moderate rains.

Sliding doors, coach surveillance, alarms in pvt trains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electronic sliding doors, windows with double-glazed safety glass, Braille signages, emergency talk-back mechanism, passenger surveillance system, and information and destination boards.

These are some of the specifications the Railways has demanded from private operators in trains that they will be running on the Railways network.

A draft specification for private trains, shared by the Railways on Wednesday, also says these trains would pro-

RAILWAYS RELEASE DRAFT SPECIFICATION



vide noise-free travel to passengers and be capable of running at a speed of 160

km/hr. The train shall be designed so that they can operate safe-

ly at a maximum speed of 180 kmph during testing. Train shall be capable of accelerating to a speed of 160 kmph from 0 kmph in a maximum of 140 seconds on level track, says the draft.

These trains will be fitted with an emergency brake which can bring them to a standstill in less than 1,250 m when travelling at 160 kmph, it says.

It also says that the trains should be designed for a life of 35 years.

Each coach shall have minimum four electrically/pneumatically powered, plug type

doors, two on each side, it says. The door mechanism shall have safety provision whereby the train shall not start unless all doors have been closed and electrically locked. Provision shall be made for passengers to open doors to permit evacuation from a stopped train in an emergency, the draft says.

There shall be an internal and external manual release mechanism on one door per side in each coach. All windows shall be provided with double-glazed safety glass, it says.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Shravana & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi: Navami: 12:57 pm

Nakshatram: Rohini: 05:22 am
(Next Day)

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 01:55 pm - 03:30 pm

Yamagandam: 06:02 am - 07:36 am

Varjyam: 08:43 pm - 10:27 pm

Gulika: 09:11 am - 10:46 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Ahnikalam: 01:55 am - 03:38 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:55 am - 12:46 pm

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy

Temp: 29/25

Humidity: 87%

Sunrise: 05:58 am

Sunset: 06:43 pm

Current Weather Conditions
Updated August 12, 2020 5:00 PM

Village/ward Secretariat exams from Sept. 20

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Village/ Ward Secretariat exams, postponed due to Covid-19, will be held from September 20 and the process will complete within a week. This was revealed during a review meeting chaired by Municipal Administration Minister Botsa Satyanarayana and Panchayat Raj Minister Peddiredy Ramachandra Reddy at Panchayat Raj Minister's camp office. The Ministers directed the officials to ensure all the precautionary measures for Covid-19 and physical distancing should be maintained in the course of exams. An estimated 10,63,168 aspirants would be taking the exam. On the first day, 4.5 lakh candidates are expected to attend the exam. At least 5,000 exam centres have been arranged for the purpose. The Ministers directed the officials to focus on filling vacancies of animal husbandry assistant post. Panchayat Raj Pricipal Secretary Goppalkrishna Dwivedi, Commissioner Girija Shankar, Village and ward secretariats Commissioner Naveen Kumar, and other officials were present.

Work on Polavaram, other projects on track despite Covid

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday reviewed the progress of various irrigation projects, including Polavaram, in the State. Works at Polavaram were going on despite Covid pandemic and monsoon, and the height of the spillway gates increased to 51 metres, officials informed the Chief Minister. The height of the spillway gates was 28 metres when the YSRCP government took over and the works will be completed by September 15, the officials said. In the same manner, works on the left canal are also going on in a fast pace. The Chief Minister said that focus should be laid on Relief and Rehabilitation as well. The projects which are to be completed this year, the Owk tunnel 2, Pula Subbaiah Veligonda tunnel 1, Nellore and Sangam Barrages, linking of Vamsadhara and Nagavali stage II were discussed during the meeting in which the officials said that the Owk tunnel 2 work would be completed by October as mud was piled up in the tunnel during the recent rains and steps are being taken as per the experts' advice and



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy chairs the review meeting at his camp office on Wednesday.

there is possibility of an extra flow of 10 cusecs of water. The officials informed the Chief Minister that water will be released in the first week of December from Pula Subbaiah Veligonda project Tunnel I and in one year 2.2 km tunnel was dug. The Chief Minister asked the officials to continue the work for the second tunnel as well. The civil works on the Nellore barrage have nearly completed to which the officials said that gates are being fixed and nearly 86.35 per cent of works were completed and the project will be round off by November along with Sangam barrage. The Chief Minister instructed

the officials to complete the projects in Vizianagaram. With an estimate of Rs 500 crore the remaining work on the Thotapalli barrage and other projects will be completed. The officials said that the work on Vamsadhara Nagavali linking would be completed by December. When the Chief Minister enquired about the Vamsadhara Stage II, Phase II works, the officials said that they will be completed by March. Neredi Barrage and Janjhavati project issues should be looked into, he said. Gandikota reservoir should be able to store 26.85 TMC of water and the R & R works should be completed, along

with Chitravati with 10 TMC ft of water, the Chief Minister said. He also instructed the officials to complete the upgrade works on Gandikota-Paidipalem Lift along with Rajoli-Joladarasi projects. The tender process has been sent for judicial review in this regard, the officials informed the Chief Minister. Jagan also instructed the officials to speed up the GNSS-HNSS linkage lift works and Pulivendula micro irrigation projects. Minister for Water Resources Anil Kumar Yadav, Irrigation Special Chief Secretary Adityanath Das and other officials took part in the meeting.

Electoral arrangements to begin with revision of rolls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission of India on Wednesday announced the special summary revision of photo electoral rolls with January 1, 2021 as the cut-off date and fixed the schedule for the same. State Chief Electoral Officer K Vijayanand in a statement here stated that rationalisation and rearrangements of polling stations, removal of discrepancies in the demographic similar entries and electoral photo identity cards (EPIC) and recasting and finalisation of proposed restructuring of boundaries and location of polling stations would be taken up from August 10 and would be completed by October 31. Likewise, preparation of supplements and integrated draft rolls would be completed



ed by November 15 and the claims and objections would be entertained between November 16 and December 15. After disposing of the claims and objections, the final publication of rolls would be on January 15, 2021. The CEO said that special campaign for receiving claims

and objections would be attended by the booth level officers of each polling station. Vijayanand appealed to the electors and eligible citizens who will attain 18 years of age as on January 1, 2021 and those who missed to enrol themselves to file their applications from November 16 to December 15.

Plasma therapy launched in Srikakulam district

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Two youths have come forward and donated plasma in Srikakulam, signalling the launch of plasma therapy in the district. The noble gesture of the youngsters saved a person who was on ventilator support at the GEMS Hospital. District collector J Niwas said the youths — Prasant and Krishna Vamsi — volunteered and Prasant donated his plasma on Tuesday evening. It was administered to a 56-year-old patient at 2.30 am.



Krishna Vamsi donated on Wednesday morning and it was given to the same patient. Prasant along with his five of his family members came to the Indian Red Cross Blood Bank on Tuesday evening. After screening, only Prasant was found to be fit for donating the plasma.

Similarly, Krishna Vamsi, son of BVVS Murthy, who runs Sri Venkateswara

He said both of them would be given Rs 5,000 each for donating plasma. He said travelling and other expenses would also be given to people who come from faraway places.

Rajendranath Reddy to head intel wing

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government late on Tuesday posted senior IPS officer KV Rajendranath Reddy to the state intelligence wing as its new chief, an official order said. Rajendranath Reddy, a 1992 batch officer, will also hold full additional charge as director general of vigilance and enforcement under the General Administration Department, an order issued by Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney said. Commissioner of Police, Visakhapatnam city, Rajiv Kumar Meena has been shunted out and directed to report to the police headquarters here. Manish Kumar Sinha, a 2000 batch officer of the inspector-general rank, will replace Rajiv Kumar, the order said. Sinha was heading the intelligence wing.

Industrialist P Srikanth Reddy succumbs to Covid

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Renowned industrialist and philanthropist Palem Srikanth Reddy, who also contested against YSRCP president YS Jaganmohan Reddy in 2009 on a TDP ticket, has succumbed to Covid-19. He was 57. Srikanth Reddy, CMD of Palred Technologies, breathed his last at Yashoda Hospitals in Hyderabad on Wednesday while undergoing treatment for Covid infection. He was the son of former state High Court chief justice P Chenna Kesava Reddy. As part of his philanthropy works, he had founded Modern Rayalaseema Foundation and had been involved in various developmental works in the region. Quitting politics, he had fully devoted himself to business and social welfare works. He had earned a Master in Industrial Engineering and Engineering Management from Stanford University, USA, and Bachelor in Industrial Engineering from



Srikanth Reddy REC Trichy, India. He had over 25 years of work experience in supply-chain management, logistics and IT, in companies including Hewlett Packard and Emery World Wide. Srikanth Reddy was the local Joint Venture Partner and Co-founder of Emery Worldwide India Private Limited (EWWIPL). He was the Managing Director of EWWIPL till 2002. EWWIPL is a transportation /logistics services company with well-established operations in 7 cities in India.

Man kills son over property dispute in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a gruesome incident, a man bludgeoned his son at Satyanagar near Chinamushidivada area under Pendurthi police station limits in Vizag city on Wednesday following a dispute over property. The victim has been identified as 40-year-old G Jalaraju, working as a seaman in Mumbai while the accused is G Veerajuu, a retired seaman. The police said that a heated argument between the father and son over a property issue led to a scuffle between them. Veeraju, in a burst of anger, hit his son on the head with a hammer. Jalaraju died on the spot with severe head injuries and he was found in the cellar of the residential complex in a pool of blood. Preliminary investigation revealed that Jalaraju came to Vizag city a few days ago. He became infuriated after coming to know that his father transferred more property to his daughters than to him.



VPT chairman K Rama Mohana Rao inaugurates the Covid Care Centre for employees of the port on Wednesday.

VPT sets up Covid Care Centre for employees

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Vizag Port Trust chairman K Rama Mohana Rao on Wednesday inaugurated a Covid Care Centre for VPT employees on its Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium premises here. Due to an increase in Covid cases, the empanelled hospitals in the city are reluctant to provide treatment to the VPT patients, stating that beds allocated for Covid-19 cases are not sufficient to cater to their needs. To overcome this problem, the VPT management

decided to open a Covid Care Centre at Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium of VPT at Narasimhanagar. The Visakhapatnam district Collector has given permission to run the Covid Care Centre at Rajiv Gandhi Indoor Stadium. The Centre was inaugurated initially with 63 bed capacity. All necessary facilities have been arranged at Covid Care Centre. Heads of the departments and senior officers of VPT, Port GJH doctors and staff participated in this programme.

Stipend of medical students hiked

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh Health & Family Welfare Department (H&FW) has increased the stipend being given to the internees and post graduate students of various medical colleges. It may be noted that most of the PG students and internees are also being deployed at Covid ward. The Director of Medical Education, Vijayawada had furnished proposals for enhancement of stipends to the Internees (House Surgeons), Post Graduates (Degree and Diploma), Super-speciality and MDS courses of Govt. Medical Colleges including Dental Colleges. The Government, after careful consideration, revised the stipend to the Internees with effect from January 1, 2020.



Water levels on the rise at Bhadrachalam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The flood level in River Godavari at Bhadrachalam is on the rise due to heavy rains in the upper reaches of the river. The water level at Bhadrachalam is rising as River Indravati is emptying its flood water into River Godavari. The water level in the reservoir on Tuesday night was measured as 25 feet. Around 12 noon on Wednesday, it

increased further to 29.5 feet. As many reservoirs were up to the brim in the upper reaches, water is being discharged downstream. The Water Resources Department authorities predict more flooding to the river. However, the authorities placate the feelings of people living in low lying areas that the flood level is not alarming and will become alarming only when water level crosses 40 feet mark.

Cong dares TRS leaders to debate on Pothireddypadu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC Secretary Challa Vamshi Chand Reddy threw a challenge at ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) leaders to participate in a debate on Pothireddypadu and Sangameswaram projects on Andhra Pradesh. In an open letter to Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao, he said

that he is prepared to interact with any number of TRS leaders on the issue of river water sharing with the neighbouring State of Andhra Pradesh. "While the Telangana government has failed to fulfill any promise that it has made to the people of the State, the Chief Minister seems



to be inclined to benefit Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. The Chief Minister's indifferent attitude towards the water theft of AP gives rise to many questions," he said. He alleged that it is conspicuously evident that KCR is deliberately not responding on

this issue. His interest in calling for an impromptu, insignificant and inappropriate cabinet meeting on 5 August in order to avoid attending the apex council meeting that was scheduled on the same day clearly indicates his evil intentions, Vamshi said. The truth behind KCR's strategy to attend apex council meeting only after 20 August

clearly tells us that he wants to favour a smooth and successful tendering of Raayalaseema lift Irrigation project, scheduled on 19 August, and subsequently make the apex council meeting redundant. He recalled that during 2017 when he was MLA of Kalwakurthy, he has participated in a debate with the present-day Agriculture Minister.

Derailed by Covid, Waltair Division registers Rs 1,000 crore revenue loss

SUMIT ONKA ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Waltair Railway Division registered a revenue loss of Rs 1,000 crore in terms of freight transport and passenger traffic due to the Covid-19 induced lockdown. Over a virtual medium, Divisional Railway Manager of Waltair Division Chetan Kumar Shrivastava interacted with journalists briefing the works taken up by the division and also updated the revenue generation details in the first four months of the 2020-21 fiscal. The DRM said enough care has been taken by railways to



check the passengers who are travelling by special trains and even the railway personnel who are working in the front line who were being given safety gadgets to combat the spread of coronavirus infection.

DRM said that an automatic video thermal scanner with artificial intelligence has been provided at the entry of the Visakhapatnam Railway station which screens 30 passengers at a time and is capable of keeping record for further reference. Shrivastava said that all the ongoing works are in progress as usual and even at a faster pace and regular train movement can be expected only after full control of coronavirus infection. The loss incurred in goods traffic is due to industrial slowdown and scarcity of workforce due to the pandemic, he said. Asked if air passengers will drift to Rail in view of the Covid hitting the civil aviation sector badly, he said all transport sectors will face such a situation as people are refraining from travelling fearing the virus.

Curb commercialisation of schools, advises HSPA

HSPA SUGGESTS CHANGES IN NEP 2020

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Schools Parents' Association (HSPA) has submitted a few changes in the National Education Policy 2020, to the Ministry of Human Resource Development. As per the association, all the schools, irrespective of their segment, have been increasing their fees exponentially over the years to an extent where it has become almost unsustainable for many. The HSPA suggested, "All private schools must form an School Management Committees like any public

school and have an SDP reviewed and endorsed by the SMC on a continuous basis. They must also transparently report their annual audited financial statements and other reports submitted to the Income Tax Department, the SMC and the public. The SMC must endorse the statement for it to be valid. The financial disclosure standards must be the same as for Section 8 companies. The SDP and the financial statements shall be freely and publicly available." They also suggested public disclosure of all information by all the schools. "Parents should

be able to make informed choices while admitting their child to a school. To achieve this, all relevant information of schools must be available in the public domain; this will include information in addition to what is available as a part of the accreditation process, including fees structure, facilities, learning outcomes, details of teachers and their qualifications, and other matters relevant to the decision making of the parents on choosing a school for their child." They further requested ministry to propose a regulatory mechanism to regulate school fee.

Scheme to promote women entrepreneurship launched

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday launched a new scheme called 'YSR Cheyutha' aimed at promoting entrepreneurship among women to make them self-reliant.

Under this scheme, about 23 lakh women belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, backward classes and minority communities in the age group of 45-60 years will get an incentive of Rs 18,750 per annum. Thus, every beneficiary will get Rs 75,000 in four years and the scheme will cost the government Rs 17,000 crore.

About eight lakh widows and single women in the age group of 45-60 years, who are already receiving monthly social pensions, would also reap additional benefit of YSR Cheyutha. Annual amount received by women eligible for pension is Rs 27,000 at the rate of Rs 2,250 per month.

In addition to this, they



would receive Rs 18,750 per annum under YSR Cheyutha. The total amount comes to Rs 45,750 per annum.

According to the government, YSR Cheyutha is unique in the sense that it gives freedom to eligible women to use the amount deposited in their unencumbered accounts for any purpose of their choice.

The government would provide marketing and technical assistance to women and the banks would provide loans.

The State has signed MoUs with ITC, Proctor & Gamble, HUL, Amul and Reliance besides banks and business opportunities will be open for those women who need help in starting small or medium business units.

In the coming days there

would be MoUs with more and more major business houses which will create more and more business opportunities.

These companies will supply their products at the price they are supplying to their Agents or even for less so that the women entrepreneurs will get more profit. Amul Cooperative will help out in dairy industry, he said.

SERP (Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty) and Mission for Elimination of Poverty and in Municipal Areas (MEPMA) will coordinate in the process.

Despite financial constraints, the State has been keen on the economic empowerment of women and their self reliance and this sustainable business model. During the interaction period after the launch, beneficiaries of various districts lauded the Chief Minister for the slew of welfare schemes and said that in the tough times of Corona, the Chief Minister has been implementing the welfare schemes which are of great use to them.

They recalled the various schemes they have benefited from and thanked him.

Ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, Botsa Satyanarayana, Venugopala Krishna, Viswaroop, Sankaranarayana, MP M Bharat, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney and other officials participated in the event.

Prompt action in SC, ST atrocities cases: Minister

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Minister for Social Welfare Pinepi Viswaroop on Wednesday said that never in the history of Andhra Pradesh has a Chief Minister responded so quickly as YS Jaganmohan Reddy has in cases of atrocities against SCs and STs.

Speaking to the media on the accusations levelled by Amalapuram former MP Harsha Kumar on atrocities against SCs and STs, Viswaroop said he had the responsibility of responding to the remarks.

In the case of a man at Rajahmundry, and in the death of a youth in Chirala, it was policemen who were the accused and they were immediately suspended and booked under SC, ST Atrocities Act and sent to jail within 24 hours, he said.

"In the minor girl's rape case, Harsha Kumar alleged that Disha Act was not implemented. He is ignorant of the fact that immediate action was taken and Disha Act can be implemented only after it gets



the President's approval," the Minister responded.

Viswaroop continued: "Harsha also accused me of not installing a statue of BR Ambedkar. He must remember that Konaseema is the birthplace of Dalit movements and I was involved in the movement right from my school days."

The Minister reminded that Harsha Kumar had twice become MP from Amalapuram thanks to the good offices of YS Rajasekhara Reddy but was never involved in Dalit movements. He added that the people of Amalapuram know how many Ambedkar statues that he had restored in the region.

He said Harsha never strove

for Dalts rights but only used them as a mask to foster his own interests.

"It was during Kusuma Krishna Murthy's tenure as the MP of Amalapuram for three terms that a bronze statue of Ambedkar was installed, which was later removed and thrown in a dustbin by the Telugu Desam government," Viswaroop said.

He questioned: "Why did Harsha, who was the MP of Amalapuram for two terms not get the idea of installing a bronze statue of Ambedkar in Amalapuram?"

The Minister advised Harsha Kumar to know his facts well before making incorrigible remarks against the ruling party.

Rein in corporate hospitals, implement GO 77: CPM

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The CPM has urged the State Government to strictly implement GO No 77 and 78 and cut down the Covid-19 treatment costs in corporate hospitals.

"Covid has already spread its tentacle everywhere infecting 21,101 persons so far and taking 144 lives. However, both the Central and State governments have failed utterly to control the spread of the disease. Though in Andhra Pradesh more number of tests are conducted, the government failed to provide proper hospital and treatment facilities," State president of CITU Ch Narasinga Rao alleged.

Taking this as an advantage, corporate hospitals are charging fees as per their whim without caring for rules or the



room, it should not be more than Rs 10,388. "However, a majority of the corporate hospitals are charging a whopping Rs 50,000 per day per bed," he alleged.

Aarogyasri and other health schemes are not implemented in the corporate hospitals for the poor and are useless for Coronavirus patients.

"Patients are being admitted only after the hospitals collect lakhs of rupees as deposit. Inmates of these corporate hospitals are complaining, even though huge charges are collected, the facilities are poor. Proper food is not provided to the patients. Though the GO says a list of charges must be displayed at the reception counter of the concerned hospital, but it is not followed," the CITU leader said.

law, he said.

Narasinga Rao said the Government issued GOs 77 and 78 on July 8 instructing corporate and private hospitals to follow the orders.

In GO 77, the government specified that the charges for a bed per day should not be more than Rs 3,250. In critical cases where a ventilator facility is required with a special

facility so that the loco pilot or guard can make announcements to passengers from driving/non-driving cab. Emergency buttons and talk-back phones shall be located near all the doors and gangways, the draft says, adding provision shall be there for voice recording of the conversations with GPS stamping.

A passenger information system (PIS) shall provide automatic announcement and the display of destination information on displays throughout the train in Hindi, English and regional languages.

Each car shall be provided with two digital destination boards on the outside (one on each side) displaying the originating, destination station, vehicle number, train number, the draft says.

The draft says the train shall provide a public address (PA)

Sliding doors, coach surveillance, alarms in pvt trains...

Continued from Page 1

Stressing the need for hazard-free environment for users, the draft also says that adequate handholds shall be provided throughout the car.

The document also says normal and emergency equipment and controls which the users or crew may operate shall be clearly identified, and operating procedures presented in both text and graphic formats.

Passenger emergency signs shall also be embossed in Braille raised typeface, it says.

The trains shall be designed to keep the noise emissions as low as possible and designed to prevent drumming, rattles or vibrations throughout its life.

The draft says the train shall provide a public address (PA)

track and OHE conditions etc. Cameras shall be placed on outer side of the train for gathering rear view of the platform. One/two camera shall be installed on the roof of driving Car/power head towards pantograph to monitor the roof equipment, it said.

An integrated screen shall be provided for the passenger car surveillance system in each driving cab.

The train will also have an Emergency Talk-Back [ETB] (on two physically independent channels) in each coach.

Once pressed/operated, it shall be possible for the passenger to communicate with the train driver/guard. If more than one emergency device has been operated, each demand shall be independently acknowledged, it said.

Meena as City Police Commissioner, initiated Mahila Mitra, a specially designed programme, intended to identify and address the wide range of issues faced by women. He also played a key role in setting up the One-Stop Centre and Disha Police Station to ensure the safety of women and also managed the pandemic well.

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Timely decisions stopped spread of virus: Tamilsai

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Governor Dr Tamilsai Soundararajan on Wednesday exhorted the commerce and industry leaders to intensify their efforts in mitigating the crisis caused by Covid-19 pandemic and support the government. She said that the commerce and industry sector was showing lot of resilience in overcoming the crisis and has been sustaining the livelihoods of the millions of people.

The Governor was participating as the chief guest in the video conference organised by the FTCCI from the Raj Bhavan, here, on the topic of "Strategic interventions of Central and State governments for the mitigation of Covid-19 Crisis." Referring to the strategic inter-

ventions by the Central government, Tamilsai Soundararajan pointed out that PM Narendra Modi has taken 'right decisions at the right time' to contain the spread of Covid-19 and thus saved many precious lives. The Governor said that the India, which faced the shortage of PPE kits and other equipment, is now exporting PPE kits, N95 masks, ventilators and other life saving medicines to various other countries through the sustained efforts of the government. "India is conducting around 7 lakh Covid-19 tests a day and it will soon achieve the target of carrying out at least 10 lakh tests a day. The governments are implementing three-pronged strategy of aggressive testing, comprehensive tracing and efficient treatment," she added.

9,597 new cases take tally past 2.5 lakh mark

Continued from Page 1

East Godavari district surged further, adding 1,332 fresh cases and reaching a gross of 35,642 while Kurnool also crossed the 30,000 mark with the addition of 781 new cases.

Chittoor reported 1,235 cases, West Godavari 929, Visakhapatnam 797, Anantapur 781, Guntur 762 and SPS Nellore 723 cases in the last 24 hours, the bulletin said.

Health department officials said 80 per cent of the coronavirus cases being reported were asymptomatic.

Guntur district reported 13 deaths, Prakasam 11, Chittoor and SPS Nellore ten each, Srikakulam nine, Anantapur and Kadapa seven each and Visakhapatnam five fresh Covid-19 fatalities. East Godavari and Vizianagaram added five new casualties, Kurnool and West Godavari four each and Krishna two.

Prez Kovind comes to rescue of tonsured Dalit youth

Continued from Page 1

It may be recalled that following a complaint by a local YSRCP leader, the police arrested Prasad of Vedullapalli recently, thrashed him brutally and also tonsured his head.

Following an outcry over the issue, the government placed the S-I, under suspension.

The victim said that no action has been taken against the YSRCP leader who was responsible for the incident. Moreover, he said that the local YSRCP leaders have been harassing him.

Prasad felt that there is no scope for him to get justice in the state and vowed to avenge the insult joining the ranks of Maoists. He released a video in this regard that went viral on the Internet. He sought permission of the President of India to join the ranks of the Maoists. He also addressed a letter to the office of Ramnath Kovind in this regard.

Responding to the letter, Kovind appointed a special officer to do justice to the youth.

KTR bats for promotion of food processing in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

IT and Industries Minister KT Rama Rao on Wednesday chaired a meeting of Group of Ministers (GoM) to draft Telangana food processing policy and logistics policy. The policies are aimed to promote food processing and logistic industries in a big way in Telangana state.

KTR emphasised the need for a food processing policy and a logistics policy to promote the food processing industries which will ensure financial empowerment of farmers and employment opportunities for youth in the State. He said the group of ministers has examined these policies along with incentives being offered by other States as well as other countries, and have come up with proposals to offer subsidies and

incentives to develop the food processing industry in the State.

The Group of Ministers meeting chaired by Minister KT Rama Rao was held to discuss the food processing and logistics policies apart from preparing necessary guidelines at Pragathi Bhavan here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Rama Rao said following the innovative measures taken by Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu, lakhs of acres in the State were freshly brought under cultivation under Krishna and Godavari Rivers. He pointed out that crops being cultivated in each village, mandal and district, were being mapped across the State for comprehensive information on agricultural operations. "With the construction of new irrigation projects and subsequently

increased cultivation area, the production of crops especially paddy, cotton, maize, pulses and spices has increased significantly after the State formation," he added.

The Minister stated that due to implementation of the sheep and fish distribution schemes, there has been a significant increase in number of sheep and production of fish. He said the State was experiencing water revolution and was in the process of witnessing another Green Revolution (agriculture), followed by the Blue Revolution (fisheries), the Pink Revolution (meat production) and the White Revolution (milk). "Though the State was witnessing an increase in crop production, we do not have the capacity to fully process them. There is an urgent need to promote food processing industry," he said.

Jagan's dream housing project launch fizzles out

Continued from Page 1

It also cancelled the government's order to take away over 6,000 acres of assigned lands and distribute them as house sites for the poor.

Subsequently, when the lockdown restrictions were removed, the programme was scheduled to be launched on July 8, coinciding with the birth anniversary of the Chief Minister's father and former chief minister late YS Rajasekhara Reddy. But, it was also postponed in view of the case pending in the court.

PM to launch 'transparent taxation' platform

Continued from Page 1

The reforms include reduction in corporate tax last year to 22 per cent from 30 per cent for existing companies and 15 per cent for new manufacturing units, scrapping of dividend distribution tax and faceless assessment. "The focus of the tax reforms has been on reduction in tax rates and on simplification of direct tax laws. Several initiatives have been taken by the CBDT for bringing in efficiency and transparency in the functioning of the I-T Department," it said.

Facebook post led to firing in Bengaluru, 3 killed

Continued from Page 1

Pant said Naveen, who allegedly posted the social media post has been arrested and appealed for peace.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa said the "attack on the residence of MLA Akhanda Srinivasa Murthy and the DJ Halli police station and riot are condemnable."

"Already given directions to initiate stringent action against the criminals (and) the government has initiated all the measures to contain violence," he said.

The attack on police, media persons and common citizens was unpardonable. The government will not tolerate such instigation and mischief, he added.

On Tuesday night, irked by the social media post, hundreds of people went on a rampage and set DJ Halli police

station on fire. They torched many police and private vehicles, smashed the belongings of MLA Murthy and those of his sister. An ATM was smashed into pieces.

To disperse the mob, police resorted to lathi charge, lobbed tear gas shells and later opened fire, killing three people.

One of the victims has been identified as Yasin Pasha. The victim's father Afzal told reporters that his son was 'innocent.'

"My son operated a meat shop in the area and had gone for dinner when the police opened fire and he died. He is innocent and was not involved in any arson," he said.

He claimed that some outsiders, who came in hordes and damaged property, were responsible for the violence.

Meanwhile, curfew has been imposed in the affected areas in and around DJ Halli and KG

Halli.

Legislator Murthy appealed against violence.

"I appeal to my Muslim brethren that we should not resort to violence for the fault committed by some miscreants. There is no need to fight. We all are brothers.

We will get the person punished as per law. We will also be with you. I appeal to the Muslim friends to be calm," he said in a video message last night.

Congress MLA and former minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan termed the violence as 'unfortunate.' "I am hopeful police will take action against all those who are responsible for this. I also request everyone to stay calm and maintain peace in the area," Khan tweeted.

Shivaji Nagar Congress MLA Rizwan Arshad too appealed to the people to maintain peace and harmony.

Cyberfraud starts singing

Continued from Page 1

Chaitanya created fake facebook accounts to execute malicious activities by referring to himself as the singer's manager/co-singer.

In February, the accused had organised an event in the name of the singer at Sanapa Village near Anantapur. Besides, he claimed to have carried out several social welfare activities, concerts in her name to increase viewership for his pages on social media and to trap her admirers.

According to sources, several others similarly cheated by him have started lodging complaints against Chaitanya. While going into these complaints, the police have appealed to all those who have been cheated or otherwise victimised to provide details.

The woman fan of the singer has lodged a complaint with the Rachakonda Cyber Crime Police, stating that Chaitanya had cheated her to the tune of Rs 1.70 crore. It all began

when the accused gave her a number, claiming it belonged to the singer. After chatting with the person she believed was her idol Sunitha, the woman transferred Rs 50,000 sought in the name of a trust named "Anandha cheralayam, Kerala".

"The accused fraudster minted money from the victim stating various reasons like personal, financial problems, father's health, mother's problem, her son's higher education purpose and income tax in different transactions at different times since 2019 Feb to till July month 2020, cheated around Rs 1.7 crore approximately," said police.

In one instance, the complainant had transferred the money on the promise of the fraudster's WhatsApp text that she has some land in the USA and after selling the land she would return the amount. To gain the confidence of the victim, the accused shared live locations and pictures of the singer's house.

IMD warns of heavy rains in parts of AP

Continued from Page 1

Parts of Visakhapatnam and East and West Godavari districts are also expected to witness moderate to heavy rains on August 14 while the remaining places in the state are likely to receive light to moderate rains.

On August 15, districts such as Visakhapatnam and East Godavari will receive moderate to heavy rains in certain places, while remaining places in the state may possibly receive light to moderate rains.

On August 16, certain places in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts are likely to receive moderate to heavy rains as the remaining areas in the state are likely to receive light to moderate rains. AP State DMA Commissioner K Kannababu in a statement said that the wind speed will be 45-55 km per hour along the seashore and waves are expected to be as high as 3 to 3.5 meters accompanied by a turbulent sea condition.

He also cautioned fishermen to not venture into the sea for fishing for the coming four days.

HALs Light Combat Helicopters deployed for operations at Leh

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited said on Wednesday two Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) produced by it have been deployed for operations at high altitude (Leh sector) at short notice to support IAF missions, "in the light of the prevailing situation on the border."

"It is the lightest attack helicopter in the world designed and developed by HAL to meet the specific and unique requirements of Indian Armed Forces reflecting the crucial role of HAL in 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'," HAL's CMD, R Madhavan, said. The Vice Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Harjit Singh Arora took part in one such operation along with HAL test pilot, Wg Cdr (Retd), Subash P John recently by taking-off from high altitude location to a forward area for a simulated attack on a high altitude target, the Bengaluru-headquartered company said in a statement.

"This was followed by a landing at one of the most treacher-



ous helipads in the region.

"The LCH successfully demonstrated its quick deployment prowess to forward locations in extreme temperatures," it said.

LCH is a potent weapon platform because of its state-of-the-art systems and highly accurate weapons that are capable of hitting any type of target by day or night, according to HAL.

The other features of LCH include its ability to operate in the complete Area of Responsibility (AOR) and altitudes.

It has capability to carry adequate weapon load at high altitudes under varied conditions.

All these characteristics make it most suitable for hot and high altitude operations, the statement added. The IAF and the Indian Army together need around 160 LCHs, HAL said.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) had approved the proposal for initial batch of 15 LCHs, the statement said.

"The IAF issued Request for Proposal (RFP) for 15 Limited

"It is the lightest attack helicopter in the world designed and developed by HAL to meet the specific and unique requirements of Indian Armed Forces reflecting the crucial role of HAL in 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat', 'HAL's CMD, R Madhavan, said

Series Production (LSP) helicopter (10 for IAF and 5 for Army) and HAL had submitted its response, it said, adding, technical evaluation and the price negotiations have been concluded and the order is expected shortly.

"However, as a proactive measure, HAL has launched production of LSPs in anticipation of orders at its Bengaluru facility," the statement said.

Covid-19: 60,963 fresh cases take India's tally to 23,29,638

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 tally went past 23 lakh on Wednesday with a single day increase of 60,963 cases, while the recoveries surged to 16,39,599 pushing the recovery rate to 70.38 per cent, according to data by the Union Health Ministry.

The total coronavirus cases in the country have mounted to 23,29,638, while the death toll climbed to 46,091 with 834 new fatalities being reported in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The case fatality rate has declined to 1.98 per cent.

There are 6,43,948 active cases of coronavirus in the country at present which comprise 27.64 per cent of the total caseload.

India had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7.

According to the ICMR, a cumulative total of 2,60,15,297 samples have been tested up to August 11 with 7,33,449 samples being tested on Tuesday.

Of the 834 new deaths reported, 256 are from Maharashtra, 118 from Tamil Nadu, 87 from Andhra Pradesh, 86 from



Karnataka, 56 from Uttar Pradesh, 49 from West Bengal, 32 from Punjab, 23 from Gujarat, 18 from Madhya Pradesh, 16 from Bihar, 12 from Jammu and Kashmir and 11 each from Haryana and Rajasthan, the data showed.

Ten fatalities have been reported from Odisha, nine from Telangana, eight from Delhi, six from Goa, five each from Chhattisgarh and Kerala, four each from Assam and Jharkhand, two each from Puducherry and Uttarakhand while Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh and Manipur have reg-

istered one fatality each.

Of the total 46,091 deaths, Maharashtra has reported the maximum at 18,306, followed by 5,159 in Tamil Nadu, 4,139 in Delhi, 3,398 in Karnataka, 2,695 in Gujarat, 2,203 in Andhra Pradesh, 2,176 in Uttar Pradesh, 2,149 in West Bengal and 1,033 in Madhya Pradesh, according to the Union health ministry data.

So far, 811 people have died of COVID-19 in Rajasthan, 654 in Telangana, 636 in Punjab, 500 in Haryana, 490 in Jammu and Kashmir, 413 in Bihar, 296 in Odisha, 192 in Jharkhand, 155 in Assam, 136 in Uttarakhand and 120 in Kerala, it added.

SHORT READS



R'than governor asks universities to conduct plantation drive on I-Day

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Governor Kailash Chandra Mishra has asked the state universities to carry out plantation of saplings in their campuses after flag hoisting on the Independence Day. A total of 88,151 saplings have been given to the universities for the plantation drive, a statement said on Wednesday. Mishra has also asked the vice chancellors of the state universities to ensure compliance of social distancing norms and other protocols in view of the coronavirus pandemic. The governor has directed the VCs to set up committees in their universities to look after the plants, according to the statement. The University of Rajasthan in Jaipur and Mohalal Sukhadia University in Udaipur will plant 1,500 saplings each. Similarly, other universities too will plant the saplings allotted to them by the Raj Bhawan, the statement said.



Yogi celebrates Janmashtami at Gorakhnath temple

PNS ■ GORAKHPUR

Amid chants of vedic hymns, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath celebrated Janmashtami at the Gorakhnath temple.

Adityanath, along with head pujaari Kamalnath and head puhoit Acharya Ramanuj Tripathi, performed puja at the temple on Tuesday night, tem-

ple manager Dwarika Tiwari said.

On Wednesday morning, the chief minister visited a cow shelter in the premises of Gorakhnath temple after taking blessings of Mahant Digvijaynath and Mahant Avidyanath. Bal Krishna Sajja competition was not organised this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tiwari added.

World Monuments Fund to help Mubarak Begum mosque dome

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Waqf Board has received an offer of help from the World Monuments Fund in carrying out repair of the central dome of the 200-year-old Mubarak Begum mosque that was damaged due to heavy rain.

The central dome of the mosque at Hauz Qazi Chowk here was damaged due to heavy rain and lightning last month.

The Delhi Waqf Board had written to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for a technical survey before removal of debris and repair work, according to a Waqf Board official.

The World Monuments Fund (WMF), a New York-based non profit group, has assured us of help in taking up the repair work



to restore the damaged dome, the official said.

"We have been approached by the WMF with regard to repair of Mubarak Begum Masjid. A technical team of the organisation is expected to visit the mosque for assessment," said the official. No comment was immediately available from the WMF. The WMF is a private non-

profit organization based in New York. With affiliate organisations established in countries like Britain, India, Peru, Portugal, and Spain, it sponsors programmes for the conservation of cultural heritage worldwide. The Waqf Board is the custodian of notified heritage mosque buildings.

Plea in SC seeks inquiry into 'mismanagement' of Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Friday a plea which has sought a direction to the Centre to appoint a commission, headed by a retired apex court judge, for inquiry into the alleged mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

The petition has alleged that the Centre failed to undertake timely and effective measures for containing transmission of the virus and an independent inquiry by a commission, appointed under the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1952, was essential to inquire into the "lapses".

As per the cause list uploaded on the apex court website, the plea, filed by six petitioners



including retired bureaucrats, is scheduled to come up for hearing on August 14 before a bench headed by Justice L Nageswara Rao. The petition, filed through advocate Prashant Bhushan, has claimed that the Centre's response to the pandemic and its "deleterious impact" on the lives and livelihoods of the citizens is a "definite matter of public importance and warrants appointment of a commission" under section 3 of the Act.

Sushant's MLA cousin slaps Sanjay Raut with legal notice

PNS ■ PATNA

A Bihar MLA and close relative of Sushant Singh Rajput sent a legal notice to Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Wednesday, threatening action over a piece written by him in the party mouthpiece about the deceased actor's strained relations with his father, his lawyer said.

In his column for Saamana a few days ago, Raut had alleged that the actor, whose death is being probed by the CBI, was not on good terms with his own family and had strained relations with his father after his second marriage.

Sanjay Raut is an honorable member of Parliament and a responsible spokesman of the party. My client Neeraj Kumar Bablu has contended that he



should apologise within 48 hours for his baseless comments. If he does so, we will proceed no further. If he does not, we will seek legal remedy, Anish Jha, the BJP MLAs counsel, said here.

Bablu, who is a cousin of Rajput, had rubbished the allegation that the actors septuagenarian father, Krishna Kishore Singh, had tied the knot again after the death of his wife in 2002. Singh had lodged an FIR at a

police station in Patna last month, nearly 40 days after his son was found hanging from the ceiling at his Bandra residence. In the FIR, Singh had accused actress Rhea Chakraborty and her family members of abetting his son's suicide besides cheating him financially.

Chakraborty has, since, been slapped with a money laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate.

Her petition, questioning the Bihar polices jurisdiction in the matter and seeking transfer of the case from Patna to Mumbai is pending before the Supreme Court.

The matter was taken over by the CBI following a recommendation by the Nitish Kumar government at the request of Rajput's father.

Unaccounted cash of Rs 1.25 cr seized

PNS ■ SEONI (MP)

Police have seized unaccounted cash and gold ornaments collectively worth about Rs 1.25 crore from five persons staying at a hotel here in Madhya Pradesh, an officer said on Wednesday.

He said they could not produce necessary documents. "Police raided a hotel under Kotwali police station area late on Tuesday night on a tip-off that some suspected persons are staying there. It was found that a group of five persons, three from Indore and two from Tarn Taran (Punjab), was in possession of a large amount of cash and ornaments," said Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Kamlesh Kharpuse.

Fire at Covid hospital in Guj, patients shifted to safety

PNS ■ BODELI

A fire broke out in the COVID-19 ward of a two-storey hospital in Bodeli town of Gujarat's Chhotaudepur district on Wednesday morning, an official said.

There was no casualty in the blaze that erupted on the second floor of Bodeli Dhokalia Public Hospital, the official said, adding that 10 COVID-19 patients undergoing treatment at the facility were shifted to its lower floor and some of them were later admitted to other hospitals.

"A minor fire occurred in the switch board of COVID-19 ward following short-circuit in the morning. The blaze was controlled immediately by the staff with the help of fire extinguisher," Chief District Health Officer



Dr Mahesh Chaudhary said. "As a precaution, the staff also shifted all the 10 patients to lower floor," he said.

Later, after a health checkup, three patients were given discharge as they tested negative for coronavirus while seven were shifted to other hospitals in Chhotaudepur town, said Chaudhary. The second floor of

the hospital, a trust-run facility, was earlier converted into a COVID-19 ward.

"While the fire was minor and did not cause any casualty or damage to property, it will take time to check and replace the electric wiring on the second floor. Thus, we have decided to shift the coronavirus patients elsewhere," Chaudhary said.



Heavy rains hit Mumbai and districts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The India Meteorological Department on Wednesday predicted heavy rainfall at isolated places in Mumbai and intense showers in neighbouring districts for the next 24 hours.

A brown alert of heavy to very heavy rainfall has been issued for Raigad, Nashik and Pune, an IMD official said.

Isolated places in Mumbai are likely to receive heavy rains, while neighbouring districts of Thane, Raigad and Ratnagiri will witness more intense showers for the next 24 hours, the official said. Other parts of Maharashtra will receive light to moderate rains, he added.

Covid pandemic casts shadow on 'Dahi Handi' celebrations

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The grim shadow of COVID-19 crisis was visible on Dahi Handi festivities in Mumbai and other parts of Maharashtra on Wednesday as mandals opted for low-key celebration unlike past years which provided for public spectacles by ebullient Govinda squads.

Adhering to the social distancing guidelines, Dahi Handi mandals were not forming human pyramids this year to mark the birth of Lord Krishna. Instead, they were carrying out health and social welfare drives, like blood donation camps and removal of plastic. In previous years, Dahi Handi used to be celebrated with great fervour in parts of Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai and neighbouring Thane, where religious institutions, political leaders, and Govinda mandals, comprising youngsters dressed in colourful attire, took part in the festivities.

Various social groups also used to organise programmes



and cash rewards were given to the groups which succeeded in making the multi-tier human pyramids and breaking the dahi handis, earthen pitchers containing curd or buttermilk, tied at a height with rope.

But this year, dahi handis were being broken in a symbolic manner with those involved maintaining social distance and wearing masks.

Ram Kadam, BJP MLA from Ghatkopar in Mumbai, said in normal times, his mandals Dahi

Handi celebration saw five to six lakh footfalls.

"Ours was the biggest Dahi Handi celebration in India in normal times. But this year, we celebrated in a very simple manner, observing social distancing given the COVID-19 crisis. No human pyramid was formed. A child climbed atop a table and broke Dahi Handi to mark the festival in a symbolic manner," Kadam said.

"This year, we gave a message of boycotting Chinese products

and working for an aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) India," he said. Bala Padalkar, chief of Dahi Handi Utsav Samanvay Samiti, an umbrella body of over 950 mandals (groups) in the state, said that the enthusiasm was not the same this year and members of various mandals agreed not to travel in the city to break dahi handis. Instead, they performed puja in their own areas without forming human pyramids, he said.

Security intensified in Jammu ahead of Independence Day

PNS ■ JAMMU

Security has been intensified across the Jammu region with increased checking and patrolling ahead of Independence Day celebrations, a police official said on Wednesday. As a measure of multi-tier security, police have deployed additional Quick Response Teams (QRTs) in Jammu city to deal with any situation, he said.

The main function in Jammu will be held at Mini Stadium Parade, which was sealed as part of security arrangements even as the Union Territory administration has decided to allow only a few hundred people to attend the celebration due to a spike in coronavirus cases, the official said.

Besides intensifying checking of vehicles, especially along the Jammu-Pathankot and Jammu-Srinagar national highway, officials said the police have also built a mobile app to keep a record of all truck drivers and their helpers moving in and out of the Union Territory to stop ferrying of ter-



rorists and smuggling of weapons. Border grid security has been tightened further and all border roads are being kept under a strict watch, he said.

"Police and CAPF companies have been deployed and assigned the task of intensified checking and area domination patrolling round-the-clock," the official said. Senior Superintendent of Police, Jammu, Shridhar Patil said adequate security arrangements have been made to ensure that Independence Day passes off peacefully.

He said special arrangements have been put in place around the venue of the main function and sought the cooperation of

the people in maintaining peace. "The people are appealed to inform police if they find anything suspicious so that timely action is taken," the officer said and asked them to celebrate Independence day at their homes due to COVID-19 pandemic and follow the social distancing norms. Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Sanjeev Verma reviewed the arrangements for Independence Day celebrations with the deputy commissioners concerned, officials said, adding the functions would not include cultural programmes and the number of contingents for march past would also be curtailed in view COVID-19 protocol.

SHORT READS



Pranab Mukherjee continues to be critical: Hospital

NEW DELHI: The condition of former President Pranab Mukherjee continues to be critical and he remains on ventilator support, the Army's Research and Referral hospital said on Wednesday. He was admitted to the hospital in Delhi cantonment on August 10 and was operated for removal of a clot in the brain. "Shri. Pranab Mukherjee's health condition continues to remain critical. Presently he is haemodynamically stable and on a ventilator," a statement from the hospital said. The condition of the former president had worsened on Tuesday and he had not shown signs of improvement, the doctors attending on him said. The 84-year-old had also tested positive for COVID-19 prior to the surgery on Monday.

Rajasthan a lesson for BJP, its 'horse-trading' politics defeated: Adhir

KOLKATA: Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Wednesday said the resolution of the Rajasthan political crisis has dealt a blow to the BJP's "horse-trading" politics. Describing young leaders such as Sachin Pilot as the future of the party, the veteran Congress MP also hailed the political acumen of Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot for "beating BJP at its own game". "The Rajasthan episode has destroyed the myth that the BJP and its theatrics cannot be beaten. The horse-trading politics of the BJP has been defeated. It was a pleasure to watch BJP shifting its MLAs to other states out of fear that they might switch over to the Congress," Chowdhury said. The BJP can be defeated at their own game and Rajasthan is an example of it, he said.

Covid patient jumps off AIIMS building; dies

RAIPUR: A 65-year-old COVID-19 patient undergoing treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) allegedly committed suicide by jumping off the second floor of the building in Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place in the C-block of the institute located under Amanaka police station area on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, said Bharat Bareth, station house officer of Amanaka police station. A resident of the city's Lalpur locality, the sexagenarian was admitted to AIIMS on August 7 and on finding some behavioural abnormalities, the patient was sent for psychiatric consultancy, he said.

'PM SVANIDHI'

Over 5 lakh loan applications from street vendors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has received over five lakh applications under the 'PM SVANidhi' scheme which aims to provide street vendors loans of up to Rs 10,000 to restart their business post the COVID-19 lockdown, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday.

The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said the PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi scheme has generated considerable enthusiasm among the street vendors.

The number of loan sanctioned and applications received under 'PM SVANidhi' scheme have crossed one lakh and five lakh respectively within 41 days of commencement of the lending process.

Under the scheme, vendors



can avail a working capital loan of up to Rs 10,000 which is repayable in monthly instalments in a year.

"The PM SVANidhi envisages bringing banks at the door steps" of these 'nano-entrepreneurs' by engaging the non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and the micro-finance institutions (MFIs) as lending institutions in addition

to scheduled commercial banks — public and private, regional rural banks, cooperative banks, SHG banks etc," the statement said.

Onboarding vendors on digital payment platforms is a very important component to building their credit profile and help them become part of the formal urban economy, it stated. Last week, the ministry had

The number of loan sanctioned and applications received under 'PM SVANidhi' scheme have crossed one lakh and five lakh respectively within 41 days of commencement of the lending process

launched the "Letter of Recommendation module" through which street vendors, who don't have identity cards or certificate of vending, can also avail benefits under scheme.

Freedom fighters' valour, sacrifices should be highlighted: Naidu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday stressed on the need to provide a comprehensive, authentic and objective account of the historical events and said stories of the valour and sacrifices made by freedom fighters from across the country should be highlighted in the textbooks.

Speaking at the release of a book 'Netaji — India's Independence and British Archives' authored by Kalyan Kumar De, he underlined the need to make the younger generation aware of India's history. De is an associate member of the Netaji Subash Bose-INA Trust.

The vice president said there were many shades and facets of freedom movement which need to be taught to the younger generation.

"Many people from different parts of India made sacrifices for our independence. Their stories should also be highlighted," he said according to an official statement. Referring to the



prominent role played by Subhas Chandra Bose in the freedom struggle, Naidu said his dynamic and courageous leadership during the freedom movement will continue to be a major source of inspiration to the people, particularly the youth.

Stating that the revival of Indian National Army (INA) made it a force to reckon with, Naidu said as the documents in this book indicate, the British were quite alarmed at the rising tide of public sympathy for the INA. It was one of the main contributing factors in the country's

freedom struggle.

Referring to the International Youth Day on Wednesday, the vice president called upon the youth to take inspiration from the life of Netaji and strive towards building a 'new' India.

Regretting that even seven decades after Independence, the country continues to face many challenges on different fronts, he asked the youth to be at the forefront of building a new India, which is free of poverty, illiteracy, corruption, caste, gender discrimination and where every Indian has equal opportunities.

Unemployment rate in WB reduced by 40%: Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday claimed that the unemployment rate in the state has been reduced by 40 per cent at a time when the country is witnessing an all time high of 24 per cent joblessness.

Moreover one lakh unemployed youths in the state will be provided with soft loans and subsidies to become self reliant under the government's 'Karma Sathi Prakalpa', she said on International Youth Day.

"Today is #InternationalYouthDay. #GoWB is committed to empowering the youth. A new scheme 'Karma Sathi Prakalpa' was launched by #Bengal Govt. One lakh unemployed youth will be provided



soft loans and subsidies to make them self-reliant," she tweeted.

"When the unemployment rate in India is at an all-time high of 24%, unemployment rate in #Bengal reduced by 40%," she added. Banerjee said she is hopeful that like in the past, the hardworking and talented youth of Bengal will lead the country to a bright future.

PIL in SC seeks guidelines for identification of minority groups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre to formulate guidelines for identifying minority groups at the state level to ensure they get the benefit of the schemes meant for them.

The PIL filed by BJP leader and advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay has also challenged the validity of Section 2(f) of the National Commission for Minority Education Institution Act 2004, for not only giving unbridled power to the Centre but also being manifestly arbitrary, irrational and offending.

The plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, said denial of benefits



to the "real" minorities and arbitrary and unreasonable disbursements under schemes meant for them to the absolute majority, infringes upon the fundamental right under the Constitution.

"Direct and declare that followers of Judaism, Bahaim &

Hinduism, who are minorities in Laddakh, Mizoram, Lakshdweep, Kashmir, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Punjab and Manipur, can establish & administer educational institutions of their choice in spirit of the TMA Pai Ruling," the plea said.

We don't give any importance to what Parth says: Sharad Pawar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

NCP president Sharad Pawar on Wednesday said he gives "absolutely no importance to his grand-nephew Parth Pawar's recent demand for a CBI probe into the case of actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death, and also termed the young leader as immature.

Sharad Pawar also said he has faith in the Mumbai Police, but added that he will not oppose if someone still wants the central agencies investigation into the case.

Rajput, 34, was found hanging at his apartment in suburban Bandra on June 14. "We attach absolutely no



importance to what my grand-nephew says. He is immature...I have clearly said that I have 100 per cent trust in the Maharashtra Police. But if someone still wants a CBI probe into it, then there is no reason to oppose that too," the NCP chief said.

Scientists sceptical about Russia's Covid vaccine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Responding with scepticism to Russia's approval of a COVID-19 vaccine, several scientists around the world, including in India, suggest it hasn't been tested properly given the time constraint and there may not be enough evidence to prove its efficacy. Announcing the breakthrough on Tuesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin vouched for the safety and efficacy of the vaccine, named Sputnik V, and said one of his daughters has already received a shot.

While the country hopes to start mass-producing the vaccine by October and plans to offer the first doses to essential workers, many in the science community seem unimpressed. The announcement should be taken with a pinch of salt, said Indian



immunologist Vineeta Bal. Unless some data are out in the open for people to see, including clinical trial phases and numbers, it is hard to believe that vaccine efficacy studies are successfully conducted between June 2020 and August 2020, Bal, an immunologist from the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research in Pune, said.

Are they talking about controlled human challenge studies? If yes, that evidence is also use-

ful to examine protective efficacy, she noted.

Florian Krammer, a professor at the US-based Mount Sinai's Icahn School of Medicine, questioned the safety of the vaccine.

"Not sure what Russia is up to, but I certainly would not take a vaccine that hasn't been tested in Phase 3. Nobody knows if it's safe or if it works. They are putting HCWs (health care workers) and their population at risk," Krammer said on Twitter.

Indian immunologist Satyajit Rath agreed with Krammer.

Russian authorities seem to be depending on the generation of 'neutralising' antibodies in Phase 2 clinical trials for deciding that the vaccine candidate works, he said. A neutralising antibody defends a cell from an infectious particle by neutralising any effect it has biologically.

Kamala Harris nomination moment of pride: OPS

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The nomination of US senator Kamala Harris, who has her connections with Chennai, as the vice-presidential running mate for the American Presidential elections 2020, is a moment of pride for Indians and Tamil Nadu, said state deputy chief minister O Panneerselvam. Reacting to Tuesday's announcement, Panneerselvam recalled her roots and conveyed his hearty wishes. "It is a moment of pride for Indians and Tamil Nadu especially, as Kamala Harris, the first Indian senator, whose mother hails from TN has been nominated as the Vice Presidential candidate by the US Democratic party.

Bengaluru violence: Cong, JD(S) extend support to govt in maintaining peace

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Opposition Congress and JD(S) in Karnataka on Wednesday extended complete support to the state government in establishing peace in violence-hit parts of the city and demanded immediate action against the culprits.

Leaders of both the parties have said that there are reports raising apprehensions that this could have been a 'pre planned conspiracy'.

"I condemn both violent incidents that erupted in Kaval Byrsandra & also the social media post that instigated the mob. I humbly request both Hindus & Muslims of the area to stay calm, maintain peace & live in harmony," Leader of opposition Siddaramaiah tweeted.

"I condemn both violent incidents that erupted in Kaval Byrsandra & also the social media post that instigated the mob. I humbly request both Hindus & Muslims of the area to stay calm, maintain peace & live in harmony," Leader of opposition Siddaramaiah tweeted

Noting that he spoke to the Bengaluru Police Commissioner on the matter, the Congress leader assured full support to the Karnataka government in establishing peace.

"Our experience tells us that only innocents suffer in the communal riots. I urge leaders from both the religions to discuss and resolve the issue amicably & restore peace in the area," he added.

Condemning the violence,

state Congress chief D K Shivakumar said, no one should take law into their hands and we extend complete cooperation to the government in taking action as per law.

Causing destruction to public property cannot be accepted... I have also heard from the media about the provocative tweet. Whoever has done it, it is wrong, the entire incident is wrong," he said.

Kamala Harris is Joe Biden's pick for US vice prez candidate

■ WASHINGTON

Presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden on Tuesday picked Sen. Kamala Harris, D-Calif., as his running mate, a historic decision that elevates the first Black woman and first Asian American woman to run for vice president at a moment when the country is grappling with its racial past and future.

Biden's announcement, made in a text and tweet, aligns him with a former presidential rival whose most electric campaign performance came when she criticized his record on school integration during a debate.

The decision is the most consequential of Biden's presidential campaign and has major implications not only for the November election but for the future of the Democratic Party. Biden, 78 years old by Inauguration Day, would be the oldest president ever and has said he considers himself "a transition candidate." The choice places Harris, who was a more vibrant and energetic presence on the campaign trail but was also at times unsteady, at the forefront of the party's future as, potentially, the



first woman vice president.

Harris will now become a vessel for Democratic hopes for a diverse party empowered by women, as well as for Republican attempts to funnel a barrage of attacks that have so far been largely unsuccessful when waged against Biden alone.

Harris, 55, is the daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants. The first-term senator previously served as San Francisco district attorney and California attorney general. She developed a close friendship with Biden's late son Beau, a relationship that Biden said he reflected upon in making his decision.

The move puts Biden, who served as vice president to the nation's first Black president, in

a history-making role in naming Harris as the first woman of color nominated for the position. He also has pledged, if elected, to name a Black woman to the Supreme Court.

While Harris, who dropped out of the Democratic presidential primary in December, was an early front-runner in the vice-presidential sweepstakes, there were still lingering concerns about the sting of the debate moment on her chances - until Tuesday afternoon.

"Joe Biden here. Big news: I've chosen Kamala Harris as my running mate," Biden wrote in an email to supporters. "Together, with you, we're going to beat Trump."

Harris will now become a vessel for Democratic hopes for a diverse party empowered by women, as well as for Republican attempts to funnel a barrage of attacks that have so far been largely unsuccessful when waged against Biden alone

activists, athletes and actors who urged Biden to pick a Black woman - and threatened that his candidacy would be doomed if he didn't.

"My advice was sought," said Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., a top Biden ally who had urged him to pick a Black woman and said that Biden called him Tuesday morning to inform him of the decision.

"I talked to him [Biden] over the past several days more than I talked to him all year," he said.

The months-long process before the decision included vetting nearly a dozen women as potential nominees. Biden on Tuesday informed some of the others that they were not chosen.

Know our ancestors are smiling: Sister

Hours after Democratic Presidential candidate Joe Biden made history by picking Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate, Ms Harris' sister tweeted an emotional video introducing the woman "who made it all possible" - their mother. Ms Harris is now the first Asian-American woman and the first Black woman to be selected as the vice-presidential nominee of a major party. "You can't know who Kamala Harris is without knowing who our mother was. Missing her terribly, but know she and the ancestors are smiling today. #BidenHarris2020," Maya Harris tweeted as the world scans through the credentials of the 55-year-old daughter of Indian and Jamaican immigrants.



'Surprised' at Joe Biden's pick: Trump

President Donald Trump on Tuesday called Kamala Harris the "most horrible" member of the US Senate and said he was "surprised" Joe Biden had picked her as his vice-presidential candidate. Trump told reporters at the White House that Harris did not impress him when she was vying for the Democratic nomination in primaries eventually won by Biden. "I was more surprised than anything else because she did so poorly," he said. He also said that during the bruising 2018 Senate confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, Harris was "the meanest, the most horrible, the most disrespectful of anybody in the US Senate."

'AMERICA MEIN KHILA KAMAL' Indian-Americans celebrate Kamala Harris's selection

■ WASHINGTON

Leading Indian-American groups and individuals, including former PepsiCo chief Indra Nooyi, have hailed the nomination of Indian-origin Senator Kamala Harris as Democratic Vice Presidential candidate, saying it was a "great choice" and a "moment of pride" for the entire community in the US.

However, there were also some community members who questioned Ms Harris's contribution towards the Indo-US ties and said they would not be swayed by identity politics.

Presumptive Democratic party Presidential nominee Joe Biden on Tuesday named 55-year-old Kamala Harris as his Vice Presidential running mate, making history by selecting the first black woman to compete on a major party's Presidential ticket. Kamala Harris, whose father is an African from Jamaica and mother an Indian, is currently the US Senator from California.

"This is a great choice for our country," tweeted Ms Nooyi, who is seen as a role model by millions of women across the world.



Women legal heirs

SC allows daughters to claim their rights on parental property with retrospective effect in a landmark ruling



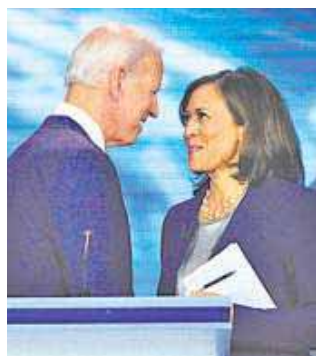
Giving hope to millions of women, who have traditionally been denied a share in their parental property owing to the cultural preference for a son and the idea of "keeping the wealth within the family", the Supreme Court has said that daughters now have a birthright to parental property with retrospective effect. In essence, this allows women to challenge past injustices, coercion and denials and claim restoration of their economic rights. A three-judge Bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra ruled that a Hindu woman's right to be a joint heir to the ancestral property does not depend on whether

her father was alive or not when an old segregatory law was amended in 2005. The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 gave Hindu women the right to be coparceners or joint legal heirs with men but did not clarify whether it could apply retrospectively. Not only does the ruling take away the gender bias from inheritance, one that has disempowered girls socially and led to their differential upbringing and value systems, the court also lauded daughters as more suitable and responsible heirs who deserve a share of parental legacy. "A son is a son till he takes him a wife... a daughter is a daughter all of her life," Justice Arun Mishra said while reading out the order. "A daughter remains a loving daughter throughout life," he added, emphasising the compassionate nature of women as care-givers. This also clears the decks for settling countless appeals on the issue that have been pending before different High Courts and subordinate courts on whether the amendment would be time-bound or not. Now that its applicability is crystal clear, this will not only open the floodgates for thousands of ancestral property-related disputes that had been put to rest but will also give women and their children, especially those who are not too well-heeled or financially independent, a fallback cushion. Traditionally, women have been denied a share in their fathers' property in the belief that a girl's share is given to her in the form of dowry and that one day she would inherit the property of her in-laws. Some enlightened families may have been reformist of their own accord but this has largely been the accepted social code. Yet it has been erroneous, for most women have been denied a share in the in-laws' ancestral property after the husband's death. Another drawback among women so far has been their poor or no legal awareness of their status as rightful stakeholders in family affairs. Even if they were aware of their rights, most women have been hesitant to claim their share in family estates as that would have meant going against their own flesh and blood for a piece of land or house. Plus, with most women in India brought up in a patriarchal society, they were made to believe that in case of a marriage going south or their single status, they would be supported by their father and in his absence, by the brother. Hence, most of them, over the years, have meekly given up their rights on property in exchange for this familial anchor. While mindset changes will only come with time, the ruling of the apex court unfetters those who are willing to stand up for their coparcenary rights.

It is no secret that access to property empowers women economically, provides them with a sense of security and self-worth and strengthens their decision-making powers. Research shows that ownership of property by women has reset the asymmetry in gender relations, resulting in reduced domestic violence, both physical and psychological. Owning assets also gives women caught in abusive relationships an exit route, which they might not have had otherwise, particularly if they are not financially independent. All in all, this judgment is a reassertion of the constitutional value of equality to women in personal law without any pre-conditions. However, one aspect that is being largely ignored in the media over the jubilation on this ruling is that there is a flip side, too. Coparcenary right is an undefined liability and any liability of the father, including the family debt and other dues, will be extended to daughters as well. So, it is not just about the right, it is about inheriting responsibility as well. Besides, what of women in other religious communities, who are governed by separate personal laws in several matters, including inheritance rights? While Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains are governed by laws on property rights codified in the amended Hindu Succession Act of 2005, Christians and Parsis are governed by the Indian Succession Act, 1925. Property rights of Muslims — both Shias and Sunnis — are yet to be codified. Till we uniformly address gender inequalities in the area of inheritance and have a representative civil rights framework for women across the spectrum, they would be subjected to abuse.

Kamala blooms

Kamala Harris is the third woman to stand for Vice-President of the US. Can she do better than the earlier two?



Kamala Harris' selection as the running mate of Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden is a momentous one. She is just the third woman to stand for Vice-President of the United States after Geraldine Ferrero in 1984 and Sarah Palin in 2008 but the first woman of colour to do so. This, four years after Donald Trump unexpectedly defeated Hillary Clinton, the first female US presidential candidate for the White House. In India, too, Harris' nomination is being celebrated since her mother was a Tamilian. Yet, it's not her origin but what she represents that might just tilt the scales.

Biden has been less than charismatic and Harris' activism and focussed campaigns on the Afro-American cause give the Democrats a sales pitch to fall back upon, that of upholding civil rights. Not new really, but tested enough. And likely to find some resonance when race relations have taken centre stage following the killing of George Floyd by a White officer. Besides, the Black community has been the worst affected by Trump's selective pandemic management. In all issues, be it of race, gender, healthcare and law enforcement, Harris has maintained a centrist record. But her drive has helped her push walls so far. Which is why Trump made his discomfort very much visible by calling her "extraordinarily nasty." He also accused her of being "the meanest, most horrible" of all US Senators.

With the US extremely fractured today, Harris possibly stands the best chance ever of having a woman occupy one of the top offices. That said, everyone expected Hillary Clinton to win in a landslide in 2016 and we all saw what happened. With Biden's mental acuity being questioned by many and Trump mobilising the Republican base, it would be fatal for the Democrats to take things for granted, particularly in some crucial battleground states which Trump snatched unexpectedly. While Harris was brought up single-handedly by her mother, after her parents divorced when she was five, and her father, the Jamaican-born economist Donald Harris, did extensive work in India, she identifies herself as a "Black" woman to build her political capital. Despite several in the Indian community urging her to recognise her heritage, she has consistently sought to downplay it. Incidentally, she is distantly related to India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. So while many in the Indian diaspora will celebrate her nomination, her politics is more often than not at variance with Indian interests. Indeed, she is as guilty as several other politicians of making some major policy flip-flops over the years. But with global geopolitics undergoing a sea change over the past few years and with China increasingly asserting itself, her views on India might change as well.

Politics of defection

MLAs jumping ship and resort politics are condemnable. There's a lot that our elected representatives need to learn from what Gandhi had expected of them



JS RAJPUT

One can easily recall umpteen instances of MLAs changing their ideological and political loyalties for reasons best known to them. Leaders who defect justify it as "the wish of the people." When the floor-crossing happened for the first time in Haryana, when an MLA switched party thrice in a day, the term, *Aaya Ram Gaya Ram* (party-switching) gained prominence in the political discourse — right from the chaupals to the Central Hall of Parliament — but was brushed aside as an "aberration." Slowly but steadily, the practice gained ground. Who can forget Bhajan Lal, the former Chief Minister of Haryana, who migrated to the then newly-elected ruling party at the Centre, lock, stock and barrel and retained his position?

The practice was subsequently polished and upgraded by leaders of all hues. One could go on counting the number of luxury hotels that have been used by parties to house their MLAs on numerous occasions. What happened in Rajasthan says it all. The MLAs, who enjoyed a comfortable stay in hotels at different locations in Haryana, Rajasthan and Gujarat, were convinced that if they went to their home State and their constituencies, they would not be able to resist the temptation of lucrative offers that would be waiting outside to change hands.

What normally should be considered as a humiliating slur by any dignified individual is now taking shape as an "unwritten" but "acceptable" code across the board and has become a parliamentary practice in Indian democracy. Every major political party has tried this on several occasions. One wonders how these MLAs would react if Mahatma Gandhi walked into their room and asked them, "kaise hain aap? (How are you?)" The Rajasthan episode is almost over and nobody condemned the happenings, not even those who have risen on several occasions to express their concern regarding the attack on constitutional values. I find their silence amazing.

What's even more surprising is that those, who usually come up with joint statements expressing concerns about what they consider "Constitutional impropriety, an attack on secular values and ethical lapses", never come up to denigrate this unethical and immoral practice that makes fun of democracy and lowers the esteem of the elected representatives themselves. It is a shameless strategy that should not find a place in a vibrant, functional democracy.

Why isn't there all-round condemnation of the Rajasthan drama of



MLAs being herded from one hotel to the other — under strict State security — as unconstitutional, unethical and immoral? Even known groups of retired bureaucrats — who suddenly appear on the scene to showcase their concerns about the erosion of social cohesion, religious amity and constitutional propriety — never thought it fit to condemn this derogatory practice of herding of elected representatives. Do they find this practice to be in sync with the Constitutional framework and in consonance with moral and ethical considerations?

In 1922, Gandhiji had written in a letter that Swaraj would not bring happiness to his people. He had said that four things would weigh heavily against it. Three of them were injustice, burden of administration and treachery of the rich. The fourth, that surprised me the most when I came to know about it, related to "defects of elections." How could he write about defections in 1922? I was told the Mahatma had studied the British election system very thoroughly. Gifted with a prophetic futuristic vision, he could anticipate the shape of things so accurately.

Often wonder whether the MLAs in Rajasthan, who enjoyed a comfortable all-expenses-paid stay in luxury hotels, even remember that they are inheritors of the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Lal

Bahadur Shastri, Rajendra Prasad and other stalwarts of the freedom struggle. These worthy elected representatives are, in fact, *panch parmashwars* of democracy. They are occupying a seat, the incumbent of which is bound to the Constitution by an oath of affirmation.

One wonders how many of them are aware of that eternal eye-opener sentence by Mahatma Gandhi: "If, instead of insisting on rights, everyone does his duty, there will immediately be the rule of order established among mankind." Are such herded stays part of the duty of the elected representatives? Do they not realise that they are being presented in public as weaklings, who would not be able to resist monetary temptations if allowed to move out of the hotel?

If these worthies could sit together with their family members, including their children, and seek their opinion on being made a part of the "pliable group", one is confident they would get the right advice. No child would like his parent to be treated as a saleable commodity. Many of them may have read or attended speeches where references were made to a query put before Mahatma Gandhi: "What is your message to the people?" He replied, "My life is my message." Would our MLAs be in a position to tell their children that they could derive strength from their experi-

ences? It appears that everyone — right from the Chief Minister to the Speaker; the party in power to those in the Opposition; and all others who matter — have their interpretations of the Constitution and Constitutional propriety. It is worthwhile to recall that under the Government of India Act of 1935, elections were held in 1936-37 in various provinces and provincial Governments were formed. All Ministers of the then Congress Government had resigned in November 1939. Gandhiji was ever vigilant, he consistently expressed his opinion on how legislators and Ministers should be performing their new duties and they should always think about the welfare of the people. He was, in a way, educating the legislators and Ministers in those days when his overarching presence on the scene itself was a deterrent against anyone breaking the norms: "The holding of any office in the Congress Government must be in the spirit of service, without the slightest expectation of personal gains."

Our distinguished legislators can ponder over Gandhian thoughts: "There is a beauty and an art in simplicity which he who runs may see. It does not require money to be neat, clean and dignified. Pomp and pageantry are often synonymous with vulgarity." It is indeed a pity that our young ones are

witnessing a political world in which — exceptions apart — elected representatives, Ministers and legislators have forsaken the Gandhian philosophy, ideas and dreams. They are doing all this knowing it fully well that it would hurt the Mahatma's memory.

When reports emerge of legislators' assets multiplying by a factor of say 500, the common man's reaction is obvious — it would definitely be devoid of respect, confidence or a connect. In 1937-39, those who became legislators and Ministers were men and women who had entered the freedom struggle — not a political party but a national movement that offered only sacrifice, toil, sufferings and jail terms. Elections and legislative positions came just by chance. But allurements were still there and senior leaders were alert to guide and to "examine the utility value of the legislators."

And for the Ministers, the guidelines were: "The Ministers are [the people's] servants. They can do nothing against the express wishes of the people. They will not stay in office a day longer than the people wish." There is much more for the Chief Ministers, Ministers and the legislators to ponder over. Are the Gandhian ideas totally out of bounds for those who still swear to be the inheritors of his legacy? If not, how could they ignore Gandhiji's words and deeds? "This office-holding is a step towards either greater prestige or its total loss. If it is not to be a total loss, the Ministers and the legislators have to be watchful of their own personal and public conduct. They have to be, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion in everything. They may not make private gains for themselves or their relatives or friends."

The least people expect from their legislators is that they do not surrender courage of conviction that a citizen can be proud of, particularly those who are in public life and are expected to enjoy the trust and confidence of their electors. They must ultimately be true to the people. They must not subjugate themselves to the whims and fancies of those who wish to retain power or gain power at any cost.

There is a lot for the elected representatives to whom Gandhiji advised not to "arrogate to themselves greater knowledge than those experienced men who do not happen to occupy the ministerial chairs." Obviously, this applies equally to every elected person.

(The writer works in education and social cohesion)

SOUNDBITE

I have known Harris for a long time. She is more than prepared for the job. She's spent her career defending our Constitution and fighting for folks who need a fair stake.



Former US President —Barack Obama

This whole insider vs outsider debate was not supposed to be an ugly witch-hunting battle. It was supposed to be debate, a conversation



Actor —Sandhya Mridul

With Harris as his political living will, he (Biden) is surrendering control of our nation to the radical mob with promises to raise taxes, cut police funding and appease socialist dictators.



American consultant —Katrina Pierson

Every cricketer goes through a rough patch. I am sure this break would have helped us both unwind and chalk out a plan. It's a matter of time before we click.



Indian cricketer —Mithali Raj

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Clear old accounts

Sir — There are huge amounts of unclaimed deposits at post-offices and many of these account holders may have even died. There are chances of fraud happening, with unscrupulous persons staking claim to such deposits. The Department of Posts should send letters to account holders who have not operated their accounts in, say, the last three years and give them reasonable time to either renew or close them. If no response is received, all such unclaimed money may be frozen in some fixed account, which may be allowed to be withdrawn by legal heirs after careful verification.

Madhu Agrawal
New Delhi

Long road ahead

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Atmanirbhar raksha" (August 11). With a view to boost defence manufacturing in India, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced a ban on a range of defence imports. Defence manufacturing under the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* scheme

Language discrimination

In the repeated invocation of culture in the National Education Policy, (NEP) — the distaste of its frequent repetitions apart — one finds a long-term strategy to resurrect a particular culture in India. The civilisation that flourished between 3300 BCE and 1300 BCE in South Asia, popularly called the Harappan or the Indus Valley civilisation, is an important era in our recorded history. And 600-700 years after the Harappan civilisation waned, a new culture evolved with the arrival of the Eurasian Steppes pastoralist groups. A new language and lifestyle emerged. The Vedic culture and the ancient Harappan civilisation were unlike each other in every aspect. Researchers have converged on the view that the present-day gods, religion, literature and traditions in most of India are adaptations from the Brahminical Vedic culture, which was rooted in caste system and rituals, and not from the ancient Indus Valley civilisation. There are, therefore, reasons to doubt the loud advocacy of culture, heritage and traditions in the NEP.

The NEP professes, "the three-language formula will continue to be implemented while keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions and the Union and the need to promote multi-lingualism as well as promote national unity." The catch here is, "the three languages learned by children will be the choices of States, regions and, of course, the students themselves

is estimated to save about four lakh crore rupees. No matter how lofty the goals appear, the fact is that India's defence sector suffers from a few drawbacks. Already, projects worth ₹3.5



so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India." This eliminates English as the second language automatically as it is not treated as a language native to the country. Incidentally, both English and Hindustani (Hindi and Urdu) belong to the Indo-European language family. This prescription puts South India at a great disadvantage. English has been the link language for this region for over a century, though Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam are of the Dravidian language family. The phenomenal growth of the knowledge-based industry in the South is credited mostly to its proficiency in English. The three-language formula, with a prescription tagged to it, would be detrimental to economic growth.

Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

the list of major arms exporters for 2015-2019 and 19th for 2019. Another grey area is the quality of products. The ammunition supplied by the Ordnance Factory had damaged tanks,

field guns and caused fatalities. The French company that manufactures Rafale fighter planes had expressed doubts about the manufacturing quality of Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) during the defence deal. HAL-made Jaguar and Mirage-2000s have caused many fatalities. While defence manufacturing under *Atmanirbhar Bharat* looks ambitious to make India self-reliant in defence manufacturing, there's a long way to go. The Government must overcome existing challenges.

Venu GS
Kollam

Wake-up call

Sir — Back-to-back fire cases at COVID-19 facility centres are a wake-up call for the Government. All such tragic events have proved that those bearing the responsibility of safety regulations have paid lip service. Exemplary action is the need of the hour, or else such cases will continue to occur.

Aman
Via email

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Staff health is company's asset

We will survive this contagion but the key to this is adaptation. Till that happens, all firms must take care of their employees



HIMA BINDU KOTA

The pandemic has changed the way we perceive every aspect of our daily lives as we struggle to adapt to a new normal. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) statistics on the magnitude and scale of the outbreak have a mind-numbing impact. There are currently 1.97 crore active cases around the world, in 216 countries. The most disturbing aspect is that global casualties have crossed the seven lakh mark. India has 2.2 million active cases and there have been 44,000 deaths. Needless to say, some aspects of the Indian economy and the corporate landscape have changed forever, and that includes the way businesses are conducted.

The economy is in turmoil and the corporate sector is having to bend over backwards to ensure that businesses stay viable. As companies struggle to find balance in these critical times, lay-offs have become common, instilling fear and insecurity among the remaining employees who, in addition to their own work, are being piled up with the duties of their erstwhile colleagues. These conditions are stressful and a drain on the psyche of the employee as s/he fights fears of unemployment, financial insecurity and rising expenses. In these conditions, the mind and body are being stretched to their limits with major collateral damage to human health.

This staff distress is unfortunately paving the way for what is being increasingly termed as "non-Coronavirus casualties." According to data compiled by a group of researchers led by public interest technologist GN Thejesh and Kanika Sharma, 338 deaths have been recorded on account of the lockdown-spurred unemployment, financial distress and isolation. The work from home (WFH) conditions are also making it an uphill task for the Human Resource departments of firms to gauge the physical and psychological health of their staff. Sometimes problems like depression are identified too late in the day.

The Bengaluru-based Suicide Prevention India Foundation (SPIF) conducted a study on the rising spate of suicides in the country and the results are not reassuring. The study based its findings on the responses received from 300 therapists, who found that suicide ideation and self-harm intentions have risen sharply during the pandemic. Out of this, 76 per cent of the people feared job loss. Additionally, 30 per cent of the patients of the therapists have already inflicted some sort of self-harm. This data is alarming to say the least and does not bode well for the future of the corporate sector.

Recently, people have been experiencing a slew of emotions due to social isolation, change of lifestyle and loss of personal income. In a recent study of 673 workers in China, their mental health showed disturbing signs with a significant proportion recording conditions of post-traumatic stress disorder, moderate or severe anxiety, depression, stress and insomnia. Other psychiatric symptoms that are prevalent are worries about physical health, anger, discrimination during the outbreak, paranoid ideations, hallucinations, suicidal thoughts, alcohol usage and intent to hurt others. In the COVID-19 scenario, the corporate sector is already learning the ropes quickly and is trying to maintain employee health. But haemorrhaging profits and lay-offs tell a different story. There needs to be a turnaround in the manner employee mental and physical health is being managed, not only in the best interests of the company but for the larger good of the economy as well. There are a slew of measures being taken across the global corporate landscape which can have a direct relevance for India. Many businesses around the world are taking the current stressful times as an opportunity to connect with their employees and are comforting them. Health and fitness are being accorded priority over productivity. This, among other things, showcases the humane side of the management.

In order to secure the health of the employees, the Indian corporate sector must encourage its staff to share their daily exercise routines with Human Resources managers and instead of over-burdening the employees with work-related Zoom and Skype calls, they must focus on some rest and recreation interactions, too.

The critical aspects impacting the health of any employee are broadly three: Fear of job loss, financial insecurity and a rising workload. The corporate sector must design rehabilitating measures that seek to address these three issues, but for this, financial well-being of the companies is a must and this is where timely Government assistance comes into the picture.

There is no saying when this mayhem will get over. But once things start becoming clearer, would businesses return to their normal self or will the "new normal" become permanent? Although we may not like the answer, the "new normal" is likely to stay. However, humans are known to adapt. That is the underlying strength that ensures the survival of our species. We will survive this contagion but the key to this is adaptation. Till that happens, it is the responsibility of all firms to take care of the mental and physical health of their staff.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

OUR FRIENDS WHO HAD GONE AWAY HAVE COME BACK. I HOPE THAT WE WILL DO AWAY WITH OUR DIFFERENCES AND FULFIL OUR RESOLVE TO SERVE THE STATE.
 —RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER
 ASHOK GEHLOT



I AM PAINED BY THE KIND OF WORDS THAT WERE USED. BUT I HAVE NOT MADE ANY DEMANDS. I AM AN MLA AND I WILL DO WHATEVER THE PARTY ASKS ME TO DO.
 —CONGRESS LEADER
 SACHIN PILOT

EVs not the best choice

The FAME policy is pumping ₹10,000 crore of taxpayer money into an industry which is strategically counter-productive. It needs a broader definition of e-mobility and innovations in sustainable storage



ARIJIT DAS

The Delhi Government recently announced its electric vehicle (EV) policy aimed at faster adoption of cleaner vehicles in the national Capital. This policy is on the same lines as the Centre's Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles or FAME-II scheme, 2019. Under Delhi's EV policy, purchase incentives will be given worth ₹30,000 for e-autos, e-rickshaws, goods carriers and up to ₹30,000 and ₹1.5 lakh for e-two-wheelers and e-cars respectively, depending on their battery capacity. This will be in addition to the existing incentives provided by the Centre.

The good thing about Delhi's EV policy is its detailing but it falls apart when it comes to fund allocation. FAME-II offers an incentive of ₹1.5 lakh to electric four-wheelers with an ex-factory price cap of ₹15 lakh and it also has a provision for an incentive of ₹50,000 for three-wheelers, including e-rickshaws and ₹20,000 for e-two-wheelers. E-buses can claim subsidy up to ₹50 lakh at a rate of ₹20,000 KWH battery capacity.

Given the incentives being offered, two questions should be considered. First, are EVs environmentally sustainable? Second, are they viable options for the Indian economy in the long-run? The answers to both these questions are debatable.

To produce an Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicle, 10 metric tonnes of CO₂ are released in the atmosphere and it is the same for an EV without the battery. Manufacturing of a 30 KWH battery releases 5.3 metric tonnes of CO₂ while manufacturing a 100 KWH battery releases 17.5 metric tonnes of CO₂. A petrol/diesel car emits an average of 5.2 metric tonnes of CO₂ in a year whereas the average usage emission from EV is 2.02 metric tonnes per year. EVs are non-polluting (at the level of the vehicle), and by design, if and only if, renewables are used as the power source. This is an unlikely phenomenon in the near future as a wide spectrum of allied infrastructure needs to be built around EVs to ensure renewable use for charging.

More than 90 per cent incentives (especially for two-wheelers and three-wheelers) are availed by lead-acid type batteries and they are environmentally hazardous. These batteries were already in high demand and competitive against the fossil fuel at least for slow vehicles. Even e-rickshaws were a hit much before the FAME scheme was announced. Over-incentivising lead acid batteries can significantly harm the environment.

Coming back to the economics of EVs, FAME correctly identified that the cost of batteries is a major price differential but failed to investigate intricate details behind such a difference. It is a common mistake often made while evaluating eco-friendly solutions. EVs should not be compared with ICEVs or regular car engines in totality. EVs are a combination of an engine and life-time fuel whereas ICEVs are valued only for the engine. Anyone buying an EV is essentially pre-owning fuel for a lifetime. Both EV and ICEV engines are comparable and cost the same. Providing an incentive to EVs is against fair competition norms and gives an undue advantage to the EV producer, which ultimately is going to hurt the technological advancement of the automobile industry as a whole.

Plus, about 40-50 per cent of the cost of manufacturing an EV accounts for reliable fuel storage i.e. the Li-ion batteries. These are the best storage options available but highly unsustainable. The raw material required for manufacturing is limited and concentrated in a very few countries. Not only that,

FOR A TYPICAL MIDDLE CLASS AND UPPER MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY, A CAR IS AN ASPIRATION AND AN INVESTMENT WITH REASONABLE RESALE VALUE. AT PRESENT EVs HAVE NO RESALE VALUE. HENCE, IT IS UNJUSTIFIED TO EXPECT A CUSTOMER TO INVEST HARD-EARNED MONEY IN AN UNTESTED, RISKY TECHNOLOGY IN THE NAME OF POLLUTION CONTROL WHILE THERE IS NO DEFINITE PROOF THAT IT IS A CLEANER ENERGY OPTION



a significant tendency is observed to capture such reserves through mergers and acquisitions. The raw material comprises approximately 60 per cent of the total cost of manufacturing Li-ion batteries. So, the price is not likely to decline if we use more of these batteries, unlike what we had observed for other electronic items like computers, solar panels and LEDs. The price of these batteries will increase in future if demand exceeds a certain limit as the price of raw materials will rise. For instance, the price of lithium increased from \$8,500 per tonne in 2015 to \$17,000 per tonne in 2018. Similarly, the price of cobalt rose from \$30,000 per tonne to \$95,000 per tonne between 2015 and 2018. These increases were in anticipation of a growing EV market but later their price dropped on its dismal performance. India does not have any lithium reserves, supply chain or an ecosystem to manufacture Li-ion batteries in order to ensure a steady supply. So EVs are not an economically-viable option for the country.

Both FAME and the Delhi EV policy talk about setting up public EV charging stations around Delhi's congested roads. This would require vast swathes of public land to serve a handful of wealthy owners and violates the basic principles of public good. Plus, parking is a major issue in Delhi, so allowing public charging is only going to legitimise capture of sidewalks. Also, charging an EV in the blazing summer sun in Delhi is neither advisable nor safe.

The China factor: Li-ion batteries account for almost 50 per cent of the cost of an EV. While China has a thriving lithium chemical, battery cathode, battery cell and EV supply chain, India has none. China dominates the battery supply chain and around three-quarters of the global battery cell manufacturing capacity is in our neighbouring country. On top of that,

Chinese companies have unparalleled control over battery raw materials and processing facilities. At present, almost all Li-ion batteries used for EVs are imported from China. This means incentives aimed at Indian manufacturers are directly going to Chinese battery producers. For example, buying a ₹15 lakh EV (with Li-ion batteries) in India means a transfer of ₹7.5 lakh to China, including ₹3 lakh of the taxpayers' money. The amount could go up to ₹1 crore for an e-bus. Strategically, too, over-dependence on China is dangerous and given the current geo-political scenario, it is not advisable to take such risky steps.

The way forward: FAME or other State Government clean vehicle schemes are an excellent platform to promote indigenous production of EVs. They should stick to the principles of *Atmanirbhar* (self-reliant) *Bharat* to promote localised production at global standards and stop incentivising unsustainable means of storage technologies.

Unbundling of EVs: Separating the vehicle from its fuel, i.e. batteries, is a necessary condition for the development of the EV market in India. At present, EVs have a low-capacity engine with super-expensive fuel options. This is an absurd arrangement and makes a mockery of fair competition. It is like British Petroleum selling cars for their oil or Ford digging oil wells for their car, leading to inefficiency in both the segments.

Make it consumer-centric: At present, EVs are policy-centric. They hardly consider consumers as end-users and rather aim to cater to the needs of development activists. Consumers need flexibility in choosing a fuel source, mileage, durability and so on. Their mobility requirement also varies from a few kilometres to hundreds of kilometres in one run. They possess varied tastes, concerns

and limitations. Unless consumers are given such flexibility and choices, EV sales in India won't pick up. For a typical middle class/upper middle class family, a car is an aspiration and an investment with reasonable resale value. At present EVs have no resale value, hence, it is unjustified to expect a customer to invest hard-earned money in an untested, risky technology in the name of pollution control while there is no definite proof that it is a cleaner energy option.

Competing alternatives: The FAME policy is biased towards EVs, which might be discriminatory against other environment-friendly mobility options like hydrogen fuel cell buses. We already have experience in running CNG buses and we can run hydrogen cell variants, too. These buses can be manufactured in India without any fuel constraint as hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe and multiple renewable sources can easily be used to generate it. Apart from being zero-emission, it does not have to face logistical challenges like EVs. In a nutshell, FAME is pumping ₹10,000 crore of the taxpayers' money into an industry which is strategically counter-productive and not even environment-friendly. This policy should immediately be replaced with a guideline which uses a broader definition of e-mobility, encourages innovations in sustainable storage that rely on the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* ethos.

The worst is the increasing tendency to use public money for the elite. If pollution is a concern, then why not give induction cookers to the poor or ban diesel generators? Automobiles do not require State backing, consumers will automatically adapt to EVs if they fit in with their requirements.

(The writer is Fellow, India Development Foundation. Views expressed are personal)

Collective effort will make India *atmanirbhar*

Self-reliance is not a short race, it is a marathon and can be completed only when all engines start firing together in the desired direction



PRIYA GUPTA

If the Centre's biggest agenda is the revival of the economy, then it can only be achieved by implementing the *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan*. We may get some idea if we analyse the progress of our neighbouring nation, China. In 1987, its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was almost equal to India's GDP at \$279 billion. Then, in December 1978, Deng Xiaoping announced the "Open Door Policy" and it was a major turning point for the Chinese economy. Beijing experienced 15 per cent growth year on year at a time the global economy was not even growing, dipping to a rate of three per cent.

This brought China from the 32nd position in global exports to first position in 2013. The Chinese Government checked all the right boxes, whether it was a lower tax regime, industry-friendly wage rules, cheap capital, free land or even allowing the misuse of patent and knowledge laws.

When multinational corporations (MNCs) realised that manufacturing costs in the US and Europe were skyrocketing due to the high cost of manpower, land and their stringent pollution norms, they began looking for alternative locations and evaluated a few South Asian countries like Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, China, Indonesia and many more.

They ignored India due to the Licence Raj, stiff labour laws, unclear policy on land acquisition, poor power supply, lack of skilled manpower, a closed foreign trade policy and many more such hurdles. We were one of the lowest-ranked nations on the Ease of Doing Business index.

Upon the evaluation of all South Asian countries, it was found that China was best suited for moving manufacturing business from the

US and Europe, as it had a huge population which could be skilled and brought into the workforce. It had huge tracts of land, too, for setting up manufacturing bases.

Now, given the global anger against Beijing due to the spread of the Coronavirus contagion, nations are looking to shift their manufacturing businesses and supply chains out of China. This is another opportunity for India to attract global business. But we need to check all the right boxes like Beijing did.

It might take time, maybe five-six years minimum to savour the fruits of an *atmanirbhar* (self-reliant) *Bharat* instead of the very next quarter like many people are hoping. If we want to act on self-reliance, we need to focus on all segments of manufacturing, starting from big manufacturing companies to the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), which can feed the former.

However, unless we invest in Research and Development (R&D), unless we create products that are better and more economical than products made around the world and in

China, we can't sell them in internal or global markets. If we want to make *Atmanirbhar Bharat* more than a slogan, then we need to provide capital-rich global players an equal footing for their investment and have an open and consistent trade policy; an easy land acquisition policy; cheap and skilled labour and a consistent power supply.

According to the Government, the five pillars of the *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan* focus on the economy, infrastructure, the system, a vibrant demography and the creation of internal demand. An economy is the sum total of many small components of business, starting from the consumer, markets, traders, banks, utility companies, manufacturers, Government policies and institutions. Hence, any leakage of resources will not bring about effective use of the same.

Infrastructure always remains a talking point in our country but no one has ever worked seriously towards developing it. As a result of this, many infrastructure projects have been delayed by as much as 20-

25 years. It is difficult to believe that projects conceptualised at a cost of ₹20 crore in 1968 cost ₹200 crore in 2010 and are still pending. If we are really interested in an *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, then fiscal self-discipline is mandatory and it must start from Government departments. Plus, we need to fix responsibility for time and cost overruns in order to get work done on time. India still lacks good infrastructure and *Atmanirbhar Bharat* will not be possible if we don't connect all the dots.

Consistent Government policies on trade and taxation are key to creating any manufacturing base as it takes time to reap the benefits of the same. The Government must announce policies for 15-20 years which can't be changed by any new Government of the future. Projects of national importance must not be scrapped or altered by a new set of Ministers.

Another key component that must be aligned is demography. Though India is a democratic country and everyone has the right to follow their own free will, if we want

to make India *atmanirbhar*, then we need to have a "India First" policy.

Self-reliance is not a short race, rather it is a marathon and can be completed only when all engines start firing in the desired direction and in synchronisation with each other. Start-ups can act as a catalyst and be stakeholders in manufacturing, service delivery and a support element in creating a consensus among the masses for this mega project.

The Government will act as the agent to expedite and bind the entire process by easing policies around it. Involve all stakeholders and give adequate compensation to them. If this is implemented, then it can be the biggest employment generator, forex earner and a huge support to the Indian economy.

To achieve a \$5 trillion economy from a \$2.8 trillion one in about five years, we need to achieve a growth rate of more than 15 per cent per annum. It can be done only by firing all engines of growth, including MSME and big industries.

(The writer is Associate Professor, JNU)



FOREIGN EYE



MANY WAYS TO RESIST CHINA

Freedom of speech and of the Press, both vital to the rule of law and the city's vibrancy, are under attack. China is extending to Hong Kong the regime of media regulation and repression that it applies on the mainland. Today, it's the media. Tomorrow, who knows who will be China's next targets. But Hong Kongers will respond then, too, by demonstrating solidarity creatively. (The NVT editorial)

CAPSULE



Volvo Car offers Rs 3 lakh discount on XC40

NEW DELHI: Volvo Car India on Wednesday said it is offering a discount of Rs 3 lakh on the ex-showroom price of its SUV XC40. Under the 'Hassle-Free Offer', customers can buy the model at a special offer price of Rs 36.9 lakh and receive complimentary accessories worth Rs 1 lakh as well, Volvo Car India said in a statement. The XC40 is currently tagged at Rs 39.9 lakh (ex-showroom). "We want to create an ecosystem where our customers can focus on technology and comfort features of XC40 without worrying about the price."



Rupee settles 5 paise lower at 74.83 against \$

MUMBAI: The rupee slipped 5 paise to close at 74.83 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday tracking muted domestic equities. The local unit opened at 74.78 at the interbank forex market, then lost ground and finally settled at 74.83 against the US dollar, down 5 paise over its last close of 74.78. During the session, the domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 74.77 and a low of 74.93 against the greenback. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.03 per cent to 93.59.

New tariff plan is not a new service: VIL counters Trai

NEW DELHI: Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) has justified its pay-more-for-priority-experience plan offered to its subscribers, and also said that telecom operators face a double whammy of having to make continuous investments in an era of call and data charges falling way below cost due to cut-throat competition. Responding to questions raised by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) over the priority plan, Vodafone Idea argued that a new tariff plan is not a new service. "It is not a new service and the service remains same... A new tariff plan is not a new service," VIL said in its reply to Trai.

'Don't reduce import duty on tea'

KOLKATA: The Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations (CCPA), the apex body of tea associations in India, has urged Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal not to reduce import duty on tea as any move in that direction will disturb the equilibrium of the industry. CCPA chairman Vivek Goenka in a letter to Goyal said that any such move will lead to erosion of domestic prices and subsequently affect the economic viability of the tea gardens and livelihood of lakhs of people.

MCX market making in 'options on goods' in gold

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Multi Commodity Exchange of India on Wednesday said it will launch a liquidity enhancement scheme in the newly launched segment 'options on goods' with gold mini contract.

The liquidity enhancement scheme, popularly known as market making, will start from September 1, MCX said in a circular.

"The Exchange, based on a competitive bidding process, will appoint the lowest (qualified) bidder in terms of 'bid incentive amount' as a single designated market maker for the product till the scheme remains in force. The maximum incentive bid amount is Rs 40 lakh per month," the exchange circular added.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India had allowed a liquidity enhancement scheme in 2018. Under the scheme, brokers and other market intermediaries are given incentives to bring in liquidity and



generate investor interest in securities for a specified period of time. MCX, which had launched options on futures in gold in 2017, had successfully experimented with market making in the contract in April-October 2018.

The average daily turnover in the gold options on futures, which was around Rs 82 crore during six months prior to introduction of the market

making in the contract, shot up to Rs 791 crore during the six-months of the market making.

The options on goods segment is much easier a product from traders' perspective and market making is likely to brighten the prospects of gold mini contract, particularly due to unprecedented interest in bullion trading due to the global rally to record in gold, MCX said.

Tata Power June quarter profit grows 10% to Rs 268 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power on Wednesday said its consolidated net profit rose by 10 per cent to Rs 268 crore for quarter ended June on the back of reduced expenses.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 243 crore during the same period a year ago, Tata Power said in a BSE filing.

During April-June, the company reported a total income of Rs 6,540 crore as compared to Rs 7,874 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Total expenses during the quarter under review stood at Rs 6,555 crore as against Rs 7,228 crore in the year-ago period.

In a separate statement, the company said, it was able to maintain stable performance despite lower profits from Solar EPC businesses mainly on account of lower financing cost and stable performance across all clusters.

Govt panel proposes 2 formats of business responsibility for cos

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In efforts to have a single source for all non-financial disclosures by corporates, a government-appointed panel has made various proposals on business responsibility reporting, including putting in place two formats for disclosing information.

The committee, constituted by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2018, has proposed that the Business Responsibility Report should be called as the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR).

This would help better reflecting the "intent and scope of reporting requirement," the report said.

As per the report, reporting may be done by top 1,000 listed companies in terms of their market capitalisation or as prescribed by markets regulator Sebi.

"The reporting requirement may be extended by MCA



(Ministry of Corporate Affairs) to unlisted companies above specified thresholds of turnover and/or paid-up capital," it noted.

The panel has suggested two formats for disclosures -- a comprehensive format and a "lite version" -- and also called for implementation of the reporting requirements in a gradual and phased manner.

Smaller unlisted companies may adopt a lite version of the format, on a voluntary basis, it added.

The committee on Business Responsibility was constituted for finalising business responsibility reporting formats for listed and unlisted companies under the National Guidelines on Responsible Business Conduct (NGRBC).

Among others, the panel has recommended that the BRSR could be integrated with MCA 21 portal as that would ensure that all information already filed on the portal by companies would be automatically filed while filing the BRSR.

Bharat Forge posts Rs 127.3 cr loss

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Forge on Wednesday reported a consolidated loss of 127.3 crore for the quarter ended June 30. The company had posted a consolidated profit of Rs 171.9 crore in April-June period of the previous fiscal, Bharat Forge said in a filing to the BSE.

The company's income during April-June period declined to Rs 1,199.2 crore from Rs 2,372.7 crore in the year-ago period. The spread of COVID-19 has severely impacted business in many countries, including India, and there has been severe disruption to regular business operations due to lockdown and other emergency measures, Bharat Forge said.

The group has made assessment of liquidity, recoverable values of its financial and non-



financial assets, including carrying value of its subsidiaries, and has concluded that there are no material adjustments required in the interim financial results. However, the impact assessment of COVID-19 is a continuous process, given the uncertainties associated with its nature and duration, it said. "The impact of global health pandemic might be different from that estimated as at the date of approval of these financial results. The group will continue to closely monitor any material changes to future economic conditions," the filing said.

Man Industries June-qtr net grows over 4-fold to Rs 17 cr

NEW DELHI: Pipe manufacturer Man Industries (India) Ltd on Wednesday posted an over four-fold jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 17.11 crore for the June quarter, helped by increased income.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 3.63 crore during the same period a year ago, it said in a BSE filing.

Total income increased to Rs 410.10 crore during the quarter under review, from Rs 244.87 crore earlier.

Total expenses also rose to Rs 386.23 crore from Rs 240.64 crore in April-June

period of the preceding fiscal. In a separate statement, the company's Chairman R C Mansukhani said, "All our plant operations have resumed successfully and we are back on track in terms of order execution."

"We are seeing good traction from domestic as well as international markets on the back of revival of demand from key geographies and domestic sector already doing well with ample opportunities from several upcoming oil and gas and water projects like Nal se Jal and river linking," he added.

GST intel detects over Rs 17 cr tax evasion

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The GST intelligence officials have detected over Rs 17 crore tax evasion by a major cement manufacturer in Satna and arrested one of its directors, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday. They also conducted multiple searches in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh from August 5 to August 11 at various premises belonging to the cement manufacturer located at Maihar, Satna and their registered dealers and distributors, it said.

"Searches have indicated that substantial quantities of cement and clinker have been supplied clandestinely without payment of Goods & Service Tax (GST) in the states of MP and UP," the statement issued by the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), Bhopal zonal unit. The searches were conducted at Maihar, Satna, Allahabad, Kushinagar, Agra, Kanpur and New Delhi. In all, 28 searches were conducted during the one-week long operation, it said.

Thermax posts Rs 15 cr loss for Jun quarter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Thermax Ltd on Wednesday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 15.27 crore for the quarter ended June 30.

It had posted a Rs 62.76 crore net profit during the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, Thermax Ltd said in a BSE filing.

The company during April-June 2020 reported a total income of Rs 685.86 crore. It had posted a total income of Rs 1,414.01 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Its total expenses during the June 2020 quarter stood at Rs 708.35 crore. It had stood at Rs 1,323.96 crore a year ago.

In a statement, it said Thermax Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer M S Unnikrishnan will retire on August 31, 2020, after serving the company for 13 years in the capacity.

Ashish Bhandari, who joined as the firm's joint MD on April 7, 2020, will succeed him as the new MD & CEO.

"The group's operations and financial results for the quarter were adversely impacted by the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Sebi slaps Rs 25 lakh fine on entity for fraudulent trading

NEW DELHI: Capital markets regulator Sebi has imposed a penalty of Rs 25 lakh on Yochana Vyapaar Pvt Ltd for indulging in fraudulent trading in illiquid stock options segment on the BSE.

Trading activities of certain entities in the illiquid stock options segment on the exchange had come under the scanner of the watchdog, which conducted an investigation for the April 1, 2014 to September

30, 2015 period. During that period, Sebi observed that a total 2,91,643 trades comprising substantial 81.38 per cent of all the trades executed in stock options of the BSE were non-genuine trades. Yochana Vyapaar (noticee) was one of the entities who had indulged in creating artificial volume of 6,90,99,386 units through 614 non-genuine trades in 219 stock option contracts, as per the regulator.



the June 2020 quarter are therefore not comparable with those for the previous quarter. "The group continues to monitor the economic effects of the pandemic while taking steps to improve its execution efficiencies and the financial outcome."

Thermax Chairperson Meher Pudumjee said, "On behalf of the board and the family, I thank Unnikrishnan for his association with Thermax for 28 long years."

Fuel demand dips 11.7 pc in July

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's fuel demand is beginning to flatline after showing signs of returning to life, as consumption dipped 11.7 per cent in July, official data showed.

Fuel consumption, a barometer of economic activity in the country, had slumped by over 45 per cent in April as nationwide lockdown halted most vehicular traffic and shut industries. However, with easing of lockdown restrictions, the demand picked up in May and June with month-on-month increase in consumption numbers.

However, mini-lockdowns imposed by states to contain the spread of coronavirus seemed to have stopped this recovery, with fuel demand falling 3.5 per cent in July over the previous month.

Deutsche Bank infuses Rs 2,700 cr in India

PNS ■ MUMBAI

German lender Deutsche Bank on Wednesday announced a capital infusion of Rs 2,700 crore into its India operations for expansion across segments.

This is the second time in less than two years that the bank has infused money into local operations consisting of 17 branches, after the Rs 3,800 crore investment in early 2019.

Banks have to set aside capital for every new loan that they make and also when the loan slips into non-performing territory.

A bank statement said the fresh capital will be used to support further expansion of Deutsche Bank India across all of its businesses, including corporate banking, investment banking, and interna-



tional private banking that have been consistently growing over the years. Its chief country officer Kaushik Shaparia said the incremental capital injection should be seen as a strong validation of the lender's confidence in the business model and potential in India.

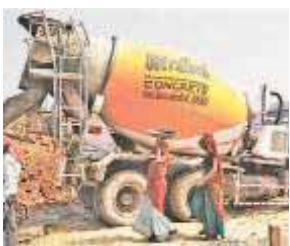
It is also "demonstrative of our intent to further deepen our presence here", he said, adding that the recent months have thrown up opportunities to work ever more closely with clients and support them with services and advice in steering through the tough environment.

Ultratech Cement plans Rs 1,500 cr capex in FY21

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Largest cement manufacturer Ultratech Cement has lined up investment of Rs 1,500 crore in FY21 in multiple initiatives, its chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla said on Wednesday.

The company is also targeting to increase its annual capacity to 118 million tonnes from 114.8 million tonnes currently, he informed the company's shareholders during its virtual annual general meeting. Birla, who heads the diversified conglomerate Aditya Birla Group, said periods of turmoil create champions, adding that Ultratech has the



capacity, leadership across markets and a strong balance sheet to emerge as one.

"Your company has planned total capex cash outlay of Rs 1,500 crore for a range of key initiatives," he informed the shareholders.

This will include spends on

installing 66 MW of waste heat recovery systems (WHRS), 1.2 million tonnes per annum brownfield cement capacity addition in West Bengal and Bihar, pending work for phase 2 of Bara grinding unit in Uttar Pradesh, coal block development in Madhya Pradesh, new ready mix concrete plants and other plant upkeep capex, he said.

The consolidated cement capacity will stand augmented to 118 million tonnes per annum, and green power capacity will increase to 185 MW for WHRS and over 350 MW for solar and wind power, he said.

Natco Pharma Q1 net profit declines 14.5 pc to Rs 122 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Natco Pharma on Wednesday reported a 14.49 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to Rs 122.1 crore for the quarter ended June mainly on account of margin pressure on formulations.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 142.8 crore for the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, Natco Pharma said in a BSE filing.

Total income of the company stood at Rs 582.1 crore for the quarter under consideration as against Rs 513.3 crore for the same period year ago,



it added. During the quarter, the company faced margin pressure on

both domestic and international formulations, Natco Pharma said.

"In spite of lower margins during the first quarter, the company is confident of its business for remaining part of the financial year based on the order book and earnings outlook. The company expects a growth of over 25 per cent in its earnings for FY2020-21 compared to prior year," it added.

The board of directors has approved an interim dividend of Rs 1.25 per equity share of Rs 2 each for FY2020-21, the filing said.

Shares of Natco Pharma were trading at Rs 843.60 per scrip on BSE, down 2.57 per cent over previous close.

CIL seeks lower rail tariff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned CIL on Wednesday said it has sought 15 per cent distance-based freight concession from Indian Railways for transportation of domestic coal to customers located at a distance of 701 to 1,400 km from its mines. The move is aimed at broadening the client base and bring in more customers under import substitution plans, CIL said in a statement.

Out of 126 coal-based thermal plants linked with CIL, 14 plants located over 1,400 km distance are eligible for the freight concession presently.

RISING THROUGH THEM ALL

Just when a lot of us were on the verge of losing hope and some others of giving up, a few from the city decided to make the most of what they do best, to both - be productive and make some quick money. *The Pioneer's* RACHEL DAMMALA speaks to the community of such newbie artists in town, who decided to neither give in to the uncertainties nor give up, but rise through them all

He enjoyed making art, he made a lot of fan art that stemmed from his love for them, and to his surprise, his work was reposted by celebrities like Amanda Cerny and Kat Graham among others. Aryaman Singh, all of 18, decided to and succeeded at perfecting his art of graphite pencil and colour pencil portraits amid the lockdown and is now also making money out of it, because why not! "I never thought I'd make money off this someday. After celebs reposted my work, I began getting requests from friends and followers on Instagram, and after a few of them, I asked myself, 'Why not monetise it' and that's how it all started," shares the BBA 1st year student, who hopes to be a businessman one day.

Then there's Harika Bantupalli, who's more things than one — a digital nomad who's a writer, editor, gourmand, teacher, and more. She's one who is always trying her hand at different skills and this lockdown, it was Digital Art. "Earlier, I'd draw or doodle a bit on paper and then scan it and illustrate and make phone covers, etc., for myself. It was during the lockdown that I received my iPad and began exploring proper digital art using the Apple pencil," says Harika. Now that she's taught herself well enough, she is making money out of it. "Since I'm already in the field of editing where I offer proof-reading, formatting services, mentoring, coaching to writers, etc., I now have added Digital art for

book covers too, as part of my package under harika.ink," she adds.

Yashwanth Busani started wall art as a hobby. He decorated his home and shared pictures of the same with friends who loved it and asked if he could do the same for them too. He later began getting more and more requests from well-wishers and their friends. "That's when I was asked 'why do it for free?' and that's how it turned monetary. I never saw this coming, but the lockdown did give me more time and thought to polish my art, and make money from it too," says the IT professional.

Now meet the sisters behind Mehraan Collection — Mehak Sisodia and Simran Sisodia whose brand is a combination of both their names. They were like any two normal siblings who watched a lot of videos about clay art and one day decided to try their hand at them. What started out as a fun DIY project with polymer clay, translated into something creative and beautiful, and they are now spreading their love for statement jewellery through their home-grown brand. "We make statement handmade earrings and pendants with Polymer Clay. We also customise as per client requirements. Each design is made in small batches and we do not mass produce. We take orders via Instagram or our online store on InstaMojo. Shipping is done through our courier partners. If you place an order from our online store, MojoExpress

takes care of the shipping and if the order is placed through any other platform DTDC takes care of the shipping, as simple as that," explains Simran, the older of the two siblings.

"During the lockdown, despite all the noise and mental disturbances, we were fortunate enough to have found our happy place," Simran adds. The sibling duo soon hopes to take it big and venture further into creative jewellery.

Srinidhi Mateti, another 18-year-old, who, like most teenagers with a flair for card making and more, used the period during the lockdown to focus on lettering and decided to combine art with letter words, phrases, quotes, illustrations and also tried adding her photography skills to make money off her love for them all. These combined, and boom, she has been receiving commissions for customised work after people saw and loved her work on Instagram. "I recently discovered gouache - a kind of paint, considered the love child of water acrylics, and the artwork has been coming out great. I've been receiving more work ever since," shares Srinidhi, who is still discovering her skills, honing them, and is yet to zero-in on what she wants to pursue as a career.

The lockdown sure has given several artists like them and more a lot of time to reflect upon what they've always seen as a hobby and helped them discover that there is so much more that they could do than just deriving joy and fun out of it.



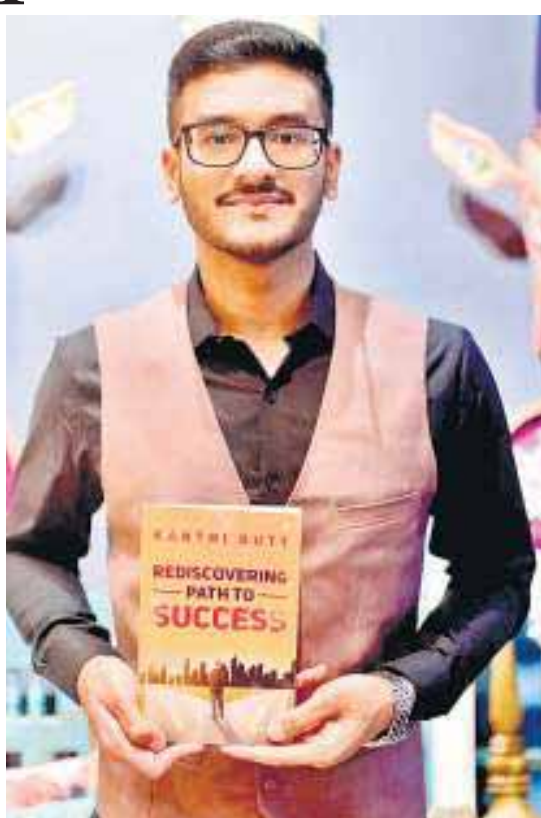
Mehak Sisodia and Simran Sisodia



Journey to entrepreneurial success!

With more and more youngsters looking to be their own boss and considering entrepreneurship today, here's a book by Kanthi Dutt, a young entrepreneur from Hyderabad, that promotes and teaches right leadership, the why's and how's of life-altering decisions, and more. In an exclusive chat with SHIKHA DUGGAL, he talks about what made him want to write the book, what made him who he is today and more

If there is one aspect of entrepreneurship people want to get right, it is leadership. Because with the right leadership you can get your workforce to reach heights they didn't think they could achieve. And to be a good leader, you have to make learning a priority. Kanthi Dutt, a young entrepreneur from Hyderabad has launched a brand new book titled *Rediscovering path to success*, which promises to hold you to the y-junctions of your life helping you know the why's and how's of life-altering decisions. The foreword for the book has been written by none other than politician Renuka Chowdhury! "I always believe that we should rediscover ourselves with the ever-changing environment and attain satisfaction in whichever path we are travelling. So it's important to re-discover at different stages in life, hence the book," shares the author of the book. *Rediscovering path to success* has the right balance of facts, stories, inspiration, actions, and somehow leave you changed after-



and in business in order to become a successful entrepreneur. Self-discovery is the key to success. In this busy urban lifestyle, we often miss doing that! This book is guaranteed to change your life forever.

THE BOOK PROMISES TO HOLD YOU TO THE Y-JUNCTIONS OF YOUR LIFE HELPING YOU KNOW THE WHY'S AND HOW'S OF LIFE-ALTERING DECISIONS.

Not only will it teach you all the do's and don'ts of the entrepreneurial life, but it will also teach you how to be a better socialite," adds the business tycoon.

As an entrepreneur, your ultimate goal is to take your business idea towards success which cannot happen overnight. There is no end to learning in the entrepreneurial business. Every industry keeps on changing and growing with time. To match up with the pace and survival in the industry, this book is a must-read!

ward. The book offers you a chance to learn about Kanthi's path to success at such a young age and point of view helping to change perspectives and also leading to unexpected opportunities — it can inspire someone to launch a start-up, pivot to a new business model or even alter a life approach.

"My book will help my readers grow both in life



A photo-journey through 'diverse Asia'

Akaleidoscopic journey across Bali, Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam captures the diverse landscapes, textures and people of Asia. The exhibit is live in an online exhibition titled 'Diverse Asia' and is available on view till August 23.

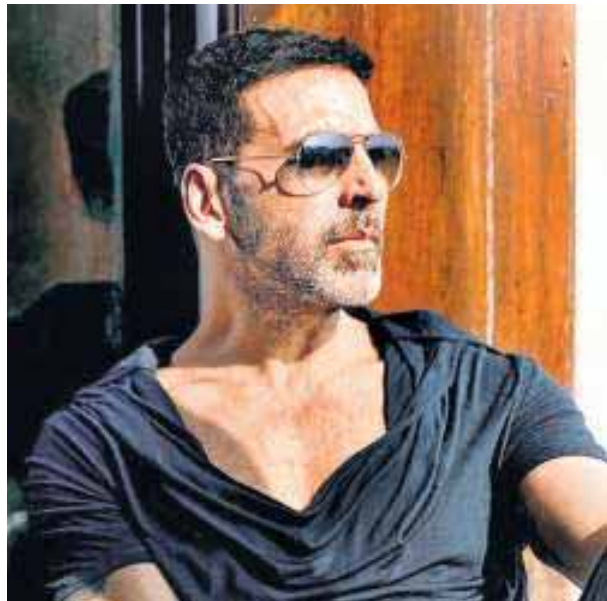
The pictures are captured by Ajit Rana, who swears by two philosophies in life - taking the road less travelled and following your heart. His photography is driven by a passion for nature, food, human emotions and different cultures. The present exhibition is an example of Ajit's travels over the last couple of years in Asia, which offers a rich palette of choices making each country a unique experience.

From the tropical luxury of Myanmar to the sparse landscapes of the high plateau of Central Asia, from the modern skyscrapers of Hong Kong to Hanoi's narrow frontage buildings, one is faced with shifts of shape, colour and people.

Equally unique is Bali, with its extraordinary outpouring of Hindu heritage temples and sculptures, tucked within a largely Muslim Indonesia. The diversity lives in Asia's landscapes, cities, natural habitat and most of all it's people. Each culture has an ancient history and traditions that stem from an ancient heritage.

The exhibition on the India International Centre website aims to give a flavour of the diversity of the region, without any pretences. As per the photographer, no single exhibit collection can do justice to even one of the country's richness, let alone what is arguably the world's most varied continent.

AKSHAY KUMAR ONLY B'WOOD STAR AMONG FORBES' HIGHEST-PAID ACTORS OF 2020



Wrestler-turned-movie star Dwayne Johnson clung to the top slot on the list of the world's highest-paid male actors for a second straight year, according to an annual tally released by Forbes magazine on Tuesday.

Johnson, also known by his ring name The Rock, earned \$87.5 million from June 1, 2019 to June 1, 2020, Forbes said, including \$23.5 million from Netflix Inc to star in movie thriller Red Notice. He also benefited from his Project Rock fitness wear

line for Under Armour Inc. Ryan Reynolds, who co-stars with Johnson in Red Notice, came in second in the Forbes ranking of male stars. He earned \$20 million for that film, plus another \$20 million for Netflix movie Six Underground, the magazine said, part of his \$71.5 million total for the one-year period.

Actor and producer Mark Wahlberg, star of Netflix action comedy Spenser Confidential, finished third with \$58 million. Next on the list were actors Ben Affleck with \$55 million and Vin Diesel

with \$54 million.

Akshay Kumar, the only Bollywood star in the top 10, landed in sixth place with earnings of \$48.5 million. Most of his income came from product endorsements, Forbes said.

Rounding out the list were Hamilton creator Lin-Manuel Miranda, actors Will Smith and Adam Sandler, and martial-arts star Jackie Chan.

The figures are pre-tax and do not include deductions for fees given to agents, managers and lawyers, Forbes said. The magazine releases a separate list of highest-paid actresses.

Swara Bhaskar plays action heroine in new web series



Actress Swara Bhaskar says her fans will get to see her performing some high-octane action sequences as a cop in an upcoming digital project.

Talking about the series, titled *Flesh*, Swara said, "Human and child trafficking is one of the most damning realities of the world and it's important that we keep highlighting the issue through the fictional content that we create."

"I am honoured to be a part of *Flesh* and given the opportunity to work with the team was an absolute pleasure. For the very first time in my career, I will be seen essaying the role of a cop which I am hoping will be appreciated by fans. They will witness me performing some high-octane action sequences," added the actress.

The web series, which is a crime-thriller, also stars Akshay Oberoi, Vidya Malvade and Mahima Makwana. *Flesh* is written by Pooja Ladha Surti and is directed by Danish Aslam.

The series will stream on Eros Now from August 21.

Rhea made 569 calls to ex-manager, called Aamir too

More details are emerging from Rhea Chakraborty's call records which show that the girlfriend of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput was also in touch with several celebrities like superstar Aamir Khan, Shradha Kapoor, Rakul Preet Singh, Aditya Roy Kapoor, Rana Daggubati, Sunny Singh and dance maestro late Saroj Khan.

Rhea is being investigated by the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) along with her family members in connection with the death of Sushant Singh Rajput on the basis of the Bihar Police complaint filed by Sushant's father K.K. Singh.

According to the call detail records of Rhea, she had called Aamir Khan once while the superstar reverted to her in the form of three SMSs.

There has been much debate over the silence of Bollywood's three Khans (Salman, Shahrukh and Aamir) in Sushant's death case till date. And now, Aamir Khan's name has been found in Rhea's call records.

According to the CDR, Rhea made 569 calls to Shruti Modi, Sushant's former manager and the latter called her 222 times.

Rhea was also in constant touch with Sushant's house manager Samuel Miranda. The CDR showed that she called him over 259 times while the latter called her 28 times.

The call records showed that Rhea had made 30 calls to actor Rakul Preet Singh while the latter called her up 14 times. The two also exchanged two SMSs between them.

The CDR also revealed that Rhea has called Aashiqui 2 fame star Aditya Roy Kapoor 16 times while he made seven calls to her. Similarly, she called up Shradha Kapoor thrice while the latter called her up twice.

The actor was also in touch with *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweety* actor Sunny Singh. Rhea had called her seven times, while the latter called her back four times.

Similarly, Rana Daggubati, who starred in the *Baahubali* franchise, was also in touch with Rhea who had called him seven times and he called her back four times.

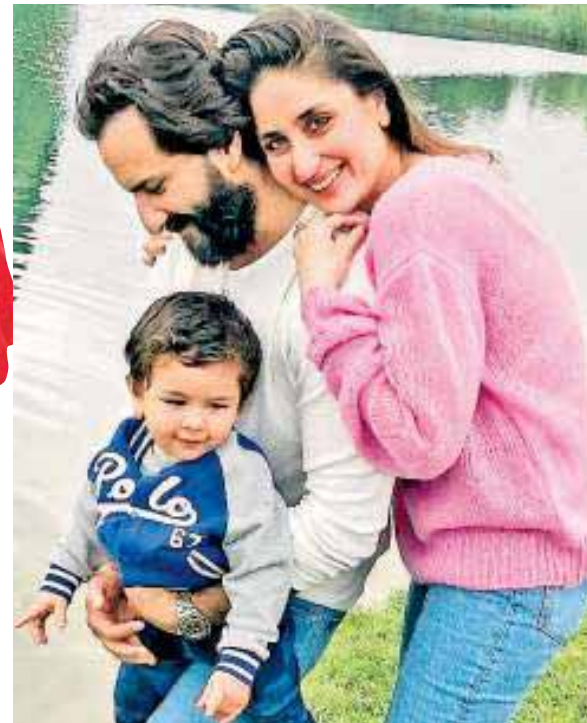
Dance maestro Saroj Khan who passed away last month was also in touch with Rhea. According to call records, Rhea called Saroj Khan thrice while the latter called her back twice and the two also shared one SM.

The CDR further revealed that Rhea was also in touch with Mahesh Bhatt. In the month of January this year, the two exchanged 16 calls among themselves. Nine calls were made to Bhatt by Rhea while he called her seven times. The ED has recorded the statement of Rhea twice, her brother Showik thrice, her father Indrajit once, her ex-manager Shruti Modi thrice, Sushant's house manager Samuel Miranda twice, her Chartered Accountant Ritesh Shah once, Sushant's CA Sandeep Sridhar once and Sushant's sister Mitu Singh once.

On Monday, a CBI team also recorded the statement of Sushant's father and his elder sister Rani Singh.



KAREENA AND SAIF ANNOUNCE: WE ARE EXPECTING AN ADDITION TO OUR FAMILY



Actress Kareena Kapoor and her husband, actor Saif Ali Khan, announced on Wednesday that they were expecting an addition to their family.

"We are very pleased to announce that we are expecting an addition to our family!! Thank you to all our well wishers for all their love and support. Saif and Kareena," said the announcement issued on Wednesday afternoon by the star couple through their office.

Saif and Kareena tied the knot on October 16, 2012. The couple have a son Taimur, who was born on December 20, 2016.

Interestingly, the announcement from the couple came on Wednesday, which happens to be the birthday of Bollywood actress Sara Ali Khan, Saif's daughter from his first wedding with actress Amrita Singh.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



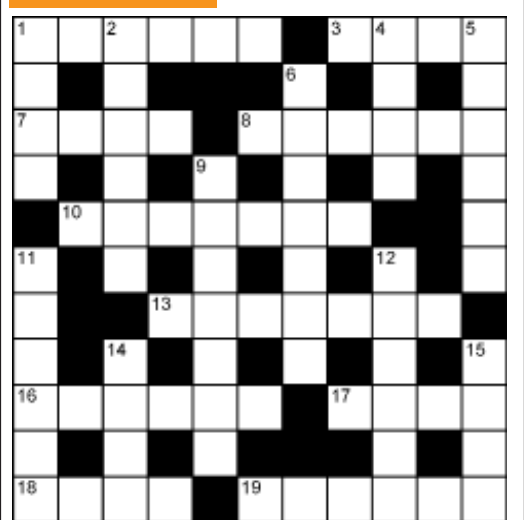
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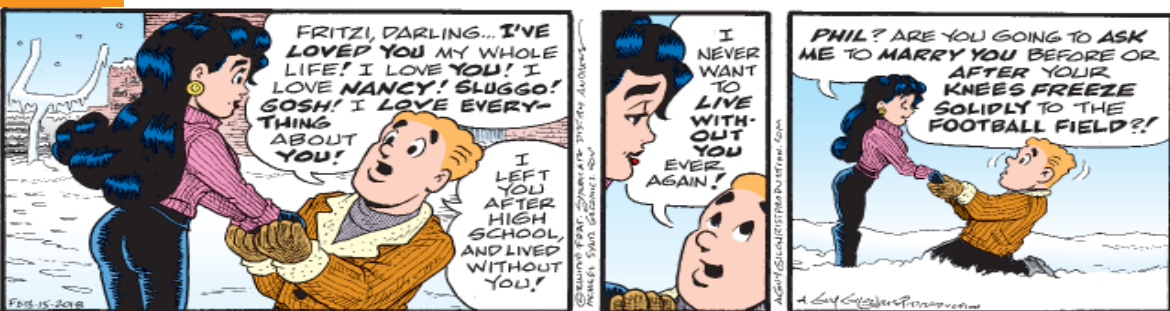
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

- Noon
- Costing nothing
- Contact by telephone
- Purchasing
- Rich
- Very sore
- A floor covering
- Large boat
- A red gemstone
- Selected
- Going very quickly
- Less dirty
- Cup and
- Small trees
- A nipping sea creature
- Twirl around

DOWN

- One of the planets
- A meal
- Water from the sky
- Ninety less ten



Most Read NEWS

Motorcycle 'Jugaad' for waterlogged roads is here!

The Indian spirit of jugaad never fails to impress. The Hindi word, which has even made it to the Oxford English dictionary, roughly translates to a clever hack. Jugaad is often celebrated as an example of the Indian spirit of resourcefulness and enterprise. It signifies doing more with less, or making the best out of meagre resources available. Videos and photos that embody the spirit of jugaad often go viral on social media and invariably garner praise for the innovation they display. This time, it is a jugaad for riding motorcycles on waterlogged streets that is winning a lot of appreciation on social media. The videos which have surfaced on Twitter and are being widely circulated online show a couple of men riding bikes on waterlogged streets, which is generally not recommended, especially if the water level is above the exhaust. These men, however, have made modifications to their motorcycles which make them easier to drive on waterlogged roads. IAS officer Awanish Sharan praised their jugaad in a tweet shared on Tuesday. "Have never seen before!! 'Jugaad' at its best," he wrote while sharing the video.



World's most expensive mask to cost Rs 11 crore

You may have seen some designer face masks out there, but they can't compare to the creation by a high-end jeweler. Luxury jewelry brand Yvel, out of Israel, is creating what they say is the world's most expensive COVID-19 face mask. The custom-made, ultra-luxe mask is making safety sparkle. When it's finished, the 18-karat white gold face covering will be encrusted with 3,600 white and black diamonds and can be fitted with the top-rated N99 filters. The jeweler says it was commissioned by a Chinese businessman living in the U.S. He's paying \$1.5 million dollars for the mask. Designer and owner at Yvel, Isaac Levy, says the man who requested the mask had three conditions. "The first one, it must be a N99 approved by the FDA and the European standards," Levy said. "The second condition was that it will be delivered before Dec. 31 this year and the third condition, which was the easiest to fulfill, was that it will be the most expensive mask in the world." Another designer at Yvel says he's never seen anything like the mask. Bezael Cooper says, "Setting this many diamonds is a little bit stressful, but we'll get by." The glitzy-up face mask may not be a practical piece of protective equipment to wear. It is expected to weigh over half a pound.



Air pollution making honey bees sick

Whether it's exhaust fumes from cars or smoke from power plants, air pollution is an often invisible threat that is a leading cause of death worldwide. Breathing air laced with heavy metals, nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter has been linked to a range of chronic health conditions, including lung problems, heart disease, stroke and cancer. If air pollution can harm human health in so many different ways, it makes sense that other animals suffer from it too. Airborne pollutants affect all kinds of life, even insects. In highly polluted areas of Serbia, for instance, researchers found pollutants lingering on the bodies of European honeybees. Car exhaust fumes are known to interrupt the scent cues that attract and guide bees towards flowers, while also interfering with their ability to remember scents. Now, a new study from India has revealed how air pollution may be depleting the health of honey bees in the wild. These effects may not kill bees outright. But like humans repeatedly going to work under heavy stress or while feeling unwell, the researchers found that air pollution made bees sluggish in their daily activities and could be shortening their lives.



20,000 paper birds help fund Covid-19 units

A flock of 20,000 multicoloured origami birds has been installed in a cathedral in Brussels, Belgium, as part of a fundraising artwork that has paid for two Covid-19 units at a local hospital. Suspended from the ceiling of the medieval Cathedral of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula by thin wires, the paper creations have come from as far afield as Hong Kong, New York and Tokyo, after Belgian designer Charles Kaisin asked people to send in home-made birds, or deposit them in boxes in 160 shops around Brussels. Each bird was matched by a donation from companies including French energy firm Engie, raising 101,625 euros (\$119,744) for two units for Covid-19 patients at the Erasmus hospital in Brussels. "I had a very serious heart surgery and I was well taken care of by this hospital. It's why I wanted to help them," Kaisin told Reuters. Kaisin also organised an art auction which raised a further 300,000 euros (\$353,000) for the hospital, which he said would support its medical research, including into the side effects of potential Covid-19 treatments.



No action for Blue Tigers this year

Indian captain Sunil Chhetri with his Bangladeshi counterpart PTI

8 followed by matches against Afghanistan (home) and Bangladesh (away) in November. A third-place finish in the group will help India get a direct berth in the third round of the qualifiers for the 2023 Asian Cup. Both FIFA and AFC stated that the decision was taken keeping in mind the safety of all participants during the Covid-19 pandemic. The games will be rescheduled in 2021. India are currently fourth in Group E with three points from five games. Qatar top the table with 13 points with Oman a point behind them in second. Eight group winners and four best runners-up will progress to the continent's 12-team final qualifying stage for the World Cup. They were scheduled to play Qatar at home on October

LATE WINNER

Ocampos' 88th minute header break Wolves hearts; Shakhtar thump Basel to reach semis

AFP ■ DUISBURG

Sevilla qualified for the semi-finals of the Europa League on Tuesday after Lucas Ocampos' late header broke Wolverhampton Wanderers' hearts, while Shakhtar Donetsk thumped Basel 4-1 to join the Spaniards in the last four. Five-time competition winners Sevilla face Manchester United in Cologne on Sunday thanks to a brilliant header from Argentine Ocampos with less than two minutes left on the clock which gave them a deserved 1-0 win, while Shakhtar take on Inter Milan on Monday in another intriguing tie. Sevilla dominated their English opponents over the course of the match, as a tired-looking Wolves' dreams of European glory ended with a whimper. "I am very proud of my players. We needed to have lots of patience against a very good team," said Sevilla coach Julen Lopetegui, whose team are now unbeaten in 19 matches in all competitions, to BT Sport. "We have ambition we work very hard... but we are going to play against Manchester United... the biggest team in world football." Premier League outfit Wolves thought they were set to make the perfect start in the 11th minute when



Sevilla players celebrate after Lucas Ocampos scores Spanish club's first goal against Wolves Europa League/Twitter



"If you want to test yourself, you have to play against teams at this high level." The Ukrainian side got off to a flyer thanks to Brazil-born Moraes, who headed home Marlos' corner with less than two minutes on the clock, and they never looked back from that point on. Taison put Shakhtar two ahead 20 minutes later when his deflected shot flashed past Basel's bamboozled goalkeeper Dorde Nikolic. Alan Patrick put the result beyond doubt from the penalty spot with 14 minutes left after Taison's burst into the box was ended by a clumsy challenge from Basel defender Yannick Marchand. Shakhtar rounded off a fine display in the 88th minute when right-back Dodo combined with Tete before smashing home a superb finish. Ricky van Wolfswinkel's close-range strike for Basel a minute into stoppage time made no difference to a thumping defeat for the Swiss.

SINGLES

3 INDIANS IN LGPA EVENT FOR FIRST TIME NORTH BERWICK: In a first for Indian women's golf, three leading players — Aditi Ashok, Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik — will tee up at an LGPA event together, the Ladies Scottish Open, starting on Thursday. Diksha plays with Stephanie Kyriacou and Yu Liu at 7.15 am while Aditi plays with Scottish star Carly Booth and South African Lee-Ann Pace at 9.58 am. Tvesa has been drawn with Yealimi Noh and Emily Pedersen, and they tee off at 12.22 pm. BARCA PLAYER TESTS CORONA POSITIVE BARCELONA: A Barcelona player has tested positive for the novel coronavirus after reporting back for pre-season training, the La Liga side said in a statement on Wednesday. Barca said the player is isolating in his home and was asymptomatic, adding that he had not been in contact with any of the players who are to travel to Lisbon for the Champions League Final Eight tournament. LIVERPOOL SET FOR RECORD PAYDAY LIVERPOOL: Liverpool will receive a record 175 million pounds payout for winning the Premier League after all 20 clubs in England's top-flight agreed to postpone any reductions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Times reported on Wednesday that teams will receive their entire payout for last season and rebates to broadcasters, which could amount to 330 million pounds. DELHI'S SUDEVA FC TO PLAY IN I-LEAGUE NEW DELHI: Sudeva FC will become the first ever football club from Delhi to play in the I-League as the All India Football Federation (AIFF) on Wednesday approved the city side's participation in the second-tier domestic competition from the upcoming season. The AIFF also announced Visakhapatnam side Sreenidhi FC's entry into the I-League from 2021-2022 season. SPURS SIGN SOUTHAMPTON'S HOJBERG LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur have signed Denmark midfielder Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg from Southampton on a five-year deal with full back Kyle Walker-Peters moving in the opposite direction on a similar contract. Financial details of the transfer were not disclosed but British media reported that Spurs have paid Southampton an initial fee of around 15 million pounds to sign the 25-year-old Hojbjerg who had a year left on his contract. Agencies

Serena sets Venus clash in Top Seed Open

AFP ■ LEXINGTON

Serena Williams had to fight for a winning return from her six-month coronavirus lay-off on Tuesday, defeating lowly ranked Bernarda Pera in three sets at the WTA Top Seed Open tournament in Kentucky. Serena, who before Tuesday had not played a competitive game since a Fed Cup appearance in February, came from behind to defeat American world number 60 Pera 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 in two hours and 15 minutes at the Top Seed Tennis Club in Lexington. Venus Williams started her campaign with a straight sets win over Victoria Azarenka in a battle of former World No 1 players. The 40-year-old American won 6-3, 6-2 and set up an exciting encounter between the Williams sisters in the second round. Rising American star Coco Gauff had to work hard for her straight-set win over qualifier Caroline Dolehide, winning 7-5, 7-5 while Canadian qualifier Leylah Fernandez knocked out seventh seed Sloane Stephens in their opener. This week's tournament — the first WTA event in the US since the Covid-19 pandemic — is taking place without spectators. Williams, 38, later revealed that the sedate surroundings had suited her game. "It was a really calm atmosphere, it was really chill," Williams said. "I can't say I disliked it. I didn't mind it at all. I've been through so many things in my career and this was totally different. I think I won today because I was calm for once in my career. Kind of reminds me of junior days. Something nostalgic about that. I kind of enjoyed it." The 23-time Grand Slam singles champion looked to be flirting with an early exit in the second set, but recovered from 0-40 down at 4-4 before holding and eventually winning the set. "I just knew I could do better," Williams said. "It was an interesting game. I just had to get used to her game a little bit. She played really well."

CSK expect Dhoni to play until 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chennai Super Kings CEO Kasi Vishwanathan feels their talisman Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who has not played any competitive cricket since last year's World Cup semifinal, will be part of the franchise in 2021 and 2022 IPLs. The 39-year-old Dhoni is set for a return to competitive cricket in the upcoming IPL, to be played in the UAE from September 19 to November 10. "We can expect MS Dhoni to be part of both (IPL 2020 and 2021) and probably for even the next year — 2022," Vishwanathan was quoted as saying by *indiatoday.in*. "I am getting updates through the media only, saying he has been training in Jharkhand in indoor nets. But we don't have to worry about the skipper, boss. We don't worry about him at all. "He knows his responsibilities and he will take care of himself and the team." N Srinivasan, the vice-chairman and managing director of India Cements, owners of the CSK franchise, in January said that Dhoni would be retained by the team for the 2021 IPL mega-auction.



RR fielding coach tests virus +ve

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rajasthan Royals' fielding coach Dishant Yagnik has tested positive for Covid-19, the IPL team announced on Wednesday, making it the first such case ahead of their departure next week to this year's tournament venue, the UAE. Yagnik is currently in his hometown Udaipur and has been advised to get admitted to hospital for his 14-day quarantine. "Post 14 days, Dishant will be undergoing two tests as per the protocols of BCCI. On return of two negative reports, he will be allowed to join the team after self isolating for 6 days and receiving 3 further negative tests upon his arrival in the UAE," said Royals in a statement. CSK have planned a short training camp at their base from August 16 to 20. While CSK are hoping to leave for the UAE on August 21, Vishwanathan confirmed that all the players will assemble in Chennai on August 14. "It will be a skill-based plus training camp. It can't immediately start off with skills because they are coming back after a long off," he said.

Unacademy to fight for IPL title sponsorship rights

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Education technology company Unacademy, which is already one of IPL's sponsors, is eyeing the league's title sponsorship rights now and is set to submit its bid to replace Chinese mobile phone company Vivo this season. A BCCI official confirmed that Unacademy has picked up the bid papers but refrained from making any comments beyond that. "I can confirm that Unacademy has shown interest and picked the bid papers. I have heard they will be submitting a bid and are pretty serious. So Patanjali if they bid, will have competition," the senior official told PTI. Vivo, which annually paid ₹440 crore, dropped out as title sponsor this year due to the Sino-India border standoff. The BCCI is now looking at a lesser value — between ₹300 to 350 crore — for a period of four months and 13 days. The official said Unacademy is a part of IPL's central sponsorship pool with other companies like Dream11 and Paytm. "Yes, Unacademy is already in IPL's central sponsors' pool from 2020 to 2023," the BCCI official said.

Sri Lanka, UAE kept as back up for 2021 WT20

NEW DELHI: Sri Lanka and United Arab Emirates are the two back-up countries being zeroed in on by the ICC, in case India is unable to host next year's T20 World Cup. While there is still one year to go before the mega event which was set to be held in Australia this year but got postponed due to Covid-19. According to a report in ESPN Cricinfo, "Sri Lanka and the UAE are among the back-up venues for the 2021 men's T20 World Cup, should the Covid-19 pandemic make India an untenable host." The ICC confirmed last week that India will host next year's tournament as scheduled in the original FTP while this year's postponed edition in Australia goes ahead in 2022. However it is a standard protocol to have back-up venues listed for any global event. "Identifying potential back-up venues is standard practice for every ICC event, but it takes on extra significance in this time because of the nature of the pandemic." "India is currently the third-worst-hit country in the world in terms of cases, according to most data studies, with over 2 million cases so far and over 45,000 deaths. "The current situation has forced the BCCI to relocate the IPL to the UAE, and only tentative plans are in place for the domestic season," the website further stated. PTI

Hafeez breaks bio-bubble

PTI ■ KARACHI

The Pakistan Cricket Board is furious at former captain Mohammad Hafeez for his apparent breach of the biosecurity protocol imposed by the England and Wales Cricket Board for the ongoing away series. The former skipper, who is not a part of the Test squad is there for the limited overs leg. On Wednesday, Hafeez tweeted a picture of himself with an elderly lady from the golf course adjacent to the team hotel despite strict instructions that they shouldn't interact with anyone outside the bubble. A source close to the Pakistan team said Hafeez's breach of protocol had upset everyone as all players had been told specifically to avoid interaction with anyone outside the bio secure bubble, since the course is open to the public in



Mohammad Hafeez tweets picture with a 90+ year old lady at Golf course

Eng will sweep Pak series: Vaughan

SOUTHAMPTON: Former England captain Michael Vaughan predicted the hosts will sweep the three-test series against Pakistan despite the absence of talismanic all-rounder Ben Stokes for the last two matches. Stokes was part of the England team which pulled off a thrilling three-wicket victory in the first Test at Old Trafford. "He (Stokes) plays a big, big role in that dressing room," Vaughan wrote in a blog, although he had no doubts about the depth in the England squad. "Even though Ben Stokes is out I think England will be too strong. England will win the series 3-0, that's my prediction." He also felt England might rest veteran quick James Anderson in the second Test beginning on Thursday.

Shakib could return from ban during SL tour

PTI ■ DHAKA

Serving a ban for not reporting corrupt approaches, Bangladesh's premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is likely to return to the national fold for a tour of Sri Lanka later this year, with his suspension ending on October 29. The southpaw was banned for two years, one year of it was suspended, for failing to report corrupt approaches by an alleged bookie during the IPL. Bangladesh's tour of Sri Lanka is more or less confirmed and given the schedule, Shakib could feature in the proposed three-match T20 series. "I think Shakib being out for a year is not that much different to the rest of our squad who have been out for six or seven months as well," Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. "We are hoping all the players are fit. Obviously, there are standards that they need to attain in terms of fitness level. We have to organise a bit of game time for Shakib, as well as for all the players."

Not just *Wild Dog* and Prakash Raj-starrer *Ranga Marthanda*, *Bigg Boss* helped him bag a Hindi-Telugu web series, where he is playing one of the leads alongside Tony Luke. In a candid conversation with NAGARAJ GOUD, the actor gives insights about his upcoming projects and more

ALI REZA ON THE MOVE

first learned about my *Bigg Boss* experience. He wanted to know whether I was interested in playing only lead roles or have any leaning towards supporting roles as well. I told him I'm okay with any role as long as it's a good one. He asked me to come down to his office afterward before offering me a significant part in *Wild Dog*. He didn't even audition me, as he was impressed with the monologue I performed on the show," Reza tells us animatedly in an interview.

Not just *Wild Dog* and Prakash Raj-starrer *Ranga Marthanda*, *Bigg Boss* helped him bag a Hindi-Telugu web series suspense thriller for ZEE5, *The Expiry Date*, where he is playing one of the leads alongside Tony Luke (Hindi movie *Badla* fame). "I've also signed a Hindi web film with a new production house. Then there is a music video I will be shooting from the 17th of this month," he shares.

The experience of sharing screen space with Nagarjuna in *Wild Dog*, he maintains, was wonderful. "Sir is very cool and down-to-earth. He never made us feel that we were working with a superstar. My conversations with him mostly centered on fitness, his eating habits, skin and hair etc," he smiles.

Right now, Reza is looking forward to gauging the reac-

tion of audiences for his gig in *Palasa 1978* director Karuna Kumar's *Metro Kathalu* for *aha*. His role alongside Sana's forms one of the four stories of the anthology drama. "My episode is titled *Ghatana*. I play a role who meets with an accident after he comes out of a cinema hall. A small story unfolds from there. I can't reveal more as the episode's duration is only 20 minutes but it's a situation that can happen to anyone at any time. When Karuna *garu* narrated the story, I found it natural and was immediately drawn towards it," he notes.

Metro Kathalu was shot when coronavirus positive cases in Hyderabad began to spike exponentially but that hardly dissuaded Reza from accepting it. "When the makers asked me whether I have any reservations about shooting, I promptly replied with a no. COVID-19 never scared me. Instead of getting scared and hunkered down at home, I wouldn't have minded if I got infected," he declares.

As the drama marks his debut on an OTT platform, Reza is excited and at the same time confident about it winning the audience's love. "With the advent of OTT, actors like me can be a part of shows where we get to play the lead roles and enrich our craft further," he points out.

Before *Bigg Boss*, the Hyderabad-lad has been a part of a string of films which didn't lead him anywhere in Telugu cinema landscape. While conceding that it did bother him, he expresses happiness

where he is right now after starting his career 14 years ago with "a junior artiste kind of model role" in Nagarjuna-starrer *Boss*. The experience of being part of small films which had little takers made his wiser. It is the reason why he wants to associate with big films playing key supporting roles for a certain time period. "The idea is to get more visibility and acceptance from people before branching out to lead roles again," he reveals his plans, signing off.

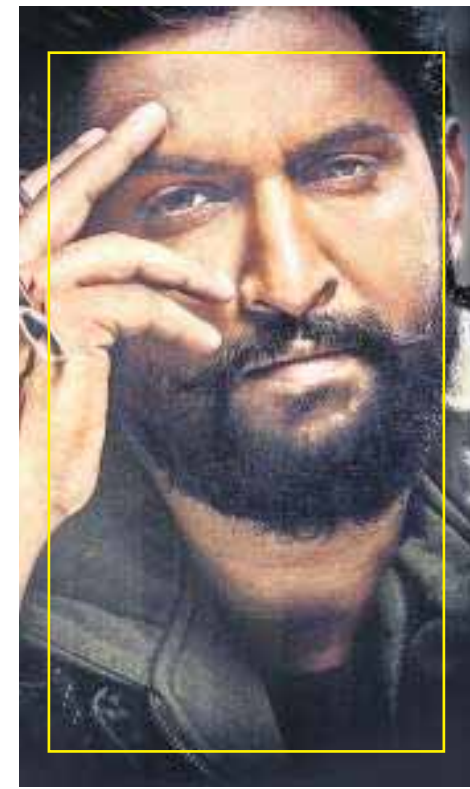


is Nani-starrer *V* headed for a direct-to-web release? At least that's what the buzz is pointing at. Despite repeated assurances from Nani that the film will see a theatrical release, multiple reports doing the rounds indicate producer Dil Raju has clinched a handsome OTT deal for the film, which is a win-win situation for both the parties. The film is believed to drop in the first week of next month.

With the film held back from release after its Ugadi deadline couldn't be met due to the lockdown triggered by the pandemic, the rapidly escalating interest rates pushed Raju to explore the digital offers on the table, word on the street has it. At the same time, some other unverified reports indicate that OTT release is just another rumour and as the film is Nani's landmark 25th, the makers are still looking at a theatrical roll out. Amid all this though, the makers chose to remain mum-not even releasing a statement (till we went to press time).

An action thriller, directed by Mohan Krishna Indraganti, *V*, co-stars Sudheer Babu, Nani, Aditi Rao Hydari, Jagapathi Babu, Vennela Kishore, Nassar and Srinivas Avasarala.

V back in the news



After *Metro Kathalu*, another anthology drama from *aha*

Gearing up for the release of *Palasa 1978* director Karuna Kumar's *Metro Kathalu* tomorrow, *aha* think-tank, in its bid to ramp-up production activities further, has given consent to another anthology drama. Prasanna, Varalaxmi Sarath Kumar, Kannada Kishore, Gayathrie, Abhirami Venkatchalam, Shantanu Bhagyaraj, Rohini and Jayaprakash are spearheading the show.

A source close to the development tells us that the show has recently moved to floors in Chennai in adherence with all the COVID-19 guidelines. "It's a four-episode anthology drama being shot in Telugu. All the four episodes will run with a similar theme. Sujatha Narayanan and Devasena are producing it, while three directors Barath Neelakantan, Siva Ananth and Sarjun KM are manning the director's chair."

Barath and Sarjun have directed Tamil

films like *K13* and *Airaa*, while Ananth has made his directorial debut with Siddharth-starrer *Chukkalo Chandrudu* in Telugu in the noughties.

The source further adds that the show's shoot is likely to be wrapped up by mid-September, with *aha* planning to slot it for an October drop.

The anthology show will be a long list of shows that *aha* is banking on to emerge as a one-stop destination for Telugu entertainment, particularly web shows. They've recently agreed to bankroll the screen adaptation of Archana Sarat's novel *Birds of Prey - The Hunt Begins*, to feature Sarath Kumar in the lead. A psychological crime thriller that deals with the theme of child abuse and how it affects the children, Pradeep Nayyar, Goutham Vasudev Menon's former associate, is directing it.

— NG



Nishikant Kamat hospitalised in Hyd with liver cirrhosis

Filmmaker Nishikant Kamat is unwell and admitted to hospital in The City. The filmmaker is reportedly battling liver cirrhosis and his condition is critical.

The 50-year-old filmmaker has battled liver cirrhosis in the past, which has relapsed again, according to a report in *spotboye.com*.

Kamat is known for

directing Bollywood films like the Ajay Devgn-Tabu starrer "Drishyam", Irrfan Khan-starrer "Madaari" and the John Abraham starrers "Force" and "Rocky Handsome", among others.

He has also directed critically acclaimed Marathi films like his debut directorial "Dombivali Fast" and "Lai Bhaari". He also featured as an actor in the Marathi film "Saachya Aat Gharat" and his 2016 directorial "Rocky Handsome".



SS Rajamouli and family test negative for COVID

Nearly two weeks after he said that he and his family members have tested coronavirus positive, SS Rajamouli on Wednesday revealed that he and the family have now tested negative. Talking to Twitter once again, he noted that they've completed two

weeks in quarantine and are devoid of any symptoms. "Completed 2 weeks of quarantine! No symptoms. Tested just for the sake of it... It is negative for all of us... Doctor said we need to wait 3 weeks from now to see if we've developed enough antibodies for plasma donation! (Sic)," the director, whose fame transcended boundaries courtesy

his two-part costume drama *Baahubali*, shared the information. Filmmakers like Puri Jagannadh and Harish Shankar immediately expressed their relief on their colleague testing negative.

Before the coronavirus-induced nationwide lockdown was announced in March, Rajamouli was working on his ambitious period drama *RRR*,

starring Jr NTR and Ram Charan. He was at the forefront along with others when it came to getting the consent of permission from Telugu states governments to resume shootings in June. While the industry did get the go-ahead, a surge in positive cases in GHMC limits meant that Rajamouli and Co. had to abort their plans.



Sanjay Dutt diagnosed with lung cancer

Actor Sanjay Dutt has been diagnosed with lung cancer, it was revealed on Tuesday. The news was confirmed by trade analyst and film industry insider Komal Nahta on Tuesday night. "Sanjay Dutt diagnosed with lung cancer. Let's pray for his speedy recovery," tweeted Nahta on his verified Twitter account, @KomalNahta.

According to reports, Dutt will fly to the US for treatment soon. Earlier on Tuesday afternoon, as the news spread that the 61-year-old actor may have cancer, Dutt had taken to social media to urge well-wishers not to worry or unnecessarily speculate.

"Hi friends, I am taking a short break from work for some medical treatment. My family and friends are with me and I urge my well-wishers not to worry or unnecessarily speculate. With your love and good wishes, I will be back soon," he tweeted on his verified account, @duttсанjay.

Dutt's health came into focus last Saturday evening when he was rushed to hospital in Mumbai after complaining of chest discomfort and breathlessness. The actor had subsequently been discharged from hospital.

Cancer survivors Manisha Koirala, Yuvraj Singh pen messages for Sanjay Dutt

Cancer survivors, actress Manisha Koirala and former cricketer Yuvraj Singh, have taken to social media to pen words of encouragement and prayers for Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt, who has been diagnosed with lung cancer. Manisha Koirala is not only a good friend of Sanjay Dutt but has been his frequent co-star since the early nineties.

On Wednesday, Manisha Koirala took to her verified Twitter account and wrote to Dutt, who is fondly referred to as Baba in the industry, "Sadden to hear about your health challenge dear baba @duttсанjay .. but I know you are tougher !! There has

been tremendous struggles in your life and you overcame them, this too shall be yet another win .. praying for your well-being." Former cricketer Yuvraj Singh on Wednesday tweeted on his verified account: "You are, have and always will be a fighter @duttсанjay. I know the pain it causes

but I also know you are strong and will see this tough phase through. My prayers and best wishes for your speedy recovery." Shortly before that in the afternoon, the actor had taken to social media to inform his fans and well-wishers that he is taking a short break from work due to medical treatment. According to reports, the 61-year-old actor will fly to the US for treatment soon.

