

ANALYSIS 7 SHUN VITRIOLIC LEADERS

MONEY 8 'RISE IN FISCAL DEFICIT LIKELY TO IMPACT CONSTRUCTION SECTOR'

SPORTS 11 DHONI, OTHER CSK PLAYERS REACH CHENNAI FOR CAMP

VIJAYAWADA DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN HYDERABAD

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22 KERALA OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN PLANE CRASH RESCUE OPS TEST POSITIVE

Twenty-two officials who responded to the plane crash in Kerala last week have tested positive for coronavirus, the Malappuram medical officer has said.

PRASHANT BHUSHAN HELD GUILTY OF CONTEMPT FOR TWEETS ON CJI

Lawyer Prashant Bhushan has been held guilty of contempt for his two tweets on Chief Justice of India SA Bobde and the Supreme Court.

KAMALA HARRIS'S MASALA DOSA VIDEO IS A RAGE ON INDIA WHATSAPP GROUPS

When Democratic Party presidential nominee Joe Biden picked Kamala Harris to be his running mate, it sparked a frenzy on the other side of the globe to track down her connections to Chennai.

AMIT SHAH SAYS HE HAS TESTED NEGATIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who was undergoing treatment for coronavirus, on Friday said he has tested negative.



'India best place for a country wanting import alternative'

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Sachin Pilot says he is Congress's strongest warrior

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Leadership by administrators during Covid-19 times

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High Court extends stay on 3-Capitals laws till Aug 27

Supreme Court to hear State's plea to lift status quo on Monday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Friday extended till August 27 the status quo on the two new laws that enable the establishment of three new capitals for the state.

A division bench of the High Court, comprising Chief Justice JK Maheshwari and Justices AV Sessa Sai and M Satyanarayana Murthy, which further heard a batch of interlocutory applications filed by the Rajadhani Rythu Parirakshana Samiti and others, extended the status quo and posted the case to August 27 for the next hearing.

The state government has filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking that the status quo order of the High Court be lifted. The matter is expected to come up for hearing in the Apex Court on Monday.

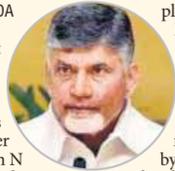
The state government, represented by senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, filed a counter-

Jagan doesn't realise the value of Amaravati: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Claiming that the State would have prospered and Amaravati been retained as its capital, Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday demanded to know what right the YSRCP government has to see buildings and land in the APCRDA limits.

He was reacting to reports that the State Government



plans to dispose of lands and buildings in Amaravati. Strongly criticising what he described as "continuing misinformation campaign" by the Government that his regime did not bring about any development but misled people with graphics, Naidu asserted that infrastructure projects worth over Rs 41,675 crore were initiated in the State Capital Region.

affidavit to the petitions in the High Court saying, "Each of the reports leading to legislations in

Acts No. 27 and 28 of 2020 answer the rationality test of judicial review and the various

inputs taken by the committee and its findings are cogent, bona fide and rational."

The counter-affidavit filed by Dwivedi added that the report submitted by the expert committee was on the basis of exhaustive study, undertaken by noticing all relevant factors, cannot be contended to be irrelevant for the purpose of Act No. 27 and Act No. 28.

The State government, referring to the legitimate expectations, contended that there cannot be any legitimate expectations on the basis of a master plan which could be modified at any time. In any event, even if there was any legitimate expectation, it has to make way for the protection of public interest. It also stated that the state's economic capacity is a relevant criterion for continuance of an earlier decision in public interest and bona fide rational grounds which are present in the present instance, the affidavit said.

Buggana should resign for Rs 649 cr 'error', says Uma

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao on Friday demanded that Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy immediately tender his resignation owning responsibility for the Rs 649 crore double payment to contractors and others.

Describing the dual-payment as an act of glaring "irresponsibility and mismanagement", Uma accused the YSRCP Government of systematically destroying the Comprehensive Financial Management System brought in by the previous TDP regime to ensure transparency and accountability in State financial management.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader asserted that the Government



was now trying to avoid accountability saying that the transfer of Rs 649 crore for a second time was a "technical error". "At the same time, there was no information whether the double payment was recovered from the receivers or whether any efforts were being made to recover the huge amount," the former minister said.

He alleged that the "so-called technical error" was done with an ulterior motive by the ruling party only to loot the public money.

Uma also strongly objected to the top officials trying to fix the blame for Rs 649 double payments on some lower level programmers who would not figure anywhere in the administration.

"A relative of the Finance Minister along with some others had taken total control of the finances now. They were calling and asking big firms about their caste and community before clearing huge bills. A Pune-based company had this bitter experience and they were asked whether any of its directors or stakeholders belonged to a particular caste," Uma alleged.

Entrance tests dates revealed, EAMCET from September 17

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Council of Higher Education has announced the revised schedule for conducting the AP Common Entrance Tests-2020.

Formally making the announcement on Friday, State Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh said that EAMCET will be conducted from September 17 to 25, while ICET will be held on September 10 and 11 and ECET on September 14.

PGECET will be conducted from September 29 to 30 while Ed CET and LAW CET will be held on October 1. PECET will



be held from October 2 to 5.

Earlier, the State Government had announced that it would conduct various CETs from July 25 to August 9, however the tests were postponed and rescheduled from September 10 onwards due to Coronavirus.

Incidentally, the Government is preparing to reopen schools and colleges from September 5.

As part of this, it has finalised the plan for the 2020-21 academic year from September 5. On the same day, about 43 lakh students will be given 'Jagannanna Vidya Kanuka', Minister Suresh said.

It may be noted that the Government of Telangana State has decided to conduct ECET exams from August 31, POLYCET from September 2 and EAMCET from September 9 to 14. The dates of LAW CET, PG ECET, ED CET, ICET and PGECET, Agriculture CET will be decided on the basis of the TCS slots which provide technical assistance in conducting the examinations.

Amaravati on agenda, Cabinet to meet on Aug 19

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State Cabinet will meet in the first block of the AP Secretariat at Velagapudi at 11 am on August 19.

According to sources, important decisions regarding the development of Amaravati would be taken up during the Cabinet meeting.

Recently, Jagan had conducted a meeting of AMRDA and decided to develop Amaravati as the Legislative Capital.

97 deaths, 8,943 new cases reported in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh reported 8,943 Covid-19 cases on Friday, pushing the overall tally to 2,73,085. Also, 97 fresh casualties were reported pushing the death toll to 2,475. The latest bulletin said these cases were registered in the last 24 hours from 53,026 tests but 9,779 coronavirus patients have been cured and discharged from hospitals across the state.

The number of active cases stood at 89,907 after a total of 1,80,703 patients had recovered so far. Kurnool district reported 12 Covid-19 fatalities in the last 24 hours, while East Godavari, Chittoor, Guntur, West Godavari and SPS Nellore had 10 each.

Anantapur, Visakhapatnam,

Prakasam, Srikakulam and Kadapa saw six new deaths each, Vizianagaram three and Krishna two, according to the bulletin. East Godavari continued to top the charts, reporting 1,146 fresh Covid-19 cases, followed by Chittoor with 987 and Kurnool 956.

Visakhapatnam was behind with 885, Anantapur 762 and West Godavari 748 new cases.

The bulletin said 27,58,485 sample tests were completed at the rate of 51,657 per million population, the highest in the country, but the infection positivity rate continued its spiral and reached 9.90 per cent.

Renowned singer SPB 'critical,' says hospital

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Veteran playback singer S P Balasubrahmanyam, who has tested positive for COVID-19, was in a "critical" condition after his health deteriorated, the private hospital treating him said on Friday.

The 74-year old singer was on life support in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and currently under observation by a team of experts from critical care, a health bulletin issued by MGM Healthcare, where he was admitted on August 5, said.

Two AP IPS officers awarded President's Police Medal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Additional DGP Ravi Shankar Ayyanar and Home Secretary Kumar Vishwajit will receive the prestigious President's police medal, the Union Home Ministry announced on Friday.

Also, 14 policemen from the state will receive the best service medals on the occasion of Independence Day, August 15.

The MHA on Friday announced the list of best per-



forming policemen for 2020. The MHA has selected 215 personnel who will be awarded Police Medal for Gallantry, 80 for President's police medal for distinguished service and 631 for

police medal for meritorious service. The 14 best service police medal will be received by IV Srinivasa Rao, additional SP, Visakhapatnam, Nallamilli Venkata Reddy, Regional Vigilance and Enforcement officer, Vijayawada, Ennamaneni Satya Sai Prasad, Additional Commandant, 6th Battalion, Mangalagiri, Kavalakuntla Eswara Reddy, Sub Divisional Police Officer, Chittoor,

Focus on ex-MP's kin in fire mishap case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Police on Friday questioned Dr Mamata Rao, daughter-in-law of senior TDP leader and former Narsaraopet MP Rayapati Sambasiva Rao, for about six hours in connection with the recent fire mishap at the Hotel Swarna Palace in Vijayawada in which 10 Covid-19 patients

died due to suffocation.

According to sources, the line of questioning was Dr Mamata's role in Ramesh Hospital administration.

Dr Mamata, wife of Rayapati's son Ranga Rao, is believed to be the head of the HR department of Ramesh Hospitals, which had taken on lease the hotel for use as a

Covid Care Centre.

Meanwhile, Krishna District Collector A Md Imtiaz cancelled all permissions granted to the Swarna Palace Hotel isolation centre, an A-category treatment centre.

The Vijayawada South Division Assistant Commissioner of Police on Thursday served summons to

Dr Mamata under Section 160 of Criminal Procedure Code to record her statement in connection with the fire accident.

The police officer said the investigations have revealed that she was acquainted with the facts/information with regard to the circumstances of the case.

Andhra Pradesh had no wild jumbos till early 1980s

SUMIT ONKA ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In an interesting revelation, it has come to light that there were no wild elephants in Andhra Pradesh for over 200 years. A herd of seven elephants is known to have entered South of Andhra around 1984 from the Hosur-Dharmapuri region in Tamil Nadu, the first time after a gap of over two centuries.

This interesting information came to light during a deliberation between wildlife experts upon the colonisation of elephants, man-elephant conflicts and ways to

Region had no elephants for over two centuries, reveal studies



conserve their population through in a webinar conducted by the AP Forest Department marking the

World Elephant Day.

The latest estimate by the AP forest department and some wildlife organisations puts the number of elephants inhabiting Andhra Pradesh at about 60-70. These jumbos move about in a herd. IUCN does not recognise Andhra Pradesh as a home of the elephant because of the small population.

Rakesh Kalva, Research Associate at Wildlife Research and Conservation Society, quoting a study taken up by Syam Prasad and Reddy, 2002,

said elephants entered in the non-traditional region of Andhra Pradesh from Tamil Nadu around 1984.

An assessment undertaken during 1985-86 (Sivaganesan and Bhushan 1986) found the habitat to be sub-optimal and postulated that the elephants had moved into the area due to drought in their normal distributional range and that they would possibly move back to their original home during the next (favourable) monsoon.

BJP's Yamini booked on complaint by TTD

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tirumala II Town police on Friday booked BJP AP leader Sadini Yamini on charges of making unsavoury and insensitive comments against the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

According to reports, the TTD vigilance unit lodged a complaint with the II Town police against Yamini for making inappropriate remarks on TTD that governs the Lord

Venkateswara shrine at Tirumala.

Yamini had made the allegedly insensitive comments against TTD for not telecasting the Ram Temple's 'bhoomi puja' event live from Ayodhya on its Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel (SVBC).

She alleged that this decision had caused distress to Hindus and condemned the Board for not telecasting the bhoomi puja.

TODAY ALMANAC Month & Paksham: Shravana & Krishna Paksha Panchangam. Tithi: Ekadashi: 02:19 pm. Nakshatram: Mrigashirsha: 06:36 am. Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work). Rahukalam: 09:11 am - 10:45 am. Yamagandam: 01:54 pm - 03:29 pm. Varyyam: 03:09 pm - 04:47 pm. Gulika: 06:02 am - 07:37 am. Good Time: (to start any important work). Amritakalam: 08:51 pm - 10:29 pm. Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:55 am - 12:45 pm. VIJAYAWADA WEATHER Forecast: Drizzle. Temp: 28/24. Humidity: 86%. Sunrise: 05:59 am. Sunset: 06:41 pm. Current Weather Conditions Updated August 14, 2020 5:00 PM

Four primary administrative practices — strategy, execution, culture and structure — determine the success of public programmes.

These are supplemented by secondary practices — talent, innovation, leadership, convergence and partnerships. The four primary practices were discussed in detail earlier (The Pioneer, 25 July 2020). Here, the focus is on the practice of leadership expected from administrators while grappling with Covid-19.

At the cost of over-simplification, it is possible to divide the career pathway of the administrator into two — postings in Districts, and at the State/Centre. During their District tenures, administrative officers make decisions in the field "by doing things again and again, failing, succeeding ... getting a feel for a problem, learning when to go by the book and when to 'stretch' the rules".

Leadership by administrators during Covid times

Experiences of decision-making in direct contact with reality situations is stored in the mind of the administrator as know how and know what of making sound judgments, and engaging in good practice.

Proficient performance at higher levels (Centre/State) requires something more than mere recycling of the "repertoire of experiences". Administrators are required to size up complex situations and make rapid decisions that are not just good, but brilliant. This requires (1) challenging conventional thinking based on experience and innovation during the process, (2) knowing how to move ahead when stuck while repeating and adapting from their own and others' experiences, and (3) understanding the implications of their decisions in the

Administrators often complain that theories are not useful in real-life settings (theory-practice gap). Actually, administrators are unable to connect "which theory" with "what kind of practice", and what is required is to learn to connect the right knowledge with the right experience

wider political economy.

Theory fulfils this gap in the way described by Charlie Munger, Warren Buffett's close confidante: "Well, the first rule is that you can't really know anything if you just remember isolated facts (or experiences) and try and bang 'em back. If the facts don't hang together on a latticework of theory, you don't have them in a usable form. You've got to have models in your head. And you've got to array your experience both vicarious and

direct on this latticework of models. ... You've got to hang experience on a latticework of models in your head."

Administrators often complain that theories are not useful in real-life settings (theory-practice gap). Actually, administrators are unable to connect "which theory" with "what kind of practice", and what is required is to learn to connect the right knowledge with the right experience in the way exemplified below. It is well known that the



SAMEER SHARMA, IAS

spread of Covid virus follows a geometric progression (1, 2, 4, 8, 16) — if one person infects two, two infect four, and so on. One major objective is to drive down the rate of infection by reducing person-to-person contact. Ordinarily, coercion (e.g. fines)

is used to impose lockdown and/or mask use, social distancing and hand washing.

This is based on the well-known assumption in economics that humans behave rationally (in self-interest) and would avoid behaviours that are likely to be penalised. However, as any seasoned administrator knows, keeping people indoors for long periods of time is extremely difficult. If humans behave in non-rational ways, then one has to look for models elsewhere.

Mental models of behavioural biases enable administrators to understand why people do not behave in their self-interest, as well as make people behave in desirable ways. In Covid-control the following behavioural biases have potential use: (1) optimism

bias, where one underestimates the risk caused by the virus, particularly if there has not been any direct contact with infected individuals, (2) overconfidence effect, in which one believes that being young and healthy makes them immune to the virus, (3) status quo effect occurs when one is unwilling to change one's social life, and (4) present bias means having a strong preference for immediate earnings, even at the risk of being exposed to the virus with long-term ill-effects on health.

Some of the tools available to counter such biases are: (1) making people see more and more individuals, particularly people they like and respect, using masks and maintaining social distance. This leads to the bandwagon effect in which

individuals tend to follow the crowd, (2) including people in Covid-control operations. Helping to protect others from infection induces a sense of pride in individuals, and (3) making home services available and giving frequent reminders that prompts the focus of peoples' attention on Covid-19 and makes them engage in self-protecting behaviours.

All in all, right mental models add a great value to standard restrictive policy measures, particularly in Covid-control. For administrators, the central message is that possessing the network of right mental models is expected to empower them to organise their experiences in a way that gives strategic depth to otherwise chaotic experiences.

(Author has a PhD from USA and a DLitt from Kanchi University. The article is based on his research and practice and views are personal)

Liquor smuggling gang busted

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The excise police busted a gang smuggling liquor from other States. Authorities seized 525 bottles from a gang of four persons, who brought the liquor from Telangana through courier.

According to the excise police, P Subbarami Reddy developed contacts in Hyderabad and was getting bottles through courier by giving wrong address. Two others — V Appala Naidu and Ramana Reddy — were carrying the bottles to the belt shop run by one Senapathi Kananka Raju.

The gang was getting a 180 ml bottle for Rs 90 and selling at the belt shop for Rs 240. A case has been registered against eight people in the incident, assistant excise superintendent R Prasad said.



Vacant Endowments lands to be leased out in State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Department of Endowments has decided to lease out the vacant temple lands in urban areas across the State in a transparent manner to generate revenue to them.

During a video conference with the assistant commissioners of all the 13 districts, the Endowments Commissioner, P Arjun Rao, asked them to first identify such lands in urban areas that have not been in proper utilisation and offer them for long lease. Arjun Rao, however, told assistant commissioners that under the supervision of the deputy commissioners of their respective districts they should take a decision on leasing out the lands up to an extent of 2,000 square yards.

They are asked to obtain prior permission of the Endowments Commissioner for leasing out the lands having an extent of above 2,000 square yards. Maintaining that this move is aimed at generating revenue to the temples



located in the respective districts during the Corona pandemic, Arjuna Rao hoped that the leasing out of the commercial lands will certainly make the temples self-sustainable.

He admitted that the revenue of all the temples in the State, including the major places of worship, has drastically come down due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Arjun Rao felt that the leasing out of the commercial lands in urban areas will largely help the respective temple administrations to be self-sufficient.

In another video conference with the deputy commissioners of major temples in the State, including Indrakeeladri, the abode of Goddess Kanakadurga, Srisailam, Simhachalam and Sri Kalahasthi, Arjuna Rao directed them to ensure that the Covid norms are stringently followed. Only 50 per cent of the staff working in the temples should be allowed to work on an alternative basis and they should be provided food and accommodation atop the hills.

Endowments Commissioner P Arjun Rao admitted that the revenue of all the temples in the State, including the major places of worship, has drastically come down due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Arjun Rao felt that the leasing out of the commercial lands in urban areas will largely help the respective temple administrations to be self-sufficient.

Endowments Commissioner P Arjun Rao directed the deputy commissioners of major temples in the State, including Indrakeeladri, the abode of Goddess Kanakadurga, Srisailam, Simhachalam and Sri Kalahasthi, to ensure that the Covid norms are stringently followed.

Fifty per cent of the staff, including priests, should be allowed to work for 15 days during which time they will be provided food and accommodation near the temple precincts, he said. This should be followed strictly and any violation in this will be viewed seriously, he added.

Woman arrested for abandoning newborn

● Police also arrested the mother of the accused for cooperating with her in dumping the baby

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

A 20-year-old woman was arrested on Friday for dumping her newborn after giving birth on August 5. She got pregnant before marriage with her boyfriend while staying in Vizianagaram town for competitive exams.

The Pusapatirega police arrested the woman from Rellivalasa village under Pusapatirega police station limits in Vizianagaram district, who allegedly abandoned her newborn baby boy after delivery on August 5.

Police also arrested the mother of the woman for cooperating with her in dumping the baby in the bushes near a local tank in the village. The 20-year-old woman is a student and she stayed some months in Vizianagaram town preparing for competitive exams.

However, she fell in love with her distant relative in Vizianagaram and they wanted to get married once they settle in



life. However, she had an unwanted pregnancy with her boyfriend before marriage. The woman confided in her mother about the pregnancy.

On August 4 night, the woman gave birth to a baby boy. In the wee hours of August 5, the woman, along with her mother, abandoned the newborn near the local tank on the outskirts of the village. The baby boy was rescued by the locals on August 5 morning. Police, along with officials of Integrated Child Development Services and others, shifted the newborn to

Gosha Hospital in Vizianagaram town for better medical care.

Police said when they intensified the investigation to trace the mother of the newborn, the woman (mother of the newborn), along with her mother, surrendered before the police and confessed the crime on Friday.

The woman was charged under Sections 75 Juvenile Justice Act and 317 of the Indian Penal Code. Police will produce the newborn before the Child Welfare Committee for further investigation into the case.

GVK Group auditors cite non-cooperation, seek to resign

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP, statutory auditors of GVK Power and Infrastructure Ltd, have submitted their proposed resignation letter as the beleaguered group is not providing them with the necessary information for audit of the financial statements for FY20, a filing from GVK to stock exchanges said on Friday.

The auditors alleged that despite several communications to GVK, the group did not provide them with necessary information.

"In view of various matters described in our communications, including the recent events in relation to company's subsidiary Mumbai International Airport Ltd



(MIAL), we have assessed the appropriateness of our continuance as the statutory auditor of the company in terms of Standard on Quality Control," the auditors said. "... we accordingly wish to communicate our intention to resign as statutory auditors of the company," the Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants said in their proposed resignation letter written on August 13.

Earlier, the CBI had registered a case against GVK Group chairman GVK Reddy,

his son Sanjay Reddy, their companies and nine other private firms that were allegedly used to camouflage the inflated figures using sham deals and unidentified AAI officials.

The Enforcement Directorate also filed the enforcement case information report, equivalent to the first investigation report registered by police, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, after studying a recent CBI FIR filed against the same entities.

In the resignation letter, the auditing firm further stated that the GVK group is requested to take the necessary steps in order to comply with the applicable various SEBI circulars and other regulatory requirements in this connection.



Laksha Kumkumarchana being performed at Sri Kapileswara Swamy temple in Tirumala on Friday

Laksha Kumkumarchana performed at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Laksha Kumkumarchana fete was performed at Sri Kapileswara Swamy temple in here on Friday. Goddess Kamakshi was decked up beau-

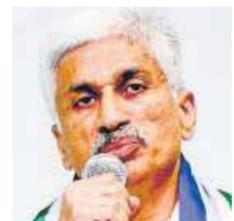
tifully and Laksha Kumkumarchana was performed by priests following Covid-19 guidelines. Deputy executive officer Subramanyam and superintendent Bhupati were present on the occasion.

Govt spent Rs 59,000 crore in 14 months for poor: Vijayasai

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a vigorous attack on TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu, YSRCP senior leader V Vijayasai Reddy shared a table of the funds spent for the welfare of the poor by his government in the 14 months.

Claiming the fund spent for the poor is a record in the 73-year history of independent India, he tweeted the details of the funds on Twitter and dared Chandrababu Naidu to release such details of the fund allocated for the poor during his regime. "In just 14 months, the Jagan government has spent literally Rs 59,425 crore on the welfare of the poor. This is a record in the 73-year history of independent India. Babu ... do you have the courage to officially



release the figures of what was done in a similar manner during your 14 month rule?"

He also defended Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy saying the YSRCP is committed to developing three capitals. The Chief Minister's review on AMRDA is a testimony of his commitment. Unlike Naidu, for whom capital has been a prof-

After recovering from Covid infection, Vijayasai Reddy mounts attack on Naidu giving a table of funds spent for the poor, daring Naidu to give such details

itable real estate business, capital is a place for us which will really benefit people, he said.

"There is no harm in developing Amravati. Due to decentralisation, development takes place more rapidly. That makes sense if you look at the Chief Minister's AMRDA review. No injustice will be done to the farmers under any circumstances. However, no one can guarantee real estate brokers," he said.

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Dressed/With Skin	₹173
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VIJAYAWADA	380
VISAKHAPATNAM	380
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Bhumi puja performed for new Parakamani building

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy and donor Muralikrishna performed the bhumi puja for the construction of new Parakamani building in front of the Matrurri Tarigonda Vengamamba Anna Prasadam Complex (MTVAC) at Tirumala on Friday.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, the TTD Chairman said the exercise of counting the contributions of devotees in the Srivari hundi is called Parakamani. He said the need for a separate building for counting and accounting operations of hundi to be carried out was a long felt need as hitherto the exercise was confined to the Srivari temple.

On many occasions, it was difficult to observe social distanc-



TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy performs bhumi puja for new Parakamani building at Tirumala on Friday

ing in the Parakamani as 200 persons per shift, nearly 600 per day were discharging their duties. Besides security issues, it was difficult for Parakamani workers to come out of the

temple for nature calls as well. Hence, TTD has decided to construct a new building for Parakamani.

He said the new Parakamani Bhavan will be constructed in a

TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy said the exercise of counting the contributions of devotees in the Srivari hundi is called Parakamani. He said the need for a separate building for counting and accounting operations of hundi to be carried out was a long felt need as hitherto the exercise was confined to the Srivari temple

sprawling area of 14,962 square feet at a cost of Rs 8.90 crore was donated by a devotee from Bengaluru K Muralikrishna. The ground floor of the first block will comprise offices for deputy executive officer, AEO, AVSO, waiting hall for staff. The ground floor of the second block consisting of sorting halls, one hundi strong room, one Perubadi strong room and also the donor cell-waiting hall. The next floor will consist of sorting hall. Ten

strong rooms for the banks to secure the counted money. To facilitate the devotees to watch the counting operations, the entire walls of the building will also be done with glass.

Donor Muralikrishna said it was his privilege to provide for a new Parakamani building and was confident to complete the construction work as early as possible. Parakamani is not a religious activity. On many occasions Srivari hundi is being

transported from Srivari temple, Tirumala to TTD administrative building at Tirupati for counting operations. Parakamani operations are conducted daily under the supervision of the Tirumala pontiffs. Parakamani staff have to undergo security check both during entry and exit causing disturbance to devotee darshan queue lines often.

The present Parakamani location inside Srivari temple is not adequate for the counting of 13-14 hundis, which accumulate every day with the offerings made by devotees. As a result of a delay in counting nearly Rs 50 crore worth coins are kept pending to transfer to banks for safe-keeping since many years. It was also difficult to remove huge stock of hundi coins outside the temple as well.

Covid campaign chariots rolled out

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Minister for Tourism and Culture Muttamsetti Avanti Srinivasa Rao rolled out the Corona campaign chariots in the district on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said chariots will work to create awareness on Corona prevention.

The minister also said that information on cybercrime and traffic would be provided through these vehicles from time to time. The minister later lauded the police for working hard to protect the people. Friendly policing is said to be showing in hands rather than words, he said.

Governor calls upon people to rededicate for nation building

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the eve of 74th Independence Day, Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan greeted people here on Friday. "Independence Day is a day of remembrance as well as of dedication, a day of remembrance of all those great patriots whose sacrifices have made it possible for us today to enjoy the fruits of freedom. A day of re-dedication to the noble ideals of truth, non-violence, peace, solidarity and brotherhood, which inspired our national struggle for freedom, on this auspicious day, let us pledge ourselves to rededicating to the cause of nation building," he said.

"As you all are aware, the country is passing through a difficult situation posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Coronavirus has caused immense suffering to the peo-



ple and disrupted the normal life. I call upon people to follow the guidelines issued by the authorities and prevent spread of the Covid-19. The fight against Coronavirus can only be won by staying at home, avoiding unnecessary travel, maintaining social distance, washing hands with soap, or sanitiser and wearing face mask," he said.

"I appeal to all those who

have fully recovered from Covid-19 to come forward and help the patients currently fighting the infection by donating their plasma. All Covid warriors should take pledge to help society in overcoming this crisis by donating their plasma to the needy as a larger responsibility towards mankind," he said.

"I extend my warm wishes to make this Independence Day

"I appeal to all those who have fully recovered from Covid-19 to come forward and help the patients currently fighting the infection by donating their plasma. All Covid warriors should take pledge to help society in overcoming this crisis by donating their plasma to the needy as a larger responsibility towards mankind," he said

In view of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic situation, the Governor has decided not to hold 'At Home' at the Raj Bhavan on the occasion of Independence Day this year

truly memorable and once again appeal to the people to "Be Safe and Stay Home" and prevent the spread of the pandemic."

In view of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic situation, the Governor has decided not to hold 'At Home' at the Raj Bhavan on the occasion of Independence Day this year. It is a customary practice for the Governor to host the 'At Home' every year on the occa-

sion of Republic Day and the Independence Day, in which the Chief Minister, ministers, members of the judiciary, senior officials, public representatives, freedom fighters, senior defence personnel, award winners and media persons are invited.

The Governor called upon the people to follow health protocols and guidelines issued by the authorities to prevent spread of Coronavirus.

Govt cancels permission to Swarna Palace Covid Centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Committee, headed by joint collector, probing the fire mishap at Swarna Palace Covid-19 Care Centre has submitted its preliminary report to the State government.

The Jaganmohan Reddy government gave shock treatment to the hospital belonging to Dr Ramesh upon scrutiny of the preliminary report.

Meanwhile, Krishna District Collector Intiaz Ahmed cancelled all permissions granted to the Swarna Palace Hotel isolation centre, an A-category treatment centre. The orders would be in force till further orders are issued to the contrary, if any.

The report brought to light many crucial issues. The committee felt that the hospital management did not take necessary precautions. Moreover, it accused the management of collecting huge amount towards fees violating GO Ms No.77.

The District Collector served a notice on the hospital indicat-



ing the observations made by the five-man committee. The Collector said, on the basis of the preliminary report, that the management did not take any precautions at all in running the Covid Care Centre.

The hospital management did not pay attention to the Rule-9, mentioned in the GO, with regard to registration of allopathic and private medical care registration regulations and rules.

The hospital reception should display the fees collected for treatment both in Telugu and English. No such board was displayed at the hospital. The

Metropolitan Hotel, M-5, admitted Covid-19 patients without district officials permission.

The medical and health department served orders on the hospital management to furnish written reply to the DM&HO before August 30 on the findings of the committee.

If an advocate were to be appointed by the committee the same information should be furnished to the DM&HO one week prior to the inquiry. The committee asked the hospital to surrender the hospital registration certificate on the day of enquiry, or prior.

YSRCP MP writes to Modi fearing of ammonium nitrate stocks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP from Narasaraopeta Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take measures for the safety of people by shifting ammonium nitrate stocks to safer places in Visakhapatnam and Chennai.

He said that the people of Visakhapatnam in particular and the people of Andhra Pradesh in general are worried because one can find storage of huge stocks of ammonium nitrate in Visakhapatnam at any given point of time.

Devarayalu said that more than that the city has oil tanks of HPCL, the Indian Naval establishment, Arms depots, Naval Airbase, Sea Base and Visakhapatnam is one of the most populous cities of Andhra Pradesh. He said that the imported chemical is stored in private godowns and nobody knows whether they are strictly following the safety protocol prescribed.

Police dept turning people-friendly: DGP



The DGP said that he made many changes in the police department as per the instructions of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The police department is turning people-friendly with innovative measures being implemented under the new policing concept, said DGP Gautam Sawang. He started a two-day training programme on 'Transformational policing: Putting people first' in Guntur here on Friday. He said that transformational policing meant to bring comprehensive change in vision of AP police.

The DGP said that he made many changes in the police department as per the instructions of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. He said that the Chief Minister asked to bring changes in the department while he was taking charge as the DGP. Hence, he was working

accordingly. He said that the department has introduced a weekly-off system for police, which is the first State in the country. He appreciated the Guntur rural police for initiating training to police officers to reach out to people.

He said that police know what is the impression of people about the department and what they are expecting from them. He said that the police assume that they are reaching people with their expectations. He said that the transformational changes are taking place in very structural and organised way in the department across the State. He said that the Chief Minister clearly mentioned that IPS and IAS officers should address people with a smile and resolve their problems.

GEARING UP FOR I-DAY FETE



Arrangements being made for Independence Day celebrations at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium in Vijayawada on Friday (inset) Collector Md Imitiaz, along with IAS officer Praveen Prakash and others, inspecting the stadium (right) DGP Gautam Sawang inspects rehearsals on the eve of celebrations

'Construct warehouses as per future needs'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has said that warehouses and cold storage units should be built keeping in view the future needs while Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) should be addressing all issues of farmers.

During a review meeting on warehouses and cold storage facilities held here on Friday, the Chief Minister said that the



warehouses and IQFs (Individual Quick Freezers) should be developed keeping future demands in view while

food processing should begin from village level and every mandal should have a cold storage unit.

Lauding the initiatives of efforts of Chief Minister for providing subsidies and facilities as well to farmers, PM Kisan CEO and Director of Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) Mission Vivek Agarwal apprised the Chief Minister of the salient features of the newly formed AIF through a video conference.

I-Day creates undefined excitement, says Pawan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan extended Independence Day greetings and said that Independence Day celebration creates a feeling of undefined excitement. "It is a fantastic festival that can be celebrated by

all Indians irrespective of their caste and creed. Mother India had experienced many indiscretions under the rule of outsiders for two hundred years." He said that so many warriors sacrificed their lives with ease for want of freedom and independence.

16 policemen from AP receive medals on Independence Day

Continued from Page 1

M Mahesh Babu, Assistant Commandant, SARCLP, Vaidyabhusana Nethaji, SI, Women PS, Srikakulam, Sirimalla Sarah Kumari, women SI, PCR Ongole Kancharla Vakalaiah, Assistant Reserve SI, DAR, Machilipatnam, Mandalapu Venkateswara Rao, Armed Reserve SI, City Armed Reserve, Vijayawada, Jinka Sreenivasulu, Assistant Reserve Sub Inspector of Police PTC, Anantapur, Chittibommala Ranga Rao, HC, ACB, Vijayawada, K Gurraya Babu, HC, AR Visakhapatnam, A Suryanarayana Reddy, ARHC, DAR, Kadapa and Dudulula Moulali, ARHC, Vijayawada.

AP had no wild jumbos till early 1980s

Continued from Page 1

However, this did not happen, and later, more elephants migrated into the area during 1986 from the Bannerghatta National Park in Karnataka which adjoins the Hosur-Dharmapuri forests.

The Kuppam and Palamaner forests in Andhra were subsequently declared as a sanctuary: Koundinya Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) for the elephants. Some of the elephants that moved into KWS further dispersed ca. 100 km north into the Sri Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary-National Park (Andhra Pradesh) and ca. 40 km southwards to the Javadi

Hills (Tamil Nadu).

Coming to North Andhra Pradesh, AP Forest Department Chief Conservator of Forests, Rahul Pandey said the elephants in the region mostly crossed the Odisha border and entered Srikakulam (2007) and Vizianagaram (2017)

A herd of six elephants came to Vizianagaram and covered about 20-km every day. There is another, albeit much smaller, herd of four female elephants in Srikakulam. However, the dry deciduous and fragmented forest segments are unfit for the elephant population, the forest officer explained.

Unfortunately, an elephant of the last herd in Vizianagaram died on this World Elephant Day, but the forest department claimed the pachyderm died a nature death and rejected any conflict or revenge death factors.

Rahul Pandey also explained how the State forest department is closely monitoring the elephants using GPS technology and trackers. An inter-state coordination between Andhra and Odisha has also ensured safe haven for the national heritage animals. Despite this, 24 elephants died reportedly between 1987 and 2003 in the state.

Eastern Ghats are spread across the states of Andhra

Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Hence, a tri-state agreement in the long-run to treat this as an ecological landscape, and not divide the area based on political boundaries is necessary.

AP has constantly taken up conservation efforts for the national heritage animal, elephants producing a positive result.

N Prateep Kumar, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) said widening their habitat, protecting the environment, digging water ponds, laying solar fencing, avoiding man-animal conflict and many other activities were undertaken so far to conserve the elephant population.

Focus on ex-MP's kin in fire mishap case

Continued from Page 1

She was also asked to produce relevant documents with regard to the hospital.

Soon after the questioning ended, Dr Mamata spoke to the media and said that she was the victim of allegations.

She clarified that she was only examining the aspects related to the operation at Ramesh Hospitals, Guntur.

Dr Mamata said she had nothing to do with the activities at the Vijayawada branch of the hospital and that she had joined the investigation only because the police had issued a notice.

Dr Mamata's lawyer G Uma Shankar says that it was not appropriate to interrogate her

client for hours together while she is recovering from corona.

"The greater the risk was to her health of recovering, the greater was the risk to the police," the lawyer said.

He said that those who are extending complete cooperation with the police should not be bothered.

"It is not appropriate to repeatedly embarrass a person that has nothing to do with the matter. Before blaming the hospital and hotel owners, it must be remembered that those to be blamed for the situation are the district collector, the municipal commissioner, the fire department and even the DHMOs," Shankar said and added that all those who gave permission at the district

level are guilty in this incident.

Meanwhile the family members of Rayapati Sambasiva Rao say that the police is harassing her in the name of investigating into the fire mishap.

Dr Mamata's husband Ranga Babu questioned the police action stating that as to how his wife could be responsible for the mishap at Vijayawada when she is working in Guntur. He said that Mamata recently recovered from Coronavirus attack and it is not proper to interrogate her.

In spite of the protests from the family members of the former MP, the police called Dr Mamata to Vijayawada for interrogation and she went there, he said.

Buggana must resign for Rs 649 cr 'error': Devineni

Continued from Page 1

The TDP leader deplored that the Accountant General had not taken up any inquiry into such a massive fraud till now.

"Apparently, the YSRCP Government was deliberately making backend payments to the receivers since they would not come under the purview of audit. If these payments were made through front-end, the government would have to become accountable. The CM and the Finance Minister were running the state treasury as if it was their personal bank," Uma alleged, demanding Buggana resign from his post.

AP HC extends stay on 3-Capitals laws till Aug 27

Continued from Page 1

Referring to the contention of the promissory estoppel, the government argued that the decision was not taken arbitrarily but was taken on the basis of various studies that were carried by various expert bodies.

"The entire decision making process of the state, leading to Acts No. 27 and 28, is based on the material available on record, the reports furnished by the experts in the field and recommendations by the High Power Committee, which ex-facie evidence their objectivity and neutrality in this regard. All the other contentions to the contrary are clearly without any substance," the government contended in the counter-affidavit.

It sought dismissal of the pleas as they lacked merit.

Senior advocate Shyam Divan argued on behalf of the petitioners.

On July 31 the state government notified the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020, and the AP Capital Region Development

Authority (Repeal) Act, 2020, immediately after Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan gave his assent to the two laws.

The petitioners, who have already filed a batch of petitions opposing the three capitals move, prayed that the court issue an appropriate order declaring that the state has no legislative competence to change the capital or to denude Amaravati from being the seat of the three civic wings, including the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.

They also wanted the AP Capital Region Development (Repeal) Act (Act No. 27) and the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act (Act No. 28) of 2020 declared 'ultra vires' to the Constitution of India.

While rebutting the claim of the petitioners, the State Government requested that the status quo order already granted be lifted forthwith.

The division bench, however, did not concede the state's request and extended the stay till August 27 and posted the matter for further hearing on the day.

Jagan doesn't realise the value of Amaravati: Naidu

Continued from Page 1

"About 45 per cent to 80 per cent works have already been completed on various structures. The CM and his Ministers are making false claims about graphics only to destroy the high potential, dream capital of Andhra Pradesh out of political vendetta," Naidu said.

He also refuted allegations that the TDP finalised Amaravati as the State Capital unilaterally.

"The decision was taken based on many parameters including the fact that more than 50 per cent people told the Sivaramakrishnan Committee that they would favour the location of

Capital between Vijayawada and Guntur. Over 4,700 people expressed this opinion while only 507 people preferred Visakhapatnam, 360 persons Kurnool and 265 Ongole," Naidu said.

He appealed to the people to give a thought whether Capital selection was a saner decision or not going by how Amaravati was located equidistant to the farthest tips of the State. "About 2.3 crore of the 5.5 crore people live on one side of Amaravati and another 2.15 crore on the other side. Similarly, 12 MPs are from one side of Amaravati and another 12 MPs from the other side," the former chief minister said.

BJP's Yamini booked...

Continued from Page 1

Acting on a complaint from TTD, police registered a case against Yamini under Sections 505 (2) and 500 of the IPC. TTD told Yamini that it broadcasts the Srivari Kalyanotsavam live on SVBC every day from 12 PM to 1 PM for a duration of 1.30 minutes, and it was not possible to telecast bhoomi puja live as Kalyanotsavam was being broadcast at the same time. It clarified that bhoomi puja was telecast on SVBC the next day. Earlier, Yamini had served as Telugu Desam Party (TDP) spokesperson before the 2019 elections. However, she joined BJP after TDP received a major setback in the elections. She has been in the news for making controversial comments.

Cabinet to meet on August 19...

Continued from Page 1

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney issued a circular to all government departments informing about the cabinet meeting and directed officials to prepare the required reports and information. The meeting will be chaired by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and important issues would be discussed in the meeting.

Renowned singer SPB under treatment for Covid 'critical,' says hospital

Continued from Page 1

"There has been a setback in the health of Thiru (Mr) S P Balasubrahmanyam... in a late night development on August 13, his condition had deteriorated," MGM Healthcare Assistant Director of Medical Services Dr Anuradha Baskaran said.

The hospital had on Thursday said he was "stable."

"... based on the advice of the expert medical team attending to him, he has been moved to the ICU and he is on life support and his condition remains critical," Baskaran added. The singer-actor, admitted with mild symptoms of COVID-19, is currently under observation by the team of doctors from critical care and "his haemodynamic and clinical parameters are being closely monitored," she said.

Balasubrahmanyam, who has worked across Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Hindi and Malayalam film industries and rendered thousands of ever-green songs, was admitted to the hospital here on August 5 following complaints of cold and "on and off" fever for two-three days then.

Early spread of Covid far greater than initially reported

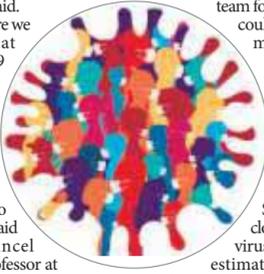
HOUSTON
There were thousands of undetected early cases of COVID-19 at the beginning of this year, according to a study which found that the disease was far more widespread in Wuhan, China, and Seattle in the US weeks ahead of lockdown measures in each city.
Researchers from The University of Texas (UT) at Austin in the US also concluded that the first case of COVID-19 in Seattle may have arrived as far back as Christmas or New Year's Day.
The study, published in the journal *eClinicalMedicine*, also found that about a third of the estimated undiagnosed cases in the US were among children.
The researchers extrapolated the extent of the COVID-19 epidemic in Wuhan and Seattle based on retested throat swabs taken from patients who were suffering from influenza-like illnesses during January in Wuhan and during late February and early March in Seattle.
When the samples were analysed later in each city, most turned out to be positive for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, the researchers said.
"Even before we realized that COVID-19 was spreading, the data imply that there was at least one case of COVID-19 for every two cases of flu," said Lauren Ancel Meyers, a professor at UT Austin.
"Since we knew how widespread flu was at that time, we could reasonably determine the prevalence of COVID-19," Meyers said.
When the Chinese govern-

ment locked down Wuhan on January 22, there were 422 known cases, the researchers said.

However, extrapolating the throat-swab data across the city using a new epidemiological model, Meyers and her team found that there could have been more than 12,000 undetected symptomatic cases of COVID-19 on March 9, the week when Seattle schools closed due to the virus, researchers estimate that more than 9,000 people with flu-like symptoms had COVID-19 and that about a third of that total were children.

The data do not imply that health authorities were aware of these infections, rather that they

"Even before we realized that COVID-19 was spreading, the data imply that there was at least one case of COVID-19 for every two cases of flu," said Lauren Ancel Meyers, a professor at UT Austin



Kerala to witness 10K to 20K cases per day during Aug-Sept: Health Minister

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
Kerala is likely to witness a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases in the months of August and September with daily infections expected to touch between 10,000 to 20,000, State Health Minister K K Shailaja said. "Experts have opined that during the months of August and September we may witness a surge in COVID-19 cases. We may report between 10,000 to 20,000 cases per day," she said in a video campaign urging the youth to join the "Covid Brigade" to halt the pandemic spread. Noting that the death rate graph will start rising if the positive cases shoot up, the Minister said it should be stopped.
"We must also understand that the death toll will increase with the rise in the number of cases. So, we need to put a hold



on the rise in cases. For that the people must cooperate. They should strictly follow the health protocol of wearing masks, hand-washing and social distancing in order to break the chain of virus from spreading," Shailaja said. India's first Covid-19 case was reported from the southern state on January 30 when a woman medical student tested positive on her return to the state from Wuhan in China, the epicentre of the novel coronavirus.

DELHI VIOLENCE

Court grants police time till Sep 17 to complete probe in UAPA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
A Delhi court has granted extension till September 17 to the police to complete investigation against 10 people booked under the stringent anti-terror law UAPA in a case related to communal violence in northeast Delhi in February.
Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat allowed the police further time to complete its pending probe against Jamia Coordination Committee member Meeran Haider; Jamia students Asif Iqbal Tanha and Gulfisha Khatoun; Jamia Alumni Association President Shifa-Ur-Rehman; JNU students and Pinjra Tod members Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita; suspended AAP councillor Tahir Hussain; former Congress Councillor Ishrat Jahan; and



United Against Hate member Khalid and Shadab Ahmed.
The court had earlier extended time till August 14 for completion of investigation against Khalid and Jahan, till August 24 in case of Rehman and till August 29 for Haider, Hussain and Khatoun.
The court said in its August 13 order that the investigation so far is also borne out from the case diaries, it said.

Nadda lays foundation of BJP district offices in K'taka

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
BJP President J P Nadda on Friday lauded the Karnataka government headed by Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa for its financial package for low-income groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, saying it was of big help to them during the lockdown.
In his address to Karnataka BJP leaders after ground-breaking ceremony of party offices in the state through a virtual ceremony, Nadda also praised the state party unit for its welfare works during the lockdown.
Nadda said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had wanted that the BJP should have its own office in every district across the country after the party came to power at the Centre in 2014.
Work on it has been going on since then, the BJP president said, adding that the party has now 500 offices.
The party will have 300 more offices in the future, he added.



"An office isn't just a building. It is the centre of tradition and inspires people to join a party. A political worker develops working there," Nadda said

"An office isn't just a building. It is the centre of tradition and inspires people to join a party. A political worker develops working there," Nadda said, recalling that as a party member he used to call people to meet him in party offices.
He also hailed Modi's stewardship of the fight against COVID-19 and said the recovery rate has risen to nearly 69 per cent.

At the beginning, India used to do just 1,500 tests a day but it is now performing over six lakh tests everyday, he said.
"PM Modi did not just address health issues, but also economic issues. On 26 March, PM Gareeb Kalyan Yojana was announced. It would provide 80 crore people foodgrains until November at a cost of Rs 1.70 lakh crore," he said.

SHORT READS



Chhattisgarh CM raises objection over draft EIA notification

RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Friday raised strong objection on the draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification, 2020, saying that it lacked sensitivity needed towards the conservation of environment, an official said here. In a letter to Union Minister of Environment and Forest Prakash Javadekar, Baghel also made several suggestions urging him to consider them in the interest of environment conservation and forest dwellers before finalising the notification, the public relations department official said. "Chhattisgarh is predominantly a tribal state with 44 per cent forest cover. Bastar, Surguja, Korha, Kawardha areas of the state have been recognised as 'Scheduled Area' under Article 244(1) of the Constitution of India, which provides protection to these scheduled areas against such laws derogatory to the land rights of indigenous population.

TN CM flags off LED vehicles for Covid awareness

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Friday flagged off LED screen mounted vehicles to broadcast short films and launched a drive to distribute pamphlets, both initiatives to create awareness on coronavirus among the people here. Continuing with several ongoing initiatives to fight against COVID-19, Palaniswami inaugurated the awareness campaign by 30 small size cargo vans with big screens, an initiative of the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC). Two vehicles would be deployed in each of the 15 zones of the city, a government release said. The Chief Minister's address on virus awareness, and short films from the Health department and GCC would be broadcast to help people understand better about the pathogen and stay safe by following norms.

Wife of Covid victim to get Rs 50 lakh insurance amount

MUMBAI: The Maharashtra government will provide Rs 50 lakh insurance cover amount to the wife of a rural development officer from Parbhani district after he contracted COVID-19 while on duty and later died of it, a government resolution (GR) has said. The state government had last month decided to provide such cover till September-end to its staffers/workers at gram panchayat and zilla parishad levels who are engaged in containing the coronavirus spread. According to the GR issued on Thursday, the rural development officer, Ramdas Aamle — attached to Supa gram panchayat in Parbhani's Gangakhed taluka — died due to coronavirus on August 3.

ITBP awards 294 troops for bravery during recent skirmishes with Chinese in Ladakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
A total of 294 Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) force personnel has been awarded the Director General (DG) commendation for displaying bravery during recent skirmishes with Chinese troops in Ladakh, the border force said on Friday.
It added that recommendations for awarding gallantry medals to 21 troops posted in this area have been sent to the government.
In its first official account of the standoff between the two militaries, the ITBP revealed how its troops "not only effectively used shield to protect themselves but also responded fiercely to advancing PLA (Chinese People's Liberation Army) troops and brought the situation under control".



"The ITBP has recommended the names of 21 men who faced the Chinese during the face-offs and skirmishes in May-June this year for gallantry," it said.
"Also, 294 personnel have been awarded with the DG's commendation rolls and insignias by ITBP chief S S

Deswal on the eve of the Independence Day," the force said.
It said ITBP troops displayed the highest order of professional skills and "fought shoulder-to-shoulder and also brought the injured Indian Army troops to the rear".
Twenty Indian soldiers were

killed in a violent faceoff with the Chinese troops in the eastern Ladakh area on the intervening night of June 15-16.
While China has accepted that it also suffered casualties during these clashes, it has not given out exact numbers. The ITBP said its troops "fought the whole night" in the area and they received minimum casualties, while gave a befitting reply to the stone-pelters of the PLA.
"At places, they (ITBP) gave a determined standoff for about 17-20 hours throughout."
"Due to the high-altitude training and manoeuvre experience of the force in the Himalayas, the ITBP troops kept PLA troops at bay and due to the all out and befitting response of ITBP jawans at almost all fronts, many areas were safeguarded in the hyper sensitive areas," it said.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Delhi Police slain Insp Mohan Sharma get 7th gallantry medal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi Police Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma, who was killed during the 2008 Batla House encounter, has been awarded a gallantry medal posthumously for the seventh time as the Centre declared bravery medals on the eve of Independence Day.
CRPF Assistant Commandant Naresh Kumar also won the bravery medal for the seventh time for undertaking counter-terrorist operations in the Kashmir valley.
The Jammu and Kashmir Police has topped the list of Police Medals for Gallantry (PMG) with total 81 medals, followed by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) that won 55 medals.
No one has been given the



President's Police Medal for Gallantry (PPMG) this time.
A total of 926 medals, including gallantry, distinguished service and meritorious service medals, have been awarded to state and central police forces personnel, the Union Home Ministry said on Friday.
The Uttar Pradesh Police has

been given 23 gallantry medals followed by 16 for the Delhi Police, 14 for Maharashtra and 12 for Jharkhand.
CRPF Assistant Commandant Kumar, till recently, was serving with the elite counter-terrorist quick action team (QAT) of the force deployed in the Kashmir valley.

Cops probe 'rumours' about Disha's death

PNS ■ MUMBAI
The Mumbai Police has initiated an inquiry into the complaint filed by the father of Disha Salian, former manager of late Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, about the rumours allegedly being spread about his daughter's death, an official said on Friday.
Based on the complaint filed by Disha's father Satish Salian, the Malvani police has launched an inquiry and the process of recording statements is on, the official said.
Disha had died on June 8 after allegedly jumping off the 14th floor of a building in Mumbai's Malad. An accidental death case was registered in the alleged suicide. On June 14, Rajput was found dead in his apartment in Mumbai.

NGT asks 4 firms to pay Rs 286 cr for 'gas chamber' like condition in Mumbai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
The National Green Tribunal has held four companies, including BPCL and HPCL, responsible for creating "gas chamber" like condition in Mahul, Ambapada and Chembur areas in Mumbai and directed them to pay Rs 286.2 crore for the damaged caused to the environment.
The NGT said though there may be many reasons for presence of Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the atmosphere like vehicular emissions, it cannot be denied that Sea Lord Containers Ltd (SLCL), Aegis Logistics Ltd (ALL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) contribute substantially and predominantly to the VOCs in Mahul and Ambapada villages.
"The prolonged exposure to hazardous air pollutants even at



minuscule level may weaken the lungs and other organs. Conditions prevailing in the area are sometimes likened to that of 'Gas Chamber', the tribunal said.
It was only because of these reasons that the companies had been taking actions to arrest the fugitive emissions which were particularly noticeable after 2015 and of late the industries have acted on implementation of

action plan, the NGT said.
It accepted the computation of fine by the Central Pollution Control Board and directed them to keep the amount in separate accounts.
The green panel said: "CPCB has accordingly assessed the values of VOCs emissions based upon the data provided to them by the companies."
"In view of the submissions made by the CPCB and above

"The prolonged exposure to hazardous air pollutants even at minuscule level may weaken the lungs and other organs. Conditions prevailing in the area are sometimes likened to that of 'Gas Chamber', the tribunal said

discussion, the objections of the units regarding use of data prior to control measures and the incorrect application of the formula and methodology are untenable." The NGT said it was satisfied that all the objections raised by the respondent companies have been duly considered by the CPCB's in-house Technical Committee and the correctness of the conclusion arrived at by the CPCB.

Blood donation must be taken up as a campaign: Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
Noting that there has been a significant decline in the number of voluntary blood donations in view of COVID-19 and apprehensions about hospital environment, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Friday appealed to people to come forward to donate blood.
Blood is required for emergency surgeries, blood disorders like thalassemia, blood cancer and road accidents and trauma cases, he highlighted.
"Hence the best way to serve human kind is voluntary blood donation," Vardhan said as he inaugurated a Voluntary Blood Donation Campaign at AIIMS here.
The camp, organized by AIIMS on the eve of Independence Day, is dedicated to both soldiers as well as COVID warriors who lost



their life while safeguarding the country and its citizens, the health ministry said in a statement.
Two families were invited as guests of honour - one family of a martyred soldier and one family of a fallen COVID warrior of AIIMS.
On India's fight against COVID-19, Vardhan said India's continuously rising recovery rate and progressively falling case fatality rate have proven the success of the COVID-19 containment

strategy followed by all states and UTs.
"We have successfully ramped up our testing capacity which has crossed the 8.4 lakh milestone today with more than 1450 testing labs spread across the country."
"I have confidence in the scientific developments taking place in the field of treatment and vaccines for COVID-19 and soon India will achieve more success in our fight against COVID-19," Vardhan was quoted as saying in the statement.
At the blood donation camp, the Union Health Minister interacted with blood donors and awarded them certificates for contributing to the blood donation drive. He encouraged doctors and healthcare workers themselves to come up in large numbers on the eve of Independence Day to donate blood and save lives of patients.

SHORT READS



COVID-19 positive Union minister Naik shifted to hospital

PANAJI: Union AYUSH minister Shripad Naik, who was under home isolation after testing positive for COVID-19, has been shifted to a private hospital here, his family said on Friday. The 67-year-old BJP MP from North Goa was shifted to the hospital on Thursday night. He had tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday along with his wife and since then they were under home isolation. He complained of fever after which he was taken to the hospital on Thursday night. His fever has subsided now, Naik's elder son, Sidhesh, said. He said his mother has also been hospitalised and she is under medical observation.

Constable killed, another injured in Naxal attack in Maha

NAGPUR: A constable was killed and his colleague injured in a Naxal attack in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra on Friday morning, police said. A police official said as per preliminary information, the incident took place in Koti village under Bhamragadh taluka of the Naxal-hit district, around 170km from Nagpur in eastern Maharashtra. The two constables had gone to a shop, where they were fired upon by an 'action team' of Naxals, he said. "One of the constables was martyred, while the other got injured in the incident," he said. Gadchiroli SP Shailesh Balkawde told PTI that there was an attack on two policemen by Naxals at Bhamragadh in which one constable was killed and another injured. The slain constable was identified as Dushyant Nandeshwar and his injured colleague as Dinesh Bhosale. In Mumbai, Home Minister Anil Deshmukh paid tributes to the police constable killed in the Naxal attack and wished speedy recovery to the injured jawan.

Mortal remains of 4 TN students to reach India next week: MoS MEA

NEW DELHI: The mortal remains of four Indian students who drowned in the Volga river in Russia's Volgograd are expected to reach India early next week, Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said on Friday. Four students from Tamil Nadu who were studying at the Volgograd State Medical University drowned in the Volga river on Saturday. Muraleedharan said he has spoken to the Indian Mission in Russia on the matter. "Heartfelt condolences to the families of the 4 Indian students who died in Volgograd due to drowning. Spoken to our Mission @IndEmbMoscow. The mortal remains are expected to reach India early next week. @PMOIndia @DrSJaisankar @VanathiBJP @VMBJP," he said in a tweet.

Sachin Pilot says he is Cong's strongest warrior

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Hitting out at the Opposition over its criticism of the recent political developments in Rajasthan, former deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot on Friday described himself as the strongest warrior of the Congress and said he would protect his party at all costs.

Pilot, who has returned to the Congress fold after a month-long rebellion against Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, made the remarks during the debate on a motion of confidence moved by the ruling party in the Rajasthan Assembly.

During the debate, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Rajendra Rathore mentioned Pilot's name in various matters, including the recent political developments in the state and a Special Operations Group (SOG) notice issued to him.

The notice was sent to Pilot



after the Rajasthan Police claimed to have stumbled upon a plot to topple the Congress government.

"They are taking my name repeatedly. Prior to my seat being changed, I was safe and part of the government. Then I thought why our Speaker and chief whip have given me a seat here? I thought for two minutes and then saw that this is a bor-

der. "On one side is the ruling party and on the other is the Opposition. Who is sent to the border? The strongest warrior is sent," Pilot said, interrupting Rathore.

Pilot's seat in the House was changed after he was removed as the deputy chief minister. Earlier, he used to sit next to the chief minister.

"Many things have been said

"They are taking my name repeatedly. Prior to my seat being changed, I was safe and part of the government. Then I thought why our Speaker and chief whip have given me a seat here? I thought for two minutes and then saw that this is a border

during the discussion on trust vote and many more will be said. Over time, everything will be revealed," Pilot said.

"But I want to say that whatever I or my companions had to say, we have told the doctor about our complaints... After getting the treatment, all of us today... 125 people are standing in the House," he said.

Over 4K invited for Red Fort I-Day event: Defence Ministry

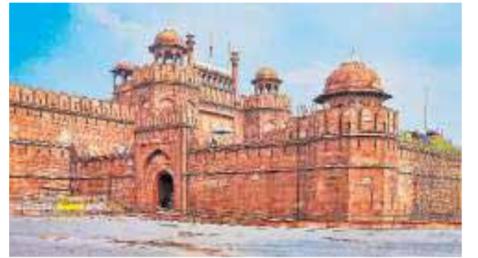
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 4,000 people including diplomats, officials and media personnel have been invited for the Independence Day ceremony at the Red Fort and it is being organised maintaining a balance between dignity of the event and factoring in COVID-19 protocols, the defence ministry said Friday.

It said the seating arrangement has been made under the guiding principle of "Do Gaz ki Doori" (maintaining distance of two yards) between any two guests. It said members of the guard of honour have been under quarantine.

"With an eye on safety, NCC (National Cadet Corps) cadets have been invited to witness the event (instead of young school children) and they will be seated at Gyanpath," it noted.

All invitees have been requested to wear masks, it said, adding that an adequate number of masks are being kept handy for distribution at



various points of venue. "Similarly, availability of hand sanitizers at pre-defined locations has been done. Display boards are placed discreetly to attract the attention of invitees," the ministry said.

In order to facilitate people's seamless movement and to avoid crowding, seating enclosures and walkways have been laid with wooden flooring and carpeting, it said.

Additional door frame metal detectors with adequately spaced markings have been

provided to avoid queuing and to ensure smooth passage for all the invitees, it mentioned.

"Most of the parking areas have been brick lined and paved in order to ensure smooth entry and exit of vehicles to the maximum feasible extent," it said.

Thermal screening at all entry points for the invitees has been planned, it mentioned. It said a thorough sanitization of the premises inside and outside the Red Fort is being carried out on a regular basis.

67 lakh girls empowered by Kanyashree scheme: Mamata

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 67 lakh girls have been empowered by the West Bengal government's Kanyashree scheme, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Friday.

Banerjee, on the occasion of seventh Kanyashree Divas, described girls as assets of the nation and said that they make everybody proud.

"Today is #KanyashreeDibas. The #Kanyashree scheme, started in 2013, has won the @UN (first prize) award. Nearly 67 lakh girls have been empowered through this unique scheme. Girls are assets of our nation, and we are proud of them," the chief minister tweeted.

Kanyashree is a conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at providing incentives to ensure girls stay in school, thereby delaying their marriage till the age of 18 years.

The flagship project, launched in 2013, offers two cash transfer components for



unmarried girls.

The first is an annual scholarship of Rs 1,000 for girls between 13 and 18 years of age, and the second is a one-time grant of 25,000 after they attain the age of 18, provided they are engaged in an academic or occupational pursuit.

The Mamata Banerjee government bagged the prestigious United Nations Public Service award for the scheme in 2017.

The state government has also decided to set up Kanyashree University in Nadia district and Kanyashree colleges across the state. The CM laid the foundation stone of the university at Krishnagar in Nadia district in January last year.

SC judgement on Prashant 'weakens' India's Constitutional democracy: Yechury

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court judgement on Friday holding activist-lawyer Prashant Bhusan guilty of criminal contempt for his tweets has weakened India's Constitutional democracy, alleged CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury.

The Supreme Court held Bhusan guilty of criminal contempt for his two derogatory tweets against the judiciary saying they cannot be said to be a fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary made in the public interest.

Holding that Bhusan attempted to scandalise the entire institution of the Supreme Court, the top court said: "If such an attack is not dealt with, with requisite degree of firmness, it may affect the national honour and prestige in the comity of nations."

"Whether one agrees with the precise formulation of Prashant Bhusan's tweets or



not, the Supreme Court judgement convicting him of Contempt is alarming. It brings into the ambit of Contempt, bona-fide criticism of the role played by Supreme Court as a Constitutional authority," Yechury said.

"The judgement will prevent open and free discussion on the role of the Supreme Court in India's democracy. This weakens India's Constitutional democracy," he said in a series of tweets.

"Whether one agrees with the precise formulation of Prashant Bhusan's tweets or not, the Supreme Court judgement convicting him of Contempt is alarming. It brings into the ambit of Contempt, bona-fide criticism of the role played by Supreme Court as a Constitutional authority," Yechury said

Covid situation not conducive to reopening of temples: HC

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Observing that the current situation was "not at all conducive" to reopening of places of worship, the Bombay High Court on Friday refused to pass any interim order directing that temples in Maharashtra be opened for public.

A bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice P V Tande said the COVID-19 situation in the state had not improved and people must therefore, pray at home. The bench was hearing a public interest litigation filed through advocate Dipesh Siroya seeking that the Maharashtra government be directed to reopen temples for public.

The state government could open temples and allow only a limited number of worshippers at a time in accordance with its COVID-19 lockdown guidelines, Siroya argued. The bench, however, asked Siroya which temple he considered personally, to be the "biggest?"

"The biggest temple is



humanity," Siroya said.

To which, the bench responded saying, "If you have any love for humanity, do not press for such prayers then." "For the love and safety of humanity, pray at home," it said. The state government pointed out that on August 12, it had submitted a detailed reply before another bench of the high court explaining how COVID-19 cases were still on the rise and that opening temples or any other places of worship was not feasible currently.

The state government said it had prohibited public gatherings for celebrations for Gudi Padwa and Janmashtami, and people had been asked to pray at home.

Queries on equivalence of eng degree nomenclatures be resolved at state level

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Queries on equivalence or relevance of nomenclatures for different engineering and technology branches for recruiting faculty should be resolved at the state or the university level, the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) has said.

The directive by the technical education regulator comes after it received multiple representations and queries on equivalence or relevance of different nomenclatures.

AICTE said engineering institutions should take an appropriate decision on relevant qualifying degrees for recruitment for teaching positions especially keeping in view the interdisciplinary nature of emerging tech-



nologies. "The council keeps on receiving a large number of representations or grievances, not only from faculty members of AICTE-approved institutions but also from the faculty members graduated from various IITs, NITs, university departments and deemed universities pertaining to their eligibility,

suitability and promotions to employ as assistant professors, associate professors or professors for different departments due to the deviations in nomenclature of their qualifying degree at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels," AICTE Member Secretary Rajive Kumar said.

Jadavpur university students make electronic mask

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Students of Jadavpur University have made an electronic mask which will be able to annihilate any virus in close proximity to the person wearing it, an official said.

The design of the mask, made by the Instrumentation department, has been readied but production will be made only after the approval of concerned authorities of government, a senior university official, associated with the project, said. The electromagnetic field created by the mask will annihilate any virus, including sars-2, which comes in the striking distance of the person wearing it, the official said.

Administrative work of Atal Bihari Vajpayee University to start in Sep

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The administrative work of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Medical University being set up by the Uttar Pradesh government in Lucknow will start from next month, a senior official said on Friday. The state government has made available 50 acres of land on Sultanpur Road in the city for the construction of the varsity which would take another two years to complete.

However, its administrative work will start in the first week of September from Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Medical Institute building in Gomti Nagar, vice chancellor of the university and renowned plastic surgeon A K Singh said.

About 60 government and private medical colleges and dental



colleges, some 300 nursing colleges and paramedical institutes will come under one umbrella with the setting up of this new medical university, Singh said. Institutes like King George's

Medical University (KGMU), Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) Saifai Medical Institute, Etawah will not be a part of this university, he stressed.

AirAsia India offers 50,000 seats without base fares to armed forces

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AirAsia India on Friday offered 50,000 seats without base fares to the armed forces personnel for the travel period between September 25 and December 31.

On the eve of the Independence Day, the airline said the travellers can submit their details online between August 15 and August 21 to avail the offer.

While the base fare will be waived off under the "RedPass" offer, airport fees, charges and taxes would be borne by the personnel, it stated in a press release.

"Once the application is reviewed, details will be sent to the applicant on the redemption process on any domestic flight operated by AirAsia India," the release said.

The AirAsia RedPass will be valid for a one-way flight for which the reservation is



required to be made at least 21 days prior to the date of departure, it mentioned.

In addition to the base fare discount, the personnel will also enjoy priority while boarding and depositing check-in luggage, the low-cost carrier noted.

It said the offer can be availed by personnel of the Indian Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, paramilitary

forces and under trained cadets.

The aviation sector has been significantly impacted due to travel restrictions imposed in India and other countries in view of the coronavirus pandemic. All airlines in India have taken cost-cutting measures such as pay cuts, leave without pay and firings of employees in order to conserve cash flow.

Indian scientists develop sustainable process for making brick-like structures on Moon

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has developed a sustainable process for making brick-like structures on the moon, according to IISc.

It exploits lunar soil, and uses bacteria and guar beans to consolidate the soil into possible load-bearing structures, Bengaluru-based IISc said in a statement.

"These space bricks could eventually be used to assemble structures for habitation on the moon's surface, the researchers suggest," it said.

"It is really exciting because it brings two different fields biology and mechanical engineering together," says Alok Kumar, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, IISc, one of the



authors of two studies recently published in 'Ceramics International' and 'PLOS One'.

Space exploration has grown exponentially in the last century. With Earth's resources dwindling rapidly, scientists have only intensified their efforts to inhabit the moon and possibly other planets.

The cost of sending one pound of material to outer

space is about Rs 7.5 lakh, according to the statement.

The process developed by the IISc and ISRO team uses urea which can be sourced from human urine and lunar soil as raw materials for construction on the moon's surface, it said.

This decreases the overall expenditure considerably. The process also has a lower

"It is really exciting because it brings two different fields biology and mechanical engineering together," says Alok Kumar, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, IISc, one of the authors of two studies recently published in 'Ceramics International' and 'PLOS One'

carbon footprint because it uses guar gum instead of cement for support.

This could also be exploited to make sustainable bricks on Earth, it was stated.

Some micro-organisms can produce minerals through metabolic pathways.

One such bacterium, called 'Sporosarcina pasteurii' produces calcium carbonate crystals through a metabolic pathway called the ureolytic cycle: it uses urea and calcium to form these crystals as byproducts of the pathway.

"Living organisms have been involved in such mineral precipitation since the dawn of the Cambrian period, and modern science has now found a use for them," says Kumar.

To exploit this ability, Kumar and colleagues at IISc teamed up with ISRO scientists Arjun Dey and I Venugopal.

They first mixed the bacteria with a simulant of lunar soil. Then, they added the required urea and calcium sources along with gum extracted from locally-sourced guar beans.

India at 74

The pandemic has given us our transformative moment. Probably to remind us of forgotten ideals that make up our civilisational DNA



On September 5, 2019, 74-year-old Erramatti Mangayamma gave birth to twin girls in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, becoming the world's oldest mother after being called "barren" her whole life. At 74, Ferdinand Marie de Lesseps made an attempt to construct the Suez Canal. And at 77, John Glenn became the oldest person to go into space. The point of citing these inspirational figures, who were really ordinary men and women till they were challenged, is that no time is too early or too late enough to make a new beginning. And at 74, with perhaps one of the most unimaginable crises in our nation's history — the relentless pandemic,

the sliding economy, the collapse of democratic institutions, the chaos of sectarian politics and a conflict-ridden society — India is perhaps at that turning point in its timeline to correct its course and claim a new destiny. Perhaps this churning is necessary to prepare ourselves for a new century instead of relying on templates that we thought were transformative but are now past their prime. Had it not been for the pandemic and the crushing burden it imposed on our social and economic infrastructure, we wouldn't have bothered to look at rebuilding them. There's nothing wrong with globalisation except that when there is resource scarcity in every nation, as a pandemic-induced shutdown snapped mutual dependencies, we ought to be self-sufficient. The massive push to self-produce through *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, decentralising the agricultural economy and empowering rural India may not show results in the short-term. But at least the steps for the next big leap have been laid. China transformed itself in its lowest phase and became the world's largest producer. As a consumption-driven society, we are battling low demand and investment, but given the accelerators and enablers in economic packages, revival is possible. Graded targets for manufacturing at home, incentivisation and hand-holding through the initial breakthrough stage, standardisation of quality through technical partnerships with global expertise, developing economies of scale and allowing competition only to build better and robust home brands will get us there. Not insularity, but letting the trade winds blow so that we can make our mark on shop shelves around the world beyond the boutique handicrafts or tea. If we can be the world's largest producer of vaccines, we can be the factory floor for other products as well. Statistics speak for themselves. Most global chains and majors have, so far, not robbed domestic brands of their dedicated market but have had to indigenise their product lines instead. Pre-pandemic, India emerged as one of the fastest-growing major economies and post-recovery is projected to become one of the top three biggest economies in about a decade. And if the deep penetration of our digital economy is any indication, then that would be our competitive edge. These are also the days when India has awakened to its potential in the knowledge economy. Taking the COVID-19 management module as an example, just in a four-month period, we have developed our own test kits, exported drugs, ventilators and PPE kits, worked on our own vaccine and built multi-bed treatment facilities through both public spending and private partnerships. Imagine, what an increased health spending and a ground-up public health policy, especially at the primary and secondary levels, can do to ease medical treatment and not make it another nightmare for a nation battling serious disease burdens. For the first time, research and development (R&D) is being prioritised in the National Education Policy (NEP) with dedicated funding, compared to the last few years when money spent on it has been actually dwindling. The NEP's switch in emphasis from herd-oriented learning to an absorptive and application-based one should hopefully groom innovative minds and get us creditable research papers and patents, an area where our centres of excellence are still inadequate. So far, ISRO has been the only name that comes to mind when it comes to innovation, what with its missions to the moon and Mars. But science and technology will be the most meaningful when it impacts the life of the common man, still distressed and poor, and given Indian ingenuity, we could lead a solution-oriented talent pool.

Of course, our democracy has weathered many challenges and unfortunately, it faces its toughest survival test yet. It is no longer a culture but a tool. Politics has overtaken its true purpose, the purveyors of power using it to erode representative institutions and using collective angst and distress to arrogate more power to themselves. Policies are being weaponised for partisan purposes than public good. Though the shared crisis of COVID-19 did bring about some kind of cooperative federalism, we must not forget that happened only with an authoritarian sanction. Meanwhile, majoritarianism has become a mainstream virtue and secularism an ill-conceived vice, conformists of mainline discourse are true patriots while a thinking civil society has become an enemy of the State. The executive has become bigger than either the legislature or the judiciary and watchdog institutions like the media are either willing propagandists or ousted rebels. We are more disunited when we should be united as a pluralistic society. Yet the pandemic that has attacked us at a not too friendly age of 74 has brought out the best of human spirit, courage and compassion in everyday life. Probably to remind us of the ideals that make up our civilisational DNA. And, therefore, we are best placed to resurrect them than writing them off.

Sputnik V and safety

Is Russia's vaccine truly effective without community trials or is it the beginning of a new commercial and political race?



Russia claims to have beaten the rest of the world and come out with a vaccine for the Coronavirus named 'Sputnik V.' However, even before it hits the markets, it has become mired in controversy, with several countries, and even traditional friend India, expressing some doubts over its efficacy. What has the experts worried is the pace at which Sputnik V has been produced, leaving behind front-runners like Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna and Pfizer. They fear that without large scale community trials, Moscow has cut corners and may have put the lives of those inoculated at risk. The Moscow-based Gamaleya Institute, which is making the vaccine, got lightning speed regulatory approvals less than two months after it got into human trials. Compare this to other vaccine candidates in human trials that are not expected to be ready before early next year. However, Russia has claimed that such fast approvals were possible because Sputnik V resembles a vaccine for the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome that had already been tested greatly. This isn't the only controversy surrounding Russia and its bid to win the vaccine race. In July, it was accused of trying to steal vaccine research by the UK's National Cyber Security Centre. But the fact of the matter is that despite all the concerns of health and security experts, Moscow has got orders for one billion doses already from countries desperate to eradicate the pandemic. And even as Russia claims that India is one of the 20 nations to place an order, New Delhi has set up an expert committee headed by NITI Aayog member VK Paul to "consider the logistics and ethical aspects of procuring and administering the COVID-19 vaccine." The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) can ask Russia to conduct late-phase human trials, usually both phase-2 and phase-3, on an Indian population. This is the usual requirement for all vaccines developed outside India.

But there are overlap issues. As over 50 per cent of vaccines are currently manufactured in India, the Pune-based Serum Institute of India has already tied up with other developers. Then, there is the issue of availability and competition with India's own vaccine. According to the Russian Register of Pharmaceuticals website, the vaccine would be in circulation from January 2021 but the Indian vaccine is expected to hit the market before that. So, how the Centre will balance out the country's need for a Corona vaccine with the commercial interests of Indian firms producing it remains to be seen.

Pledge of independence

On our 74th Independence Day, we have perhaps forgotten that India's strength lies in unity and not conformity. We need to renew our vows



AJOY KUMAR

On August 15, 1947, India and its citizens gained independence with the British rule coming to an end. Loudly and proudly, we pronounced to the world that we, too, were ready to step out from the darkness of colonial rule to a new dawn, ripe with uncertainty but also hope. It is this hope that former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru so eloquently captured in his address to the nation on the eve of India's independence. He opened his speech with, "Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny..." His immortal words still send a chill down my spine. But too often, we focus only on the first few words. If we read his speech further, Nehruji talked about a pledge that we have renewed by obtaining freedom. A pledge "of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity."

Few exemplified this pledge and dedication to the service of India more than Mohd Usman, also known as *Naushera ka sher* (the Lion of Naushera). At the time of India's independence, Mohd Usman was offered a high position in the Pakistan Army but he refused to join. Instead, he chose to help build a "new India" that had awakened on the fateful night of August 15. Usman bravely defended Naushera, causing a heavy toll on the Pakistani side but was martyred in July 1948 while fighting for his motherland. He was posthumously awarded the Maha Vir Chakra but more importantly, he remained a shining symbol of hope for a secular India. On his death, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas wrote, "...a precious life of imagination and unswerving patriotism has fallen a victim to communal fanaticism. Brigadier Usman's brave example will be an abiding source of inspiration for free India."

Such an example was necessary at a time when tension, fear and suspicion were writ large owing to the spectre of Partition. Not only did Usman dedicate his life to the service of India but also his death. Just as significant and poetic is the fact that six months before Usman was killed in a battle, another famous son of India, Jadunath Singh Rathore, who was under Usman's command, protected a nine-man forward section



“ WE ARE CURRENTLY LIVING IN TIMES WHERE DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF SOCIETY ARE ASKED TO PROVE THEIR NATIONALITY. PROVING ONE'S NATIONALITY HAS BEEN REDUCED TO THE IDEA OF BEING SUBSERVIENT TO A RULING CLASS AND NOT CREATING TOO MUCH NOISE. THIS TEST IS NOT LIMITED TO INDIVIDUALS OF DIFFERENT FAITHS OR CASTES. IT IS FOR EVERYONE WHO DISAGREES WITH THE GOVT ”

ery against thousands of enemy forces. His bravery led to him being posthumously awarded the second-ever Param Vir Chakra. This sacrifice by two of India's brave sons — both were from different faiths but laid down their lives for the Indian dream — in all likelihood terrorised Pakistan more than any weapon could and still does. So where does India stand today? Seventy two years after the death of these bravehearts, it seems that the fear and suspicion, that loomed large then, looms larger now. We are currently living in times where different sections of society are asked to prove their nationality. Proving one's nationality has been reduced to the idea of being subservient to a ruling class and not creating too much noise. This test is not limited to individuals of different faiths or people who come from different castes; it applies to anyone who does not agree with the view of the Government in power.

There are a number of instances where dissent against the Government and its actions are not only treated with the reckless exercise of power but also through an indiscriminate attack on the individual's patriotism. There are numerous examples that are in the public domain but one does not

even need to go that far. The author himself has been subjected to vile abuse and was branded "un-Indian" merely because he had written/spoken in favour of what he believed was right for the beloved country. This despite the fact that he served as a public servant and was awarded a medal for bravery by the Government itself. I can only imagine how an everyday citizen is treated when he/she dares to dissent.

A part of the reason why we are in this unfortunate position is that we have forgotten that India's strength lies in unity and not conformity. We are steadily moving towards a time where dissent in a non-violent form and the free flow of ideas is stymied by authoritarian force or by the loudest voice. We have forgotten that our enemies as Indians are not our countrymen, who may follow different faiths or eat different foods, but illiteracy, hunger and corruption.

In his speech, Nehru recognised this when he said, "The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity." His words hold just as true today as it did then. True service to India is not fighting wars that our political masters or news channels manipulate

us into. Instead, it is the fight against poverty, illiteracy and disease that plague millions of Indians.

This is one of the main reasons why I am proud of the work done by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The party's goal is to remain true to the nationalistic spirit through its work. This is why the Delhi model of governance has received such widespread credit in areas of health, education and transparency. All of this has been achieved by people of all faiths, gender and caste. By treating service to one another as the truest form of patriotism, we are united by purpose and enriched by our non-conformity.

Therefore, as we celebrate the 74th independence day, I would like to urge the citizens to remember the sacrifices of Usman and Jadunath Singh Rathore, who were killed before they could get a chance to see their beloved country turn two and laid down their lives for the Indian dream. A dream where people, divided for centuries by a foreign ruler, could find common meaning and purpose by pledging to live in service to one another and, therefore, in service to the country. A pledge renewed in 1947 demands renewal even more so in 2020.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of the AAP)

SOUND BITE

Having completed all talks, we have come to the Assembly today. It may rain fire at this frontline, but we all and I will be the shield, club and spear and will protect.



Congress leader —Sachin Pilot

Unless you are a good actor, you won't survive. As far as the disparity is concerned, it is tougher for outsiders. Star kids have access to information that we don't.



Actor —Vikrant Massey

The world will be laughing and taking full advantage of the United States if Joe Biden ever became President. Our country would collapse.



US President —Donald Trump

If one analyses this (Galwan) incident carefully, it's clear that the onus is not on China. The Indian side crossed the LAC for provocation and attacked the Chinese border troops.



Chinese Ambassador to India —Sun Weidong

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Manage distribution

Sir — An expert group on COVID-19 vaccine administration has advised against States procuring the Russian vaccine. The directive has reportedly come in response to some States showing keen interest in getting the consignment to arrest the pandemic. Any procurement has to be done centrally, so that supplies can be allocated to States in proportion to their needs. Without a data-driven and honest assessment, this could set off needless politicking.

In the case of lockdowns, too, a uniform policy should have been adopted for all States to follow. Had every State followed the same guidelines, the detection of cases and deaths in all the States in terms of percentage would have been more or less the same.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Diminishing popularity

Sir — Politics is a different ball game altogether. For three years, US President Donald Trump

Race to the White House

In the run-up to the November elections, US President Donald Trump is relentlessly whipping up anti-immigrant sentiments. On the other hand, Democratic candidate Joe Biden's choice of Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential mate is a reminder to the incumbent that immigrants cannot be wished away. Though Kamala is part-Indian, part-Jamaican, she is an absolute American, committed to her country and its people. From being San Francisco's District Attorney twice, to being elected California's Attorney General for two terms and being Senator from California since 2017 to finally being a vice-presidential prospect, she has achieved many firsts as a woman of African and Asian pedigree. Irrespective of whether 77-year-old Biden wins or loses, 55-year-old Kamala is the heir apparent for the Democratic party which may be as early as 2024. Her rise is thought-provoking for us not only because of her Indian roots but also because she boycotted the "Howdy-Modi" event in Texas last year. Her views on Article 370 and CAA among others shall put the Government on the backfoot. Here, Biden and the Democratic party's views are no different. The party, perceived to be under the Leftists' and Progressives' control, occasionally indulges in India-bashing and is also seen to be soft on China, unlike Trump. Unless



it tweaks its stance, a Democratic victory would have a significant bearing on both the Indo-US and Indo-China relationships. Black voters in the US, courtesy the George Floyd saga, are already polarised against Trump. Kamala's entry will lead to a further hardening of stance. Though Indian Americans traditionally vote for Democrats, yet a shift is happening towards Republicans. The 2.3 million Indian voters can tilt the results either way. How the two political parties, going forward, charm them will be a matter of strategy and shall have long term echoes on who stays on top of the pecking order in the geopolitical space.

SK Prabhakar
Gurugram

House for the moment and she is likely to be a trumpcard in a close contest. She is expected to wear away the Black votes and the Indian diaspora in a bid to trounce Trump.

CK Subramaniam
Via email

Temporary relief

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Will the truce hold?" (August 14). It is no secret that the coup in Rajasthan was orchestrated by the BJP. It was just waiting to destabilise the Government. But Sachin Pilot's revolt fizzled out as the Congress took an unusually tough stand. By now Pilot would have also realised the selfishness of the saffron party, who tried to use him as a pawn and played its cards very carefully. As for the Congress, it is time it nominates a president, who can lead the party and act as a bulwark against a rampaging BJP. Most importantly, accommodate the young Turks.

Tharci S Fernando
Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

\$5 trillion GDP a distant dream

By all calculations, the COVID-19 impact has pushed India's \$5 trillion goal back by three years



SWAPNIL SONI

The Prime Minister has laid down a visionary target of making India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25. This has stimulated debate and discussion among economists and policymakers to seek roadmaps to attain this optimistic economic goal. This discussion garners more significance given the current domestic and global economic slowdown coupled with domestic price instability, the US-China trade war and the current pandemic. Amid such global and domestic challenges, two questions arise: Will India become a \$5 trillion economy? What should be done to help India attain its goal?

It is necessary to empirically diagnose India's growth pattern to meet the objective of a \$5 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from the current level of \$2.9 trillion. The latest estimate of the GDP for 2019-20 and the exchange rate of ₹70.39 per dollar (average exchange rate of 2019-20) yield a \$2.9 trillion GDP that has to touch \$5 in five years. This implies exchange rate adjusted Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of about 13.5 per cent, which is close to the Niti Aayog's projection of 11.5 per cent. However, the \$5 trillion GDP target was originally set during the pre-COVID-19 scenario, which has now made this target impossible to achieve owing to the disastrous consequences of the lockdown on the economy.

Amid the macroeconomic shocks and uncertainties, many national and global institutions and rating agencies have been releasing a revised GDP growth forecast for 2020-21. S&P and Fitch Solutions have projected India's GDP growth rate for 2020-21 as -5 per cent. The World Bank maintained a -3.2 per cent growth outlook. In contrast, Moody's Investors Services and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) posited non-negative growth numbers of zero per cent and two per cent for the current financial year (FY). On May 22, the RBI postulated the GDP growth in the negative territory. It further released a projection of -1.5 per cent growth for 2020-21 in its *Survey of Professional Forecasters* report in June. However, most projections predict above eight per cent growth outlook in the FY 2021-22, owing to the fiscal and monetary stimulus and reforms announced by the Government accompanied by the unravelling of the pent-up aggregate demand in the economy.

However, incorporating the adversity in GDP growth, due to the pandemic, it is best to consider a GDP growth rate of nearly -3.2 per cent for 2020-21 relying on the World Bank's estimate and the RBI's negative territory forecast. This growth number, while being conservative, hovers around the other negative estimates and thus is a tenable representative of all the growth projections made by various multilateral institutions and agencies. It is inevitable that subdued growth for the initial year (2020-21) of the \$5 trillion target trajectory will either devolve the growth pressure to subsequent years or push the target year to a later period.

Realistic estimation for the post-COVID-19 period i.e., from 2021-22 to 2024-25, yields a CAGR of 18.1 per cent, incorporating a -3.2 per cent GDP growth for 2020-21. This estimate indicates that the Indian economy has to grow at an annual rate of 18.1 per cent to attain a GDP target of \$5 trillion by 2024-25, which looks more surreal than real. Plus, each one per cent decrease in the growth rate for the current year yields an additional burden of 0.3 per cent in the CAGR for the subsequent years of the growth trajectory. Given the unrealistic-looking projected growth rate of 18.1 per cent, one needs to look at the alternative to attain the \$5 trillion target which is, naturally, a postponement of the target year.

In the post-COVID-19 period, the economy is expected to recover and revive as argued by multilateral institutions, rating agencies and economists. In fact, economists have even gone ahead and contemplated that the Indian market will emerge stronger than ever post-COVID-19, given the liquidity support and future demand. This revival is attributable to stimulus and reforms announced by the Government for all the productive sectors. However, the effectiveness of these stimuli and reforms would depend on their implementation and thus remains debatable. If not a big bang, a green shoot is expected to knock on the door of the economy in the next FY, replicating a V-shaped recovery to some extent.

Given this, from 2021-22, the economy's productive sectors, i.e. agriculture, industry and services, will follow their respective historical growth trajectories. Thus, it is expected that these productive sectors, post-COVID-19, will grow at the historical average of the previous five years of about 7.5 per cent, 9.0 per cent and 11.4 per cent, respectively. This looks more realistic and acceptable than the 18.1 per cent annual growth rate, derived and discussed earlier. This consideration and associated analysis revealed that the Indian economy will attain only \$3.8 trillion by 2024-25 and reach the \$5 trillion target by 2027-28 with a CAGR of 9.97 per cent. This implies that the COVID-19 impact has pushed India's \$5 trillion dream back by three years.

The ambitious \$5 trillion economic objective intends to provide a stimulus to the economy while raising many pragmatic challenges to achieve it. This objective can be achieved by providing an appropriate fillip to the growth of agriculture, industry and services sectors that are drivers of the Indian economy. However, a data-driven approach reveals that the growth attained by the present GDP patterns is far from the target required to attain the \$5 trillion objective. However, it is possible to attain this target by 2027-28 when there is a recovery in the economy during the post-COVID-19 period coupled with a consistent growth in productive sectors over the years.

Historically, the services and industry sectors show a high correlation with the overall GDP growth rate but they need consistent stimulus for growth. In fact, the productive sectors collectively can deliver viable growth rates that may put the Indian economy into the \$5 trillion club by 2027-28.

Any moderate shock to one sector may be absorbed by the other sector, but a major shock cannot be tackled and can derail the \$5 trillion growth trajectory. Thus, policymakers must focus on all the three sectors equally without focussing on any particular one. Along with the individual growth of a sector, its dynamics with other sectors and its contribution to the economy are evenly important. This could be achieved by attracting Foreign Direct Investment and strengthening the Regional Innovation Systems to encourage local firms to network, innovate and globalise.

(The writer is Senior Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I HAVE THE GREAT HONOUR TO ANNOUNCE THAT I'VE PICKED KAMALA HARRIS, A FEARLESS FIGHTER FOR THE LITTLE GUY AS MY RUNNING MATE FOR THE ELECTIONS.
 —FORMER US VICE-PRESIDENT
JOE BIDEN



SHE (KAMALA HARRIS) IS THE MEANEST, THE MOST HORRIBLE, THE MOST DISRESPECTFUL OF ANYBODY IN THE US SENATE.
 —US PRESIDENT
DONALD TRUMP

Shun vitriolic leaders

The community should be represented by some liberally-balanced Muslims who know history and at the same time are rooted in their faith. Or else we could be stranded in a wasteland



FIROZ BAKHT AHMED

A lot of water has flowed under the bridge since 1947. The 200 million plus population of Indian Muslims was the one, that at the call of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad from the steps of old Delhi's Jama Masjid, put down its luggage meant for the next Lahore train from the Old Delhi Railway Station. In all probability, theirs was the right decision, in spite of the fact that many of their relatives had decided to leave for their El Dorado — the newly created Pakistan. Even today most of the Indian Muslims living in Old Delhi have their relatives in the country across the border. Religious frenzy has never augured well for any community in India and the world. In the words of eminent Muslim thinker, AG Noorani, the "two-nation theory" was, in effect, an offshoot of the constant friction and confrontation stirred up between the two communities and it was under exceptional circumstances that Jinnah's concept gained popularity among the Muslims. Indeed, the whole country responded to the "two-nation theory." The greatest religion for both communities became Hindu-Muslim hatred. This mephitic form of politics saw its culmination in 1947 when a wall of hatred rose between the two communities.

Partition horrors: Elders would describe the gory sight of trains full of mauled, murdered, mutilated and dead Hindus chugging into the stations from Pakistan and similar trains from India, full of dead and mutilated Muslims pulling into Pakistan. These were called "blood trains" and all too often they crossed the border in funeral silence. Huts, houses, bungalows and mansions were burnt and robbed on both sides. Women were raped and murdered, children were killed in front of their parents, some women on both sides of the border jumped into wells and rivers while men also killed their wives and daughters to save them from dishonour.

Jinnah and Nehru both responsible: Jinnah on the Muslim front and Nehru in opposition to Jinnah, both barristers full of intellectual rivalry to be one up against the other, instead of preserving the sovereignty of India, started dreaming of being the new kings of the nascent kingdoms. Azad was blatantly ignored and sidelined by the Congress because he considered both Nehru and Jinnah as the main villains of the vivisection. He could read well into Nehru's flagrant opportunism and ambition to be the first Prime Minister of the new nation.

Azad was quite aggravated about the Partition and had accused Nehru of being lured into the Partition by Lady Edwina Mountbatten. Even in the play *Maulana Azad*, by noted playwright and scriptwriter, Dr Saeed Alam, Tom Alter, playing the protagonist, was heard stating in chaste Urdu, *Log kehney hain, aur theek hi kehney hongey, ke Jawahar Lal ko batwaare pe raazi karney mein us charming lady ka bahut bada haath tha.* (People say, and they must be right, that the charming lady played a big role in getting Jawahar Lal to accept the Partition.)

Today's Muslim leadership, bereft of thinkers like Maulana Azad and Dr Zakir Hussain, has lost both its voice and utility. During every election, it has been seen that all leaders are power-brokers indulging in pernicious vote-bank manipulation, acquiring State patronage themselves and leaving ordinary Muslims to the mercy of God.

Muslims misled: Despite that, Muslims won't fully trust Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had declared in a meeting with eminent clerics and intellectuals at his residence on June 6, 2015, that he wanted to see in each Muslim's hands the holy *Quran* and a computer. When Home Minister Amit Shah said, "Muslims are like our children. We want to treat

IT IS TIME THAT MUSLIMS REALISE THAT THE RSS IS A REALITY AND MODI IS A PRIME MINISTER WHO HAS PLEDGED 'SABKA SATH, SABKA VIKAS, SABKA VISHWAS (COMPASSION FOR ALL, PROGRESS FOR ALL, TRUST FOR ALL)'. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MUSLIMS TO HOLD HIM TO ACCOUNT AND ENSURE THAT HE REMAINS COMMITTED TO INDIA'S PLURALISTIC LEITMOTIF



them equally on a par with others", hardly any member of the community hailed it. This opposing mindset is creating a major problem in better integration with the mainstream. Battered by the populist rhetoric and provocative militancy of its myopic ill-educated clerics and shallow youth, the nation's cultured and high potential minority stands at the crossroads. Owing to their obscurantist approach, they are leading the community back to the dark ages of ignorance, like the ones in Arab countries before the advent of Islam. More often than not, they are interested in feathering their own nests and are indulging in petty-mindedness characterised by an extremely narrow and irresponsible outlook completely out of tune with the existing reality. Such leaders are not seriously interested in dealing with the main problems of the community. Muslim leaders and petty politicians are becoming richer day-by-day while the people they represent are languishing in ghettos.

In this ghettoised situation emerged the churlish political middlemen as interlocutors for communities, picking on sensational issues that would only apparently tighten their stranglehold on the gullible and divert attention from the real bread and butter and educational issues. Shah Bano, Jamia Millia, the AMU's minority character, Taslima Nasreen, Salman Rushdie and so on became issues. However, none of them had any bearing on the real problems of the Muslims. Educational backwardness, women's education, social stagnation, communalisation of the police force and absence from the mainstream were never addressed by the self-appointed interlocutors with the same emphasis as the Babri Masjid issue. It is thanks mainly to this leadership that Muslims remain stranded in a wasteland of missed opportunities even 73 years after Independence.

Muslims' ghetto mindset, the main problem: Indian Muslims, who now call themselves "Muslim Indians" deliberately, do agree that Pakistan today has

become hell on Earth. Yet they fail to thank their God and stars that they are far better in India as compared to those in Pakistan in terms of safety and security of life. My Karachi-based cousin has told me that after dusk, all city roads become deserted. I have a few questions to ask my Indian co-religionists. How is it going to benefit them when they abuse the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the BJP and Modi? Will constantly howling for reservations based on religion not discredit them?

Why do the so-called intellectuals and clerics instead of coolly convincing, heckle opponents in TV debates? All this has created a negative perception of Muslims in the country. My concern is that if these questions are not satisfactorily answered, relations between Hindus and Muslims will worsen. So far at least the answers that have come from educated Muslims have been deeply unsatisfactory or incomplete. The community should be represented by some liberally-balanced Muslims, who know history and at the same time are rooted in their faith.

However, the situation with the ghetto mindset of the Muslim community today is rather grim as they remain critical of the system in general and try to run a parallel governance via the AIMPLB (All-India Muslim Personal Law Board), the *Sharia* courts and the so-called rabble-rousing leaders like the Owaisi brothers, Azam Khan and a horde of perennial apologists seen in TV debates. Rather than serving the community and the nation, their vitriolic remarks create a perception of the community that all the Muslims are similar, which is not true. As per my assessment, more than 50 per cent Indian Muslims are with a progressive idea of India. However, they are tight-lipped and don't want to come out openly in support of the present Government for fear of being socially boycotted or stigmatised as RSS stooges and BJP sycophants.

Prophecy's teachings forgotten: The problem with today's Muslims is that they

don't follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in letter and spirit. This actually distances them from Islam as well, because, Islam possesses sufficient elasticity to enable it to adapt itself to the social and political revolution going on around it. The Mohammedan Common Law (today AIMPLB), or *Shariah*, is by no means unchangeable or unalterable. A practical example of it is the ban of triple *talaq*, a part of *Sharia* but not mentioned in the holy *Quran* and absolutely abhorred by the Prophet. The only law unalterable in Islam is essentially the *Quran* and the traditions of the Prophet. The team of Modi, Shah and Ravi Shankar Prasad, the Law Minister, have banned the draconian *Sharia* law besides settling the eons old *mandir-masjid* imbroglio.

But across India, despite the many problems, the community is forging ahead. Large numbers are doing exceedingly well. The 1992 Babri mosque razing led to major churning. The dominant consensus was that it was important to concentrate on education. That process continues. On November 9, 2019, the issue got amicably settled and none of the Muslims, except the AIMPLB or Owaisi brothers, protested.

Light at the end of the tunnel: More and more Muslim women, even in smaller towns, are acquiring an education. Although a Muslim political party has come up in Assam, another one in Telangana and two have been formed in Uttar Pradesh, most Muslims swear by secular national parties. It is time that Muslims realise that the RSS is a reality and Modi is a Prime Minister who has pledged "Sabka Sath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas (Compassion for all, Progress for all, Trust for all)." It is the responsibility of Muslims to hold him to account and ensure that he remains committed to India's pluralistic leitmotif.

(The author is the chancellor of Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad and the grandnephew of Bharat Ratna Maulana Azad)

MSMEs need help to keep afloat

Invest in a mechanism to strengthen the longevity muscle of MSMEs as that would help break barriers and capture global markets



DIPANKER MUKHERJEE

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the flavour of the season. Promoting inclusive growth by providing employment opportunities in rural areas to women and people belonging to marginalised sections of society, they are the new engines of India's growth story.

Contributing about 29 per cent to India's GDP, the vision is to increase this contribution to about 50 per cent. Collectively employing over 120 million people, second only to the mammoth agriculture sector, the MSME sector contributes over 45 per cent to India's overall exports.

A net gain is also reduction of regional imbalances and a more equitable distribution of national income and

wealth. MSMEs by design have high flexibility and strong ties to customers and suppliers.

The focus on customer needs, detailed knowledge and experience is many times difficult to replicate. Low overheads often aid lower fluctuations in their business cycle. With a very positive climate in the thinking on MSMEs, where policy, polity and production seem to have come together in fitting measure, all seems to be well in this rapidly upcoming 63 million-sector. It is primed to help move the economy towards the \$5 trillion mark.

Some chinks below the surface, however, need attention and merit early correction. The MSME sector operates primarily on a cash basis and has less access to formal sources of credit. The financial stress of operation, which has been curtailed due to the lockdown and the continuing overhead expenses, however small, has created a burden on many of these companies, which are struggling and are on the brink of shutting down or have already shut down.

With the overall slowdown in the economy and the prospect of a tepid

growth in future demand, this sector will be hard hit. For the MSME sector not to become a "me too" sector, asking for complete Government support and the Government in turn nudging the unwilling banking sector to provide credit in a high default risk scenario, the options available are seemingly limited. An enhanced working capital limit and guarantee on loans to small businesses seem to be the way ahead.

The biggest need for working capital — MSME bank loans — is contested by the banks. Processes are lengthy and loan queues are long. The MSMEs can't get loans and hence don't grow and because they don't grow, they don't get loans. It is a classic "catch-22" situation. Ironically, large lending to big corporations continues despite the risk of them becoming insolvent.

The credit gap for MSMEs as estimated by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and Intelcap stands at ₹16.7 lakh crore. Loan approvals, logistics support, technology access and market access work against the MSME growth ambition. Unlike large companies, they do not have the support of a

strong network of people, resources and marketing channels, most of which become easily accessible with scale.

MSMEs are often seen competing with large corporations and this should be avoided through policy measures. Certain products and categories should be prioritised for MSMEs along with pre-defined quality standards. What affects the MSMEs further is that they don't have the experience of learnings from management education to have an appropriate appreciation of the grammar of business. There is a hit and trial growth.

The future of MSMEs depends significantly on big corporations buying from them. They thus link up with big businesses through disadvantaged negotiations of prices and payment terms, forcing them to borrow more and more. Add to that scenario, the difficulties of delayed income tax and Goods and Services Tax (GST) refunds which further prevent growth. Thus, in the payment hierarchy, where MSMEs are last and have little bargaining power, they are forced to continue the relationship which is contingent on them remaining

small. Equally, the MSMEs are unable to apply pressure to reduce dues as they are made to feel that their future business is at stake. Due to the lack of skilled and professional manpower, they are unable to create the required pressure.

Their access to grievance redressal is either not available or has very low resolution levels. Many don't know how to leverage the redressal system. They fear that seeking such remedy would jeopardise their future business as ultimately they have to fall back on the same business houses for repeat business and the same service providers. For the MSMEs, a nose above the water is as good as it gets.

The creation of a favourable ecosystem for MSMEs would thus remain contingent on regulators assisting in clearance of their bills. Pay or be dealt with swiftly or pay up the interest which the MSMEs are paying for no fault of theirs. Investing in a mechanism to build resilience and strengthen the longevity muscle of MSMEs would help break barriers and capture global markets.

(The writer is Co-founder, Handdygo Behtar Zindagi)

CAPSULE



Rupee settles 6 paise lower at 74.90 against \$

NEW DELHI: The rupee settled 6 paise lower at 74.90 (provisional) against US dollar on Friday tracking weak domestic equities. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.85 against the US dollar, then lost ground and finally settled at 74.90 against the American currency, registering a decline of 6 paise over its previous close of 74.84. During the session, the rupee witnessed an intra-day high of 74.74 and a low of 74.93 against the greenback. Meanwhile, wholesale price-based inflation declined 0.58 per cent in July, even as food items turned costlier. WPI inflation in June was at (-) 1.81 per cent. The dollar index was trading 0.05 per cent lower at 93.29.



Volta's Q1 profit falls 51 pc to Rs 81.77 crore

NEW DELHI: Tata Group's air conditioning and engineering services provider Volta's on Friday reported a 50.83 per cent drop consolidated net profit to Rs 81.77 crore for the first quarter ended June 30, impacted by COVID-19 pandemic. The company had posted consolidated net profit of Rs 166.32 crore in the same quarter last fiscal. Total income of the company during the quarter under review stood at Rs 1,364.34 crore, down 49.41 per cent from Rs 2,697.27 crore in the year-ago period, Volta said in a regulatory filing. "The group's operations and financial results for the quarter ended June 30, 2020, have been impacted due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdown," Shares of Volta were trading 0.84 per cent at Rs 613.50 apiece on BSE.



MRF Q1 profit falls 95 pc at Rs 13 cr

NEW DELHI: Tyre major MRF Ltd on Friday reported 95.07 per cent decline in consolidated net profit from continuing operations at Rs 13.46 crore for June quarter impacted heavily by the coronavirus pandemic. In the year-ago period, the company's consolidated net profit from continuing operations was Rs 273.27 crore, MRF said in a regulatory filing. Revenue from operations in the period under review stood at Rs 2,460.70 crore as against Rs 4,470.82 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal, it added. "COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the business environment and the economy," MRF said. The group's plants, offices and godowns were closed when lockdown was announced.

'India best place for a country wanting import alternative'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday said India can emerge as a great destination for countries that are searching for new alternatives for imports and exhorted industry players to tap this golden opportunity. In a bid to boost 'self-reliant India' endeavour, Gadkari urged industry bodies like FICCI to identify the sectors heavily reliant on imports, particularly from China, and look for substitutes towards indigenous production for export growth from India.

"All sectors are facing crucial problems in the present situation as COVID-19 has created many complications. However, one of the blessing in disguise is that majority stakeholders are keenly interested to shift to new alternatives (for sourcing required products) and India can be a great destination for it," Gadkari said while interacting with MSME Member bodies and sectorial associations of FICCI.



The Minister said China's 70 per cent of exports pertained to ten sectors and asked industry players to research on various sectors and come out with lists of probable industries where India can begin indigenous production and start exports. Asking industry to study and research on products China exported, the Minister said industry players should also study the success stories of different nations including the

success of micro finance model in Bangladesh.

He asked the industry to prepare a list of problems faced by them as far as finances were concerned and assured them to escalate these at proper platforms including at the Finance Ministry and Prime Minister's Office (PMO) level.

"There are problems MSMEs are facing, financial institutions are in the crisis... Liquidity is a big problem. We need for-

eign investment, public private investment and government support," he said.

He also urged the industry to look beyond metropolises and developed cities to lay a network of industries and ventures in rural, far-flung and tribal areas which never grabbed attention and provided the example of Jamshedpur as to how just one industry could change the face of the place and resulted in a smart city. The minister informed that the government is working on a scheme for inclusion of smallest units under the MSME ambit and providing for their micro-financial requirements.

He also stressed the need for upgradation of technology by industry players and urged them to explore joint ventures to bring in foreign low cost capital.

The Minister also stressed the need for performance audit of the ventures saying that performance audit was on par with financial audit.

'Rise in fiscal deficit likely to impact construction sector'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Even as construction activities in the country have resumed since July, increase in fiscal deficit of central and state governments is likely to impact the sector this financial year, according to India Ratings (IndRa).

The agency had recently noted that the fiscal deficit of central and state governments will come at 12.1 per cent with the states contributing 4.5 per cent of it. "An increase in central and state government fiscal deficit in FY21 can impact both order inflow and collection in the sector," India Ratings said in a release.

After almost three months of the COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdown, the country entered the unlock mode from June 1, with the government lifting restrictions gradually and almost all economic activities resuming from July. The agency said revenue and earnings before interest,



taxes, depreciation, and amortisation (EBITDA) margins of engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) companies would decline around 15 per cent and 200 basis points, respectively, this fiscal as against FY2020, as the lockdowns would reduce the project execution pace.

"However, the demand drivers seem to be healthy, with medium-term revenue visibility at end-FY2020," it noted.

The order book of the top 18 EPC players declined six per

cent year-on-year in FY20, after registering extraordinary growth during FY16-FY19, in which it almost doubled to Rs 2.1 lakh crore from Rs 1.2 lakh crore. The agency noted that while growth in the road segment was supported by government plans to increase the pace of road construction in the country to 30 km per day in FY19 from 15-16 km per day in FY16, the building and housing segment was supported by Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAY) scheme.

Indian Bank Q1 net profit up marginally at Rs 369 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Indian Bank on Friday reported a marginal 1 per cent rise in its standalone net profit at Rs 369.26 crore in the first quarter ended June 2020. Its net profit stood at Rs 365.37 crore in the same period a year ago. Sequentially, the lender had posted a net loss of Rs 217.73 crore in preceding quarter ended March 2020.

Total income of the bank almost doubled to Rs 11,446.71 crore during the April-June period of 2020-21 from Rs 5,832.12 crore in the year-ago same period, Indian Bank said in a regulatory filing. With regard to June 2019 quarter and sequential January-March 2020 period numbers, the bank said the figures are related to standalone Indian Bank financials for pre-amalgamation period, hence not comparable with post amalgamation financials for the quarter ended June 30, 2020.

MF industry adds 5.6L folios in July, debt funds gain traction

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The mutual fund industry added over 5.6 lakh investor accounts in July, taking the total tally to 9.2 crore, primarily on account of contribution from debt schemes.

In comparison, the industry had added 5 lakh new folios in June.

According to data from Association of Mutual Funds in India, the number of folios with 45 fund houses rose to 9,21,05,737 at the end of last month, from 9,15,42,092 at June-end, registering a gain of 5.63 lakh folios.

Of the total new folios last month, more than 4 lakh were added in debt funds.

Market experts say that the addition of folios suggests that investors were undeterred by the market volatility. Besides, it indicates their understanding of the market risks associated in the mutual fund schemes.

The sector added 6.13 lakh investor accounts in May, 6.82 lakh in April and 9.1 lakh in March.

"The sharp fall in the markets in the month of March provided a good premise for investors to invest in the equity markets. Hence, it's quite likely that many new investors would have found this as an



opportune time to invest in the equity markets through mutual funds route," said Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director Manager Research at Morningstar India.

"This is evident from the sharp surge in the number of folios in the month of April. There was an uptrend in the number of folios in the month of May and June too highlighting investor interest," he added.

Folios are numbers designated to individual investor accounts. An investor can have multiple folios.

The number of folios under the equity and equity-linked saving schemes marginally dropped in July. The investor count slipped by 368 to 6.37 crore.

The debt oriented schemes folios count went up by 4.25

lakh to 68.85 lakh. Barring overnight funds, all the categories in debt funds witnessed a growth in folios.

Corporate bond funds added 60,269 folios in July, followed by liquid funds (58,379), short duration funds (54,002) and banking and PSU Funds (51,626).

Overall, investors pumped in Rs 89,813 crore into various mutual fund schemes last month.

Fixed income securities or debt funds witnessed an inflow of Rs 91,392 crore, while equity-oriented funds saw its first withdrawal in over four years at Rs 2,480 crore.

The inflow has pushed the asset base of the mutual funds industry to Rs 27.12 lakh crore at July-end from Rs 25.5 lakh crore as on June 30.

Edible oil imports highest in 11 months at 15.17 lakh tonnes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's edible oil imports are showing a sign of revival as total shipments in July remained highest in the last 11 months at 15.17 lakh tonnes, trade body SEA said on Friday.

India, world's leading vegetable oil buyer, had imported 13.47 lakh tonnes of edible oils in July 2019.

"Import of edible oil in July was showing revival sign as pipeline stock which was reduced in April-May 2020 due to lower import is being partially filled up," Mumbai-based Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) said.

Edible oil imports rose 13 per cent to 15.17 lakh tonnes on a year-on-year basis. "This is the highest import in the last 11 months of the oil year 2019-20," the trade body said.

Much of the imports were palm oils as total shipments rose to 8.24 lakh tonnes in July this year from 8.12 lakh tonnes a year ago.

Among palm oils, only Crude Palm Oil (CPO) and Crude Palm Kernel Oil (CPKO) were imported in July. The import of RBD Palmolein has declined drastically after it was placed on

the restricted list from January 8 this year, it said.

The trade body said soybean imports also increased to 4.84 lakh tonnes in July this year from Rs 3.19 lakh tonnes in the same month previous year. Sunflower oil imports rose marginally to 2.08 lakh tonnes from 2 lakh tonnes in the said period.

"In the lockdown period, there was a spurt in demand from households in consumer packs for sunflower and soybean oils, which is evident by the increase in their import," SEA said.

However, total imports from November 2019 to July 2020 of the current oil year declined by 11 per cent to 95.69 lakh tonnes from 10.80 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period mainly due to reduction in import of RBD Palmolein by 82 per cent, it added.

The oil year runs from November to October.

'Major reforms in Odisha Development Authority Rules'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

In a bid to boost the real estate sector and make housing schemes affordable in urban areas during the post-pandemic period, the Odisha government has introduced major reforms in the Development Authority Rules.

Odisha Urban development Minister Pratap Jena on Friday said the state government has already notified the Odisha Development Authority (Planning & Building Standard) Rules, 2020, which aimed at bringing uniformity of norms and procedure.

The new rules will also do away with the majority of the provisions of multiple regulations notified by different development authorities. This will help to introduce a common online platform for building plan approval throughout the state, he said.

The new rules are both proactive and progressive, Jena said, adding that they (rule) will address the concerns of all the segments of urban population.



Haryana's draft industrial policy aims to attract Rs 1 lakh cr investment, generate 5 lakh jobs

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana's draft industrial policy aims to attract Rs 1 lakh crore investment, generate 5 lakh jobs and establish the state as a favoured investment destination. According to the draft 'Haryana Enterprises and Employment Policy, 2020', the state is planning to establish Haryana as a competitive and favoured investment destination, achieve regional develop-

ment, export diversification and provide livelihood opportunities to its people through resilient economic development.

"The policy objective is to attract investments of Rs 1 lakh crore and generate 5 lakh jobs in the State," as per the draft policy.

It also seeks to double the exports to Rs 2 lakh crore, revalidate at least 100 State statutes (Acts, Rules and guidelines) and make them more suitable to investors, build supply chain facilities and infrastructure across 22 districts.

The policy is currently being given final touches and is scheduled to be released later this month. "The policy emphasises the need for a balanced regional growth across the state. This would be strategised through fiscal and non-fiscal interventions that assist dispersal of the industry to the industrially backward areas of the state and infrastructure-led geographical dispersal driven by mega projects and industrial corridors," according to the draft policy.

HINDALCO INDUSTRIES POSTS Q1 LOSS OF RS 709 CRORE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hindalco Industries on Friday posted a consolidated loss of Rs 709 crore for the quarter ended June 2020.

The company had posted a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 1,063 crore in the April-June quarter a year ago.

It said that "Q1 consolidated PAT for continuing businesses before tax-effected

exceptional and special items stood at Rs 139 crore".

The Aditya Birla Group firm in a statement said that "on account of certain special items, including charitable contributions towards COVID relief, ex-gratia paid to employees for their contribution during COVID, and Aleris acquisition costs, the reported PAT was impacted".

Infosys extends support for GovHack 2020 in Australia, NZ

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT major Infosys on Friday announced extension of its support for GovHack 2020 in Australia and New Zealand.

The two-day hack event, which begins on Friday, is being held simultaneously in Australia and New Zealand and gives competitors 46 hours to create concepts, mashups, and models with open government data, according to a statement.

In doing so, the participants will examine the challenges facing the government and communities in new and innovative ways, it added.

This year, the competition has been fully virtually enabled with the competition schedule, datasets, problem challenges, and team profile pages publicly hosted, it said.

It added that the opening and closing ceremonies will be livestreamed.

GovHack is the largest open



data hackathon in the southern hemisphere, the statement added.

"As lead corporate sponsor, Infosys is creating a dedicated version of its learning plat-

form Wingspan, so that participants can learn while they work. Within Infosys, some 2,20,000 employees use this platform to access over 4,000 courses with content provided by in-house experts and over 40 partners," the statement said.

Infosys will also make the Advanced Machine Learning module of its AI platform Infosys Nia available, giving participants the tools and frameworks to manage and

apply rules to the flow of data from creation to storage, it added.

Infosys Australia has set the challenge of reimagining the aged-care experience, seeking easily accessible solutions that can keep the elderly safe amid the coronavirus pandemics. Infosys New Zealand is seeking solutions using emerging technology that can help improve responses to future regional, country or world emergencies.

Global shares mixed on lackluster China economic data

PNS ■ TOKYO

Global shares were mixed in cautious trading on Friday as investors studied fresh data out of China showing that its recovery remains subdued.

Shares were on the decline in early European trading after Asian benchmarks finished mostly higher.

France's CAC 40 dropped more than 2.0% in early trading to 4,939.72, while Germany's DAX slipped 1.2% to 12,840.34. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 2.4% to 6,040.21. US shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures down 0.7% at 27,634. S&P 500 futures fell



0.4% to 3,353.12 China reported its factory output rose 4.8% from a year earlier in July, on a par with June's increase.

Retail sales fell 1.1%, as consumers remain cautious.

Malaysia reported, meanwhile, that its economy con-

Widespread worries persist about a second, or third, surge in coronavirus cases in many places. Another afternoon fade for stocks left most benchmarks on Wall Street lower

tracted at a real annual rate of 16.5% in April-June, its worst downturn on record. The Malaysian central bank forecast that the economy will return to growth in 2021.

Widespread worries persist about a second, or third, surge in coronavirus cases in many places. Another afternoon fade for stocks left most benchmarks on Wall Street lower.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 gained nearly 0.2% to finish at 23,289.36. South Korea's Kospi slipped 1.2% to 2,407.49. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 0.6% to 6,126.20. Hong Kong's Hang Seng gyrated earlier in the day but lost 0.2% to 25,183.01, while the Shanghai Composite index gained 1.2% to 3,360.10. Trade tensions between the U.S. and China are

also on investors' minds as so much of Asian regional growth depends on exports to those giant economies.

The two sides are due to hold talks online later Friday on a trade deal reached in January that brought a truce in their bruising tariff war. US retail sales, production and productivity data are expected later in the day. Benchmark US crude lost 28 cents to \$41.96 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell 43 cents to \$42.24 per barrel on Thursday. Brent crude, the international standard, added 18 cents to \$45.14 a barrel.

Sensex tanks 433 points; Nifty gives up 11,200 level

PNS ■ TOKYO

Domestic equity benchmark Sensex plunged 433 points on Friday, tracking heavy losses in banking, consumption and auto stocks amid a selloff in global markets. Tanking 663 points from the day's high, the 30-share BSE index settled 433.15 points or 1.13 per cent lower at 37,877.34.

The broader NSE Nifty slumped 122.05 points or 1.08 per cent to close at 11,178.40.

Axis Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, falling

around 3 per cent, followed by SBI, M&M, Bajaj Finance, ITC, HDFC Bank, HCL Tech and IndusInd Bank.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, NTPC, Tata Steel, Titan and Infosys were the gainers. According to traders, key indices made a U-turn after trading on a positive note in the first half of the session following massive losses in European equities.

Stock exchanges in Paris, Frankfurt and London plunged up to 2 per cent in early deals.

A recent survey indicates that a whopping 97 per cent of people are willing to use bicycles more often, provided the government takes adequate measures to make them a safe and convenient mode of transport

PEDALLING TO A NEW NORMAL

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle once said, "When the spirits are low, when the day appears dark, when work becomes monotonous, when hope hardly seems worth having, just mount a bicycle and go out for a spin down the road without a thought on anything but the ride you are taking." Certainly, cycling is one of the most efficient and environmentally-friendly modes of transport, especially in the current scenario.

As part of #DilliDhadakneDo, a survey was recently conducted, where a whopping 97 per cent of respondents out of nearly 1,400 people were willing to use cycles as a mode of daily transport. The study indicated that a lack of safe and convenient cycling infrastructure, absence of dedicated cycling lanes, poor air quality and unruly traffic were deterrents to more citizens taking up cycling in the capital.

Two decades ago, a third of commuting in 80 Indian cities was done on bicycles, but by 2007 this average had fallen to 12 per cent. It is likely to drop further given that Indian cities are not taking any significant

initiatives to create a safe cycling environment. Bicycle users have no rights on the road. They are forced to either remain on the sides with tattered edges making cycling unsafe or they have to ride on the road space meant for motorised traffic.

It was learnt that around 93 per cent respondents who were a part of the survey owned cycles, while the remaining seven per cent reported hiring on rent for commuting to their work place. Maximum hired/rented cycles were used by the unskilled workers (14 per cent). Likewise, maximum respondents who had their own cycles were skilled workers (97 per cent), followed by owners of petty shops and small businesses (95 per cent) and those who are into jobs (94 per cent). Those who hired cycles reportedly had to pay a rental amount in the range of 50 (minimum) to 250 (maximum) per month.

Believing that cycling will be the best option to travel while maintaining social distancing, Mudra, a domestic worker and one of the survey respondents, said, "We have to step out daily to reach our work-

place and cannot use buses as this pandemic calls for physical distancing norms. Autos or rickshaws are far too costly for us to use on a daily basis. As there are no separate tracks for bicycles, I have to risk my life daily while trying to earn bread for my family and also adhering to all the precautionary measures. Dedicated cycling lanes will make life easier for many like me."

The study attempted to find out the respondents' frequency of cycle usage for transportation. A vast majority of the respondents (91 per cent) reported using their cycles every day to commute to their workplaces. The frequency of cycle usage for commuting was highest among skilled workers (94 per cent) and lowest among unskilled workers (87 per cent). Around five per cent respondents stated making use of their cycles at least once a week for transportation. Less than two per cent each were using cycles once a month or once every two months.

Respondents who were a part of the study were asked to state the challenges they faced while cycling. Half of the sample respondents stated that they feel unsafe while cycling in heavy traffic. Nearly 47 per cent opined that they feel upset at the unruly behaviour of other drivers. Around 37 per cent respondents stated that the probability of theft of cycles was a constant worry, while

another 32 per cent stated that cycling during bad weather conditions was a huge challenge. Lack of proper cycling infrastructure was cited as a challenge by 16 per cent respondents. Maximum respondents who stated feeling unsafe in traffic (58 per cent) and bad behaviour of other drivers (54 per cent) were the unskilled workers. Likewise, it was seen that the owners of petty shops and small businesses were the ones most concerned about cycle thefts (46 per cent).

The survey also attempted to find out from the respondents the factors that could inspire and encourage them to use cycles for commuting more frequently. Majority of the respondents (58 per cent) were of the opinion that more designated cycle lanes would motivate them to use cycles more often. Another 48 per cent pointed out that if separate pathways are designated for cyclists and pedestrians, they would feel more encouraged to commute by cycles, while 27 per cent sample respondents felt the need for exclusive cycle parking spaces in markets and offices. Around 25 per cent stated that they would feel motivated to cycle more often if the streets had a better lighting system.

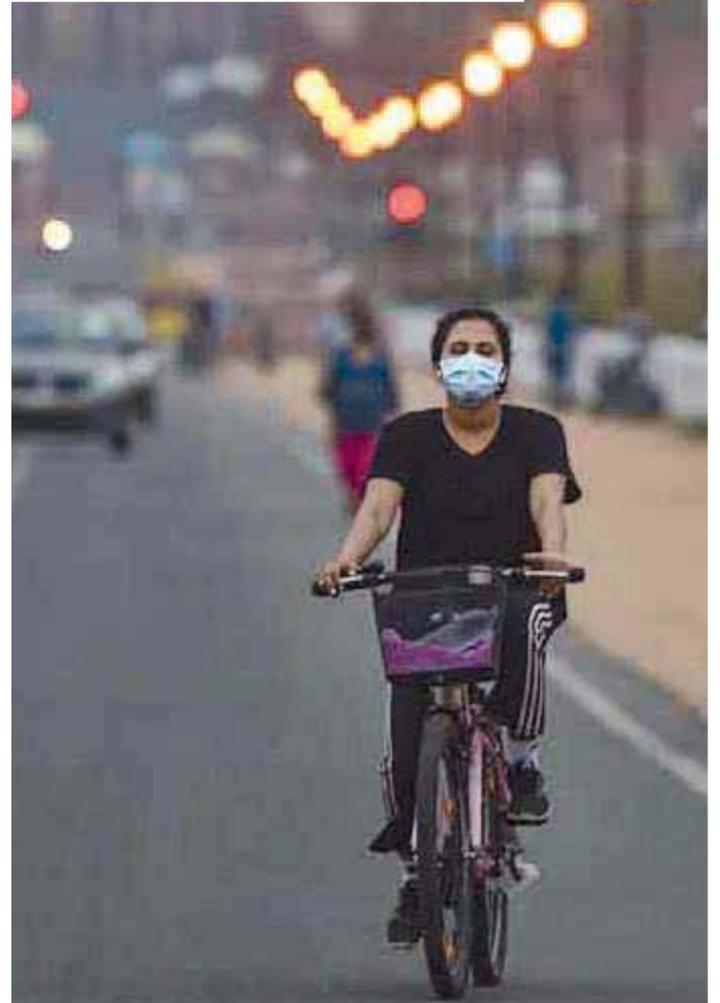
Emphasising on the scary reality of Delhi's mobility, leading environmentalist and Executive Director of Swachha, Vimlendu Jha said, "About 91 per cent of Delhi

livelihood cyclists use cycles every day to commute, but are our roads designed for safe walking and cycling? Clearly the answer is no. For almost 11 lakh cyclists in the city, there is just 100 km of cyclist tracks. There is a dire need to strengthen policies to protect pedestrians and their right to walk and cycle."

The study findings indicated that cycling is a major mode of transport for majority of the people residing in Delhi, particularly those who come from poor socio-economic strata. Saji Cheriyan, Director of Operations, SaveLIFE Foundation, said, "Segregation of traffic is essential to reduce road user conflict and protect vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists who form the bulk of urban road users in India. States must ensure that non-motorised transport road users are prioritised in street design rather than motorised road users."

Recent Delhi Government estimates show that there are nearly 1.1 million regular bicycle users in the city. This figure is from before the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The trends indicate that the numbers will only rise.

In order to enhance the use of cycles, policy measures to create and provide large-scale safe cycling infrastructure, accompanied by regulations on the use of private motorised vehicles could be implemented.



A tribute to 'anna daatas'

With most people stuck at home and not many places to visit to celebrate Independence Day this year, and some others too scared to want to risk going out, the internet offers several options from web calls, new content on OTTs, sales, etc. There also are several artistes releasing their work to commemorate the day. One such artist is city boy Roll Rida who's latest single *Nagali* is trending already. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer's* RACHEL DAMMALA, he talks more about the content of the video, the idea behind it, timing, and more...

Roll Rida's *Nagali* is a rap about farmers and their troubles, especially during the lockdown called due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The video also features Amit Tiwari, his *Bigg Boss Telugu 2* housemate, playing a farmer facing the heat of the situation. Roll's new single has been directed by Harikanth Gunamagari, co-produced by Ajay Mysore and Dhatri Ammanabolu. Music by prominent music director Pravin Lakkaraju beautifully complements the lyrics and makes one feel stronger for the cause.

The rap's powerful and intentional lyrics have caught the attention of people belonging to various walks of life and ages. The rap, penned by Roll himself, is sure to break the hearts of even a pre-occupied 10-year-old living in the suburbs. The video has already garnered supportive comments from fans who're cheering and congratulating the rapper for touching intense subjects like this.

WHAT MADE YOU WRITE SPECIFICALLY ABOUT FARMERS' PLIGHT AMONG OTHER ISSUES?

We've all stopped venturing out and rested for at least five months now, while some others had the option to work from home except the medical staff, police officers and other frontline workers. They have



all been lauded for their work. But not many thought about our 'anna daatas' — the farmers, they were silently working behind the scenes. Imagine if they locked themselves in too? More than COVID, we'd have to be fighting a famine. They're often called the backbone of our country, and sadly, remain right there — at the back, their efforts rarely are appreciated, their betterment seldom talked about.

MOST OF YOUR SONGS, HAVE BEEN MORE COMMERCIAL. ARE YOU SURE THAT GEN Z, MOST OF YOUR FAN BASE, WILL RELATE TO THE SONG?

I definitely think they will, in fact, that's the whole idea behind the song — that all of us, who're preoccupied with our own problems, will see

the reality of the plight of those who feed us. Moreover, I made the video for more of awareness than commercial success. Just like *Arupu*, which was about women's safety and their issues, reached a million people, I believe this one too, about a farmer, will reach and influence many. For me, it's awareness through entertainment, because if you can, why not? Pop legend Michael Jackson

believed in spreading love through music. I want to follow in the steps of such artists who offer a message, an idea, awareness through their music. I want to leverage whatever impact my songs can have on people because I can and I'm more than grateful for that.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT THAT YOUR WORK INFLUENCES YOUR FANS AND VIEWERS?

Even if this song might not turn out to be a major hit like my other commercial songs, but manages to inspire at least one person to do something about a farmer's issues, or make one even want to take up farming, I've done my job, I count the video a success. That's bigger than any hit for me.

TAKE US THROUGH THE CREATIVE PROCESS, FLOW OF THE IDEA OF NAGALI

Every lyric in the rap is very intentional, they came right from my heart. Once I sent these lyrics to the music director, Pravin, he was super impressed and wanted to do it right away, I'm so thankful to him. I also can't thank our producers, Ajay, and Dhatri enough — at a time when people incurred losses, lost jobs because of the pandemic, and were taking careful and calculated decisions, they immediately came forward to

invest in a non-commercial song in times like this. It only shows how everyone was on board with the idea and the cause of the song, I'm grateful to have known and worked with Amit too. It wouldn't have been possible with even one of the crew members missing.

HOW TOUGH AND DIFFERENT AN EXPERIENCE WAS IT SHOOTING FOR THE SONG AMID THE PANDEMIC?

Oh, so so tough, because on any other day, we'd have at least 100 crew members, this time, we had only about 25-30 people around. This meant less manpower and more workload on each one of us. But the team did a great job! We strictly followed the guidelines laid down by the government. In fact, we feel that even mother nature gave us her blessings, because it has been raining heavily until the day we shot, which was 3 days, and it began to rain immediately after we wrapped the shoot!

AFTER SUCH A POWERFUL SONG, WHAT'S ROLL 'RIDING' NEXT?

There's a lot in the pipeline. The next one coming up is an interesting story about an innocent boy turning to be a gangster, about the various circumstances and issues that led him to become that, so stay tuned!

LOCKDOWN SUICIDES CALL FOR ATTENTION ON FILM, TV WORLD'S MENTAL HEALTH

Preksha Mehta, Manmeet Grewal, Anupama Pathak and Sameer Sharma. These names share two things in common. All of them are actors by profession, and all of them unfortunately committed suicide during the lockdown. The crisis and uncertainty that the Covid-induced lockdown brought in its wake was perhaps too much and they could not deal with its pressure.

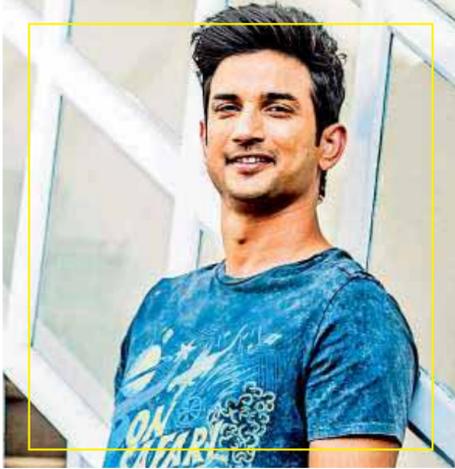
Celebrity suicides during the lockdown has taken the discussion on mental health, and the dark side of the entertainment industry, to the next level.

The most talked-about unnatural death during the lockdown has been Sushant Singh Rajput's. While probe is still to ascertain if it was a suicide or some other reason, it is obvious that the late actor might have been in some sort of psychological pressure in his last days.

Talking of mental health and duress, Dr Seema Hingorany told IANS: "Not just actors but several people have committed suicide during lockdown. Depression level is high among people. The fact is, the lockdown crisis was just a trigger along with financial insecurity and loneliness. Loneliness is a major trigger."

"Many a time it happens that people who have gone through trauma — whether it is from their childhood or a sexual assault, bullying by the society or any other internal emotional humiliation — have not given themselves a chance to heal. It stayed in their subconscious. So, when a crisis occurs, the mind starts thinking irrationally, which pushes someone to take an extreme step. I deal with lot of such cases where people have terrible past memories that they are carrying as baggage of bitterness and that surface from time to time," added the clinical psychologist.

After Sushant's death was initially painted as a suicide out of depression, many personalities came on television channels and shared their view on mental health and the dark side of the glamorous



ED finds no big transfers between SSR and Rhea's accounts

The Enforcement Directorate probing the money laundering case involving the death of Sushant Singh Rajput has found no big transactions from the late Bollywood actor's accounts to the bank account of his girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty.

However, the ED has found that Rs 15 crore was transferred from his account as alleged by his father K.K. Singh, said an ED source related to the probe. The ED source also said that the agency will try to ascertain besides Sushant, who was using his debit cards, internet banking, credit cards and other financial transactions.

"We are mapping the transactions to ascertain the movement of money from Sushant's account to other accounts and for what purpose," he added.

The agency said that the agency is collecting all the banking transaction details to study the mode of payments done via Sushant's bank account.

The source also pointed out that out of Rs 15 crore, approximately Rs 2.7 crore was paid as taxes by the late actor.

Another ED source, related to the probe also pointed out that Sushant and Rhea, who were in a relationship spent on each other. However, there is no such

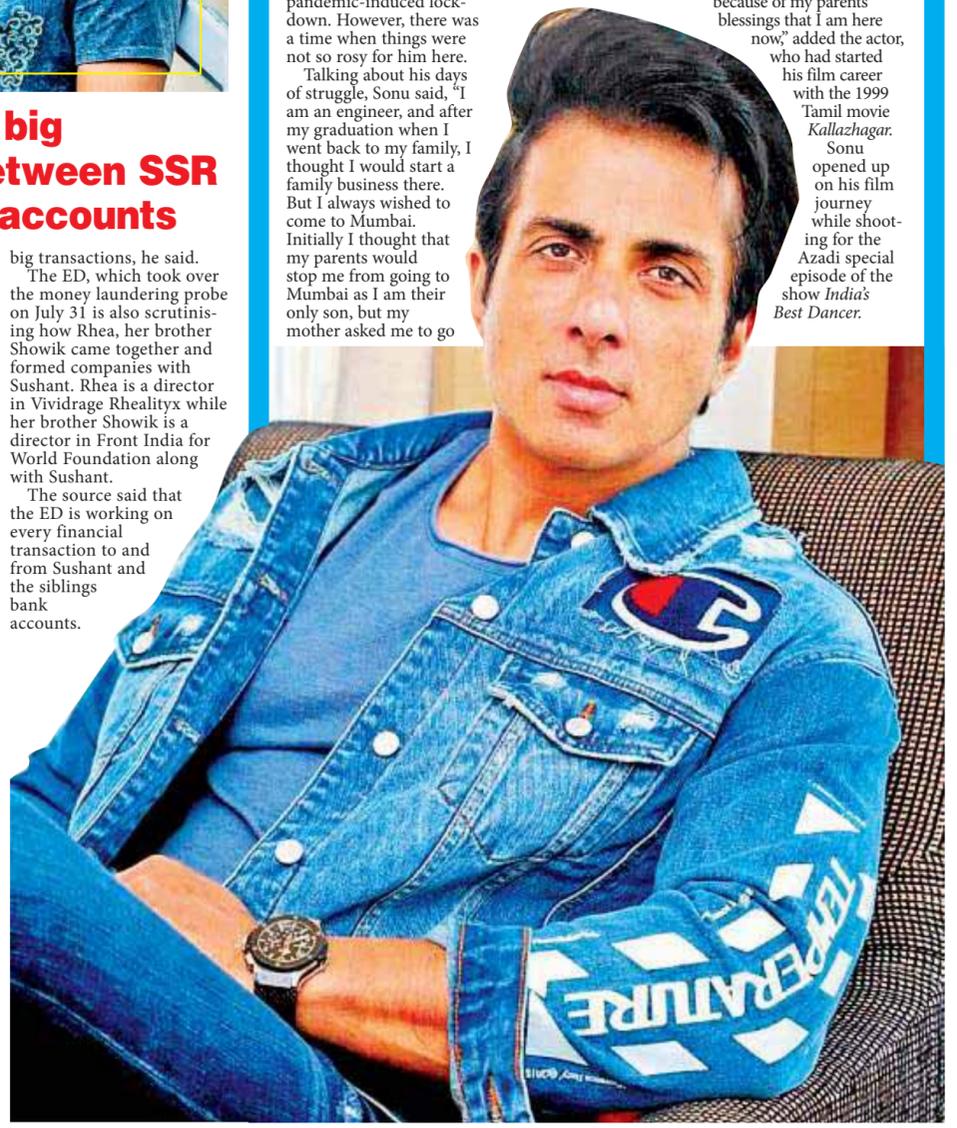
SONU SOOD RECALLS HIS INITIAL DAYS OF STRUGGLE IN MUMBAI

Actor Sonu Sood is being hailed as messiah of migrants lately, due to his efforts in helping them reach home during the pandemic-induced lockdown. However, there was a time when things were not so rosy for him here.

Talking about his days of struggle, Sonu said, "I am an engineer, and after my graduation when I went back to my family, I thought I would start a family business there. But I always wished to come to Mumbai. Initially I thought that my parents would stop me from going to Mumbai as I am their only son, but my mother asked me to go and achieve my dreams."

"I still remember when I first came to Mumbai, I had Rs 5,500 which I had saved. I went to Film City, paid Rs 400 to get an entry because I was stopped at the gate. I thought that if I roamed around in Film City, a director or a producer would spot me and cast me in their project, which never happened. It is only because of my parents' blessings that I am here now," added the actor, who had started his film career with the 1999 Tamil movie *Kallazhagar*.

Sonu opened up on his film journey while shooting for the Azadi special episode of the show *India's Best Dancer*.



FUN

ARCHIE

...WHICH LED TO THE TAXATION ACT OF...
Awwrrgh
YAAAWN
YAWN
DON'T YOU MIND IT WHEN THE STUDENTS YAWN LIKE THAT?
NOT AT ALL!
IT'S THE ONLY WAY I KNOW THEY'RE LISTENING TO MY LECTURES!

CALVIN AND HOBBS

TIME TO GET UP, CALVIN. YOU DON'T WANT TO MISS THE SCHOOL BUS.
I'M NOT GOING TO SCHOOL, MOM. I'M AN OWL.
NO, YOU'RE NOT. NOW GET UP AND GET DRESSED.
I'M NOT AN OWL?
I'M NOT! I'M ME AGAIN! THE TRANSMOGRIFICATION MUST ONLY BE TEMPORARY! IT WORE OFF OVERNIGHT! I'M A KID! I CAN...
...GO...TO... SCHOOL.
YAWWWNNN! KEEP THE SHADE DOWN WHEN YOU GO, OK?

GARFIELD

SOMETIMES I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M DOING
WHOA
I ALWAYS KNOW WHAT I'M DOING
HE'S LUCKY

REALITY CHECK

PENICILLIN IS HIS KRYPTONITE!
WELL, THE DOCTOR SAID YOU HAD TO WEAR IT UNTIL YOU STOP BITING YOUR STITCHES.

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	

NANCY

TOMORROW'S THE WEDDING! AUNT FRITZI AND PHIL WILL BE TOGETHER FOREVER!
JUST LIKE US!

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

- Sick people in hospital
- A feeling that makes you scratch
- Ran after trying to catch
- One of your five senses
- Pimples on the face
- Requires
- Opposite of winner
- Attend classes here
- Young child
- Studied closely
- Wash your hair with this
- Frozen water
- Smashed to pieces
- This turns into a frog
- The country of the Spanish
- A biting insect
- A popular pet

DOWN

- See these at an art gallery
- Small nails for carpets
- Pleasant

SOLUTION 7

S	A	S	A	E					
A	T	T	R	A	C	T	I	V	E
H	A	P	P	I	E	S			
H	A	P	P	I	E	S			
A	T	T	R	A	C	T	I	V	E
C	A	T	E	N	P	L	E	R	
O	F	F	I	C	H				
L	I	N	G						
T	H	R	O	R	S				
E	T	E	R	E					

Most Read NEWS

Antarctica ice shelves are melting faster, finds study



The ice that hangs off the edge of Antarctica and floats on the ocean is melting faster than it is being replenished, even in pockets of East Antarctica typically thought to be less vulnerable to climate change, according to a study. These structures, known as ice shelves, shed nearly 4,000 gigatons of their mass between 1994 and 2018, according to the new research, which leveraged nearly 25 years of satellite measurements of ice thickness. It echoes findings of numerous previous studies reporting the retreat and destabilization of Antarctic ice shelves but goes further, helping scientists understand the processes driving the melt around the entire continent over longer time periods and with high spatial resolution. Antarctic ice loss can reverberate across the entire planet, changing global weather patterns, the researchers and other experts said. The study, published in the journal Nature Geoscience, is part of a relatively new scientific discipline that aims to understand how the ocean interacts with ice sheets. Ice sheets are massive swaths of ice that cover Antarctica and Greenland. The edges of ice sheets can spill over onto the ocean, forming ice shelves.

Woman gives birth to son mid-flight, names him 'Sky'

The mother of a baby born on an airplane that was taking her to a hospital in Anchorage has named her son Sky because of his unique birth and first experience. Chrystal Hicks gave birth to Sky Airon Hicks on Aug. 5 around 1 a.m. after boarding a plane to be flown from the small community of Glennallen to a hospital, KTUU-TV reported. She was 35 weeks pregnant. "I was just having contractions and it wouldn't stop, and it kept getting stronger and they thought we were going to make it," Hicks said.



"But we obviously didn't make it very far," Hicks gave birth less than an hour into the flight, she said. "It was shocking, it was really weird at first, I didn't know what to think," Hicks said. "But everybody kept talking about the baby on the plane." Hicks and her son made it safely to the hospital. Sky was placed on a breathing machine when he arrived because he was born a month premature. The baby is expected to be discharged from the hospital next week. Hicks said filing out the birth certificate information was difficult because they were about 18,000 feet (5,500 meters) in the air. "I just put Anchorage," Hicks said. "I didn't want to put on a plane or in the sky." Hicks has three other children - ages 3, 9 and 11.

Man pulls 10-tonne truck, urges youth to quit drugs



After two months' practice, a 75-year-old Nihang, an armed Sikh warrior, pulled a 10-tonne truck using a rope tied to his shoulders to convey a message to youth to stay away from drugs and be healthy. The septuagenarian Satnam Singh told ANI, "When with just two months of practice, I can pull this truck and lift heavy weights with my teeth, then the youth here can do everything. For that, they will have to stay away from drugs." Singh said, "I am 75 years old and this truck which I have pulled weighs 10 tonnes. I have been practising for two months." Singh got inspired after watching a viral video of a youth getting intoxicated. After watching it, he felt sad and decided to do something that would inspire youth. Singh started his practice by pulling 110 kg with his teeth. He then started pulling his car with teeth. Now he ties a rope to the truck and his shoulders and pulls it. "I watched a video of a youth who was taking drugs and I thought our youth are being destroyed by them. So we should do something that will inspire them to take up the task that can benefit them. So I came up with this idea and started my practice. Initially, I started to pull 110 kg weight and then vehicles with my teeth.

2500 people attend socially-distanced concert in UK

Industrialist Harsh Goenka posted a video of a socially-distanced concert that was held in Newcastle, UK, on August 11 amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. Around 2500 people attended the concert wherein singer Sam Fender performed and entertained the audience. Precautionary measures were observed as 500 raised platforms were installed at Gosforth Park - each at a distance of about 6.5ft apart from each other. Three to four guests occupied each platform and were also able to order food and drinks, Daily Mail reports. "2,500 people flocked for a socially-distanced concert in Newcastle, UK. Each set of concert-goers had their own private viewing platform, table, chairs and a fridge," Harsh Goenka



said in the caption of his post. Harsh Goenka's post has gone viral on social media while his fans and followers thanked him for sharing the video. "That's an amazing arrangement. Entertainment didn't stop + social distancing followed too," a user said. Another comment reads, "Not just this video but in general the videos that you share are a class apart and bring in a very fresh perspective of things. Thank you and keep sharing." The novel coronavirus pandemic has affected over 180 countries. Globally, there are over 18 million infections, according to the Johns Hopkins tally.

Willian joins Arsenal

AFP ■ LONDON

Arsenal have signed Brazil midfielder Willian on a three-year deal after the 32-year-old's contract with Chelsea expired.

The 32-year-old forward is an experienced player and has made more than 600 club appearances in a career spanning 13 seasons. He has played in leagues all over the world and Arsenal will be hoping he can give them a big boost next season.

Willian started at Brazilian side Corinthians, before joining Shakhtar Donetsk in August 2007. In his six years there, he won four Ukrainian Premier League titles and the UEFA Cup in 2009. Four years later, he briefly signed for Anzhi Makhachkala before joining Chelsea, winning the Premier League and League Cup in his second season in England.

MADE IN US

Super-sub Tyler Adams' maiden Leipzig strike helps Nagelsmann's side knock-out Atletico to reach CL semis



RB Leipzig players celebrate after winning their Champions League quarterfinal match against Atletico Madrid at the Jose Alvalade stadium in Lisbon

AFP ■ LISBON

Leipzig stunned Atletico Madrid 2-1 on Thursday to reach the Champions League semi-finals for the first time as Tyler Adams' 88th-minute winner earned them a showdown with Paris Saint-Germain.

Atletico looked to have secured extra-time at the Estadio Jose Alvalade when Joao Felix won and then scored a penalty to cancel out Dani Olmo's headed opener early in the second half. But Adams proved an unlikely hero for Leipzig, coming off the bench to snatch victory in Lisbon after his fired effort took a cruel deflection of Stefan Savic and flew in.

The win marks a historic

night for Leipzig, who were only formed 11 years ago and played their first-ever season in Germany's top flight in 2016.

Progress to the last four also puts another feather in the cap of their coach Julian Nagelsmann, whose stock will rise even further after ousting Diego Simeone, one of this competition's most gnarly tacticians. "I'm perhaps one of the happiest coaches in the world," Nagelsmann said.

"We were the better team, the result is totally OK. The second goal is a bit lucky but we found the space behind the defensive line. I think we were the better team today."

Their challenge is now to

defeat PSG on Tuesday, the French champions who have only played three matches in almost half a year and needed a late escape to see off Atalanta on Tuesday.

"It's normal that when you get to the next round, you want more," Nagelsmann said. "Tonight we're happy. Tomorrow we'll start looking at Paris. That will be another difficult game but we'll have a plan."

'HURTS A LOT' For Atletico and Simeone, this was an opportunity spurned to go far in Europe at the end of what has been a disappointing season in Spain. After Real Madrid's loss

"When I came on I wanted to bring energy and help the team in any way possible. Getting your first goal is a little bit unexpected for me. I'm not a typical goal scorer but I'm happy I could help the team"

— TYLER ADAMS

"I'm convinced that we gave everything we had. But it wasn't enough. We have to raise our heads and try again next season"

— DIEGO SOMEONE

"Tonight we're happy, tomorrow we'll start looking at (PSG). That will be another difficult game, but we'll have a plan"

— JULIAN NAGELSMANN

against Manchester City, only Barcelona are left to fly the Spanish flag in this tournament and they face a formidable challenge against Bayern Munich on Friday.

Questions will be asked again about the future of Simeone, who has struggled to recreate an Atletico side capable of challenging for major honours.

His notoriously defensive approach, which saw off holders Liverpool in the last 16, looked outdated here against the slick, quick and free-flowing style of their opponents.

"It hurts a lot," said Atletico's Saul Niguez. "They had superiority in many areas on the pitch, inside, outside. Many times we were not even close to stopping them."

SINGLES

WRESTLING NATIONAL CAMPS FROM SEPT 1

NEW DELHI: The Wrestling Federation of India will hold the national camp for Olympic weight category wrestlers from September 1, top Indian wrestlers Bajrang Punia and Pooja Dhandia confirmed on Friday. The training camp for women wrestlers is slated to begin in Lucknow, while the one for male wrestlers will start in Sonapat.

ATP PLANS SEASON-END FINALS WITHOUT FANS

LONDON: The Italian Open is shifting to a week earlier than originally planned in September, and the Hamburg European Open will follow it on a provisional ATP calendar for the rest of the 2020 men's tennis season. The season-ending ATP Finals in London are still slated for Nov 15-22, without spectators. But the ATP said on Friday it "remains hopeful" that will change and some fans will be allowed to attend.

KIPCHOGE AMBASSADOR FOR 'RUN AS ONE'

MUMBAI: Reigning Olympic marathon champion Eliud Kipchoge was on Friday named the ambassador of the fund-raising initiative 'Sunfeast India Run As One', starting on Saturday. The "virtual event" will support people affected by the Covid-19 pandemic with the citizen-led movement bringing together people of 28 states and eight union territories. The 30-day movement will kick-start on Saturday while registrations will continue till September 11.

WIEGMAN APPOINTED LIONESSES COACH

LONDON: Netherlands women's football team manager Sarina Wiegman will succeed Phil Neville as England Women's head coach from next year after signing a four-year deal, the Football Association (FA) announced on Friday. The Dutch won the European Championship under Wiegman in 2017 and she also led them to their first World Cup final two years later in France. Wiegman will take charge of England in September 2021.

MCDONALD TO MISS AUS TOUR OF ENG

SYDNEY: Australia's senior assistant coach Andrew McDonald will miss next month's tour of England owing to a pre-existing commitment with his IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals (RR), the country's cricket board said on Friday. The former Australia all-rounder had replaced Paddy Upton as the head coach of Rajasthan Royals last year.

YOUSUF, RAZZAQ JOIN HPC AS COACHES

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has roped in former captain Mohammad Yousuf and all-rounder Abdul Razaq as coaches of its High Performance Centre in Lahore. Talking to media, Yousuf confirmed that he was offered a coaching position and was happy to accept it.

Tata joins Unacademy, Dream11 for IPL title sponsorship rights

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Multinational conglomerate Tata Group has submitted its 'Expression of Interest' to become IPL title sponsor this year, joining education technology company Unacademy and fantasy sports platform Dream11 in a bid to replace Chinese mobile phone company Vivo for one season.

Friday was the last date of submission of 'EOI' to the BCCI. The IPL will be held from September 19 to November 10 in the UAE this year and the winning bidder will hold the rights for four months and 13 days. Tata Group's entry into the

fray makes the bidding war on August 18 very interesting as BCCI is expecting that the winning bid will not be much lower than Vivo's ₹440 crore annual contract even though the rights period is of a short duration.

"Yes, Tata Group has submitted their Expression of Interest to buy IPL title rights," a group spokesperson said. A source in the BCCI earlier confirmed the submission of EOIs from the other two companies.

"The EOI doesn't have to mention the bid amount. It will be sent on August 18," the official said. "Post the delivery of the EOI, BCCI shall inform the

rights, product categories and entitlements to the interested third parties. The final bid should be sent to eoi@bcci.tv between 11 am to 1pm on August 18, 2020." The BCCI has already stated.

Yoga guru Baba Ramdev's Patanjali and Jio Communications are also reportedly in fray but no immediate confirmation was forthcoming from the BCCI on these two names.

The Board has made it clear that the highest bidder might not get the title sponsorship unless the parent body is satisfied with its plan for the high-valued brand.

Sikki, Kiran undergo Covid-19 tests again



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Doubles badminton player N Sikki Reddy and physiotherapist Kiran Challagundla on Friday underwent Covid-19 tests for a second time, a day after testing positive for the virus which forced the national camp to be halted in Hyderabad. The 26-year-old Sikki, a

Commonwealth Games Bronze-medallist, and Kiran on Thursday tested positive for the contagious disease at the SAI Pullela Gopichand academy, which was immediately closed down for sanitisation and the national badminton camp was suspended for a few days.

"Sikki and Kiran decided to get themselves tested again in Continental hospital in Hyderabad today. The results are expected tomorrow. They did it in their personal capacity, just to rule out any discrepancy," said a source close to the development.

"Rest of the members decided that if their report again comes positive then they all will get themselves tested after a few days."

Kolkata to host 2020/21 I-League season

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All matches of this season's I-League and second division league qualifiers will be held in Kolkata with strict health and safety measures in place to deal with the Covid-19 threat, the All India Football Federation (AIFF) said on Friday.

The decision was taken in a virtual meeting of the League Committee chaired by AIFF senior vice-president Subrata Dutta.

The I-League, the country's second tier club competition, is likely to kick off in November while the second division qualifiers is tentatively scheduled for the third week of next month. But the schedule of both the leagues is subject to Government clearance. The AIFF said the schedule and date for the second division qualifiers and the I-League, however, would be finalised once the guidelines from the central Government are issued.

Dutta said that the AIFF will directly be responsible for the safety of the players and officials.

Dhoni, other CSK players reach Chennai for camp

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Enigmatic former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni and some of his Chennai Super Kings teammates arrived here on Friday for a short training camp ahead of the IPL in UAE, where the World Cup-winning star will make his eagerly-awaited return to competitive cricket after a prolonged sabbatical.

Apart from Dhoni, others who have reached the city for the week-long camp beginning on Saturday at the M A Chidambaram stadium are Suresh Raina, Deepak Chahar, Piyush Chawla and Kedar Jadhav.

"Thirteen or 14 of the 16 Indian players will be part of the camp, including MS. Since they came after undergoing Covid-19 tests, their next test will be 72 hours before leaving for the UAE on August 21. They will start training from tomorrow," a CSK official told PTI.



All the players, except all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, are expected to participate in the camp.

A CSK official said Jadeja would be missing training owing to personal reasons and would join the squad before its departure the tournament venue.

All the players would be subjected to two tests here and only if they return negative for

Serena beats Venus in sisters' clash

LEXINGTON: Twenty-three-time Grand Slam champion Serena Williams overcame a stern test from elder sister Venus to make it to the quarter-finals at the inaugural Top Seed Open.

Serena, No 1 seed, defeated Venus 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 in a thrilling match that lasted for two hours and 19 minutes on Thursday played at the Centre Court.

"I've lost a few tight sets lately, so I was telling myself I really wanted to win this one and try to focus on those last two games," Serena said in her on-court interview as per the WTA website.

"I'm super relaxed. Having no crowd sort of makes things more relaxing. I've practised in louder places than this court." "I honestly didn't come here to win. For the first time in my career, I came here to



win some matches and see what happens. I haven't had this much time off since the baby, so now I'm just trying to get some rhythm and see what happens," she added.

It was Serena's 19th win over the five-time Wimbledon champion in their 31 encounters. Serena will next face Shelby Rogers — who defeated rising Canadian star Leylah Annie Fernandez 6-2, 7-5 — for a spot in the semi-finals. AFP

Halep reaches Prague semis

PRAGUE: Top seed Simona Halep cruised to the WTA Prague Open semi-finals after seeing off Poland's qualifier Magdalena Frech in two sets on another scorching day on Friday.

The reigning Wimbledon champion needed only 59 minutes to beat the 22-year-old Pole 6-2, 6-0 in what was her first convincing win at tournament following two tight three-setters.

"It was a good one and I take it," the 28-year-old world number two told the public Czech Television. "I hit the ball stronger and I opened the court better" than in the previous two matches, Halep added.



Bianca pulls out of US Open

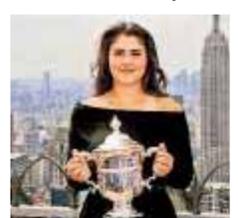
AFP ■ NEW YORK

Reigning US Open women's champion Bianca Andreescu on Thursday said that she will not defend her title, saying the coronavirus pandemic has contributed to an inability to prepare for the event.

The 20-year-old Canadian, who defeated Serena Williams in last year's final, said she wants to concentrate on being at her best when she does return to competition.

Her decision means that this year's event, which starts in New York on August 31, will be without both of its 2019 champions after Rafael Nadal also said he would skip the tournament over health fears.

"After many discussions with those closest to me, I have made the difficult decision not to return to New York this year," Andreescu said in a statement released on social media. "I have taken this step in

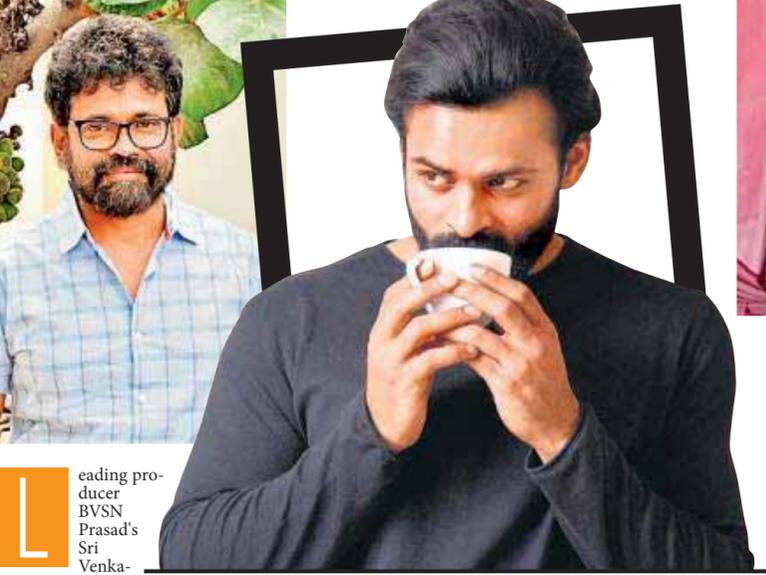


order to focus on my match fitness and ensure that I return ready to play at my highest level."

"The US Open victory last year has been the high point of my career thus far and I will miss not being there," Andreescu said. "However, I realise that the unforeseen challenges, including the Covid pandemic, have compromised my ability to prepare and compete to the degree necessary to play at my highest level."

Olga Govortsova of Belarus will take Andreescu's place in the US Open main draw.

SAI TEJ signs a mystic thriller with Sukumar's protégé



Leading producer BVSN Prasad's Sri Venkateswara Cine Chitra and top director Sukumar's Sukumar Writings have joined forces to produce Sai Tej's next. To mark the directorial debut of Karthik Dandu, who has been a part of Sukumar's writing team in the past, the untitled film will be a mystic thriller — a first-of-a-kind genre for Tej, who until now was mostly seen in commercial potboilers. The film was officially announced on Friday with a poster which read 'Siddharthi



naama samvathsare, brihasmriti simharasou sthitha namaye, anthima pushkare'. Helping his protégé Karthik on the screenplay front is Sukumar himself. Of late, Sukumar has

ramped-up production activities under his banner. Film with Tej is his third joint production in the last couple of years. He has Uppena ready to release and 18 Pages with Nikhil. The chances of Tej's latest signing going to floors this year are bleak. He is first required to complete a couple of songs for first-time director Subbu's *Solo Brathuke So Better* (SBSB), which he headlines along with Nabha Natesh before diving into the filming of Deva Katta's socio-

political drama, where he is rumoured to be playing an IAS officer. Meanwhile, there's a strong buzz that after Nani-starrer *V*, the next big-ticket project that is likely to have a direct digital release is SBSB. With no sign of the- atres reopening any-time sooner, BVSN Prasad is believed to have negotiated a handsome deal with a leading OTT player. Another production of his, a romantic comedy featuring Ashok Selvan, Nithya Menen and Ritu Varma, was part of the deal, reports claim.



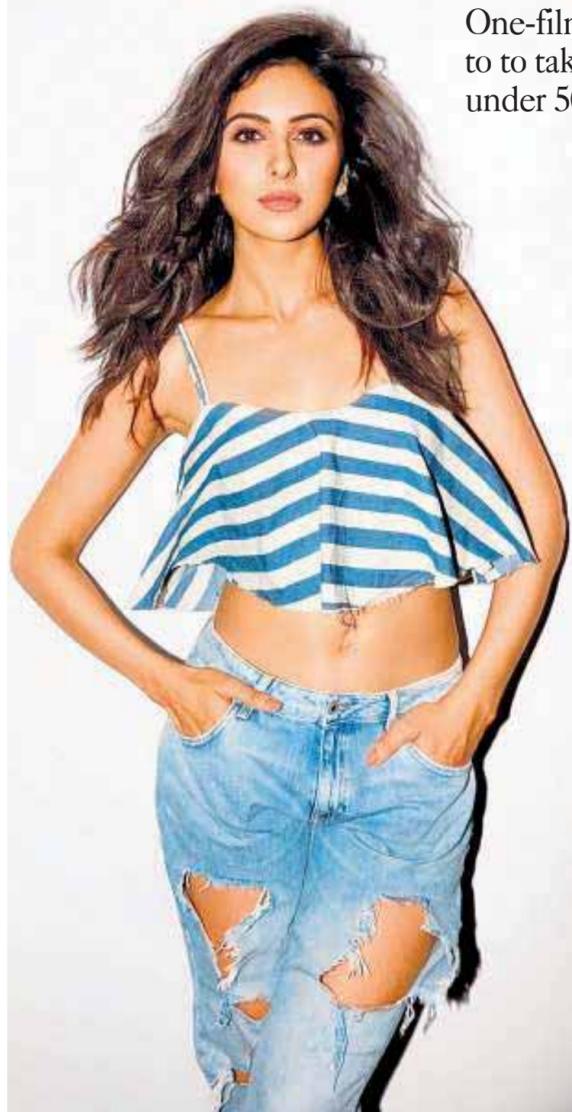
NIHARIKA GETS ENGAGED TO CHAITANYA



Niharika Konidela, who went public with her relationship to JV Chaitanya in June earlier this year, got engaged to him at a plush hotel in Hyderabad on Thursday evening. The event was at an intimate affair with just immediate family members in turn out. For the event, Niharika wore a dazzling violet coloured lehenga paired with a long sleeved embroidery blouse, while the groom-to-be Chaitanya cut a dash in a lalchi pyjama matching the colour with his bride-to-be. Megastar Chiranjeevi and his family, Allu Arjun with wife Sneha, Sai Dharam Tej and Vaishnav Tej attended the ceremony. The only notable absentee was Pawan

Kalyan. Taking to Instagram after the event, Naga Babu had a cheeky message to share for Chaitanya. He wrote, "Dear chait, everyone say that she is more like me in many ways than any. I believe in you that you will shower her with all the Love in the world. And also from today onwards, she is officially your problem (sic)." Arjun, Upasna and Ram Charan as well took to their social media pages to congratulate Niharika and welcome Chaitanya into the family. Chaitanya, an alumnus of BITS Pilani and the Indian School of Business (ISB), is the son of M Prabhakara Rao, Guntur's Inspector General of Police. He is presently employed with a leading MNC in Hyderabad.

Rakul Preet, Vaishnav Tej TO HEADLINE KRISH'S NEXT



One-film-old director Krish has decided to take up another venture and wrap it under 50 days, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

In a fresh development, filmmaker Krish has got the nods of Rakul Preet Singh and one-film-old Vaishnav Tej to front his next directorial, which he will complete before he shifts complete attention to his high-budget costume drama with Pawan Kalyan. The director has shot some portions of Pawan's untitled film in Hyderabad before COVID-19 outbreak brought the shoot to a screeching halt. Not keen on wasting time further, the director, who is known for his breakneck speed of filmmaking, decided to take up another venture and wrap it under 50 days. The director's in-house production house First Frame Entertainments will be producing the new venture which will roll



next month. When contacted, producer Rajeev Reddy said, "While I cannot disclose the film's genre now, it's a story that Krish has been excited about for a long time. The schedule chart hasn't been prepared yet but he will wrap it up quickly. The idea is to complete it by the time Pawan wraps up *Vakeel Saab*." VS Gnana Shekar, who has shot most of Krish's Telugu films from *Krishnam Vande Jagadgurum*, has been signed on as the lensman.



Filmmaker Deva Katta on Friday unveiled the theme poster of his next, *Indraprastham*, which is loosely inspired by the friendship and rivalry

Deva Katta announces political drama *Indraprastham*

shared by united Andhra Pradesh iconic politicians-N Chandrababu Naidu and YS Rajasekhara Reddy — and their journey in reshaping the landscape of Andhra Pradesh politics for three decades. The announcement comes days after he accused producer Vishnu Induri of trying to make a web series on the similar story, with Chadarangam web

series fame director Raj attached to direct. The voiceover of Katta in the poster describes what the film will tread. "The purpose of any competition is to find winners. Winners run the world! When two best friends compete in a sport, the game gets a lot more interesting." The poster also carried a quote which read as "moralities change,

the battle for power remains constant". Harsha V and Teja C together will be producing the project under Proodos Productions banner, with Katta set to direct. While it remains to be seen whether the director will be making it as a web series or a feature film, he will, however, begin it after he wraps up Sai Tej's next.



Telugu mainstream actors will take OTT plunge in 1 or 2 years: Aravind

Leading producer Allu Aravind believes that if a vaccine for coronavirus is discovered followed by the reopening of cinema halls, the first six months will attract a lot of foot-falls. "Recently in Spain, cinema halls reopened and there was a 13 percent surge in occupancy rate than what it was last year. I foresee a happening where weekends will attract more audiences in the Telugu states," the producer, who is the co-owner of Telugu streaming app aha, said in a zoom session with the media recently. Admitting that the lockdown did help the cause of aha to an extent, Aravind noted that OTT platforms will occupy a huge space in the entertainment sector. However, he is of the opinion that theatrical experience can never be replaced. "There's nothing like watching a film in a cinema hall. Until theatres provide sound, visual and ambience of high quality, there's no danger to their existence. They will compete with OTT but at the end of the day, cinema will remain the king," he declared with an air of confidence. The producer, whose

bona fides include blockbusters like *Rowdy Alludu*, *Annayya*, *Magadheera* and *Sarrainodu* among others in a career spanning more than four and half decades, is happy with the growth trajectory of aha ever since its February launch. "40 lakh aha apps have been installed so far, while 1.28 crore people have browsed through its content. Our target of 18 months was achieved in the first six months itself, making us happier and surprised bunch as well," he stated, expressing confidence that aha will grow by three-four times around this time next year. "42 new shows have been sanctioned till the June of next year." When asked whether his sons- Allu Arjun and Sirish-will take the OTT plunge, he shared, "A big north Indian hero is set for his OTT debut soon with a show whose budget is around Rs 170 crore. In a couple of years or before, our mainstream actors will join the OTT bandwagon." To a question on recent reports about megastar Chiranjeevi in talks for a show with aha, the Geetha Arts chief noted, "We are having discussions with him. We have to impress him with a big show; we are trying our best."