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the pioneer



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CHINA 'BIGGER THREAT TO INDIA' THAN PAKISTAN: PAWAR

MAHA: TEEN GIRL ENDS LIFE AFTER FIGHT WITH BROTHER OVER PHONE

DON'T PUT BRAHMIN COMMUNITY IN THE DOCK OVER CRIMES OF ONE PERSON: MAYA

KERALA HUB OF GOLD SMUGGLING, ALLEGES RAMESH

Amid the border tension with China, NCP president Sharad Pawar has said China is a "bigger threat to India" than Pakistan. China's military might is "ten times greater" than India, the former defence minister said, adding that Beijing has "weaned away" India's neighbours to its side. The Centre should try to put international pressure on China through negotiations and diplomatic channels, Pawar said in an interview to Shiv Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana'. The second of the three-part interview series was published in the Marathi daily on Sunday. "When we think of an enemy, the first name that comes to our mind is that of Pakistan. But we need not worry about Pakistan."



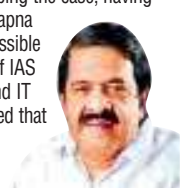
A 19-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide in Nagpur in Maharashtra after her brother refused to allow her to use his mobile phone, a police official said on Sunday. A Hudkeshwar police station official said the deceased had been asking her parents to buy her a mobile phone but the family's poor financial condition was a hindrance. "Her brother had a phone but he was not allowing her to use it. They had an argument over it on Saturday and she consumed poison and died in a hospital in the evening. An accidental death case has been registered," he informed.



Appearing on the side of the Brahmins in the wake of the gangster Avikas Dubey episode, BSP chief Mayawati on Sunday said the entire community should not be put in the dock over the crimes committed by one person. In a series of tweets, the BSP leader also cautioned the state government against "indulging in politics" over the issue and refrain from doing anything due to which the Brahmins feel "unsafe or terrorised". She said the government should act on the basis of facts to restore people's faith, adding that it should be "honest and impartial", only then the state will "become crime-free".



Sharpening his attack against the CPI(M)-led LDF government over the sensational gold smuggling case, Congress veteran Ramesh Chennithala has alleged Kerala has become a "hub" of smuggling of the yellow metal and wants the NIA to expand its ambit of probe. With the NIA probing the case, having arrested key accused, including the alleged kingpin Swapna Suresh, Chennithala said NIA should investigate the possible role of government officials. Referring to the removal of IAS officer M Sivanasakar as principal secretary to the CM and IT Secretary after his name emerged in the case, He alleged that the action itself speaks about the link of the old smuggling mafia with the state government.



KCR: Maximise ayacut under water supply

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TS mulls allowing online betting for horse racing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State government is actively considering a proposal to allow online betting during horse races planned to be organised sans spectators and punters by the Hyderabad Race Club at Malakpet, despite the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

The club has already lost huge revenues with peak summer racing season suspended due to corona lockdown. Prospects for the monsoon racing season, set to commence by this month end, also look bleak otherwise.

Around 8,000 people take part in betting for horse races per day at the Malakpet Race Course on an average.

In this context, the club is



Around 8,000 people take part in betting for horse races per day at the Malakpet Race Course on an average.

horse racing. Following this, the Hyderabad Race Club has made a similar request to Telangana state government.

Official sources said, "The state government is seriously examining how betting can be legally conducted online as in other countries and also in (other Indian) states so that we can soon resume horse racing, with punters and fans participating online, to revive the exciting sport and make up for losing crores in rupees due to the ban."

learnt to have requested the state government to allow betting online as punters and fans are currently barred from attending horse races, should they be resumed as per Unlock

2 guidelines in the race course grounds in Malakpet. The Karnataka state government recently permitted the Bangalore Turf Club (BTC) to conduct online betting for



Arvind Kejriwal terms pulse oximeters as 'suraksha kavach'

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Coronavirus enters Telangana Raj Bhavan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Covid-19 has entered the Telangana Raj Bhavan, with at least 10 staffers, including the Governor's cook, and an equal number of their family members testing corona positive on Sunday.

However, Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan and her husband Dr P Soundararajan tested negative. The coronavirus has already entered the Secretariat, Chief Minister's Office and the Chief Minister's official residence and workplace Pragathi Bhavan.

Covid-19 cases surfaced at the Raj Bhavan following rapid antigen tests on Saturday and Sunday. The tests were done since 28 special police battalion personnel tested positive in RT-PCR test, following contact tracing with the help of Director of Public Health. In all, 395



The 10 Raj Bhavan staffer and 10 of their family members who tested positive were admitted to Government Ayurveda Hospital in S.R.Nagar for further treatment.

tests were conducted, of which 347 proved negative. All the 28 police personnel who tested positive were isolated immediately.

The 10 Raj Bhavan staffer and 10 of their family members who tested positive were admitted to Government Ayurveda Hospital in S.R.Nagar for further treatment. Observers have praised the

Governor for leading from the front by not only arranging tests for the Raj Bhavan staff and police personnel, but also getting herself voluntarily tested. She tested negative. The Governor has appealed to people in red zones or with the contact history to get themselves tested at the earliest to contain further spread.

TS caseload up by 1,269

GHMC accounts for 63% of fresh cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State reported 1,269 fresh Covid-19 positive cases and eight fatalities on Sunday, taking the death toll to 356 and the cumulative number of positive cases to 34,671.

Out of the new positive cases, 800 were reported from areas under GHMC. In all, 132 persons tested positive from Rangareddy and another 94 from Medchal district.

On Sunday, the health authorities tested 8,153 samples, of which 6,884 proved negative. A total of 1,563 persons were discharged upon recovery on Sunday, taking the overall number of discharges to 22, 482. The number of active cases now stands at 11,883.



Ficci survey estimates FY21 GDP growth to be in negative territory

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Devotee puts 20 gold biscuits in Tirumala 'hundi'

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

An unidentified devotee has offered 20 gold biscuits to the shrine of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala Hills, near here, a top official of the temple said on Sunday.

The gold biscuits totally weighing 2 kg were found in the 'hundi' (offering box) on Saturday when the day's collection was being counted, executive officer of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Anil Kumar Singhal said. The TTD governs the ancient hill temple.

The total cash offerings amounted to Rs 16.7 crore during the last one month after the shrine was reopened on June 11 following the coronavirus lockdown, Singhal said.

Cong 'Speak Up Telangana' social media drive to elicit concerns of people

K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee's Covid-19 Task Force has decided to launch 'Speak Up Telangana', an online drive on social media platforms, on July 18 to elicit the concerns of people with regard to the pandemic.

Besides, a decision was taken to write an 'open letter' to TS Chief Minister K



Chandrasekhar Rao, conveying its comments, observations and suggestions to deal with the pandemic. At a meeting on Sunday, the

Task Force discussed health and education issues in the light of Covid-19 pandemic. TPCC president Capt Uttam Kumar Reddy attended the meeting, which was chaired by Marri Shashidhar Reddy. The Task Force expressed serious concern over the spike in the number of Covid-19 cases in Telangana and decried the failure of the state government in tackling it.

3 generations of Bachchan family hit by COVID-19

REUTERS ■ MUMBAI

Revered Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan's daughter-in-law and granddaughter have joined him and his son in testing positive for COVID-19, the family said on Sunday, in one of the highest-profile cases of the pandemic sweeping India.

From hospital with his father in Mumbai, Amitabh Bachchan's son Abhishek said his wife and former Miss World Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and their eight-year-old daughter had also been infected by the



new coronavirus. "Aishwarya and Aaradhya

have also tested COVID-19 positive. They will be self quar-



In a first, Trump dons mask in visit to a military facility

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump, who has avoided wearing a mask in public even as the coronavirus pandemic spread, donned one on Saturday at a military medical facility outside Washington where he was to meet with wounded soldiers and front-line health-care workers.

The visit to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center marked Trump's first public appearance with a face covering since the virus began sweeping across the United States earlier this year.

Trump had previously refused to wear a mask in pub-

"I think when you are in a hospital, especially in that particular setting when you are talking to a lot of soldiers, people that in some cases just got off the operating table, I think it's a great thing to wear a mask"

—DONALD TRUMP, President of America

lic or ask other Americans to do so, saying it was a personal choice, although he had said he would if he was in a crowd and could not maintain distance from others.

"I think when you are in a hospital, especially in that particular setting when you are talking to a lot of soldiers, people that in some cases just got off the operating table, I think

it's a great thing to wear a mask," Trump told reporters at the White House just before his visit to Walter Reed.

At the medical facility, Trump walked by media gathered for a carefully staged photo opportunity wearing a navy blue mask emblazoned with a presidential seal embossed in gold. He said only "thank you" as he passed.



BJP state president Bandi Sanjay meets MP Aravind and enquired about the incident

BJP MP attacked for his remarks on TRS MLAs

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Persons believed to be Telangana Rashtra Samiti activists pelted BJP leader and Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Aravind's convoy with stones and eggs on Sunday for his recent comments on legislators Vinayabhaskar and Narender, alleging land-grabbing by them in Warangal.

The war of words between the two parties continued on

Sunday. The MP accused the MLAs of indulging in land-grabbing as 'mafia'. He sought an inquiry into alleged cases of land-grabbing by the MLAs.

Apparently angered over the allegations, TRS activists came in large numbers and chased the convoy of the MP, pelting stones and eggs in the process. The MP could leave the place unhurt.

Ashok Gehlot govt crisis deepens

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ashok Gehlot-led government in Rajasthan seems to be teetering on the brink of collapse as Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot, on Sunday, claimed that 30 MLAs are supporting him, adding that the Congress government in the state is in minority now.

Pilot, who is also the chief of state's Congress unit, has also decided to skip Congress Legislative Party (CLP) meeting scheduled to be held on Monday at Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's residence.

The Congress has 107 MLAs in the 200-member state assembly. It also has the support of independent MLAs and legislators of other parties like Rashtriya Lok Dal, CPI (M) and Bhartiya Tribal Party (BTP). The BJP has 72 legislators and is supported by three MLAs of RSLP.

Pilot, who has been locked in a power tussle with Gehlot had gone to Delhi yesterday along with some Congress MLAs, who are believed to be his supporters, to meet party high command.



TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Ashadha & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi : Ashatami: 06:08 pm
Nakshatram: Revati: 11:14 am
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 07:30 am - 09:07 am
Yamagandam: 10:44 am - 12:21 pm
Varjyam: NIL
Gulika: 01:59 pm - 03:36 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 08:32 am - 10:20 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:55 am - 12:47 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Cloudy
Temp: 30/24
Humidity: 72%
Sunrise: 05:49 am
Sunset: 06:54 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated July 12, 2020 5:00 PM

Increase Covid test centres, Kishan tells Telangana govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Union Minister for State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy interacting with the staff of Gandhi Hospital in the city on Sunday

Union Minister for State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy Sunday said that the Centre has no plans to transform Binbinagar AIMS hospital as Covid-19 hospital, however, the Centre will put its efforts to transform it if the state government asks in this regard. Kishan Reddy said that already the Centre is using Railway and ESI hospitals for Covid treatment. He alleged that the private hospitals are charging indiscriminately as there is no government control over them, he said stressing the need to control private hospitals excesses.

He said that the Central teams would give suggestions for better treatment to corona patients. He said that the state government informed that there is dearth of medical staff in the state and stated that the Centre will provide online training to the new medical staff in any state. Kishan Reddy demanded the state government to speed up tests to control the deaths. He said that he

suggested the state government to conduct tests on everyone in containment zones.

"As Coronavirus cases in Hyderabad city are increasing, I have been visiting different COVID-19 centres across the city, meeting doctors there, patients, and paramedical staff. I am trying to build confidence among them. I request the Telangana government to increase the number of Coronavirus centres in the city," he said.

"Everyone residing in containment zones should be tested. For this, the Telangana government must increase the Covid test centres. A person who develops symptoms or gets tested positive should be given proper treatment. Telangana government must take confidence buildup measures in the state," he said.

Kishan Reddy made it clear that the Centre is ready to extend any sort of help to the state in regard to contain the

A person who develops symptoms or gets tested positive should be given proper treatment. Telangana government must take confidence buildup measures in the state, said Kishan Reddy

spread of the virus. He urged the state government to initiate all steps to tackle the spread of corona in the coming days. He said that he visited Gandhi hospital though several people warned him not to visit. He said that he discussed with the SLBC officials on the steps initiated for the implementation of Athma Nirbhar Bharath. He said that he suggested SLBC officials to strive to reach the goal kept before them by Prime Minister.

KCR: Maximise ayacut under water supply



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao on Sunday instructed officials concerned to prepare an action plan so that the river water coming from the irrigation projects, which were constructed with lot of hard work and expenditure, should be supplied to as many agriculture lands as possible in the State. He made it clear that the state government had no other priority item on the agenda than to create water facility for majority of the farmers and for this, the government would ready to spend any amount of money.

He said water from the projects should first be utilised to fill the tanks, later reservoirs and finally the ayacut. He said for the Sriram Sagar Flood flow canal, more OTs should be created and with other schemes water should be supplied to fill the tanks to supply water to the lands where irrigation water was not available. He also instructed that all the wings of the Irrigation Department should be brought under one umbrella. He held a detailed review here on Sunday at Pragathi Bhavan on identifying the areas where irrigation facility was not there and the plan to supply water for those

The state government is constructing major irrigation projects on Krishna and Godavari rivers clearing several hurdles, spending a lot of money, said CM KCR

water in abundance. We have to utilise water completely. We have to supply water to more ayacut. Examine the capacity of canals whether they can supply water to the last piece of land in the Ayacut. If need be, increase the flow capacity of canals. Fill the tanks first. Later fill the reservoirs and finally supply to the ayacut. Supply water based on this plan. With this water received during the Monsoon period can be saved in larger volumes. All tanks and check dams should be filled with water in Telangana state. This will in turn increase the water level which can supply water to the borewells which farmers dug at a cost of Rs 45 thousand Crore," the Chief Minister said.

regions. Ministers KT Rama Rao, Koppula Eswar, S Niranjan Reddy, Vemula Prashanth Reddy, Errabelli Dayakar Rao, Nagarkurnool MP P Ramulu, Government Whip Balka Suman, MLAs Marri Janardhan Reddy, Ala Venkateswarlu, Jaipal Yadav, Ravishankar, Sanjay, K Vidyasagar Rao, Kandala Upendar Reddy, Principal Secretary (Irrigation) Ranjit Kumar, participated. Kathapur ZPTC Bhoomiah, farmer Sripal, who had a telephonic discussion with the CM were also invited as special invitees. "The state government is constructing major irrigation projects on Krishna and Godavari rivers clearing several hurdles, spending a lot of money. The government has completed the pending projects on a fast-track. Tanks and revived with the inspiration from the movement (Telangana statehood movement). If fruits of these works to be passed on the people, the only way is to supply water to more agriculture lands. Till date, Telangana faced the irrigation water problems. After formation of the Telangana State, the TRS government had given priority to the irrigation sector. With Kaleswaram and other projects we have now availability of



Oppn parties' allegations meaningless, says HM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Home Minister Mohammad Mahmood Ali on Sunday refuted the allegations levelled by the leaders of the opposition parties over the demolition of mosques and temple in the Secretariat and termed them as meaningless. "Leaders of the Opposition parties criticised the move even after the Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao announced that a new mosque and temple would be built as part of the new Secretariat. CM said that the inauguration of the new secretariat building would take place only after prayers are offered in the new mosque and temple after the construction of the new secretariat building," he said. He said that they are making unnecessary propaganda in the mosque and the temple issue as the leaders of the opposition parties could not find any point to criticise the state government. He said that they could not see the development being done by the state government and that their existence would be questionable if these development programmes continued like this in the future.



'Mission Bhagiratha reflects govt's vision'

PNS ■ NIRMAL

The State government's Mission Bhagiratha programme will address the drinking water crisis and ensure that the present and future generations do not suffer on account of water scarcity, said Minister for Forests and Environment Allola Indrakaran Reddy. He was speaking after inspecting a filter bed of the prestigious drinking water scheme at Siddapur village in Nirmal rural mandal.

On the occasion, the Minister said, "The Mission Bhagiratha programme reflects the government's vision. The government showed the way to the entire country by conceiving and implementing Mission Bhagiratha. Drawing inspiration from Telangana, West Bengal has taken up the Bengal 'Jal Swapna' programme to provide drinking water to every household," he said.

He further stated that protected and purified drinking water was being supplied to all

houses of Nirmal town with the help of the filter bed. He added the drinking water crisis of the district centre had become a thing of the past now. He instructed authorities of rural water supply to expedite works belonging to Mission Bhagiratha and to take steps for supplying drinking water to all habitations at the earliest.

Later, the Minister participated in Telanganaku Haritha Haram at the filter bed and planted saplings on the premises. He also took part in a sanitation drive at his residence in Nirmal. Indrakaran urged the people to ensure that rain water does not stagnate and to remove unused articles and home appliances. He opined that cleanliness plays a vital role in staying healthy. He called upon the people to observe Sunday as a dry day and keep their premises clean for 10 minutes. He advised them to wear face masks and sanitisers for preventing the spread of the novel Coronavirus.



Minister for Forests and Environment Allola Indrakaran Reddy inspecting the works in Nirmal on Sunday

This village celebrates birth of girl child

KONDAPUR: At a time when crime against women is on the rise and common notion prevails among people that a girl child is an additional responsibility, there are people who are breaking the stereotype and setting a new trend.

Haridaspur village of Kondapur mandal of Sangareddy district is one such village which is leading by example. Contrary to popular stereotype about girl child, the residents of Haridaspur celebrate if anyone in the village delivers a baby girl.

Haridaspur in Sangareddy district is a small hamlet. The residents of the Haridaspur welcome girl child into any family in the village with open arms. This is not just to practice a ritual or strange tradition.

Sometime back, the villagers had called for a meeting and resolved killing of the girl child

was a great sin. They resolved that every family in the village should regard the birth of a girl child as a great fortune. They got the solution spread to everyone in the village by beating of drums.

If any family in the village gives birth to a baby the whole village should erupt in joy celebrating the arrival of the baby girl, it was resolved. If any woman of the village is pregnant, the whole village should pray to the almighty that the family should be blessed with a baby girl, the villagers announced amidst beating of drums.

Moreover, the village panchayat gives some money to the family into which the girl child was born to help raise the girl. The villagers adopted a resolution in this regard. The resolution is being implemented from January this year.

'Convert IRCS Blood Banks into Plasma Banks'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

"There is a need to prioritise our efforts in increasing the recovery percentage and creating confidence among people that Coronavirus is just like any other virus and not to panic," said BVS Kumar, former State Committee Member, IRCS. In a statement here on Sunday, he said that the known fact that fear and tension in an affected person will minimise the immunity levels to combat the virus. To improve the recovery rate and reduce the Covid-19 deaths, there is a dire need to make available the Convalescent Plasma to the patients. Convalescent Plasma is nothing but the plasma taken from a person, who is a Covid-19 winner.

He says that as the availability of an effective vaccine for this virus is not in sight, only the use of Convalescent Plasma is the only way to reduce the deaths. Kumar said that at present only one Plasma Bank was set up by Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences in Delhi.

Varavara Rao's kin demand his release

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The family of the arrested poet and activist Varavara Rao on Sunday demanded his immediate release by stating that his health condition is deteriorating fast and that the state is trying to kill him in jail. In a release, Hemalatha, wife of the poet and daughters -- Sahaja, Anala and Pavana expressed serious concern over the health condition of the poet. The statement mentioned that the entire family was worried about the deteriorating health of the jailed poet in Navi Mumbai Taloja Jail.

The statement maintained that the health condition of Varavara has been scary for over six weeks now, ever since he was shifted in an unconscious state to JJ Hospital from Taloja Jail on May 28, 2020. Even as he was discharged from the hospital and sent back to jail three days later, there has been no improvement in his health and he is still in need of emergency healthcare, it detailed. The family members say that the immediate cause of concern now was that they were very much perturbed at the routine phone call they received from Varavara on Saturday evening.

"Though the earlier two calls on June 24 and July 2 were also worrying with his weak and muffled voice, incoherent speech and abruptly jumping into Hindi. As an eloquent and articulate public speaker and writer in Telugu for over five decades, a Telugu teacher for four decades and known for his meticulous memory, this fumbling, incoherence and loss of memory were in themselves strange and frightening," they said.

Hemalatha went on to say that the family was informed about Rao's hallucinations. "But the latest call, on July 11 is much more worrisome as he did not answer straight questions on his health and went into a kind of delirious and hallucinated talk about the funeral of his father and mother, the events that happened seven decades and four decades ago respectively. Then his co-accused companion took the phone from him and informed us that he is not able to walk, go to toilet and brush his teeth on his own. We were also told that he is always hallucinating that we, family members, were waiting at the jail gate to receive him as he was getting released," she said.

Officials forcing us to relocate to Koheda market, allege farmers

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The marketing officials shifted the Kothapet fruit market to Koheda and advised the farmers to bring fruits to Koheda market. But the farmers and commission agents say that it would amount to contempt of court and questioned the authorities the rationale behind shifting the market to Koheda without fully developing amenities there.

It may be recalled that the tin roofs of temporary sheds set up in the Koheda fruit market were blown away sometime back as rain accompanied by gales lashed the city. Several have been injured in the incident too.

The farmers argue that the officials are advising them to sell their fruits in Koheda market in spite of the fact that there are arrangements made at the market. There are no platforms built there. During the current monsoon season the fruits would get damaged, the farmers lamented.

Earlier, some farmers and traders, who conducted operations there sustained



It may be recalled that the tin roofs of temporary sheds set up in the Koheda fruit market were blown away sometime back as rain accompanied by gales lashed the city. Several have been injured in the incident too

injuries as the roof of the temporary sheds got blown away. Since there are no arrangements for farmers and traders at Koheda market, the commission agents moved the State High Court against the government's decision to shift the market to Koheda.

The court ruled that the government should relocate the market to Koheda only after providing all amenities to farmers and traders. Throwing the court orders to winds, the Marketing Department directed the

farmers and traders to move to Koheda market. The commission agents said that they would move the contempt of court petition in the High Court. Traders and farmers questioned the government whether the Coronavirus would subside if the market is relocated to Koheda.

The Marketing Department officials are not sanitising the market and not observing precautions in Kothapet fruit market, but asking the farmers and traders to relocate to the

Koheda market. They demanded an explanation from the authorities questioning, "What is the hurry?" The commission agents alleged that some elected people's representatives, market committee members, marketing department officials have purchased lands near the Koheda market. Perhaps to increase value of the lands, the marketing officials have been pressuring for relocation of market to Koheda, the sceptical commission agents said.

TTD wins pilgrims' applause for spiritual progs

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Among the two dozen pilgrim callers, who made calls to TTD EO Anil Kumar Singhal as a part of the monthly Dial Your EO Programme held on Sunday, most of them complimented and thanked TTD for telecasting live Sundarakanda Pathanam and Veda Parayanam on Sri Venkateswara Bhakti channel.

Pilgrim callers, Padmavathi from Hyderabad, Madhavi Latha and Ramana from Bengaluru, Suguna, Ramamurthy from Vijayawada, Kalpana Devi from Palakkad of Kerala, Vijaya from Visakhapatnam, Koteswara Rao from Guntur lauded TTD for telecasting the Parayanam programme live on SVBC. They also appreciated TTD scholars, Kuppa Venkata Siva Subrahmanya Avadhani and Dr A Vibhishana Sharma for taking the programme forward in the most successful manner.

FIRST COLUMN

Rising fuel costs slow growth

Any society that pays high for its fuel suffers as this erodes incomes, reduces purchasing power and causes a slowdown in the pace of production



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The rising prices of food items are adding to the woes of the people even as they struggle to come out of the economic impact the coronavirus-necessitated lockdown has had on their lives and livelihoods. Now that India has moved into a phased "unlocking" stage, States like West Bengal, Assam and Uttar Pradesh are in a quandary whether to allow full opening of their economies or continue as before with select sectors being allowed to open up. This uncertainty is disrupting supply chains and creating artificial shortages in most parts of the country.

It is a double whammy. Recession has hit not only India but the entire globe. Job losses, reduction in income and fall in production are common. But in countries like India, the rising cost of transportation due to the unprecedented hike in administered petroleum/diesel prices, is telling on the people. Given the reduced purchasing power, inflation has added to the woes of consumers and farmers alike. Despite higher minimum support prices, farmers have not been able to get even the minimum cost for their produce and have been forced to sell at rock-bottom prices.

Since most restaurants, hotels and processing plants remain under lockdown, the demand for vegetables and foodgrains is low. This has a direct bearing on most farm produces. Corn for example fetched ₹2,200 per quintal in 2019 but this year it is difficult to get even one-fourth of that price. So a farmer who earned ₹20 plus lakh last year, despite better production, is content with ₹5 lakh this year. Plus, the farm sector is in trouble as input costs have increased manifold during the last few months. Even irrigating the fields costs more than double now, as the administered price of diesel has set new records. The people are certainly not beneficiaries of the crash in crude prices to around \$40 a barrel as the taxes have remained high. Any society that pays high fuel costs suffers in more than one way. It erodes incomes, reduces purchasing capacity and causes overall slowdown at a time when pace in production is a must.

However, the rising food prices are in reality a pre-Corona phenomenon. Even in December 2019, prices were rising. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 14.2 per cent on an annual basis. This was the highest increase since December 2013. The latest 20 to 40 per cent rise in prices of vegetables is attributed to higher labour costs and 15 to 20 per cent higher transportation costs. Supplies, too, have reduced by about 15 per cent due to summer rains damaging vegetable crops. The shortage of labour following the reverse migration has increased wages of farm labourers.

These all reflect in the spiralling vegetable and food grain prices. Even prices of rice and wheat have increased in the market despite a massive dole being given to the poor by the Government. It is said that in about 11 States, the free distribution of foodgrains has not happened as planned. According to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs data, 36 States and Union Territories procured 6.38 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of eight lakh MT allocated for migrant workers by the Centre for the months of May and June. However, till June 30, just 1.07 lakh MT, about 13 per cent of the foodgrains was distributed. Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Ladakh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Tripura had distributed not more than one per cent of the supplies got by them.

The crisis has been building up on the price front since the 2019 general elections. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) procured 36 million tonnes prior to that in 2018, the highest since 2012-13. It swelled the FCI's stocks to 75 million tonnes — 33 million tonnes of wheat and 42 million tonnes of rice. It is estimated to be about one-third of the total production. It has been utilised well for distribution till coming November at a cost of ₹1.5 lakh crore. But the mismatch in distribution, the market supplies and other factors have continued to add to the prices.

Interestingly enough, despite free supplies, the prices have not come down in rural markets either. This is intriguing. It is attributed to reverse migration causing a large influx in rural areas. The prices of edible oils have also noticed significant spikes. The village markets have seen a spiral in locally-produced oils. This has happened due to the rise in mustard and other oilseeds prices, labour costs, electricity and diesel prices. Overall, expelling and freight costs have increased. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in June noticed the inflationary situation. Its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) says, "The macroeconomic impact of the pandemic is turning out to be more severe than initially anticipated because of supply disruptions and demand compression. Beyond the destruction of economic and financial activity, livelihood and health are severely affected." The MPC says it is necessary to ease financial conditions further. It reduced interest rates which caused hardships and further reduced purchasing power of the most vulnerable classes. There may not be any magic wand but a soft policy approach and reduction in Income-Tax rates for now would help the common man. With a benevolent tax regime, prices too can mellow. It would reduce governance costs and add to the well-being of the country.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

POINT COUNTER POINT

AMID THE CRISIS POSED BY THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, BJP LEADERS HAVE GONE BEYOND HUMANITY AND ARE ENGAGED IN TOPPLING THE GOVERNMENT. —RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT



THE BJP HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ALL THIS. DURING THE RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS ALSO, THEY HAD LEVELLED SUCH BASELESS ALLEGATIONS. —RAJASTHAN BJP PRESIDENT SATISH POONIA

Justice turns turtle

Law-keepers have been walking a tightrope in this part of the Hindi heartland. With the killing of gangster Vikas Dubey, they have shown how they blindly follow political masters



AMIT SENGUPTA

In the badlands of Uttar Pradesh (UP), things only change to remain the same. In that iconic film, *Omkara*, made by Vishal Bhardwaj and located in the diabolical landscape of western UP where *bahubalis* (strongmen) call the shots, every character, with the caste prefix attached most often with their surnames and on their foreheads, fits into this eternally-predictable jigsaw puzzle. There is a revealing scene in this incredible gangster film of bitter realism. Langra Tyagi, obviously a Brahmin, played superbly by Saif Ali Khan with a pronounced limp, goes to a jail as a "visitor" to meet a buddy. The policeman at the "reception" is making a loud announcement. Among other instructions he is clearly stating that no arms, ammunition and so on will be allowed to be taken inside the prison. So Langra Tyagi walks up to him nonchalantly and declares for all to hear that he has arms and ammunition. The policeman looks up and jokingly dismisses him, saying: "Chal jhutte (Oh come on, you are a liar)."

In recent weeks, indeed quite apparently since July 3 this year, almost a similar script played out for the world to see. And it was more volatile than the pandemic, the lockdown, the quarantine, mass migration of workers especially in UP and Bihar, joblessness and the economy that's awaiting some sort of resurrection. It had such a typically inevitable ending that even a C-Grade Bollywood script writer would blush in astonishment and embarrassment.

By now, the macabre story of the murder of eight policemen, including a Deputy Superintendent of Police, in UP and the "encounter" of the man who led the attacks on the cops has unfolded, with all its gory details in the media and social platforms. More than the detailing, which is unfolding and which is still wrapped in many hidden sleaze tales of the underground and the overground, mixing in a sinister synthesis with such lucidity, there are too many questions. All of these surround the hitherto not so popular figure of the protagonist: Vikas Dubey of village Bikaru in Kanpur Dehat, Chapaur block.

A history-sheeter, gangster and criminal, with over 60 cases against him, including multiple cases of land-grabbing and murders, Dubey was known to be a typical *bahubali*. Pandering to the upper caste politicians at the local level with big ambitions, he not only wielded the gun as an insignia of his prowess but also convinced them about his invincibility in their grand design. It is slowly emerging that he had been used by politicians across the spectrum. It is also being openly said that he was bumped off brazenly and with a total lack of finesse in the darkness of the night so that he would not reveal all his shady stories of politicians and policemen up his sleeve.

However, uncanny questions remain, about his life and especially the manner in which he died. It is common knowledge that officers of the UP Police have a reasonably murky record in terms of the numerous "encounters" under the current Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime, despite observations against the same by the highest court in the land. Vikas Dubey, shot dead at the age of 43 in a striped white T-shirt with a pronounced and happy potbelly, started his criminal life when he was young. His early gang was conceived in his youth, with muscle-flexing, land-grabbing, extortion and murder as his

“
LIKE LANGRA TYAGI, DUBEY WALKED WITH A LIMP, HE SIMPLY COULD NOT RUN. EVEN THEN, THE UP POLICE WAS FORCED TO SHOOT HIM DEAD. ONE WONDERS WHY? WAS HE SHOT IN THE CHEST? IF HE WAS RUNNING, WITH A LIMP, HOW COME HE WAS NOT SHOT IN THE BACK? WHY DID HE SURRENDER IN THE FIRST PLACE IF HE REALLY WANTED TO RUN? WHY DID HE NOT HIDE AND GET HOLED UP, WITH ENOUGH POLITICAL PATRONAGE, TILL THINGS COOLED DOWN? WHY DID HE NOT SURRENDER IN A COURT WITH LAWYERS, IN FULL PUBLIC VIEW, AND INSTEAD CHOSE TO SEND A SYMBOLIC MESSAGE BY SURRENDERING IN A HINDU TEMPLE?”
”



unique selling points. Not really a Robin Hood, or a do-gooder bandit, he was soon branded as one of the most wanted criminals in the countryside.

He liked to be called "Pandit", proudly flaunting his Brahmin legacy. The first murder case apparently happened in 1990. Nothing happened to him in terms of the justice system as is the undeclared norm in UP in many cases. He thereby chose to become a lackey of a politician who shifted from the BJP to the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). Dubey, too, joined the BSP in 1995-96. Both he and his wife won local elections by hook or by crook.

Significantly, he was the main accused in the murder of BJP leader Santosh Shukla, who was then a Minister of State, no less, at the Shilpi police station, again in Kanpur Dehat, in 2001. In a daredevil act, sending a signal to all across the police force and the political spectrum, he apparently chased the Minister inside the police station and shot him dead as a public spectacle. Two policemen also died in that incident. However, Dubey was not arrested.

He surrendered after some months, reportedly accompanied by politicians, even while the entire bureaucracy and police administration tacitly refused to proceed against him, according to the brother and relatives of the BJP politician he had murdered. Predictably, again, he was acquitted. Dubey was finally arrested in 2017, booked under the Gangsters Act and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act. Two years later he was chargesheeted. However, his activities continued unabated.

As is well-known, for reasons best known to him, Dubey's gang ambushed a police party looking for him on the night of July 3 in his village and killed them in cold blood. Eight cops were killed and several injured. Dubey was

reportedly tipped off by his contacts in the police force that a raid was about to be conducted on him. The gangster and his men not only took the guns of the policemen but also reportedly inflicted severe wounds with an axe on their bodies. Why he participated in this elaborate bloodbath, only he knew; something, perhaps, the nation will never come to know now.

Since then, he was known to have travelled across four State borders, undetected, and ended up, as if going for a morning walk, at the Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga temple in Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh (MP), on July 9. Unarmed, he surrendered, without an inch of anxiety written on his face, to the unarmed and untrained guards at the temple. He was reportedly identified when he repeatedly shouted his name for all to hear, and his identity was established through the use of the Truecaller app on the phone.

The MP Police handed him over to the UP Police, which then took him in a convoy to some unknown destination, probably Kanpur, followed by intrepid reporters in their vehicles. He was apparently made to sit with policemen, unarmed obviously, and handcuffed, in a Tata Safari. He showed no desire to escape and had willfully surrendered, obviously working on a bigger plot. There were speculations in the media and amid UP-watchers that he would be bumped off just like the rest of his close aides had been.

On July 10, as the night unfolded into another macabre drama, the SUV with Dubey inside, surrounded by policemen, allegedly turned turtle, on a road which did not seem to have any bumps or potholes. According to reports, the SUV, which had skid on a smooth tarmac, did not leave any tyre marks or wasn't damaged. Besides, its doors were jammed. There are reports

that it was not the same one which was carrying him initially. Reportedly, the vehicle which overturned was a Mahindra SUV while he had been travelling in a Tata Safari earlier.

Thereafter, the cops came out with a predictable version: The SUV overturned, Dubey tried to snatch a gun from a policeman and run. Like Langra Tyagi, Dubey walked with a limp; he simply could not run. Even then, the UP Police was forced to shoot him dead. One wonders why? Was he shot in the chest? If he was running, with a limp, how come he was not shot in the back? Why did he surrender in the first place if he really wanted to run? Why did he not hide and get holed up, with enough political patronage, till things cooled down? Why did he not surrender in a court with lawyers, in full public view, and instead chose to send a symbolic message by surrendering in a Hindu temple? What were the sleazy, sinister and shady secrets Dubey was hiding in his several decades of criminal life, so lucidly tangled within the web of UP politics?

Indeed, if Dubey was bumped off, which seems to be so at this moment, what was the hurry to enact this public spectacle so soon after his arrest and so shoddily at that? And why were the reporters following the convoy stopped again and again, and then finally barricaded?

In the badlands of UP, these questions make little sense. Indeed, those reporters who would be brave enough to ask these questions are clearly not following their beats. Law keepers have always been walking a tightrope in this part of the Hindi heartland. With the killing of gangster Vikas Dubey, the criminalisation of politics has again come a full circle. Or, should we say, that it has turned turtle?
(The writer is a senior journalist)

The rise and rise of secular sectarianism

With intensifying economic, political tensions and polarisation, the nature of internal conflicts within societies is evolving



NADEEM PARACHA

The concept of sectarianism is largely associated with factions and divisions within a religion. However, there is also now an increasingly used expression called "secular sectarianism." This is about factionalism within a secular ideology, especially one which directly or indirectly sees itself as being as grand an idea as the idea of faith. In fact, in some cases, it wants to actually replace it as a new kind of faith. Most secular ideas, however, retain a democratic respect for religion, as long as it remains relegated to dealing with the people's personal spiritual matters and does not interfere

in the worldly workings of the Government. But there have been episodes where some followers of a secular ideology broke away to re-model this ideology into a new faith that was to replace the old religions. In the late 18th century, when a violent revolution in France overthrew the French monarchy and Catholic clergy, the intellectual leadership of the revolution looked to create a secular democratic republic.

However, within this group were also those who believed that the revolution had only been able to weaken the political role of Catholicism and that a new religion was needed to completely expunge it from French society. US academic Keith Baker writes that a faith called "Cult of Reason" was founded complete with temples of reason. This did not go down very well by most of their compatriots who saw it as a contradictory act. How could secularism, which insists on separating Church and State, become the source of a

new State religion? Second, the detractors also pointed out that the idea of reason, in the political context at least, rationalised this separation instead of becoming a theological doctrine itself.

The "Cult of Reason" was, therefore, a short-lived idea and sidelined. However, soon it was replaced by the "Cult of the Supreme Being." This was mainly conceived by the radical French republican, Maximilien Robespierre.

When his faction of French revolutionaries overwhelmed the "moderates", Robespierre declared the new faith as the State religion. Historian Emmet Kennedy writes that Robespierre insisted that a belief in a godhead was important for social order but it needed to be done through reason. This, however, did not stop him from organising festivals to honour the "god of reason." This again was problematic.

The "moderates" in the French assembly, that had come into being

after the revolution, had agreed with the revolution's pursuit of completely abolishing the monarchy and neutralising the political power that the clergy and the Church once exercised. However, many of them were also of the view that religion's social utility need not be attacked. Ironically, Robespierre, who detested his moderate colleagues, agreed. But he suspected that remnants of the Church might be used to usurp his faction's power in the assembly. So, he decided to create a whole new faith to fill the void left behind the receding avenues of Catholicism.

The contemporary Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, explains Robespierre as a highly contradictory character who placed the "necessity" of violence and terror in the context of ideas that were actually opposed to those that he was propagating. In fact, in an early exhibition of secular sectarianism, he opposed the idea of separating faith from politics, by quoting the 18th

century French philosopher Voltaire as follows: "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him."

Secondly, Robespierre fully understood how, for centuries, the Catholic Church in Europe had managed to gather tremendous degrees of political and economic power. But since the French revolution was directly aimed at abolishing this power along with the monarchy, Robespierre decided to replace Catholicism with an alternative faith.

To Robespierre, the "Supreme Being" was a deity called Liberty. This, to him, was a "living deity" which was to be worshipped through democracy and reason. This then would lead to a life of virtue and the immortality of the human soul. The moderates were left horrified when Robespierre started to hold festivals which looked quite like the ones held by the fallen clergy of yore. Even though he was already ordering the beheading of critics, he also made it unacceptable to reject the new faith.

When his faction's acts became too radical, the moderates managed to remove him through an internal coup. His faith, too, was abolished. Robespierre's faction, believing itself to be purer republicans and revolutionaries (compared to the moderates), could not help but fall into a "god complex," with the right to judge what was politically correct and what wasn't.

In the 1960s, the Red Book that carried quotes of the founder of communist China, Mao Tse Tung, became a sacred tome in China and Mao became a living deity of sorts. Of course, in theory, communism is atheistic, but when Mao whipped up a "Cultural Revolution" in 1966, "Maoism" almost became a religion. Those in the Chinese Communist Party, who exhibited distaste or concern towards what Mao had triggered, were cut down by fanatical mobs, waving the Red Book and claiming to be on the right side of the revolution. International

communism split into various factions.

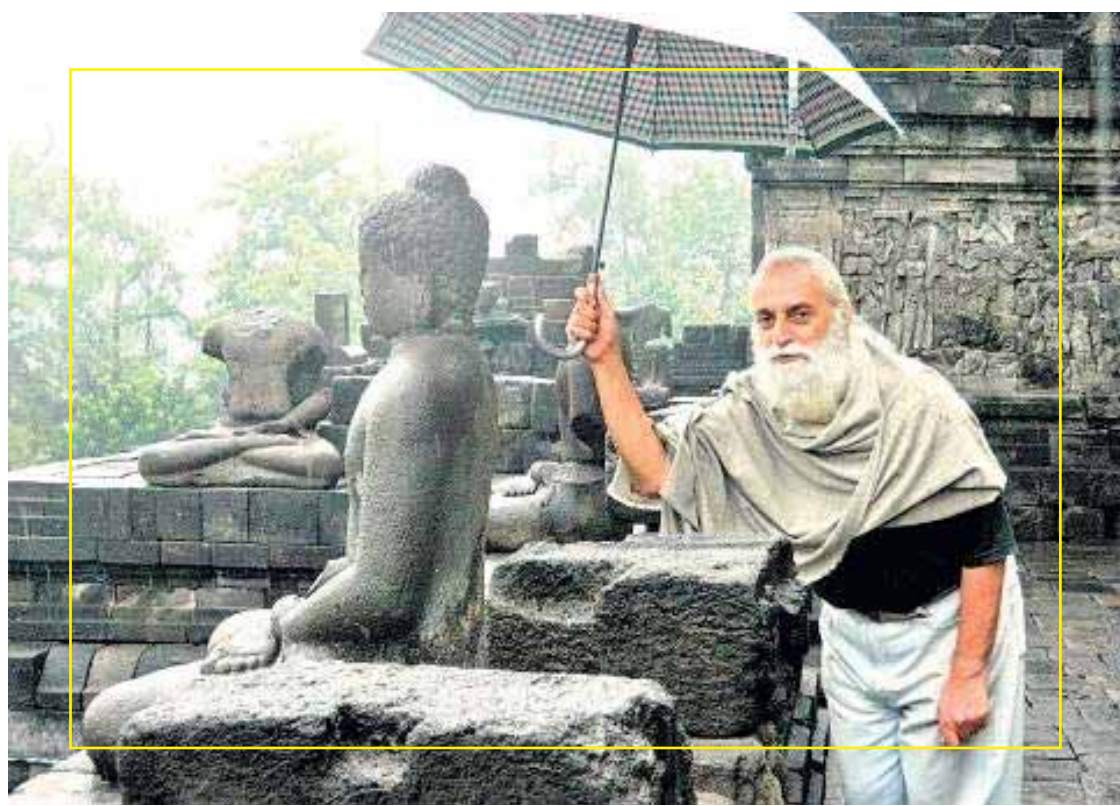
JNU professor Ajay Gudavarthy writes that, over the years, because of intensifying economic and political tensions and polarisation, the nature of internal conflicts in societies is changing. According to him, old class and ethnic conflicts remain but they are being increasingly added to by conflicts within marginalised groups who were once most likely to remain united. He gave the examples of racial equality and women's rights groups who, after finding the need to expand their identities beyond the usual "binary" ways that race and gender are perceived and debated, have ended up spending more effort battling other such groups who may think otherwise. It's like standing in front of a mirror and shouting at your own reflection, believing the reflection to be the enemy. In a way then, sectarianism is not unique to religions alone.
(Courtesy: Dawn)

'WE LIVE IN OUR HEADS, NOT THE SOCIETY'

A poet, critic, activist, and academician, he may be popularly referred to as the first openly queer poet. Hoshang Dinshaw Merchant, a retired Professor, who has written several critically acclaimed books of poetry and critical writing, describes himself as a male homosexual Parsi by religion, Christian by education, Hindu by culture and Sufi by persuasion. Penning over 13 books of poetry and critical studies, Merchant is also known for Yaraana — Gay Writing — from South Asia, which grew to become a seminal anthology of queer literature. Hoshang who made Hyderabad his home since the mid-80s speaks to NAVEEN KUMAR about his journey as a writer, early years, and more...

WRITINGS AND THE THEMES...

I started writing during my mature years. My first poem was when I was 16 years old, but it did not get published until I was 23. By 25, I started graying and my hair was white. My poetry was my way of coming out as gay to the world. I had to hide it as I couldn't openly say that I was gay. My poetry is my means of conveying things to the outside world. I don't torture my readers, I write for boys who are coming out and there are four-five words that I use time and again. Unlike the Americans, I never used big words and jargon. I waited and made a proper theme vocabulary and style for myself. My second poem was published when I was 40.



EARLY YEARS...

Hoshang Merchant was born in 1947 to a working-class Zoroastrian family in Mumbai, where he attended Xavier's Lads Academy and St. Xavier's College. He has a Masters from Occidental College, Los Angeles and for his Ph.D. in 1981, he wrote a dissertation on Anais Nin. He has lived and taught in Heidelberg, Jerusalem, and Iran where he was exposed to various radical movements of the Left. "I was a very good student, also a loner growing up who never played a game in my life. But I was good at art, painting and essay writing and always stood first in English. However, I was not someone who you would call an overall topper," he says.

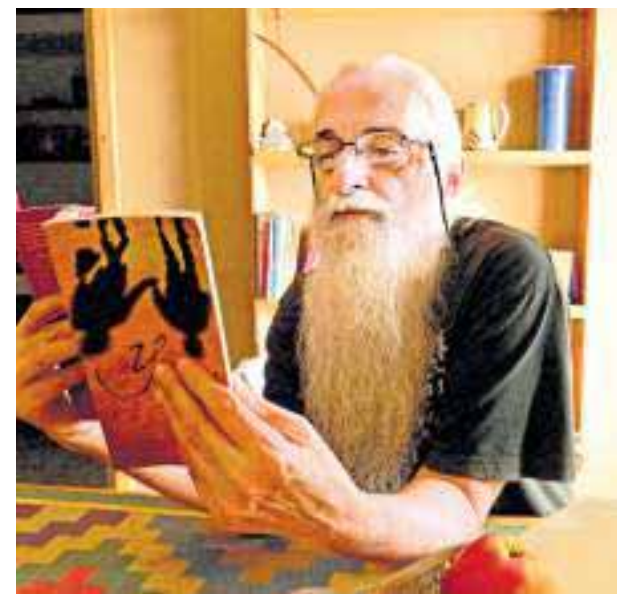
SETTLING DOWN IN HYDERABAD...

My family was the fourth generation in Bombay back then. My childhood was very that of a wealthy and pampered kid. We were those kids who had a car to pick and

drop us back from school. My parents got divorced when I was very young and that was very traumatic. We were told that those who go with my father would get all the family money and those who go with mother, won't. I have three sisters and they went with my father. I was sent for higher studies to the States with a meager allowance. Though I was very poor, I was rich in my experiences through my travels. In 1984, I came back to Bombay but could not find a job. After two years of unemployment, I joined Hyderabad Central University in 1986 after I noticed an advertisement in the newspaper. I was kicked out of 13 jobs in 10 years and have travelled all over the world before settling down in Hyderabad. Even here, I could not rent a room and moved places 17 times in 12 months because of my sexual orientation. Thankfully nobody touched me or beat me up.

GAY MARRIAGE...

Marriages are about property. Any marriage. Say some-



body has served somebody for 25 years, and then he dies. So the other one inherits his property. But what about people who don't have property? Or what about the kind of relationships that don't last that long? The kind of relationships I've had — two months, three months, a few days. What does marriage

mean to people like us? But I can understand that people have grown up in a heterosexual society and want to think, "Oh, I want to live with this person forever". I did too. I knew no better. I'd also grown up seeing my father and mother. As human beings, we live in our heads, we don't live in society.



Cleaning your house? Go eco-friendly with DIY bio-enzymes

As Hyderabad is looking for inexpensive ways to shift to sustainable living, the latest fad in the city, for all the right reasons, is making homemade bio-enzymes. Krishnaveni Mishra, Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Hyderabad, talks to *The Pioneer's* RACHEL DAMMALA on what they are, uses, how to make them, and more...

The lockdown sure got a lot of us to try various things at home. While some realised we could cook dishes like Haleem too in our own homes, some others realised they could grow vegetables in a garden in their own backyard. The newest trend to be catching on has to be making our own 'Bio-enzymes' at home to keep chemicals at bay. What are Bio-enzymes, you ask? Bio-enzyme cleaners are organic solutions produced by fermentation of fruits, vegetables, sugar, and water. In simpler terms, Bio-enzymes are a natural way to manage your home cleaning need, by doing yourself and the environment a favour, for almost no cost. Several people have been taking interest in this, including actress Samantha Akkineni, who can't stop promoting this simple yet effective discovery she made recently! So how do they work? These

HOME-MADE BIO-ENZYME CLEANERS ARE ORGANIC SOLUTIONS PRODUCED BY FERMENTATION OF FRUITS, VEGETABLES, SUGAR, AND WATER

cleaners use good bacteria to digest wastes, soils, stains, and bad odours. This is possible by the bacteria that produce enzymes specifically designed to break down certain molecules into smaller pieces. How to make your own Bio-enzyme at home? All you need are over 3 kilograms of citrus peels (of oranges, lemons, pineapple, and sweet lime, etc.), 10 litres of water, 1 kilogram of jaggery/brown sugar, a teaspoon of yeast. (The yeast here can be

the remaining of your previous batch of bio enzyme, or if this is the first time you're making one, instead of a month with yeast, it'll take you three months without.) Now mix all these ingredients in a plastic container that has screw bottle caps. Now leave this for a month (3 months without yeast). Release excess gases by opening the bottle cap once in two days but ensure it is covered always. Once it's ready, drain the liquid and store it in plastic bottles. The bio-enzyme is ready to be used for multiple cleaning purposes. What to keep in mind while making one? Since there will be gases that will be released during the process of production, a plastic container is the best option. Also, don't screw the bottle too tight, the gases can cause it to explode. Ensure that the container is covered always to keep away fruit flies from getting into it.

WHAT YOU CAN USE YOUR HOME-MADE BIO ENZYMES FOR:

- To clean and disinfect all surfaces in the house
 - To purify air and remove bad odour
 - To break down grease and grime
 - To de-clog drains
 - To remove limescale on taps and other steel appliances
 - To remove pesticides and harmful chemicals from fruit and vegetables
 - To clean and freshen clothing and footwear
 - To be spray as a natural pesticide and herbicide
 - To nourish the hair and skin of pets
 - To keep cockroaches and mosquitoes away
 - To purify groundwater
- The worsening conditioning of the environment has called for an urgent need to move towards natural and sustainable living. If you're one that's impatient to wait a month and longer, most organic stores sell bio-enzyme cleaners, so go ahead and buy one. At a time when Hyderabad is under the threat of harmful chemicals contaminating our water and land, this is definitely one step we can take towards helping the planet heal.

REKHA'S bungalow sealed after security guard tests Covid-19 + ve

Veteran actress Rekha's bungalow in the Bandstand area of the Bandra locality has been sealed by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) after a security guard tested positive for Covid-19.

The bungalow named Sea Springs has also been declared a containment zone and BMC has sanitised the locality completely.

The bungalow normally has two security guards on duty. One of them has tested positive for the novel coronavirus, according to a report. The infected member of Rekha's staff is currently undergoing treatment at a facility in Bandra Kurla Complex.

Rekha is the latest Bollywood celebrity whose staff has been affected by Covid-19. Earlier, Aamir Khan, Karan Johar, and Boney and Janhvi Kapoor, have reported that members of their staff have been infected by the coronavirus.

An official statement from Rekha or her office is awaited in the matter.



Anupam Kher's mother, brother Raju Kher test COVID 19 + ve

Veteran actor Anupam Kher has shared that his mother Dulari, brother Raju Kher and two other family members have tested positive for COVID-19.

The actor took to social media to share the health update. He also revealed that he had tested negative for the virus.

"This is to inform all that my mother Dulari is found Covid + (Mildly). We have admitted her into Kokilaben Hospital. My brother, bhabhi & niece in spite of being careful have also tested mildly positive. I got myself tested as well & I have tested negative. @mybmc is informed," Anupam Kher tweeted along with a short video.

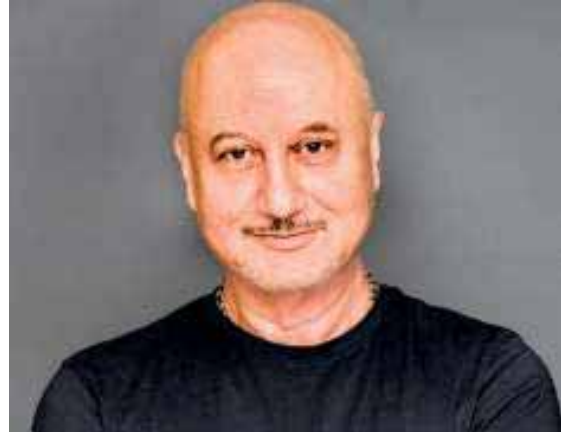
He took to Instagram to explain the symptoms his mother started showing. "I would like to inform friends, well-wishers

and everyone else that I had taken my mother for a check-up yesterday, as she had been experiencing loss of appetite. On doctor's recommendation, we took her for CT Scan to rule out any medical issue. Upon testing, she was found mildly Covid +ve," he wrote.

Kher continued: "Owing to her age, we have admitted her into Kokilaben Hospital. She is doing fine. Three other members (my brother, his wife and my niece) have also tested mildly positive. I got myself tested as well and I

have tested negative. The family has self-quarantined themselves and we have informed the BMC. I would like to reach out to everyone with aged parents — please get your parents tested even if they show the slightest of symptoms. Despite the extreme amount of carefulness displayed by my brother and his family over the last few months, they still tested positive. So I urge everyone to take this seriously and understand that no amount of safety measures are enough. Friends, don't let your guards down. Let's be vigilant, let's be aware and let's fight the bad times together."

Many celebrities wished the family a speedy recovery.



"Speedy recovery, lots of love and energy to mom , Raju and his daughter .. this too shall pass my friend .. take care... love you," wrote Anil Kapoor.

"Prayers for the speedy recovery of your family," Bipasha Basu commented. Actress Bhumi Pednekar shared: "Eagerly waiting for her next video #DulariRocks", while Neena Gupta said: "Oh ho take care my dear and good luck fr ur family,"

AISHWARYA, AARADHYA TEST COVID 19 +VE, JAYA TESTS -VE

Actor Abhishek Bachchan tweeted to confirm on Sunday evening that his wife, actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, and daughter Aaradhya had tested Covid-19 positive. "Aishwarya and Aaradhya have also tested COVID-19 positive. They will be self quarantining at home. The BMC has been updated of their situation and are doing the needful. The rest of the family including my Mother have tested negative. Thank you all for your wishes and prayers," tweeted @juniorbachchan.

Jaya Bachchan is tested negative for covid19.

DUBBING STUDIO, WHERE ABHISHEK WORKED ON BREATHE, TEMPORARILY SHUT

After Abhishek Bachchan was found positive for the novel coronavirus, the dubbing studio where he worked on his web series Breathe, has been temporarily closed. Film trade analyst Komal Nahta shared the news on Twitter. "Sound N Vision dubbing studio closed temporarily as Abhishek Bachchan had, just a few days back, dubbed there for his web series, Breathe: Into The Shadows," he wrote. Abhishek had been stepping out to the studio almost daily earlier this month to finish the last bit of work on his web series.

ABHISHEK BACHCHAN IS COVID 19 +VE, REQUESTS ALL TO STAY CALM

Actor Abhishek Bachchan on Sunday morning posted on Instagram to reiterate that his father Amitabh Bachchan and he have mild symptoms of Covid-19. He requested all "to stay calm and not panic".

"Yesterday, both my father and I tested positive for COVID-19. Both of us having mild symp-

toms have been admitted to hospital. We have informed all the required authorities and our family and staff are all being tested. The BMC has been in touch and we are complying with them. I request all to stay calm and not panic. Thank you," wrote Abhishek on Instagram.

On Saturday evening the 77-year-old Amitabh Bachchan had tweeted to

confirm he was Covid-19 positive.

"T 3590 -I have tested Covid positive .. shifted to Hospital .. hospital informing authorities .. family and staff undergone tests , results awaited .. All that have been in close proximity to me in the last 10 days are requested to please get themselves tested!"

@SrBachchan had tweet-

Soon after Bachchan's tweet, Abhishek had tweeted to confirm that he too had tested Covid positive.

The Bachchans are admitted to Mumbai's Nanavati Hospital. Their condition is said to be stable.

The Bachchan bungalows, Jalsa, Prateeksha and Janak, were being sanitised by BMC on Sunday morning.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

ACROSS

- 1 A three-sided figure
- 7 Following
- 8 Tiny
- 9 Assistant
- 10 Finest
- 12 Moist
- 14 A glass container
- 17 Have a quarrel
- 18 Living
- 19 Cut paper with these

DOWN

- 1 Add up numbers to get this
- 2 Jerusalem is in this country
- 3 The organ of smell
- 4 Depart
- 5 A big important church
- 6 Squashed right down
- 11 A vegetable that grows underground
- 13 A witch's power
- 15 Small tree branches
- 16 Tame animals

SOLUTION

E	N	O	R	M	O	U	S	
X	P	N	T	O				
E	V	E	S	C	A	R	T	O
R	R		E	I				
G	R	A	L	S	T	O	N	G
I	A		G	H				
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L	D	I	S	A	G	R	E	E





Before *Middle Class Melodies*, Vinod wrote stories belonging to diverse genres and started pitching them to producers, but to no avail, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

Mélange of food, love & humour in a MIDDLE-CLASS MILIEU

Vinod Anantoju, the director of *Middle Class Melodies* (MCM), featuring Anand Deverakonda and Varsha Bollamma in the lead roles, developed interest towards films during intermediate, while going on to do a bunch of short films in engineering to hone his skills. Before that, he was an avid reader. "My dad was a manager of Guntur branch Visalandhra book house. So, I cultivated the habit of reading at an early age. I started writing soon after and was also into storytelling as well. Because of slight financial instability at home, I had to take up a software job in Hyderabad after engineering. The initial plan was to do it for two-three years and then follow my dream of making movies. However, the two years soon turned into seven years," he smiles in a conversation with *The Pioneer*.

He continues, "During the last four years of my job, I couldn't even make time to do short films because of the demanding nature of work at office. It was then I decided that if I continue to remain with the job, it will go on and

on. I had to take a call. Thankfully, my parents were always supportive of my decision to enter film world."

Before *Middle Class Melodies*, Vinod wrote stories belonging to diverse genres and started pitching them to producers, but to no avail. "By default I could write stories which are serious in nature and it turned out to be a difficult proposition to convince producers with them. It was around this time, I decided to write a light-hearted drama along with my buddy Janardhan Pasumarthi. We first considered the title *Middle Class Melodies*. There was an inherent story and a theme in the title. So we thought of doing something from it and started developing it. The film is not a single protagonist story; other characters around him have significant importance. All these characters were borrowed from real people's lives around us. We later bundled them into a thematic connection," he shares.

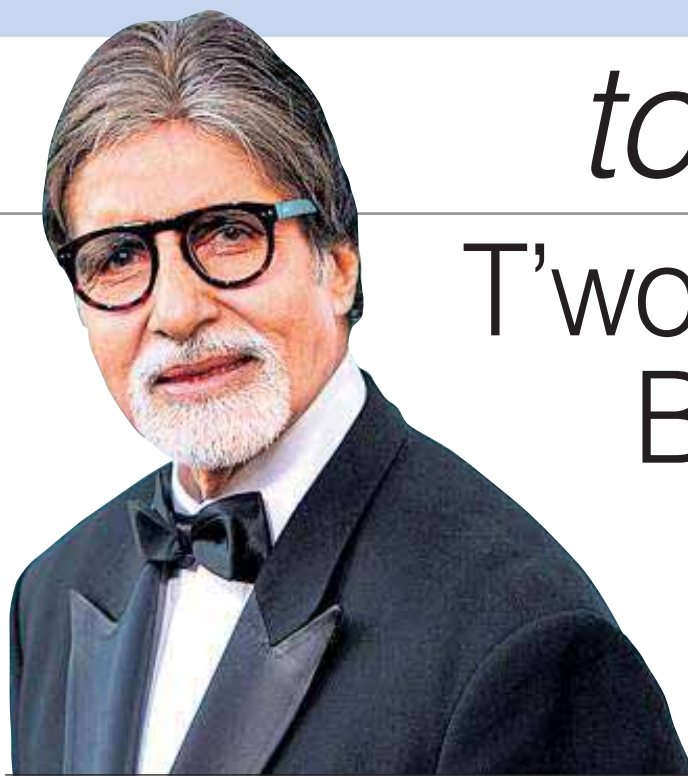
Vinod is quick to inform that the story is not in a usual format, which is why it took him and Janardhan two years to get it green-lighted. "It's got a new flavor and is a realistic comedy.

It will not be a punch-filled comedy but more in the bracket of Jandhyala, Babu and Vamsi's comedy. It will be a slice of life film minus the big stakes and outstanding drama. The conflicts are light and the narrative flow smooth. Tharun Bhascker happened to hear it and impressed by it, referred it to Anand Deverakonda. In fact, post the narration, the actor said he was looking for a story of this nature. Bhavya Creations later endorsed it," he recalls, adding that while doing short films, he was aware of Tharun's work in the short films arena, so was the Pellichooopulu director of his. "However, we didn't know each other personally. My friend Raviteja Girijala, who edited my film, worked as an editor for Tharun's films *Pellichooopulu* and *Ee Nagarinika Emaindi*. It was he who helped me forge a bond with Tharun."

In the film, Anand plays a villager Raghava, an expert in whipping out Mumbai chutney. Hailing from Kolakaluru, which is 20.5 kms drive from Guntur, he is passionate about cooking and aspires to open a hotel in Guntur and introduce Mumbai chutney to the locals. "Guntur is a popular hub for

street food and the film has many portions revolving around food. In fact, there is even a song on different varieties of food items in Guntur. Raghava, however, has to encounter problems financially and opposition from his father to open his hotel. He has a love interest as well and her part blends into his dream. Simultaneously, supporting parts around the protagonist too have small story plots," he reveals.

Except for the lead pair, the film's supporting roles have been played by fresh faces like Chaitanya Garikapati, Divya Sripada, Goparaju Ramana, Surabhi Prabhavathi, Prem Sagar and Prabhavathi Varma. It was the story diktat, Vinod observes. "As I was attempting a realistic comedy, I wanted the audiences to connect to characters like their neighbours or their own. If popular supporting actors played those roles, it would give the feeling of watching a cinema, which I didn't want. I had to audition many actors from theatre groups of Guntur and Tenali for the parts and it took three months of time. The workshops followed soon after."



tollywood

T'wood wishes Bachchans a speedy recovery

After legendary Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan and his son Abhishek Bachchan announced that himself, wife Aishwarya and daughter Aradhya too have been tested positive for coronavirus. A wave of get well soon

wishes began pouring in, flooding Twitter and other social media platforms.

Big B had tweeted: "T 3590 -I have tested Covid positive .. shifted to Hospital .. hospital informing authorities .. family and staff undergone tests , results awaited .. All that have been in close proximity to me in the last 10 days are requested to please get themselves tested!"

Bollywood celebs aside, Tollywood celebs were not far behind wishing the Bachchans a speedy recovery. Megastar Chiranjeevi, who considers Big B as his role model and mentor, tweeted, "All our best wishes and hearty prayers are with you Amit ji! @SrBachchan Get well Soon! (sic)"

Nagarajuna Akkineni, who has family and business ties with Bachchan, wrote, "Dear Amitji, our prayers are with you for a speedy recovery (sic)"

Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma, who collaborated with Big B for Sarkar series among other films, in his usual andaaz tweeted: "SARKAAAAR am sure u will kick Corona on its butt and come back more stronger than ever like u always did ..I wont pray for u, but I will pray for the Corona who will surely die in its assault on u (sic)"

In a lengthy post, power star Pawan Kalyan, a die-hard fan of Sr Bachchan, said that he still remembers his family praying for the superstar's health when he got injured during *Coolie's* shoot. "You always invoke such tremendous amount of love, loyalty and affection from different age groups. We love you not only because of your talent but also for your fighting-spirit, simplicity and humbleness. It gave me immense pain when I got to know that you and Abhishek ji have tested positive for corona. May lord Dhanvanthri bless you and Abhishek ji with healing energies," the actor said in a statement.

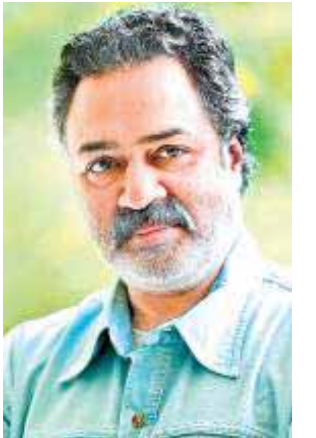
Maahesh Babu posted, "Get well soon sir! Wishing you a speedy recovery... (sic)"

Other noted personalities like Ravi Teja, Gunasekhar, Harish Shankar, Sampath Nandi and Chinni Krishna were among a host of others who wished to see Bachchans recover fast.

Avika Gor's birthday fundraiser to support 3000 students

Opportunities for learning and development are the key to nation's progress. Unequal access widens the social and economic divide. There are still hundreds of schools across the country where digital education is not yet possible, causing thousands of students to lose out on precious hours, days, weeks and eventually months of education.

Camp Diaries, an organisation started by Milind Chandwani during his stint with Teach For India in 2017, makes learning fun for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. They have so far impacted over 5,000 students across nine cities in India, and



Sanjana Reddy signs another film

Even before she embarks on the arduous road to make a biopic on Karnam Malleswari, one-film-old director Sanjana Reddy has signed another film. This new project with KL Damodar Prasad will begin after she wraps up work on the Malleswari biopic. Sanjana met Prasad with a storyline after her maiden film *Rajugadu*, with the latter asking her to expand it fully. When he rang her recently to check her health status after she took ill, he also enquired her about the old story. She gave him a full narration later and impressed by it, he

THIS NEW PROJECT WITH KL DAMODAR PRASAD WILL BEGIN AFTER SHE WRAPS UP WORK ON THE MALLESWARI BIOPIC.

decided to rope her in. It will be one of the four films he announced last year under Sri Ranjith Movies, which produced tasteful films like *Ala Modalaindi*, *Anthaku Mundu Aa Taruvatha* and *Kalyana Vaibhoga*.

Varma gears up for another film on lockdown



Filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma, who announced projects like *Murder, Thriller* and *Power Star* in the past one month, is gearing up for another film titled *Lockdown*. According to the buzz, he will be making another suspense thriller in the backdrop of coronavirus-induced lockdown. Leading the cast will be Varma's find Sri Tej from Vangaveeti and Lakshmi's NTR, and Poojita Ponnada. The filmmaker has already made a film *Coronavirus*, whose trailer is already out. Presently in post-production, it features Srikanth Iyengar and is helmed by Varma's shishya Agasthya Manju. *Lockdown* is believed to roll after Varma wraps up *Power Star*.



