

ANALYSIS 7
FUTURE MORTGAGED
FOR FOOD

MONEY 8
CONSULTING ENGINEERS URGES GOVT
TO REVISIT L1 TENDERING SYSTEM

SPORTS 12
HUGE CHANCE
MISSED

HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY JULY 15, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



TAMANNAAH,
SATYADEV PAIR UP
FOR A ROMANTIC
DRAMA

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JITENDRA SINGH, RAM MADHAV IN SELF-QUARANTINE

MUKESH AMBANI NOW WORLD'S 6TH RICHEST, BEATS ELON MUSK AND GOOGLE FOUNDERS

AMITABH BACHCHAN, SON ABHISHEK, TO STAY IN HOSPITAL FOR AT LEAST A WEEK

HOMES ON STREET PAINTED SAFFRON IN UP CITY, CASES FILED

Union minister Jitendra Singh and BJP general secretary Ram Madhav have gone into self-quarantine after party's Jammu and Kashmir unit president Ravinder Raina, who had accompanied them to the residence of a slain party leader, tested positive for coronavirus on Tuesday. Singh, who is also a party MP from Udhampur, said he has gone into self-quarantine. "Have gone into self-quarantine with immediate effect from 4 PM today, after receiving the news about corona positive test of J&K BJP President Ravinder Raina who had accompanied us from Srinagar to Bandipora on 12th July," he tweeted. Singh, Minister of State for Personnel, had visited the house of his party colleague Waseem Bari, who along with his father and brother were shot dead by terrorists in North Kashmir's Bandipora last week.

India's richest man surged past Silicon Valley tech titan Elon Musk as well as Alphabet co-founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page to become the world's sixth-richest person. The chairman of Reliance Industries Limited, whose wealth surpassed Warren Buffett's last week, is now worth \$72.4 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. Shares of the conglomerate have more than doubled from a low in March as its digital unit got billions in investments from companies including Facebook, Silver Lake and, most recently, Qualcomm. Mukesh Ambani is now richer than Larry Page, Sergey Brin and Elon Musk. Mukesh Ambani's energy empire is slowly shifting to e-commerce, with tech giants seeking to take a piece of India's fast-growing digital business.

Amitabh Bachchan, 77, and his son Abhishek, 44, both diagnosed with COVID-19, will have to be in hospital for at least a week, said a hospital insider, reported news agency PTI. On Tuesday morning, the source shared a health update about Big B and Abhishek and said they are "stable". "Both are stable and are responding well to the treatment. They will have to be in the hospital for at least seven days," PTI quoted the source as saying. Abhishek's wife actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan and their young daughter have also tested positive - they are in home quarantine.

A businessman in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj city has filed an FIR (first information report) against a group of people who allegedly painted his home saffron despite objections. He claimed that he was threatened and abused after he asked them to stop. The street where the incident took place also has one of the homes of UP Minister Nand Gopal Nandi. A second FIR filed by another resident claims the minister sent the men. The minister has justified what he calls "development work" and said the controversy is "needless". Visuals from the street showed rows of houses painted in saffron and religious symbols being painted on many of them.



Congress wilts
under pressure
from 'Young Turks'

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TS jumps to sixth in loan raising in the country

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has jumped three places to occupy the sixth position among all states in the country with regard to raising loans i.e. market borrowings, according to a report just released by the Reserve Bank of India.

The report, pertaining to previous fiscal 2019-20, states that the gross borrowings of TS government increased to Rs 37,109 crore in 2019-20, while the net borrowings increased to Rs 30,697 crore.

Net borrowing is the amount borrowed during the fiscal year, while gross borrowing includes net borrowing for the year and the repayment of past



loans. In 2018-19, the TS government's gross borrowings stood at Rs 26,740 crore and the net borrowings at Rs 22,183 crore. That is, the TS government's gross borrowings increased by

38.77 per cent and the net borrowings went up by 38.38 per cent in 2019-20, compared to that of 2018-19. TS ranked No.9 in the tally of highest borrowings in the country in 2019-20. Since then, it has jumped three places by raising

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more loans in the current fiscal (2020-21) till May, due to which it has currently attained sixth place in the country.

The TS government had raised Rs 8,000 crore in gross borrowings during April, May this year. Of this, the net borrowings stood at Rs 6,750 crore.

Applauded in fight against Covid, Bengal bureaucrat dies

PNS ■ KOLKATA

A government official working on the frontlines of West Bengal's fight against coronavirus died on Monday morning due to the highly infectious illness, leaving behind a husband and a four-year-old son.

Debdatta Ray, the 38-year-old deputy magistrate of Chandannagar subdivision in Hooghly district, reported Covid-like symptoms earlier in the month and was advised to quarantine at home which was in the Dum Dum area of north Kolkata. She developed severe respiratory distress on Sunday and was rushed to Shramjibi Hospital in Serampore, where she lost the battle against COVID-19 the next morning.

SC serves notices on TS police, BHEL

Police inaction for over 9 months in woman's suicide

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notices seeking responses from the Telangana government, Telangana State Police, the management of BHEL-Ramachandrapuram unit here and the Central Bureau of Investigation on a plea seeking the transfer of probe from the state police to the Central Bureau of Investigation in the case pertaining to suicide by a woman officer of BHEL, after she had allegedly faced mental torture and sexual harassment at workplace.

The petition was filed by the mother of the 33-year-old deceased victim. It is alleged in the plea that the victim, Neha Chouksey, was driven to suicide in October 2019 by eight of her colleagues in BHEL Ramachan-



Commissioner of Cyberabad Police VC Sajjanar, under whose limits Miyapur Police Station falls, said that they did not receive the SC notice and would act on it when received.

drapuram unit, including one who was her supervisor, since they had subject her to mental torture, sexually harassment at workplace, and even threatened her with rape.



Pilot playing into the hands of BJP: Gehlot

5

HC TO TS GOVT Cancel registration of errant pvt hospitals

INKESHAF AHMED ■ HYDERABAD

Taking a serious view of the exorbitant fees running into lakhs of rupees charged by private hospitals for extending treatment to Covid-19 patients, the Telangana High Court on Tuesday directed the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare to exercise the powers bestowed on him, to even cancel the registration of such hospitals under the Clinical Establishment Act, 2010, against the erring private hospitals.

Besides, the High Court directed the state government to exercise the powers delegated to it by the Centre under the Act to control and supervise the functioning of private hospitals.

A division bench of the Court, comprising the Chief Justice of the state Justice RS

TS reports 1,524 new Covid-19 cases

HYDERABAD: Telangana State on Tuesday reported 1,524 new Covid-19 cases, apart from 10 deaths due to the virus. In all, 13,175 samples were tested on Tuesday - the highest in a single day so far - of which 11,651 proved negative. The cumulative number of tests in the State has gone up to 1,95,024, while the total number of positive cases so far is 37,745.

Chauhan and Justice B.Vijaysen Reddy, directed the state government to permit Gandhi Hospital to extend testing facilities to all the patients having Covid-19 symptoms.

ONLINE CLASSES Centre limits screen time for students

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pradoxically, Covid-19 has not only necessitated syllabus cut amid shortened instructional hours, but also justified effecting across the board cuts in screen time of students who now have to reconcile themselves to a blend of homeschooling and online classes as classroom instruction is still a distant dream.

The HRD Ministry on Tuesday announced guidelines for online classes by schools and recommended a cap on duration and the number of sessions in a day for students. This follows concerns raised by parents that online classes have increased children's screen time.

8 held for black marketing of COVID-19 drugs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Eight people who allegedly indulged in black marketing of emergency drugs used for COVID-19 patients were taken into custody here on Tuesday.

Based on specific information, police teams nabbed the eight, who were black marketing generic versions of Remdesivir and other drugs which are being used as anti-viral medicine for COVID-19 patients, Remdesivir 100 mg injections

The Pioneer exposed large-scale black-marketing of the drugs in city



Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Anjani Kumar told reporters. Police seized 51 Remdesivir 100 mg injections among other drugs besides Rs 55,000, from the possession of the arrested persons who are into surgical business, medical agency and medical distributor. The total worth of the seized

items including cash was put at Rs 35.5 lakh, police said. Those arrested had formed a group and started black marketing of emergency drug for COVID-19 patients to earn easy money illegally and sold it at higher prices, they said.

With regard to sale or usage of these drugs, Police said it has been clearly mentioned on the box that the medicine is supposed to be meant for institutional and Hospital sale only.



Govt working to mapping land bank available for industry: Goyal

8

ADHIR WRITES TO PM Varavara Rao at 81 cannot be threat to nation

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Congress Leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Tuesday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking his intervention for the release of Telugu poet Varavara Rao who was arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case in Maharashtra.

Rao at 81 years of age "cannot be a threat to one of the strongest countries" in the world, Chowdhury said.



"A person of 81 years of age has been languishing in jail for years without knowing his offence, now he has been men-

tally disoriented, having no medical assistance.

"You may please intervene in this matter and save his life, otherwise our future generations will not forgive us (sic)," he wrote in his letter to Modi.

Rao and nine other activists were arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist link case, which was initially probed by the Pune police and later transferred to the National Investigation Agency in January this year.

Covid-hit Dy Speaker throws Covid norms to winds yet again

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At a time when celebrities and leaders are expected to set examples of impeccable adherence to Covid-19 containment norms, Covid-hit Deputy Speaker Padmarao Goud chose to throw caution to the winds by letting his bravado do the talking as Potharaju at the Bonalu celebrations.

Just two weeks into his recovery from Covid-19, he took part in Bonalu festivities amid large gatherings in Secunderabad in clear violation of Covid-19 guidelines and curbs.



A video of the festivities, which went viral on Tuesday, shows Padmarao Goud taking part in the Bonalu rituals without a face mask as a bare-bodied 'Potharaju' dancing merrily to delirious drum beats. Initially Goud is seen slipping the face mask into his pocket. Soon, he removes his shirt even as devotees encircle him, leaving informed circles agape.

A video of the festivities, which went viral on Tuesday, shows Padmarao Goud taking part in the Bonalu rituals without a face mask as a bare-bodied 'Potharaju' dancing merrily to delirious drum beats. Initially Goud is seen slipping the face mask into his pocket.

The state government has imposed several curbs on public gatherings in view of the alarming rise in Covid-19 cases, especially in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav even appealed to devotees to desist from celebrating

Telangana's ancient Bonalu festival with large gatherings this time. Recently, Goud tested positive for coronavirus. Along with him, four of his family members were also infected and all of them were put under home quarantine at their residence in Secunderabad.

IMD predicts heavy rains in State

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday predicted thunderstorms accompanied by lightning over Telangana on Wednesday. In its forecast, it said heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places of Adilabad, Nagarkurnool, Komaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nizamabad,

Jagtial, Karimnagar, Paddapalli, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Medchal, Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural, Mahabubabad, Mahbubnagar, Khammam, and Bhadradi Kothagudem in the state. The IMD warned that rainwater may pool on the roads in low-lying areas. The roads will be wet and slippery, it said, suggesting people should restrict their movements.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Ashadha & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Dashami: 10:19 pm
Nakshatram: Bharani: 04:43 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 12:22 pm - 01:59 pm
Yamagandam: 07:30 am - 09:07 am
Varjyam: 05:48 am - 07:33 am
Gulika: 10:45 am - 12:22 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritkalam: 11:24 am - 01:10 pm
Ahijit Muhurtham: NIL
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Cloudy
Temp: 25/23
Humidity: 92%
Sunrise: 05:50 am
Sunset: 06:54 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated July 13, 2020 5:00 PM

It's tragically distressing, and surprising, that the Grand Old Party that is supposed to act as the principal Opposition in the country, is facing a crisis that threatens its very existence.

To a political observer, the basis of this crisis lies in the fact that the party has been alienating itself from generational affection of prominent families that had been its backbone right from its inception. The present turmoil in the Rajasthan unit of the Congress raises some pertinent questions, the most pressing being how would it tackle the present political crisis?

Whatever the outcome of the rebellion by Sachin Pilot in Rajasthan, questions will be asked if the Congress high command is equipped to keep both the party veterans and the young blood happy.

Truth be told, the latest rebellion in the Congress is nothing but a tussle between the old guard and the new blood, just like it was in Madhya Pradesh where the

Congress wilts under pressure from its Young Turks



BJP took advantage and toppled the Kamal Nath government.

The Congress has been nurtured by some very prominent families for generations together. But for the support that warmth extended by these families in the past, the party would not have fared well.

With the changing scenario following the 'mandalisation' of politics, and the subsequent Ram Mandir agitation, the Congress floundered, and wilted under the 'special attention' paid by party presently ruling the country - the BJP - especially under Narendra Modi.

Though it may not be fair to attribute the latest political crisis to Modi, the fact remains that Rajasthan, like Madhya Pradesh, holds a special place for the BJP.

Rajasthan was ruled by

With the changing scenario following the 'mandalisation' of politics, and the subsequent Ram Mandir agitation, the Congress floundered, and wilted under the 'special attention' paid by party presently ruling the country - the BJP - especially under Narendra Modi.

Bhairon Singh Shekhawat in early 1990s, while Madhya Pradesh was ruled by Sunderlal Patwa. Both these governments were axed under Article 356 of the statute following the infamous demolition of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

It's another matter altogether that the BJP regained power at some of the other point of time in Madhya Pradesh in a 'democratically approved' manner without winning elections and it is believed that it capturing Rajasthan is just a matter of time.

This is despite the Congress' attempts to woo Sachin Pilot.

Having lost the election in Madhya Pradesh, the BJP successfully convinced prominent Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia to switch over. Jyotiraditya being disgruntled at not getting the CM's chair did help of course.

His father Madhav Rao Scindia had been a trusted lieutenant of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. The elder Scindia had gained political prominence at the national level after defeating Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1984 General Elections. His son



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

Jyotiraditya too contributed a lot to the Congress in his home state, but the decision to make Kamal Nath the CM dashed the hopes of the young leader, ultimately leading him to revolt.

The story is unfolding in Rajasthan too - another young leader Sachin Pilot has rebelled and is doing his best to topple

the Congress government.

Undoubtedly, the BJP is pulling the strings behind the scenes, but that does not change the fact that the families of both Sachin and Jyotiraditya had been committed to the Congress in the past.

Unfortunately for the Congress, its present leadership has been unable to go with seniority and ignoring the claims of Jyotiraditya and Sachin Pilot.

Thus were sown the seeds of disenchantment that ultimately led to turning of the tables.

The Congress high command 'advised' these three young leaders to bide their time. While Jyotiraditya and Sachin Pilot tried to topple their respective governments, Jagan did not. Instead, he waited, and waited in vain.

After N. Kirankumar Reddy replaced Rosaiah as the Chief Minister, Jagan realised that he had to carve his own path, and

decided to part ways with the Congress.

Subsequently he launched his own party.

In the case of Jagan too, the Congress leadership failed to convince him to stay on in the party. In fact Sonia Gandhi offered Jagan to lead the party in 2014 elections besides making him a Minister of State in Union Cabinet.

But Jagan turned down the proposal, expressing doubt over the chances of the Congress retaining power in 2014. Things would have been different had the Congress leadership managed Jagan to continue in the party.

Thus, the Congress lost the generational affection of the YS family, a family that represented the party in the Assembly for five terms and the Lok Sabha for four terms. This is considered to be the longest legislative life of a contemporary Congress man from AP.

Incidentally, the TDP too has the backing of some families that have been loyal to it for generations.

TS to have a problem of plenty after kharif crop is harvested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Coronavirus pandemic has created a quandary situation in the state in regard to the storage spaces in warehouses in Telangana.

As kharif crop procurement would begin in another two months in state, there is a need to dispose the crops procured during rabi season, from the warehouses.

The agriculture department predicts bumper harvest in kharif season as well. The authorities are worried over making space for the crops to be procured as all warehouses are completely occupied with the crops procured during rabi season.

The officials have been facing problems in disposal of the crops procured last year with markets slowing down due to Covid-19. The state government agencies are unlikely to get the price they quote since traders are not favourably inclined to take the crops at higher prices.



The Markfed called for bids to dispose of 94.70 lakh quintals of maize to create room for the crops to be procured in kharif.

During last rabi, the government procured various crops like maize, ground nut, red gram, Bengal gram, sunflower over one crore quintals. The paddy procurement

during last rabi was put at 65 lakh tonnes. The Cotton Corporation of India procured 40 lakh bales of cotton, while the traders have stocks up to 5 lakh bales with them.

Therefore, warehouses in the state are piled up with stocks. Since the godown space is not enough to store crops, the authorities hired private

function halls and marriage halls to store the crops and market yards.

The District Collectors of Telangana sent a communication to the state government to shift them to safer places or they might get damaged due to rains.

Traders are not showing interest to buy the crops as

there is slump in the market due to Coronavirus.

The Markfed procured maize at Rs 1,760 a quintal from farmers. To make profit, it should sell maize at Rs 1,900 a quintal to keep itself out of red. The Markfed gave time to traders till July 18 asking them to quote their price. If the traders quote too low, the officials take it to the notice of the Chief Minister and take a decision. If the quoted price were to be less by Rs 100, the Markfed is likely to sustain a loss of Rs 100 crore.

The Telangana State Warehousing Corporation asked the state government to clear the stocks from godowns to make rooms for the crops to be procured after kharif.

Principal Secretary Marketing Department B Janardhan Reddy said that the district collectors stated that there was no adequate protection to crops stored in function halls and wedding halls. The Government would soon take a decision on the issue.

Forest Department trains staff online on Yadadri model forest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Forest Academy (TSEFA) Dulpally, here has gone online for training the front line staff of forest department. The new afforestation concept, the Yadadri model of natural forest development and the Palle Prakruti Vanam (PPV) will be taken up in all villages across the state were the concepts being taught online.

The online programme includes two training sessions, one on Yadadri model and one session on PPV so that staff learn technical issues and will be able to guide others in the implementation of the programmes. Initially twenty members are being trained in each district and five districts are covered every day.

The participants include officers right from conservator of forest (CF) to Forest Beat Officers (FBO). In all about 600 staff members are being trained. Primary objective of the training is to give technical guidance



for the implementation of the programmes at village level. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) R Sobha, G Chandrashekar Reddy Director TSEFA and VVN Prasad, Special commissioner, Research and Development are supervising the training process.

The required notes and literature are also circulated to trainees through social media apps. The staff is participating in training, using their smart phones from wherever they are located. "This is new approach for mass capacity building and avoiding travel and using resources efficiently," the officials said.

Covid-hit Dy speaker throws...

Continued from Page 1

After treatment in a private hospital, Goud was discharged. This is his first 'public' appearance thereafter.

Referring to Padmarao Goud, KTR had earlier stated that anyone can contract Covid-19, whether one is a celebrity or politician. "I have asked our deputy speaker to wear a mask. He has never obliged. As a matter of fact, he often brushed aside the threat of the pandemic, stating that Hyderabadis are strong and they won't contract the virus. Days after his statement, Padmarao tested positive. I am appealing to all to wear a face mask. Corona does not see whether one is a prince or a pauper," KTR had remarked at a public meeting recently. Goud's participation in Bonalu, in brazen disregard of Covid-19 norms, has drawn flak from the opposition. They dubbed Goud's 'Bonalu' merriment as 'social irresponsibility'.

If public representatives behave in this manner, what message do they send to the people, asked leaders of opposition parties.

TS jumps to sixth in loan...

Continued from Page 1

Going by the pace at which TS has been raising loans, RBI has estimated that the Telangan State government's gross borrowings will increase to Rs 48,000 crore and net borrowings to Rs 40,500 crore in current fiscal 2020-21.

Uttar Pradesh topped the country's list of states, with its gross borrowings totaling Rs 67,453 crore and net borrowings amounting to Rs 50,494 crore. Other states with highest loans include, Tamil Nadu with gross borrowings of Rs 62,425 crore and net borrowings of Rs 49,826 crore.

West Bengal made gross borrowings of Rs 59,242 crore and net borrowing of Rs 43,132 crore.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 51,170 (10 gm)	
₹ 70	↑
SILVER	
₹ 52,100 (1kg)	
₹ 110	↑

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹167
Without Skin	₹190
Broiler at Farm	₹115

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	330
VIJAYAWADA	356
VISAKHAPATNAM	349
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹3.40

Cancel registration of errant pvt hospitals

Continued from Page 1

Referring to news reports on the issue of the huge amounts of fees being charged by corporate private hospitals like Yashoda Hospitals and KIMS, the division bench asked the state government as to what kind of action it had initiated against the two hospitals for violation of its orders. It asked the government to fix

the maximum charges that can be collected by private testing laboratories. It asked the state government to give wide publicity to the details related to availability of the beds and ventilators at different hospitals of the state.

The Court directed the state to submit a report with regard to implementation of its directions by July 27 before adjourning the hearing of the case.

8 held for black...

Continued from Page 1

Remdesivir drug comes with a consent form that has to be filled and signed by the patient/attendants and doctor concerned at the time of administration of drug.

A copy of consent form has to be handed over to patient and attendants. It is the duty of the institution to ensure availability of consent form all the time especially during inspection by Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation and Drug Controller General of India, police added.

TS reports 1,524 new...

Continued from Page 1

There are 12,531 active cases. In all, 1,161 persons were discharged on Tuesday. The total number of discharged patients is now 24,840. With 10 more deaths on Tuesday, the death toll in the state increased to 375. Tuesday's tally included 815 cases from the GHMC area. Besides, there were 240 cases from Ranga Reddy, 97 from Medchal, and 61 from Sangareddy. As for the number of beds, the official bulletin said that government hospitals as on Tuesday had a capac-

ity of 17,081 Covid-19 beds, of which 11,928 were isolation beds, including 734 occupied. As many as 3,537 were oxygen beds, including 721 occupied. Likewise, out of 1,616 ICU beds, 350 were occupied. Thus, the bed occupancy is 10.6% and 89.4% of the available beds are vacant.

OFFICIAL SLAMS PIB

Director of Public Health Dr. G. Srinivasa Rao has strongly condemned and expressed utmost displeasure at the statement given by the Centre's PIB on Telangana conducting low tests.

SC serves notices on TS police, BHEL

Continued from Page 1

Counsel for the petitioner, advocate Alakh Alok Srivastava, brought to the notice of the apex court that the police have not yet filed the charge-sheet and no arrests have been made, though more than eight months have elapsed.

"The suicide note, dated October 16, 2019 of the deceased, and her last telephonic conversation with her

sister, categorically establish that her own supervisor and office colleagues subjected her to extreme level of sexual, physical and mental harassment and attempted to rape her, due to which she was forced to commit suicide," Srivastava contended.

"There is another shocking attempt of the Telangana Police to blame the unfortunate suicide of deceased on her alleged 'mental illness', despite the fact that her employer BHEL

has categorically deposed that no sign of any mental illness was shown by her at her workplace," the plea to the Supreme Court mentioned.

According to media reports, the apex court has asked the TS Police why they did not question the eight persons named in the suicide note.

When contacted, the investigating officer in the case, Venkata Shyamala, Inspector of Police, Miyapur, refuted claims that no investigation

was done. He told The Pioneer: "We on our part did interrogate the accused and have recorded everyone's statements. We have sent her phone for examination and are waiting on the call data records in the case," he said. He mentioned that he had not yet received the SC order.

In a similar vein, Telangana Additional Director General of Police Jitender mentioned that he had not received the apex court's notice.

Varavara Rao at 81 cannot be threat to nation

Continued from Page 1

The case pertains to the alleged inflammatory speeches made at the Elgar Parishad convales held in Pune on December 31, 2017, which, the police claimed, triggered violence the next day near the Koregaon-Bhima war memorial located on the outskirts of the western Maharashtra city.

IMD predicts heavy rains in State

Continued from Page 1

According to Skymet, "Trough extends from eastern parts of Bihar to Telangana across Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. Due to this rain activities are going on. In north Telangana districts and in adjacent Chhattisgarh, there could moderate rain."

Centre limits screen time for...

Continued from Page 1

The Court passed this order in a batch of Public Interest Litigation (PIL) pleas filed on Covid-19 issue. During the course arguments, the HC expressed surprise over the non-performance of Covid-19 detection tests at the Gandhi Hospital, which is designated as the Covid-19 center.

As per the guidelines titled 'Pragyata', the Ministry has

recommended that the duration for online classes for pre-primary students should not be for more than 30 minutes. For Classes 1 to 8, the limit is two online sessions of up to 45 minutes each; while for Classes 9 to 12, it is four sessions of 30-45 minutes' duration each.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has led to closure of schools and has impacted over 240 million children of the country who are enrolled in

schools. Extended school closures may cause loss of learning. To mitigate the impact of the pandemic, schools will not only have to remodel and reimagine the way teaching and learning have happened so far, but will also need to introduce a suitable method of delivering quality education through a healthy mix of schooling at home and schooling at school," HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said.

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CRIME CORNER

Woman kills self over harassment

HYDERABAD: A married woman committed suicide by setting herself on fire at Gopanpally in Chandanagar on Tuesday. Police said that the woman took the extreme step due to harassment from her husband and in-laws. The victim was identified as 31-year-old K Sravanthi. She was married to Kankana Santosh Kumar, a private employee, in 2017. According to the police, the couple had frequent fights over the last one year, with Santoshi's parents harassing Sravanthi for additional dowry. On Monday night, Santosh picked up an argument with Sravanthi, after which she is suspected to have been depressed and ended her life. Sravanthi then doused herself with fuel and immolated herself in her bedroom and then rushed into the lift, where the security persons found her. She died on the spot. Her family members who woke up to her cries rushed to her rescue and tried to douse the flames, but could not save her. Based on a complaint, the police registered a suspicious death case and are investigating.

Teenager sets grandmother on fire over property dispute

HYDERABAD: A teenager allegedly murdered his own grandmother by setting her ablaze at Ellaverthi village in Shankarpally on Tuesday. The victim was identified as Kansamma, who is survived by a son and three daughters. According to the police, she had recently divided her property and gave a share to her daughters too. Unhappy with her decision, her grandson, a Class X student confronted her and picked up arguments with her, demanding that his father, the only son, be given the share that was given to the three women. However, Kansamma disagreed and on Tuesday the accused again picked up an argument with her after which he is suspected to have doused her with petrol and set her ablaze. She died on the spot. The Shankarpally police are making efforts to nab the accused, who went absconding after the murder.

Man arrested for selling injections at higher prices

HYDERABAD: A pharmacy store owner who sold the crucial Remdesivir injection for four times its higher price, was arrested by the Punjagutta police on Tuesday. The store was selling the injection for Rs 21,000, nearly four times its actual price of Rs 5,400, police said. A resident of Golconda, Sikander Ali Khan, 29, had complained to the police on Tuesday that he purchased three Remdesivir injections from one medical store near the NIMS hospital for his relative who is taking treatment for Covid-19. The medical store charged him Rs 63,000 for the three injections, when the MRP of the drug was Rs 5,400. The pharmacist cited the non-availability of the injection in the market when the exorbitant price was questioned, Khan said in his complaint. Based on the complaint, the police booked a case under relevant sections. He was arrested and produced before court, after which he was remanded in judicial custody.

Road mishaps decrease

DAVE BENNETT SILVERY
HYDERABAD

Another advantage of the lockdown that was imposed to curb the spread of Coronavirus is that of the decrease in road accidents reported. According to the half yearly data provided by the Hyderabad City Police, road accident deaths decreased by 23 per cent in Hyderabad during the first six months of 2020 when compared to the same period last year.

According to the Police, Hyderabad Commissionerate reported 106 casualties between January and June 2020, whereas in January to June 2019, 130 deaths were reported due to road mishaps. During this month till July 12, as many as seven persons lost their lives in road accidents. January and February 2020 had the highest number of deaths this year with 24 and 23 respectively. After the imposition of lockdown, there was a steady decrease in the number of deaths with 16 cases reported in May and four in April, when the lockdown was being imposed at its most strict peak. However, as the government began to relax procedures and lifting of the restrictions, the number of deaths jumped to 23 in the month of May. This can



File photo of an accident

60 black spots were identified based on the accident data and measures were taken which resulted in a decrease of accident deaths

be largely attributed to people coming out onto the roads in large numbers after being forced to stay at home for weeks. In June, there was a decrease reported with the police recording 13 deaths.

During the same six months in 2019, 27 road accident deaths were reported in January, 28 in February, 19 in March, 21 in April, 27 in May, and 15 in June.

Of the 106 deaths reported this year, 90 of them were due to over-speeding and the eight due to driving under the influence. According to the police, the number of pedestrian deaths decreased by 38 per cent. While 33 pedestrians were killed in 2020 so far, 53 pedestrians were killed in road

mishaps in 2019 (between January to June). As many as 1,049 minors were caught driving in violation of the rules this year, a decrease of 61 per cent when 2,732 were caught in 2019. Overall analysis shows that over speeding and driving vehicles under influence of alcohol are the major cause for deaths in road accidents. The Hyderabad Traffic

Police proactively identified the black spots and other accident prone areas to control the road accidents. Accordingly, 60 black spots were identified based on the accident data of 2019 and various corrective measures were taken which resulted in a decrease of 23 per cent of Road Accident Deaths during the first six months of 2020 compared to 2019.

Till the middle of March, 2020 the Hyderabad Traffic Police conducted various awareness programmes on road safety. Officials reached out to students by covering 578 Educational Institutions in 2019-2020 and educated 2,52,739 students. Due to the lockdown and closure of institutes, further awareness campaigns could not be done.

Beds in private hospitals to be monitored through dashboard

PNS HYDERABAD

With lack of hospital beds and timely treatment becoming two big issues leading to several Covid-19 deaths in Hyderabad, the state government planned to roll out a dashboard to monitor the beds in private hospitals in Telangana, especially in the capital city.

Officials indicate that the dashboard to be implemented in Telangana will be similar to that of dashboard existing in Delhi and Mumbai.

A senior official from the Health Department said, "The dashboard will be dynamic. It will have information on the number of patients in the hospital at the particular time, number discharged and fresh admissions apart from vacant beds. The dashboard will have information on vacant isolation beds, ICU beds and ventilator beds. The details will be



available in public domain in a couple of days."

On July 9, the division bench of Telangana High Court suggested to the state government to explore the system of having live dashboards in all the designated Covid-19 hospitals in the state, similar to the dashboard

implemented in Delhi, for the benefit of patients.

The court even asked the state government to ask the Delhi government to share the software being used, which will give first hand information regarding availability of beds, ventilators and related information to the needy patients.

TSIC program to benefit 100 startups

PNS HYDERABAD

During these current times, startups have been struggling due to the economic slowdown caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, the Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC) along with some of the most prominent incubators and enablers in the city, is bringing in collective support for startups in the state.

This collaborative initiative to support the startup ecosystem, will work with startups from several incubators and outside. Programmes for strategy rejig followed by pitch preparation for equity funding, debt or corporate market access will be provided.

The initiative is powered by incubators like T-Hub, CIE-IIITH, IKP, RICH and TiE among others.



Outsourcing staff at Gandhi complain of state apathy

PNS HYDERABAD

Outsourced employees, sanitation staff and security personnel of Gandhi Hospital have been demonstrating for the past five days demanding hike in their salaries and regularisation of services.

The JAC of these employees boycotted their duties and staged sit in front of the hospital and demonstrating in support of their demands.

They allege that the officials pay no attention to their problems in spite of their agitation for the past five days.

They have been risking their lives during the current Coronavirus crisis, but the government is not recognising their services. In the new state of Telangana, they anticipated that they would get job security, but so far nothing materialised.

The outsourced nurses lament that the nurses recruited during Covid crisis are being paid Rs 25,000 a month, while the nurses who have over 14 years of experience are being paid only Rs 17,500.

You don't need a hospital to fight corona: Srinivas

PNS HYDERABAD

The brave and courageous officer from She Teams Cyberabad, K Srinivas, who fought the Coronavirus infection while being diagnosed with cancer and diabetes shares his experience and reassures the public not to worry if tested positive.



"I've been a cancer patient for more than 10 years now and also am diabetic," says the 56-year-old official who was tested positive for Covid19 on June 6.

"Once I got the news of being tested positive, I shifted to my son's farmhouse in Shabad with my wife to home-isolate and recover from the infection. Ours is a joint family. I didn't want to risk anyone's health because of me," said Srinivas.

His initial symptoms were headache and cough and had contacted the virus from his driver, who was trained along with other traffic officials at Cyberabad by an inspector who was first tested positive.

"Coronavirus is five-months-old but I've been taking special care for cancer for years now. My process involves eating neem leaves by warming them up with

turmeric and salt. This needs to be taken on an empty stomach," he said.

For Coronavirus, he resorted to meditation, jogging, using

warm water with medicinally prescribed tablets. "You must use warm water for everything possible. You do not need a Hospital to fight this virus. A proper home isolation with all the necessary supplements and strong mental strength is enough," he said.

As a message to the public, the Covid warrior said that one must get themselves checked incase of fear of infection and should immediately distance yourself from family. "In my case, even though I have a joint family, the virus entered my house. I didn't let anyone come near me. All you need is a strong headedness and will to fight the virus," he concluded.



State partners with Coursera to upskill unemployed youth

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK), a non-profit organisation created by the state government to bring synergy among government institutions, industry, and academia, has partnered with Coursera, the world's leading online learning platform, to train 50,000 unemployed youth during the Covid-19 crisis. The partnership is part of Coursera's global roll-out of the workforce recovery initiative, where any state and country can provide



unemployed workers with free access to online learning.

The government of Telangana, through TASK, has been proactive in improving the employability of its youth by investing in skills of the

future. On the eve of World's Youth Skills Day, through this partnership TASK is making 3,800 courses on Coursera available to 50,000 unemployed youths across Telangana.

NIA arrests 2 for links with ISIS sympathiser

PNS HYDERABAD

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has established a Hyderabad link in the arrest of two Pune residents on late Monday night. The duo were regularly in touch with Hyderabad based ISIS operative, Mohd Basith, who was arrested by the agency in August, 2018.

The NIA has now found that Nabeel and Sadiya were providing logistic support to ISIS to carry out terrorist attacks in the country.

The investigators said that Nabeel S Khatri, 27, and Sadiya Anwar Sheikh, 22, both residents of Pune, were propagat-

ing the ideology of ISIS terror group as part of the activities of the outlawed ISKP. A case was initially registered by Delhi Police Special Cell on March 8, 2020, after the arrest of a Kashmiri couple



Jahanzaib Sami Wani and his wife Hina Bashir Beigh from Jamia Nagar, Okhla Vihar, Delhi. The couple had affiliations with ISKP, and were found to be involved in subversive and anti-national activities. "The duo from Pune were in touch with Basith, who is cur-

rently lodged in Tihar jail in another NIA case," an official said, adding that they deliberated on how to propagate the ideology of ISIS and further its activities in India and were planning to recruit gullible youth.

It has also been revealed that Sadiya Sheikh was in contact with ISIS recruiters through social media since 2015. "She was planning to execute a terrorist attack in Jammu & Kashmir and was detained by police in the valley in 2018," they said. The duo will be pro-

duced before Special Court.

Prior to his arrest, Basith had created an Instagram account by the name 'Musaib bhai', through which he searched for pro-ISIS groups and used at least half-a-dozen mobile phones to dodge the security agencies. During the custodial interrogation last year, Basith disclosed about his visits and meetings where he discussed ISIS with the intention of hatching a further conspiracy to wage violent jihad.

In June, when they were taken into custody for interrogation, Hina Bashir Beigh tested positive for coronavirus, her husband Jahanzaib Sami, and Basith were found negative.

SCR commissions largest EI system

PNS HYDERABAD

The largest Electronic Interlocking (EI) system on South Central Railway has been commissioned at Gooty yard on Sunday, along with major yard remodelling.

The interlocking mechanism provided at Gooty yard is also the fourth largest interlocking system installed over the South Central Railway. Other major yards on SCR include the yards at Secunderabad, Vijayawada and Kazipet Railway stations.

But these are not electronic interlocking signalling system. Now, the Gooty yard after strengthening of signalling system has become the largest electronic interlocking station on SCR with 343 routes.

Gooty is a major station in Guntakal and handles trains from four important directions - Mumbai, Chennai, Secunderabad and Hyderabad. With the regular increase of traffic overtime, the sections around the station yard have become highly saturated.

Cops arrest 15 for playing snookers

PNS HYDERABAD

Based on credible information, the East Zone Task Force team, led by Inspector Srinivasa, raided 'Oxydo Snooker Parlour' at Chaderghat and apprehended its owner on Wednesday.

According to the Police, the owner, Shoaib Benjal, was found running the Snooker parlour and allowing players, violating the lockdown guidelines.

Police apprehended 14 players and handed over them to Chaderghat PS.

Poor medical aid for jail inmates

NAMRATA SRIVASTAVA
HYDERABAD

The recent issue of Telugu poet and writer P Varavara Rao deteriorating health in jail, has again brought the attention of many towards the bad state of health of jail inmates in the state.

While this situation is not new, many human rights activists feel that it is much more dangerous in view of the ongoing pandemic.

Vasanth Goud, a human rights activist feels it's high time the government interfered into how jails worked. "Most jails are over-crowded. In times of a pandemic, when social distance is being promoted widely and people are taking at most care of their hygiene, inmates are crowded in a single cell with negligible sanitation. There are no doctors or health care workers, if even a single inmate acquires the Coronavirus, it will be a chaotic situation."



MA Shakeel, a lawyer and human rights activists, expresses that keeping inmates without medical aid during a pandemic is inhuman. "The Supreme Court directed all states and Union Territories to form high-powered committees chaired by a High Court judge to oversee the process of decongesting jails. But the Telangana government did nothing. More than half of the inmates in the jails are under trial, which

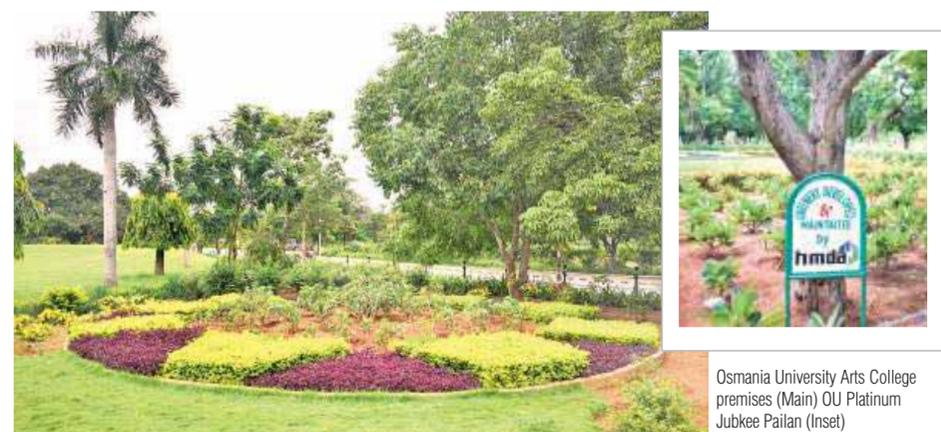
means their crime is not yet proven. And yet they are living in such inhuman condition during a pandemic. There is no sanitation, the condition of the toilets is so bad that no human can use it and certainly there can't be any social distancing since the jails are over-crowded. It's in a way taking away the Right to live," shares the lawyer. The jail authorities, meanwhile, remained unavailable for a comment.

HMDA develops mini forest at OU campus

PNS HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority has embarked on a greenery development programme on OU premises as part of the sixth phase of the Harita Haram programme. The HMDA is growing at least five lakh saplings on the premises of the university under the directions of Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and also the OU in-charge vice-chancellor.

In a statement on Tuesday, HMDA said that the OU campus, which is birth place of many movements, will soon turn into minor forest area with the implementation of the Harita Haram. The HMDA is growing saplings among the trees that dot on either side of the road in the campus. To prevent encroachment of OU lands, the HMDA is growing plants where there is vacant space and also nursing them.



The HMDA gives priority to grow flower and fruit-bearing trees in the campus. Yadadri modal of forests would be developed in OU library, OU auditorium, D-

hostel area and in place in front of the Law College. In an area of 253 acres, block plantation will be developed in 2x2 pattern. The plantation will be raised

near OU Dobhi Ghat, OU department of Zoology, OU mathematics department, in the landscape garden in front of OU library, behind the Tagore auditorium, in Arts

College, in the quarters of professors, behind Habsiguda bus-stop, in the OU VC quarters, near Mohini tank in the varsity and OU Academic staff college premises.

Covid-19 and the blow to the education sector

K VENKATESHWARLU
HYDERABAD

One of the worst hit by the Covid-19 pandemic has been the education sector. The closure of schools, colleges and universities around the world has affected over 87 per cent of all the world's students, according to a report.

The officials of Education Department are clueless as to what to do to protect the education year. The government has not yet taken any decision on re-opening of schools and colleges. However, the private school managements have started online classes for the next academic year, while the government still has no plans to conduct online classes to students in state-run schools.

However, the online classes are creating troubles to the teachers and parents of children in private schools.

Several parents lodged complaints with the authorities concerned over the school fee hike, while some of them staged protests in front of schools to reduce the fees. It may be recalled that the government has asked the school managements to not to increase school fees this year in view of Coronavirus crisis situation.

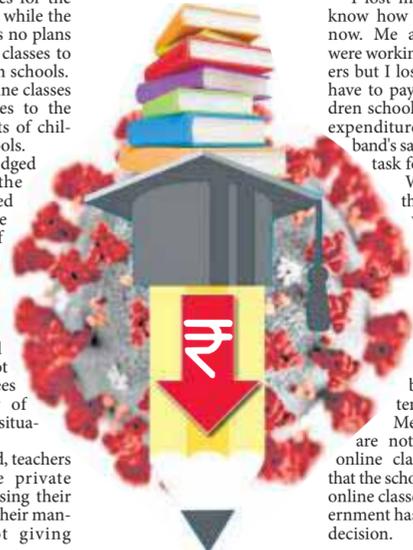
On the other hand, teachers working with the private schools are also raising their voices alleging that their managements are not giving

salaries properly. They made several representations to the government urging the latter to look into their problems.

Many private school teachers are opting some or other means to make both ends meet. Several private teachers

■ The closure of schools, colleges and universities around the world has affected over 87 per cent of all the students

■ State to implement alternative education from August



were left jobless as private school managements removed some teachers due to Coronavirus.

However, the school managements are arguing that the parents of the students are not paying fees and hence they are not in a position to pay the salaries to the teachers. They are making it clear that they removed teachers, who are not competent to teach online.

Padma, a teacher who had been working with a reputed corporate school at ECIL was sacked as she was not able to teach students through online classes.

"I lost my job and I don't know how to make a living now. Me and my husband were working as private teachers but I lost my job now, we have to pay house rent, children school fee besides other expenditure from my husband's salary. It's very tough task for us."

When asked about the situation in private schools, an owner of a school at Uppal said that they have to pay salary to teachers, school building rent, power charges and infrastructure besides daily maintenance.

Meanwhile, parents are not happy with the online classes. They allege that the schools are conducting online classes though the government has not yet taken any decision.

Govt to bring out policy on alternative education

HYDERABAD: The state government is likely to announce policy guidelines soon on providing alternative education to school students till classroom teaching commences. The alternative education is likely to be implemented from August 1. The CBSE authorities have devised alternative education programme calendar and implementing the same since April. As per the calendar, teachers do not teach academic curriculum alone. They also teach arts, physical education, yoga and other vocational education. Projects and assignments are being prepared to promote self-learning by students. In TS, in the first two weeks the focus would be revising the lessons learnt earlier and increasing the students' grip over basic aspects. Later, assignments would be given. From third week onwards, classroom syllabus would be taught. Currently, through Vidya channel of T-Sat daily classes will be held from students from classes 6 to 10 for a duration of 45 minutes. Daily two or three lessons would be taught. The Nipuna channel and also Doordarshan Yaddagiri channel would air the lessons.

Gunda Ravinder starts indefinite fast over lack of recognition

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

Gunda Ravinder, a protagonist for Telangana movement on Tuesday embarked on indefinite fast at KCR temple on the premises of his residence protesting against the lack of recognition to him in the party.

He said that he spent his properties to strengthen the TRS, but lamented that he has had no recognition in the party.

Earlier, he made attempts to agitate near the CM's camp office. He said that he is active in the movement for Telangana since 2001. Earlier, he attempted suicide citing injustice to those who took part in the movement. He said that he did not receive any support from the TRS in spite of being an agitator for the statehood of Telangana.

Errabelli finds fault with Central govt over Covid

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Errabelli Dayakar Rao has asked the BJP leaders to desist from making false allegations and malicious campaigns. He also condemned the comments that the state government was negligent in dealing with the Covid-19 cases.

Dayakar Rao and Tribal Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod laid the foundation stones for Rythu Vedika buildings in the erstwhile Warangal district on Tuesday.

Speaking at Kodakandla in Jangaon district, the Minister said the state government had taken steps to contain the contagion much ahead of other states. "Even the BJP-ruled states in the country responded to the pandemic much later," he said, and wondered why the pandemic was not being kept under check by BJP



Ministers Dayakar Rao and Satyavathi Rathod lays foundation stones for Rythu Vedika buildings in the erstwhile Warangal district on Tuesday.

governments.

"BJP leaders must tell the people why they are failing to check the Covid-19 in those states," he said, and found fault with the BJP led Union government for not linking the NREGS with agriculture through Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has been urging the Central govern-

ment for the same for the benefit of farmers.

"BJP led Central government is not responding to the pleas by the state government with regard to linking of NREGS with Agriculture," he said and asked the BJP leaders who were making allegations against the state government to stop from doing so.

PRIVATE TEACHING HOSPITALS

11k beds available to treat Covid patients

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Medical and Health department told the High Court that over 11,950 beds, including 1,000 in the ICU, are available in private teaching hospitals.

The total number of beds available for Coronavirus patients in Government Hospitals is put at 5,131. Of them, 361 are in the ICU and 255 have ventilator facility in the ICU. Over 2,339 beds have oxygen facility.

In the first phase, over 8,315 beds available in hospitals affil-



iated to the private teaching hospitals of Apollo, Kamini, Mallareddy (Women's Medical College), Mamata, Shadan, Chalmeda Ananda Rao and Pratima Medical colleges in

Karimnagar, RVM medical college in Medak and Bhaskara, Mallareddy, Medicity, Mahavir, VRK, Ion teaching hospitals in Rangareddy district would be used.

Of them, 548 beds are in ICU, 167 have ventilator facility in the ICU and 788 beds have oxygen supply facility.

If the number of cases increase, the beds in Mamata Hospital in Khammam, MNR hospital in Medak, Kamini hospital in Nalgonda and Maheshwaram, Surabhi hospital in Siddipet, SVS college in

Mahabubnagar would be brought to use for treatment of Covid patients. In the second phase, 3,635 hospital beds would be available for Corona patients. Of them, 236 beds are in the ICU, 49 beds have ventilator facility, while 410 beds have oxygen supply facility.

The Telangana State Medical Infrastructure Development Corporation will supply free of cost the PPE kits, gloves, masks and other paraphernalia to 21 teaching hospitals, which treat Corona patients under the supervision of the government.

KCR razing Secretariat building for Nizam's treasure: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MP from Malkajgiri A Revanth Reddy has alleged that the state government is demolishing the old Secretariat buildings with an intention to loot money.

Revanth Reddy alleged that the state government has taken up 'operation G Block' for the sake of Nizam's hidden treasure and said that the truth is buried under its debris.

Urging the High Court to interfere in the issue, he stated that there is hidden treasure under the building of G Block constructed by Nizam at

Secretariat premises.

Speaking to the media by providing newspaper clippings on demolition works on Tuesday, Revanth Reddy questioned the state government to tell as to why it started demolition works at midnight instead of morning.

"Why is the government not allowing mobile phones of workers inside the Secretariat premises and why were the two police constables suspended for taking pictures of demolition works?" he questioned.

"What is the need to block roads for three kilometers though the Secretariat has wall



around its premises. What is the need to demolish the buildings secretly?" Revanth Reddy alleged.

In the process of demolition,

the government demolished temples and mosques mercilessly, he added.

Revanth Reddy said that G Block has huge history. The

'Pay Rs 50L ex-gratia to frontline Covid victims'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President & Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy asked the party cadre to expose the failures of TRS Government in handling Coronavirus situation in the state as part of 'Speak Up Telangana' campaign being launched on July 18.

He reiterated the demand that the state government include Covid-19 treatment in Aarogyasri scheme, pay Rs. 50 lakh ex-gratia to frontline warriors including health, sanitation workers, journalists and police personnel who die due to Covid-19 and Rs. 10 lakh ex-gratia to the families of all Coronavirus victims.

Addressing the party cadre through social media platform Facebook on Tuesday, Uttam Kumar Reddy and CLP leader Bhatti Vikaramarka said that the TPCC Covid-19 Task Force, headed by senior leader Marri Shashidhar Reddy, has decided to launch the "Speak Up Telangana" online Social



Media Campaign to voice the concerns of the people.

They expressed concern over increase in the number of Covid-19 cases and deaths in Telangana State. He said the spike in Covid-19 cases was purely due to the failure of the state government as it did not follow the 'trace, test and treat' norm set by the World Health Organisation (WHO) since the beginning. They said it was unfortunate that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao went missing from action for almost 13 days at a time when the Coronavirus took the entire state into its grip. The

Chief Minister did not even give an explanation as to why he went missing from the scene especially after giving an indication that another lockdown might be imposed to control further spread of Covid-19.

The Congress leaders alleged that TRS leaders, including TRS working president and Minister KT Rama Rao were trying to downplay the Covid-19 situation. They pointed out that Telangana was still in the bottom of states in conducting Covid-19 tests and also in recovery rate. They slammed KTR for stating that the death

rate in the state was 'Just 2 per cent'.

"KTR must realise that each number in the statistics represents a human being and a family. Life of each and every citizen of Telangana is highly precious and deserves to be saved. Instead of being apologetic for the rising number of deaths, KTR is trying to defend his government by showing the death figures as low. Will KTR or any TRS leader give a similar statement if those 2 per cent include a member of their family?" Uttam Kumar Reddy asked.

They said that the state did nothing to prevent the spread of Coronavirus during the last four months. Despite repeated requests by the Congress, the government did not increase the testing rate. The health infrastructure was not upgraded during the lockdown period and today the situation has turned so worse that the staff of Gandhi Hospital, the frontline warriors against Covid, had to go on strike demanding adequate payment.

Release funds due to state, Srinivas Goud urges Centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Spots V Srinivas Goud urged the Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju to allocate funds that are due to the state from the Centre in connection with development of sports and youth services. He was participating in a video conference with the union minister from his office on Tuesday.

Srinivas Goud has explained the Union Minister about the various initiatives taken by Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government in enhancing sports infrastructure in the state. He said that the state government has allocated 2 per cent reservation for sportsperson in government jobs, and 0.5 per cent reservation for those who complete



Minister for Spots V Srinivas Goud in a video conference with the Union Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday

higher studies.

He told the Union Minister that the state government has set up a 250 acre Sports School in the state and sportspersons and infrastructure have been

encouraged like never before. Principal Secretary Youth Services Sabyasachi Ghosh and Principal Secretary Sports Raghunandan Rao and others also participated.

Rapid antigen kits at hospitals in Khammam

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

The State government has been taking all measures to contain the spread of covid-19, Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar said on Tuesday.

Steps were being taken for launching full scale covid-19 testing in Khammam from August month onwards at District Government Hospital and Mamata General Hospital in Khammam, he revealed.

The Minister released rapid antigen kits to be used for covid-19 testing and home isolation kits at the District Hospital here. The kits would be used for emergency testing and for those who were in home isolation after being tested positive for coronavirus.



Minister P Ajay Kumar addresses the gathering at Khammam on Monday

Rapid antigen kits would be available at the District Hospital, community health centres (CHCs) and primary health centres (PHCs) to test pregnant women, in emer-

gency surgery cases and accidents cases.

The home isolation kits contain 12 items, he noted.

Countries world over were being troubled by covid-19

pandemic and in India the disease spreads fast due to high population density.

The Telangana government has been making all-out efforts to both contain the virus spread and to treat the patients at Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad and at District Hospitals. Public needs to be cautious and follow preventive measures, Ajay Kumar noted.

The District Collector RV Karnan rapid antigen kits would be helpful in getting quick results in deciding if a person was infected with the coronavirus or not. As many as 1000 kits were made available at the District Hospital.

Similarly, 1124 kits were distributed among the PHCs and CHCs in the district for covid-19 testing.

Venkaiah Naidu lauds Dr Sriram

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu has appreciated the gesture of Dr P Sriram in driving the tractor to shift the body of a corona victim to the burial ground. Dr Sriram, drove the tractor carrying the body of a victim to the crematorium after the tractor driver refused to drive the vehicle in Peddapalli hospital on Sunday. Responding on the incident, Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday appreciated the doctor through his twitter account.



"Greatly appreciate the gesture of Dr Pendyala Sriram, Peddapalli district surveillance officer in Telangana. I am sure his noble act will inspire others" he tweeted.

REALTY MAFIA ATTACK

Gudur condemns police inaction

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee Treasurer Guduru Narayana Reddy has strongly condemned the State Police for not taking any action against the TRS corporator's husband and his henchmen who brutally attacked a local resident in full public view in Medipally town.

Narayana Reddy, in a media statement on Tuesday, said that the video of TRS Corporator's husband Sridhar Goud and his gang attacking a local resident, Purereddy, which went viral on social media clearly shows the brutality and fearlessness with which they carried out the attack. They did not even listen to the minor boy who pleaded with them to spare their father. He said it would not be wrong if such anti-social elements with no signs of humanity were eliminated in an encounter.

The Congress leader said that despite the video of the attack going viral on social media, the State Police took no action against TRS leader



Sridhar Goud and his men. He said the victim was attacked for allegedly questioning the legitimacy of a few real estate transactions in the area. He strongly condemned the inaction of local police and asked whether they would've reacted in a similar manner if the victim was a relative or kin of the Home Minister or some senior police official.

Narayana Reddy alleged that Police was encouraging rowdism by not taking any action against those indulging in violence targeting the innocent people to instill fear in the entire society. He demanded that the State order a probe into the incident and register a case for Attempt to Murder, Criminal Intimidation and other relevant sections of IPC.

SHORT READS



Police force alerted to ensure maintain law and order in Rajasthan

JAIPUR: Police personnel across the Rajasthan have been alerted to maintain peace in their jurisdiction amid the political crisis in the state, an official said. "Following intelligence inputs and political happenings, police force across the state has been alerted to ensure peace and maintain law and order situation," ADG (Law and Order) Saurabh Srivastava said. He said that police force has been asked to keep a vigil so that common people do not have to suffer. The Congress on Tuesday sacked Sachin Pilot from the posts of Rajasthan's deputy chief minister and the party's state unit chief. Cracking the whip on the rebel party leader, the party also removed his loyalists Vishvendra Singh and Ramesh Meena from the state cabinet.

No one can take away the fact that Sachin worked with dedication

NEW DELHI: No one can take away the fact that Sachin Pilot has long worked with dedication for the Congress, party leader Jitin Prasada said on Tuesday soon after his "colleague and friend" was sacked as Rajasthan deputy chief minister and Pradesh Congress Committee chief. Prasada, considered a leader of the party's 'young brigade', also expressed the hope that the situation can be salvaged. "Sachin Pilot is not just a colleague but my friend. No one can take away the fact that all these years he has worked with dedication for the party," Prasada tweeted. "Sincerely hope the situation can still be salvaged. Sad it has come to this..." he said.

Truth can be rattled, not defeated: Pilot

NEW DELHI: Soon after his removal as Rajasthan deputy chief minister, rebel Congress leader Sachin Pilot said "truth can be rattled, not defeated". He also changed his profile on Twitter deleting all references to his position as deputy CM and Rajasthan Congress chief. He only described himself as MLA of Tonk and a former Minister of IT, Telecom & Corporate affairs, Government of India. "Truth can be rattled, not defeated," he said in a tweet in Hindi. Cracking the whip against rebel Pilot, the Congress removed him as deputy chief minister of Rajasthan and replaced him as PCC president.

Abhijit Bhargar takes charge as Navi Mumbai civic chief

THANE: IAS officer Abhijit Bhargar on Tuesday took charge as commissioner of Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMCC). Bhargar had earlier served as collector of Palghar district. He took charge from outgoing civic chief Annasaheb Misal. In view of rising cases in Thane district and Navi Mumbai, the state government had replaced three municipal commissioners and brought in young IAS officials to head the civic bodies in the region. Bhargar told reporters that he had the task cut out for himself to contain the coronavirus transmission.

Pilot sacked as deputy CM, party's Rajasthan unit chief

PNS ■ JAIPUR

The Congress on Tuesday sacked Sachin Pilot from the posts of Rajasthan's deputy chief minister and the party's state unit chief.

Cracking the whip on the rebel party leader, the party also removed his loyalists Vishvendra Singh and Ramesh Meena from the state cabinet.

Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot met Governor Kalraj Mishra immediately after the Congress Legislature Party meeting where the decision to remove the three ministers was taken.

Sources said Gehlot briefed the Governor on recent developments in the state, caught in the grip of a power struggle between him and Pilot.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasara will be the new Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief.

He said Sachin Pilot enjoyed the affection and blessings of Congress president Sonia Gandhi and was given political power at a young age.

Yet, he and other ministers were trying to topple the state government as part of a BJP conspiracy, he said after the Congress Legislature Party meeting at a hotel on the Delhi highway here.

"It cannot be acceptable to any political party. Therefore, the Congress took the decisions with a heavy heart," he said announcing the removal of Sachin Pilot, Vishvendra Singh and Ramesh Meena

Pilot playing into the hands of BJP: Gehlot

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Tuesday accused rebel leader Sachin Pilot of playing into the hands of the BJP. Speaking after the Congress announced the sacking of Pilot and his two aides from the state cabinet, Gehlot alleged that the BJP wanted to repeat what it had done in Madhya Pradesh. The Congress government led by Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh had collapsed in March after a rebellion by Jyotiraditya Scindia. But the BJP's intentions will not fructify in Rajasthan, Gehlot said. The chief minister said that Pilot and other ministers as well as MLAs were given ample opportunities but they did not attend the Congress Legislature Party meeting on Monday and Tuesday. "There is nothing in the hands of Sachin Pilot. He is



playing into the hands of the BJP which is making all the arrangements," he told reporters after meeting Governor Kalraj Mishra. "I am very sad that horse trading was going on. It is for the first time in the country that democracy is under such grave threat," he said. Gehlot said that he had fulfilled the rebel leaders demands by making budget announcements and "their works were done but still they were like this".



made the new state Congress chief. Tribal leader and MLA Ganesh Ghogra will be the new president of the Youth Congress, he said. Till now, the post was held by Pilot loyalist Mukesh Bhakar, who on Monday had tweeted that the loyalty to the Congress meant the "slavery" of Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. The party also appointed Hem Singh Shekhawat as the new state president of the Congress Seva Dal, replacing Pilot loyalist MLA Rakesh Pareek.

Seeking self respect, say three MLAs

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Three Rajasthan Congress MLAs -- Vishvendra Singh, Ramesh Meena and Deepender Shekhawat from the Sachin Pilot camp, issued a joint statement on Tuesday saying that they were seeking to restore their self respect and are not clamouring for any posts and positions contrary to false reports in the media. Vishvendra Singh and Ramesh Meena were removed from the cabinet on Tuesday.

In a joint statement, they said, "We have for years worked with dedication, devotion and service towards the party. And we are taking a stand to protect our dignity and self respect at a time when our leader is threatened with notices from the SOG under the charges of sedition and criminal conspiracy. This is unprecedented in Indian democracy and the Congress party, for whom we have toiled with sweat and blood."

Under the leadership of Sachin Pilot, we have made every effort in the past 6 years to strengthen the party and bring it to power in Rajasthan at a time when it had been reduced to an insignificant number in the state assembly. Public humiliation of our leader Pilot is something that is totally unacceptable to us, and those responsible for this treatment need to be made accountable.

Final year UG online exams to be held from Aug 10-31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi University will hold final year undergraduate online Open Book Examinations (OBE) from August 10-31, the Delhi High Court was informed on Tuesday.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Subramonium Prasad was informed by the varsity that the students left out of online exams will be given an opportunity to appear in physical examinations, to be held sometime in September.

While the university initially informed that it has decided to conduct the exams from August 17 and will conclude on September 8, the court asked it to reconsider the schedule and compress it as the final year students are supposed to pass and join other courses in India or abroad and

their career prospects are at involved. The counsel for DU and Dean of Examinations professor Vinay Gupta agreed



to that and after discussions it was decided that the online OBE will commence from August 10 and conclude on August 31.

It was also decided that the first phase of mock tests will start from July 27, instead of July 31 and the second phase of mock tests will commence from August 1 instead of August 4.

While the purpose of the first mock test is only to make students familiarise with the process and the technical aspect, the second mock test will be the real time test, DU said.

On the aspect of schedule of physical examinations and declaration of results, DU's counsel sought some time.

The court also granted liberty to the varsity to bring out the notification for the revised date sheet of exams on its portal.

Delhi HC allows woman to end abnormal foetus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



FATHER-SON DEATH CASE

5 TN cops sent to CBI custody for 2 days

PNS ■ MADURAI (TN)

Five policemen arrested over the death of a father-son duo after being allegedly thrashed at a police station in Tuticorin district in Tamil Nadu were sent to the CBI custody for two days by a court here on Tuesday.

Principal District and Sessions Judge Hemant Kumar passed the order remanding an inspector, two sub-inspectors and as many constables of Sathankulam police station to the custody of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which has taken over the case from the state CB-CID police.

While the premier investigating agency in its application

filed on Monday sought seven days custody, the counsel for the accused policemen, booked by the CB-CID on murder charges, opposed the plea. The five, including Inspector Sridhar and sub-inspectors Raghu Ganesh and Balakrishnan, lodged in the Central Prison here, were produced in the court on Tuesday, complying with the order of the judge.

A CBI team led by an Additional Superintendent of Police is investigating the death of P Jeyaraj and his son Bennicks days after they were allegedly beaten up brutally in the Sathankulam police station last month, an incident that led to a nationwide outrage.

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday allowed a woman's plea seeking termination of her over 23 week old pregnancy after a medical report from AIIMS endorsed the procedure in view of complications associated with birth of the baby. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan said in view of the report submitted by AIIMS, it was allowing the plea which had claimed that the foetus was abnormal as it suffers from "spina bifida and Arnold Chiari Syndrome defect" which results in the spinal cord being outside the body and the brain tissue extending into the spinal canal.

The foetus also has other abnormalities like a deformed skull and a heart defect, the petition filed through advocate Sneha Mukherjee had said.

The bench said it would give detailed reasons for its decision later and disposed of the matter.

On July 10, the high court had referred the woman's case to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for setting up a panel of experts to examine her and the foetus to ascertain whether it would be safe to terminate the pregnancy.

NGT directs Delhi to stop illegal water extraction

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Delhi government to implement its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to stop illegal extraction of ground water in the national capital.

A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel noted that 15 per cent of the ground water reached below 40 metres.

The tribunal was apprised that the Environment Department, Government of Delhi, has prepared SOP titled 'Regulation of extraction of ground water, closure, prohibition of illegal activities relating to use of borewells/tubewells'.

BOIS LOCKER ROOM HC's last chance to Centre to reply on plea for removal of such groups

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Tuesday granted last opportunity to the Centre for replying to a plea seeking directions to it to ensure that social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram remove groups such as 'Bois Locker Room', for the safety and security of children".

A bench of Justices Rajiv Sahai Endlaw and Asha Menon directed that replies be filed by the ministries of home affairs, IT and finance within four weeks. While Facebook has already filed its reply, the court also asked Google and Twitter to file their responses within four weeks and listed the matter for September 16.

"The respondents are



directed to file their counter affidavits in four weeks positively. If they fail to file it in four weeks, no further opportunity will be granted to file the replies," the bench said.

The order came on the application moved by former

RSS ideologue K N Govindacharya "highlighting the unlawful nature of illegal groups" like 'Bois Locker Room'.

The court had earlier in May asked the Centre and social media platforms to respond to the application.

Handover MLA suicide probe to CBI: Bengal BJP

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Iterating that BJP leader and Hemtabad MLA Debendra Nath Roy was "murdered", the saffron party on Tuesday said it had no faith in the post-mortem report, which stated that the "legislator died due to hanging and no injury mark was found on his body".

Calling for a CBI probe into the case, Rahul Sinha, the national secretary of the BJP, said the police and the administration were trying to "project the murder as suicide".

"The state police and the administration want to cover up the matter. The post-mortem report called the murder a suicide. We have no



confidence in this report. The state should either hand over the investigation to the CBI or order a judicial probe under the supervision of a sitting judge of the high court," Sinha said.

The Hemtabad MLA's body was found hanging from the

ceiling of a verandah outside a shuttered shop near his home in Bindal village of North Dinajpur district on Monday.

Police said a suicide note was found in his shirt's pocket where he blamed two people for his death. Ray's family and the BJP, however, claimed he

was "murdered by the TMC", a charge denied by the ruling party in the state.

Ray had won the Hemtabad (reserved) seat on a CPI(M) ticket in 2016 but later joined the BJP. He had, however, not quit his assembly seat.

BJP supporters clashed with police and pelted stones at buses during a 12-hour bandh called by the party in north Bengal on Tuesday over the unnatural death of the BJP leader.

A BJP delegation also met President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday and demanded dismissal of the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal and a CBI probe into Ray's death.

COVID-19: Kamat slams bed reservation at pvt hospitals in Goa

PNS ■ PANAJI

Senior Congress leader Digambar Kamat on Tuesday slammed the Goa government's order asking private hospitals to reserve 20 per cent beds for COVID-19 patients, claiming that the move had created panic in people's minds.

The state health department had on Monday issued an order directing all private hospitals with ICUs to reserve 20 per cent of their beds for COVID-19 patients.

"The government's decision



Digambar Kamat

to reserve 20 per cent beds in every private hospital in Goa has created panic and fear in the minds of people. Is government trying to take COVID-19 to every hospital bed?" Kamat asked.

The Leader of Opposition questioned how safe it was for

other patients if people infected by coronavirus were also admitted to small hospitals in Goa.

Kamat also reiterated his demand for a white paper on COVID-19 pandemic in Goa and sought to know why the state government had not made an optimum use of the South Goa District Hospital.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant should take up the matter with the Prime Minister and get money from PM Care Fund to make all the facilities in the hospital fully operational, he said.

'Ambedkar seeks scrapping of SC/ST quota'

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi president Prakash Ambedkar has demanded scrapping of "political reservation" in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha constituencies for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

He also said no party has the guts to remove such reservation at present because of "vote bank politics" and fear of losing power.

Asked about the constitutional provision of reservation introduced initially for 10 years, Ambedkar in an interview to PTI on Monday said, This is a wrong understanding of the Constitution. The 10-



Prakash Ambedkar

year reservation provision was made as a political reservation."

"It was for reserving the constituencies (in Lok Sabha and Assemblies for SC/ST). Babasaheb had later said in 1954 that it was not required

and the provision should be removed," said the grandson of Dr B R Ambedkar.

He said people have accepted that voting is their right and they will use it whether the constituency is a reserved one

Congress, none have the courage to scrap it, he said.

Asked about well-off people taking benefits of reservation, Ambedkar said, "I have never availed benefits of reservation, and I had won from a general seat."

However, on the issue of reservation in social (jobs) and education sectors, he said, It is the fundamental right enshrined under Article 16. As long as this fundamental right exists, this reservation will continue."

He also said there should be a provision of granting 'reservation within reservation' to provide benefits to maximum number of people.

PAPER WITH PASSION

Pilot sacked

The fact that Congressmen across the spectrum sympathised with him and not Gehlot after his dismissal is proof of his worth



ASHOK K MEHTA

In the end, the Congress has chosen to waste away wilfully rather than renewing itself to make sense in contemporary politics. And perhaps it is reconciled to the idea of natural destruction rather than carrying on its tired self. Its central leaders, namely the Gandhis, have decided to go by their known playbook, even if it is hopelessly out of sync with the times. So instead of addressing the anxieties of younger leaders, who were crafting a new party and rebuilding it with one State election after another, the high command has decided to be content with its old courtiers, who themselves are well past their prime and as directionless and confused about the party's future as the central leadership. But mutually serving each other, they could last for a while, existing but not functioning. And so it is that the party sacked Sachin Pilot for revolting against the high command-endorsed Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot. And the sad part is like Jyotiraditya Scindia, he did everything right, strengthening the grassroots matrix of the party, scoring electoral wins and attracting a younger demographic that has a more social than political vision, all of which were interpreted as political overreach. Needless to say that both have been true blue Congressmen, sons of fathers — Madhavrao Scindia and Rajesh Pilot — who have been dynamic and forward-looking leaders of their time and were quite indispensable to the party. Nobody is saying that experience should be overlooked or not valued but when all the old guard did was to ensure stasis, the Young Turks did move and shake things around and had only wanted their rightful place and accommodation. Both Scindia and Pilot had even agreed to junior positions if not the chief minister's posts in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan but were not made use of or allowed to function. Both wouldn't have rebelled against the party they called home if they were given space to grow. Besides, the Congress rout in the 2019 general elections, especially in the three States which it had won just six months before in the Assembly polls, was an embarrassment for both Gehlot and Kamal Nath. Gehlot's son even lost from Jodhpur. Still they were prized for past loyalties, their propaganda that they had the state units in their grip and their veiled sabotage threats if denied primacy.

Yes, Gehlot has played his politics well. Fearing a Gujjar consolidation around Pilot and an erosion of his base, he had made the relationship between a Chief Minister and his deputy dysfunctional from day one. With constant provocations and clipping his powers, he pushed Pilot further away, who still held on with all his might. And when Pilot began questioning his own Chief Minister on sensitive issues like the Kota child deaths, Gehlot got busy praising Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for taking on UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. He has encashed that obsequiousness now and by serving Pilot police summons for conspiracy to topple his Government, he got him in the exact spot where he wanted. Pilot, who had been approached by a watchful BJP informally for some time, burst forth, making it easier for Gehlot to justify his junior's breakaway tendencies and demand action from the central leadership. And unlike Kamal Nath, he prepared himself, herding a majority of legislators, securing his bargaining position and isolating Pilot. Even if the latter has 30 odd MLAs, he cannot ensure his political survival without the BJP. So yes, Gehlot is more skilled in the art of political entrapment. But Pilot has the popular perception, of a leader who staked his life in Delhi to work the ground in Rajasthan. And the Congress leadership, particularly Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi, would be seen as untrustworthy simply because they didn't even bother to defend their peerage in the public eye. This is their defeat as legacy bearers, unless they are happy that their surname will anyway ensure their continuity, friends or not. The BJP has been subtle about its Operation Lotus attempt this time around as Pilot, unlike Scindia, was not particularly inclined to swing in extremes. As parties ready for a floor test, the Congress has the support of 107 MLAs, one MLA each from CPI(M) and the RJD, and that of 13 Independents, six more than are necessary to remain in power. It may woo back some MLAs from the Pilot camp, threatening disqualification that would leave them with no gains. This would bring down the halfway mark to around 92-94, a number that suits Gehlot. He is also reshuffling his Ministry to humour some. BJP has 72 MLAs and its ally RLP three. Pilot may be the lone wolf now and may have to fight a pack in the avaricious BJP if he joins it. But if he continues working the way he has, he would soon turn into an asset anywhere. Even Scindia, who broke away with 23 MLAs, is still getting more Congress legislators into the BJP. Some rebel Congressmen have emerged mighty successful in the BJP like Himanta Biswa Sarma. The fact that Congressmen across the spectrum sympathised with Pilot and not Gehlot after his expulsion is proof that dedication is the bigger political capital.

Problem of plenty

With a record percentage of meritorious students, how will colleges accommodate them despite raising cut-offs?



If the CBSE Class XII results brought relief to students, given the uncertainty over their declaration and forward career planning, they have thrown up a new challenge. Due to the revision in the marking scheme necessitated by the Corona-induced exam disruptions, the pass percentage has touched an all-time high of 88.8 per cent and there is a glut of meritorious students. Presenting universities and colleges with a problem of plenty, the number of students scoring 90 per cent and above has breached the 1,00,000-mark. The number of high scorers has gone up by 63,000, from 94,299 in 2019 to 1,57,934 this year. The number of students scoring 95 per cent and above has also more than doubled to 38,686 from last year's 17,693. Lucknow girl Divyanshi Jain has got a perfect score of 100 in six subjects. The CISCE, too, has seen similar stupendous results and 96.84 per cent of students have cleared them.

Colleges and universities are already considering increasing the cut-offs for undergraduate admissions. In fact, these institutions have suggested that as the percentage of students in the high-scoring bracket keeps increasing each year, the marking system at the school level be re-evaluated. But this year might see the pressure easing off premier universities and colleges due to the pandemic as many students might opt for studying in their home States. If this happens, then it might give meritorious local students the chance to get admissions in hard to enter premier institutions. We need to worry about the bigger picture though, that of imposing an unrealistic performance pressure on the younger generation, considering that only a skimming layer of five to 10 per cent students will get into good colleges. Are we building an unfair expectation of deservedness among our young and not preparing them for a failure in a realistic competitive scenario that's not based on marks or grades but application of imbibed knowledge? While there is much debate going on about CBSE's marks moderation policy, which allows grace space to students, and a demand for a more equitable assessment code, question is the status of the average students who may not have breached the 90s' barrier but aren't too bad either. Clearly, standardisation marking protocols are building up more complexities in the system of higher education. Testing methods are being simplified and made more objective without factoring into account analytical ability or subjective assessment, the last being the preserve of humanities. The problem with such a format is that it encourages learning by rote rather than priming creative thinking or challenging teaching quality. In the process, merit, too, is being compromised as two students with different real capacities, maybe one 80 per cent and the other higher, are being flat-planed on a performance graph.

Muddling through

The actual situation along the LAC is by no means what is being depicted. This is where the battle of narratives is either compromised or lost when we should be calling the shots



Deciphering the statements made by India and China after the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) meeting (July 10) is instructive. In the Indian statement, there is no reference about restoring status quo ante as on end of April/May 5. Instead, it calls for full restoration of peace and tranquility in accordance with border protocols, "urging both sides to honour and respect the Line of Actual Control (LAC)." It does not reiterate claim over the Galwan River Valley or blame China for the clash. On the other hand, the Chinese statement emphasises: "Disengagement and de-escalation" be done in a timely manner, leading to peace and tranquility (which is a historical Chinese formulation first made in the 1993 Peace and Tranquility Agreement). China has not used the word LAC but "border area."

It justified its stand during the Galwan clash by indirectly blaming India while pontificating on the rights and wrongs of the clash. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told National Security Advisor Ajit Doval on July 5 that both India and China have strategic interests and do not pose a threat to each other (another historic formulation after India named China as the reason for its nuclear tests). Chinese Ambassador in India, Sun Weidong, posted a video saying that China is not a war-like State and that both should meet each other halfway and not fall into the conflict trap. He stressed on the risks of decoupling India-China trade from bilateral relations. Chinese statements have to be taken with a pinch of salt as they can only be judged by deeds, not their words.

On the ground, except for one categorical report of breakdown in talks between local military commanders on mutual disengagement in Galwan (PP14), Hot Springs (PP 15) and Gogra Heights (PP17 A), all other sources have called the first phase of disengagement a success and according to Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, "a work in progress." The dissenting report confirms disengagement only from Galwan but to India's disadvantage, where concessions have been made on the alignment of LAC. Indian

troops have withdrawn from their own territory. Military commanders met this week to deal with Pangong Tso (Fingers area), where some thinning out has taken place and Depsang, where troops are confronting each other dangerously. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is trying to shift the LAC westwards towards the Shyok River to provide strategic depth to the G219 Highway from Xingjiang to Tibet via the Aksai Chin.

The Government of India is not making any assertions of the actual situation along LAC but using sources to disseminate information. For example, the use of DMZ/buffer zone, suspension of patrolling and other disengagement details are coming from journalists, who are attributing the information to "sources," who are Army officers leaking information. Independent journalists are crediting "my sources" for information. They are also presumably Army officers. Last time even Army Chief Gen Naravane got it wrong when he reported disengagement from Galwan when the PLA was waiting in ambush.

The Government is constrained because it is not sure about the PLA's sincerity. The actual situation along the LAC is by no means what is being depicted by "sources." This is where the battle of narratives is

either compromised or lost when we should be calling the shots.

This is, therefore, neither a case of breakdown nor breakthrough but muddling through towards some disengagement. Galwan, which was deemed to be the tough nut, appears to have been frozen. The Fingers area is very complex and has been the bone of contention for years where the PLA has made creeping territorial gains. Depsang is not a new intrusion site. Still, Government supporters are attributing the implementation of disengagement to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's muscular message in Ladakh ("Modi calls China's bluff") and Doval's conversation with his counterpart Yi.

Facts are different: The first phase of disengagement had been worked out by military commanders on June 30 and was to be completed by July 4 and verified by July 5, much before the claimed political intervention. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh already knew on the morning of July 5 that the troops had started withdrawing from Galwan, much before Doval spoke to Yi.

Lt Gen SL Narasimhan of the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) has categorically stated in an interview to *The Wire* that claims of Chinese build-up, incursions and forti-

fications are "exaggerated and none is true." He even said that during the clash on June 15, some Indian soldiers may have crossed over to the Chinese side and when the clash ended, no Chinese troops were on the Indian side of the LAC. This lent weight to Modi's statement to the all-party meeting on June 19 that Indian land was safe and not violated. Overall, he squarely blamed the journalists for inaccurate reportage due to impatience and competition to report first. By creating an illusion of strength, the Government is misleading the nation.

Assuming it is indeed the Government's coercive diplomacy that led to the PLA starting a faithful disengagement from LAC, why did Modi blink first? Reason: He neither wants a limited conflict nor another skirmish like Galwan, given the military's operational unpreparedness. Modi has not named China anywhere and apparently not wished the Dalai Lama on his 85th birthday this month. His thundering from Leh served another purpose: Boosting the morale of the Indian soldiers, who are periodically driven into fire brigade actions along the LAC in Ladakh and Bhutan because India has not developed a usable conventional deterrent.

As for Government failures for enabling multiple intrusions

along LAC in Ladakh, 144 veterans have appealed to the President to hold the people accountable. These intrusions are happening on a regular basis where the Army and ITBP are being caught off guard. Let us not forget the lessons from the 73-day stand off at Doklam. After disengagement (India was made to pull back first) from Doklam, the PLA returned after three months in this area, where they had built enormous military fortifications and continued building the road to Jangpheri Ridge through a circuitous route but across territory disputed by India and Bhutan. India did not invoke Article 2 of the India-Bhutan Treaty of 2007 to intervene as it had done earlier and let China have its way. Unfortunately, we are repeating the mistake of Sumdorong chu, too. In 1995, when our posts overwhelmingly dominated the PLA intrusion at Wangdung along Sumdorong Chu, they were ordered to pull back. Question was then asked: Why are we quitting our own territory? We are doing the same now when the intruder should be pulling back.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander IPKF South, Sri Lanka and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff.)

SOUNDBITE

The high command was compelled to take the decision because since a long time BJP was conspiring and resorting to horse-trading. We knew it was a huge conspiracy.

Rajasthan CM
—Ashok Gehlot



My music was being heard all over the world, regardless of the language. I could high five God, but I wasn't living to the fullest. I was sad. I was depressed.

Singer
—Ricky Martin



We have been culturally deceived as India has distorted facts. Sita was not given in marriage to an Indian prince. Ram came from what is present-day Nepal, as did Sita.

Nepalese PM
—KP Sharma Oli



Because you're Virat Kohli, your standards are high. Watching you on TV, I don't expect you to just play well against Australia. I expect you to win.

BCCI chief
—Sourav Ganguly



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Declining fortunes

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Piloting a revolt" (July 14). It is unprecedented in Indian political history that a Chief Minister has sent a secession notice to his own party colleague. Though the relationship between Sachin Pilot and Ashok Gehlot was frosty since the party formed the Government, Pilot's sacking from his party post was the final nail in the coffin. He had worked hard to ensure the Congress' victory in the 2018 Assembly polls. The Gandhi family's ostrich-like approach never helped the party in the past nor will it in the future. The Congress-led Government in Rajasthan may survive for now but if the party leadership does not learn lessons, it will have no one else to blame.

Bal Govind
Noida

Drugs shortage

Sir — The shortage of game-changing drugs Remdesivir and Tocilizumab is resulting in chaos at private hospitals. With huge demand and less supply, these

Congress must balance the old and young

This refers to the editorial, "Piloting a revolt" (July 14). Rumblings in the Rajasthan Congress unit have the potential to dislodge the Ashok Gehlot-led Government. The developments followed close on the heels of what happened to the Kamal Nath-led Government in Madhya Pradesh. In both these States, injuries to the grand old party were self-inflicted. Both Jyotiraditya Scindia and Sachin Pilot, sons of towering figures in the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi, are now being flushed out from the party. With the Congress yet to overcome the leadership crisis, it is but natural for younger leaders to seek opportunities in a bid to sustain their political lives and grow further.

It's no secret that both Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Pilot were at loggerheads when the latter was to be rewarded with the Chief Minister's post but the former's hold over the party came as a stumbling block. The current situation in the Congress explains how the power tussle between the old guard and the Young Turks has peaked. Lacking mass support, the Congress leadership is on a sticky wicket



and is unable to have a hold over party legislators. The back to back drubbing in general elections discounted the political face value of Sonia and Rahul and also evaporated the little gains made in a few State elections. The present state of affairs can lead to implosion as voices are now being aired from the likes of senior leaders like Kapil Sibal, who have blamed the party management. The Congress must retain young and talented leaders in the party.

N Sadhasiva Reddy
Bengaluru

injections are being sold at 10 times their actual cost. Black marketing in this pandemic situation is unfortunate. Families of COVID-19 patients are facing many hurdles in getting these drugs. Some private hospitals are leaving it to the patients to get the injections. It is imperative that the Government becomes

more vigilant and makes sure that the drugs are available to the patients who need them. It should also check whether private hospitals are prescribing the drug to the right patients or administering it merely to make money.

Ravi Teja Kathuripalli
Hyderabad

Leadership crisis

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Piloting a revolt" (July 14). Sachin Pilot's defiance is another wake-up call for Congress president Sonia Gandhi after Jyotiraditya Scindia's exit from the party. This shows there is

something wrong with the party. Entrenched nepotism, leadership vacuum, lack of efforts aimed at democratisation of the rank and file are now putting paid to the hopes of an early resurgence of the Congress. Unless the central leadership issue is resolved, there can be no hopes for revival for the party.

Rashmi
Via email

Focus on the economy

Sir — RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das has outlined how the Corona pandemic has severely affected the supply of goods and services and movement of capital and labour across the world. Das has made it clear that growing the economy is his priority. The RBI's measures such as a reduction in interest rates and the supply of cash have brought relief to the general public. Thanks to this, the financial stability in the country has been maintained.

Bhupendra Singh Ranga
Haryana

Send your feedback to:
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FIRST COLUMN

Break this toxic nexus, now

If we don't stop electing criminals as our *netas*, then we are just getting the Government we deserve



KALYANI SHANKAR

Recently, the BJP president, JP Nadda, while addressing a virtual rally observed, "Criminalisation of politics has scaled new heights. Now we all hear about cut money in Bengal. We need to cut to size these leaders who demand a cut. We need to restore Bengal's glory and remove this Government lock, stock and barrel." He was so right in his observations that what followed a week later confirmed the need for checking criminalisation of politics.

Last week's encounter killing of Uttar Pradesh-based don Vikas Dubey by the State police brings into focus once again the nexus between politicians and criminals and has sparked off a wider debate. Dubey was shot dead on July 10 by the UP Police, who claimed that he was trying to flee after the vehicle carrying him from Ujjain skidded and toppled over. Prior to that, on July 3, Dubey and his henchmen had killed eight policemen in a shoot-out in Kanpur amid allegations that some politicians and police officers had been shielding him. Both, his arrest and the encounter, have raised several inconvenient questions. The Opposition parties in UP have accused the BJP-ruled Yogi Adityanath Government of shielding him, forgetting that many other parties which ruled UP over the years helped him to grow as a don. UP leaders, right from Mayawati, Akhilesh Yadav to Priyanka Gandhi Vadra have demanded a probe, alleging that the gangster who was trying to join the BJP, was killed to protect leaders in the UP Government.

Former DGP and a distinguished ambassador Julio Ribeiro has put it succinctly in an opinion piece: "How did Vikas Dubey, a local hoodlum whose territory did not extend beyond a couple of districts in Uttar Pradesh, lose all respect for the police and authority of the State? The answer is not difficult to formulate. All the classical signs of decay of the judicial system, because of the politicisation of the institutions of governance, were long visible to even those outside this system."

With a criminal career spanning over three decades, Dubey is a classic case of how a small-time goon grew to head a major criminal network with the help of the corrupt system. Dubey's death marks the 118th encounter killing since March 2017, when Yogi Adityanath took over as the Chief Minister of UP. Unfortunately with the encounter death, the truth is now lost as the don was needed alive and not dead to know the names of his backers. Many say that the killing was outside the law and an encounter death is not real punishment as he needed to go through the judicial process. The judicial system was equally to blame as with about 60-odd criminal cases against him, Dubey had managed to remain outside prison, on bail.

The criminalisation of politics has often been debated in public fora. This nexus between the *netas* and criminals saw an upward trend from the 80s onwards. While the politicians used criminals earlier, the latter saw that they themselves could get into Parliament. The Supreme Court and the Election Commission of India (ECI) — the two constitutional bodies — have since undertaken some commendable steps to reform the electoral process. The February judgment of the apex court in this regard will have a far-reaching impact as the court has asked for "reasons for such selections, as also as to why other individuals without criminal antecedents could not be selected as candidates." If implemented, for the first time the political leadership will be answerable for criminalisation of politics. In the last four elections, there has been an alarming trend of increased criminalisation of politics. Interestingly the judgment also noted that, "In 2004, 24 per cent of the Members of Parliament (MPs) had criminal cases pending against them. In 2009, that went up to 30 per cent; in 2014 to 34 per cent; and in 2019 as many as 43 per cent of MPs had criminal cases pending against them." The first test of implementation of this judgment will be the Bihar elections, although successive judgments barring criminals have done little good. Under the current law, only people who have been convicted at least on two counts can be debarred from becoming candidates. What is needed are urgent judicial reforms, police reforms and electoral reforms, which are long overdue. For instance there have been a number reports on electoral reforms, including the Dinesh Goswami committee, that are lying unused. They need to be dusted out and their recommendations implemented. The Election Commission needs to be provided with more powers. The nexus between the criminals, police and politicians needs to be broken and checked.

Interestingly, many criminals have entered politics and become lawmakers. Nearly half of the newly-elected Lok Sabha members in 2019 have criminal charges against them, a 26 per cent increase as compared to 2014, according to the Association of Democratic Reforms. Many Governments have talked about these reforms but nothing concrete has been done. What is lacking is the political will and the support of all parties to bring legislations to address these issues. The public, too, should not elect criminals. If we don't stop electing criminals then we are just getting the Government we deserve. (The writer is a senior journalist)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THERE IS NOTHING IN PILOT'S HANDS, IT IS THE BJP WHICH IS RUNNING THE SHOW. THE SAME TEAM WHICH WORKED IN MADHYA PRADESH IS AT WORK HERE.

—RAJASTHAN CHIEF MINISTER ASHOK GEHLOT



OUR PRIORITY IS THAT THIS GOVERNMENT LOSES ITS POWER. WE ARE VIGILANT AND WILL DECIDE OUR STRATEGY AS THE SITUATION UNFOLDS.

—RAJASTHAN BJP PRESIDENT SATISH POONIA

Future mortgaged for food

Tax collections are far from adequate to pay for free food and the Govt is borrowing heavily to make up for the shortfall, thereby imposing an unsustainable burden on the future generation of taxpayers



UTTAM GUPTA

To shield millions of poor from the devastation caused by the COVID-19, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced that the Government would give five kg of rice or wheat per person per month for "free" to around 80 crore people through the Public Distribution System (PDS) for three months. It would also give for "free" one kg of pulses per household for three months. This was in addition to five kg of cereals per person per month that 80 crore beneficiaries are already getting at a heavily-subsidised price of ₹3 per kg rice, ₹2 per kg wheat and ₹1 per kg under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

As the deadline for the free supplies ended on June 30, the same day the Prime Minister announced extension of the scheme for five months till November 30. This time, the Government will also provide one kg grams free to each family per month.

Enumerating a spate of festivals during the extended period, when the demand normally increases, Narendra Modi exhorted that it was necessary to continue with additional supply (albeit for free) to ensure that people are not hard-pressed. He also thanked farmers for producing the required quantity of food and the taxpayers for helping the Centre garner resources to facilitate supplies to the poor, free of cost.

But what Modi didn't say is that collections from tax are far from adequate to pay for free or subsidised food supplies and that the Government is borrowing heavily to make up for the shortfall, thereby imposing an unsustainable burden on the future generation of taxpayers. Let us check out some facts.

Under the NFSA, the supply of wheat, rice and coarse cereals to the beneficiaries/consumers at ₹2/3/1 per kg is a fraction of the cost of procurement, handling and distribution (e.g. 1/12th in case of wheat). The supplies are made by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other State agencies on behalf of the Centre who reimburses to them an amount equal to "the difference between the cost and the sale price multiplied by the quantity sold." This reimbursement amount is known as food subsidy.

In recent years, food subsidy has increased to frightening levels. During 2019-20, against an already high Budget Estimate (BE) of ₹1,84,000 crore, the actual spend during the year was ₹2,19,000 crore. Of this, the Revised Estimate (RE) was ₹1,09,000 crore even as the balance ₹1,10,000 crore was borrowed by the FCI from the National Small Savings Fund (NSSF). For 2020-21, the expenditure was estimated to be ₹2,53,000 crore, including ₹1,16,000 crore as BE and likely borrowings of about ₹1,37,000 crore by the FCI.

That was before the COVID-19 crisis. It does not include the impact of free food given during April-June, (₹60,000 crore) and promised by Modi for July-November (₹90,000 crore). With this additional expenditure of ₹1,50,000 crore, the total spend on food subsidy during the current year will cross the ₹4,00,000-crore mark (in case, the scheme is extended beyond November, that will further inflate the bill).

Given the highly-fragile resource position (due to a steep fall in tax collections on the one hand and COVID-19-related hike in expenses on the other), the Government is unlikely to provide any extra amount over and above the Budget

UNLESS THE FOOD SUBSIDY IMBROGLIO IS ADDRESSED AND PAYMENTS ARE BROUGHT DOWN TO SUSTAINABLE LEVELS, INDIA RUNS THE RISK OF FALLING INTO A DEBT TRAP. BROADLY, THERE ARE THREE MAJOR FACTORS BEHIND HIGH AND EVER-INCREASING FOOD SUBSIDY VIZ HIGH COST OF SUPPLY, LOW ISSUE PRICE AND AN OCEAN OF BENEFICIARIES



allocation of ₹1,16,000 crore. This means that all of the incremental amount, ₹1,50,000 crore, will be borrowed by the FCI. Together with the ₹1,37,000 crore initially budgeted, the total borrowings by the FCI during 2020-21 will be ₹2,87,000 crore.

Add to this figure the cumulative borrowings of ₹2,00,000 crore as on March 31, 2019 plus ₹1,10,000 crore borrowed during 2019-20. The total amount owed by the FCI to the NSSF would be close to ₹6,00,000 crore by the end of the current fiscal. Though staying on the balance sheet of the FCI, the fact remains that this mammoth debt is entirely the liability of the Union Government and will need to be serviced from the latter's tax collections in the future.

In the past, thanks to inadequate allocation in the Budget, the Government had been making short payments to the FCI, forcing the latter to borrow from banks to sustain operations. When the FCI started taking loans from the NSSF in 2016-17, the Centre had committed to release the subsidy arrears to enable it to pay back in subsequent years. But that was not to be. The subsidy arrears kept mounting and the FCI kept on borrowing more and more from the NSSF.

The Indian food subsidy regime remains fundamentally vulnerable. The COVID-19 crisis has only aggravated this vulnerability. The irony is that despite spending mammoth sums, even the poor are not getting full justice. The supplies under the NFSA at five kg per person per month barely cover 50 per cent of the requirement of a person which is 10 kg per month, as estimated by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO).

This forces him/her to buy the bal-

ance quantity from the market at a much higher price, which in the case of rice, is at least ₹35 per kg, being linked to the cost of supply. For buying 10 kg, the poor have to spend a total of ₹190 (five kg at ₹3 per kg plus five kg at ₹35 per kg). Thus, the effective price works out to ₹19 per kg instead of ₹3 per kg that s/he should be paying. Unless the subsidy imbroglio is addressed and payments are brought down to sustainable levels, India runs the risk of falling into a debt trap. Broadly, there are three major factors behind high and ever-increasing food subsidy viz. high cost of supply, low issue price and an ocean of beneficiaries.

The cost of supply includes the Minimum Support Price (MSP) paid to farmers besides the handling and distribution cost. While the former is computed as cost of cultivation plus 50 per cent of this as profit, the latter is reimbursed to handling agencies on "actual" basis. This system of paying on "actuals" devoid of any norm with regard to efficiency in operations lies at the root of both the MSP and handling and distribution cost being on a rising trajectory at all times.

The price at which foodgrains are issued to beneficiaries, i.e. ₹2/3 per kg for wheat and rice, are almost close to "zero." This means that almost the entire cost of supply is subsidised. In case of rice, with ₹35 per kg being the cost, ₹32 comes from the Government as subsidy. In such a scenario, rampant misuse of subsidy is inevitable.

Finally, the beneficiaries getting food at near zero price are over 80 crore or nearly two-third of the population. Is India home to that many poor? There is something seriously amiss as the official word on the number of poor is off

more than 25-30 per cent. Yet, if over

80 crore people are eligible for food virtually for free, the subsidy bill is bound to become unsustainable.

In early 2015, a committee under Dr Shanta Kumar, a senior BJP leader, had examined these issues. It recommended a cut in beneficiaries from 67 per cent to 40 per cent. It also proposed restricting the benefit of ₹1/2/3 per kg only to the poorest of poor people under the *Antyodaya Anna Yojana* while increasing the supply to seven kg per person and making the rest pay 50 per cent of the MSP paid to farmers. That report is lying in cold storage.

The above recommendations can help in saving a good amount of money. But this is far from making a dent in the problem of a ballooning food subsidy. A sustainable solution won't emerge so long as the Government remains involved in procurement, handling and distribution of foodgrains; as then, all stakeholders will expect it to do all that keeps the subsidy bill rising all the time. Thus, farmers would want it to pay higher MSP; handling agencies won't rein in costs and more and more people would wish to come under the NFSA.

The Government should withdraw from buying and selling of food. Instead it should restrict its role only to giving subsidy directly to the poor using the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) option. This will also be in sync with its big bang reforms (announced on May 15) giving an unfettered role to the private sector in agri-marketing. The State agencies may continue but as a commercial entity at par with private players. Then only will we have real food security in the country without mortgaging the future.

(The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst)

Banks have yet to lend emergency credit

It is vital to implement the MSME loan package while balancing the interests of businesses and banks so that the financial system and credit cycle remain stable



APARNA RAMAN

The economic stimulus scheme for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), announced by the Centre on June 1, has still not been satisfactorily implemented, thanks to the ineffectual status quo process of credit approval and disbursement by commercial banks and specialised financial institutions such as the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). Unfortunately, even a crisis of this scale has not been able to reform commercial lending practices, which continue to operate in the same manner, both in terms of how banks assess and select MSMEs to disburse

loans. The data on credit offtake provided by the Finance Minister's office on June 18, almost a month after the stimulus announcement, clearly shows that out of the ₹3 lakh crore allocated for the collateral-free Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS), only about six per cent or approximately ₹2,000 crore has been disbursed.

Apart from the big Public Sector Banks (PSBs), namely the State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank and Punjab National Bank, the rest of the PSBs have fallen woefully short of both the sanctioned amount and disbursement target.

Private banks and small finance banks are yet to even participate in the ECLGS scheme. In the meantime, the cash flow situation of the majority of the over six crore registered MSMEs, including sole proprietorships, is already extremely dire, with several small businesses in shut-down mode and their owners on the

verge of personal bankruptcy.

The drastic decline in demand and the prolonged absence of workers have made it nearly impossible for the MSMEs to pass the regular credit checklist of lenders. As a matter of fact, those with existing debt on their books or having stressed balance sheets are struggling to stay solvent until credit approvals are processed and funds disbursed to their accounts.

In the face of fast-disappearing equity, most MSMEs now face a looming threat of existing creditors invoking the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act, 2002 and forcing them to declare bankruptcy.

The gravity of the situation that MSMEs find themselves in was recently brought to public knowledge by the Federation of Indian Micro and Small and Medium Enterprises, when its president, Animesh Saxena, sounded an alarm in an interview that

MSMEs were in the ICU and if not given working capital, they would not survive after another three to four months. The 2019 report of the RBI Committee on MSMEs estimated the difference between demand and supply of credit for them to be in the range of ₹20-25 trillion. The ongoing pandemic has increased this gap, making it harder for MSMEs to access credit than ever before.

Despite the Central Government's intention and the RBI's endorsement of the MSME rescue package, bankers still remain extremely wary of disbursing loans to those who need it the most. The ground reality is that lenders now view every MSME utilising the loan moratorium as a potential Non-Performing Asset with impaired repayment ability or inherent disability to service even short-term debt.

As far as the immediately borrowable amount of up to 20 per cent of outstanding debt is concerned, the

Credit Guarantee Funds Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) notwithstanding, the level of transparency and trust in lender-borrower relations has proved to be seriously inadequate to respond to the need for instant fund transfers to be implemented.

Based on an analysis of last month's reports in the Press, only PSBs have so far sanctioned emergency loans worth ₹8,320 crore to MSMEs in 12 States under the ECLGS, of which, ₹599 crore have been disbursed to 17,904 accounts. This is barely a fraction of the total number of MSMEs or of their total credit requirement.

Private bankers have also remained unwilling to increase credit exposure to their existing MSME clients due to the unprecedented uncertainty that has gripped the supply chains and manufacturing processes because of the pandemic. While on the one hand, bankers seek

to increase their customer base and diversify their loan portfolio, on the other, they are faced with the perennial risk of default and potential bad debts, which worsens the macroeconomic consequences of their confusion "to lend or not to lend" at such a time of crisis.

Since bank loans to MSMEs are classified as Priority Sector Lending and the RBI has recently exempted such loans from the statutory requirement of maintaining a Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) under Section 42(1) of the RBI Act, 1934, more liquidity will be available in the banking system and the balance sheets of the banks will not be under constant pressure throughout the year.

Since the recent revised definition of MSME removes the distinction between manufacturing businesses and service businesses altogether, and classifies them based on investment and turnover, they must now be given new financing options for growth and

expansion, separate from their day-to-day operational or working capital requirement.

It is vital to implement the MSME loan package while balancing the interests of businesses and banks such that the financial system and credit cycle remain stable and sustainable. Hence, the Government must remember that on the one hand, while it must create more entrepreneurs and employment, on the other, it must also take necessary steps to mitigate the risk to public deposits and the State's own investment in banks and financial institutions.

At the end of the day, the Prime Minister's clarion call for an *Atmanirbhar Bharat* and the *Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan* cannot be realised and become a successful pan-India model until and unless each and every MSME is made solvent as well as profitable in the long-term.

(The author is a lawyer and investment advisor)

Consulting engineers urges govt to revisit L1 tendering system

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consulting engineers' apex body CEAI on Tuesday urged the Centre to do away with the conventional L1 tendering and procurement system. The Least Cost Selection method or L1, which is the award of work to the lowest financial offer, has been a prevalent procurement strategy for procurement of works by contractors, consultants and purchase of goods since long in the country. In the post coronavirus situation and as a necessary first step towards



'Aatmanirbhar Bharat', the CEAI said, it has urged the government to revisit and say goodbye to the age-old conventional L1 tendering and procure-

ment system in the country. "This has often resulted in poor quality of works and goods. This necessitates an urgent need to change the selection mecha-

nism and move towards the concept of 'Workable Rates' Procurement Mechanism," the Consulting Engineers Association of India (CEAI) said in a statement.

The changed procurement system, which offers various alternatives to derive workable rates in a transparent manner, will give opportunities to competent firms to plan a project or a bid on workable rates, thereby facilitating better management and execution which will reflect on quality and timelines, said K K Kapila, Chairman, Infrastructure Committee of CEAI.

Private sector capex is set to contract by 20-26 per cent this fiscal due to COVID-19-pandemic-led business disruptions, and investments are unlikely to recover meaningfully before FY25, as per a report.

The L1 system is plagued with delays of time and cost overruns, Kapila said and added that it will ultimately lead to time consuming arbitrations and higher costs. "The change from L1 needs to be brought about as a matter of great urgency in the country. How can we buy bullet proof jackets at L1? How can we buy PPE kits on L1? Do we need to secure our forward line or kill them because we refuse to bring the requisite change in the system.

Pvt sector capex to plunge 20-26 pc this fiscal: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Private sector capex is set to contract by 20-26 per cent this fiscal due to COVID-19-pandemic-led business disruptions, and investments are unlikely to recover meaningfully before FY25, as per a report.

Capital spending by corporates will pick up by 15-20 per cent next fiscal, boosted primarily by the low base effect, according to an India Rating report on Tuesday.

It also warns that in the absence of a broad-based pick-up in domestic and external demand, faster resolution of stressed assets and deep structural reforms, private sector investments are unlikely to recover meaningfully before FY25.

In fact, the pandemic outbreak and ensuing national lockdowns have crippled the economy, making corporates and individuals risk averse.

As uncertainties around demand recovery have persisted and the deleveraging process is yet to kick start, the private sector capex growth has remained mute or low —



clocking only 5 per cent annual growth since FY17. Since then, growth in overall gross fixed capital formation continued to fall over FY18-FY19, the report said.

Corporates' capacity utilisation level continues to hover below 75 per cent since the last round of growth capex between FY12 and FY14. Weak demand growth, even prior to the pandemic outbreak, resulted in shortfalls in cash flow generation, thus delaying their deleveraging.

"While capacity utilisation will take at least another four years to peak, broad-based

deleveraging will take another six to seven years," the report said, adding this will have the maximum impact on "capex this year, which may contract by 20-26 per cent due to the COVID-19-led business disruptions, before growing 15-20 per cent next fiscal year".

Auto and auto ancillaries, pharmaceuticals, consumer goods and cement three sectors stand out as in these segments, technological innovation, regulatory developments and changing patterns of consumer demand will prove to be the important drivers of capex spending, it added.

Sensex plunges 661 points

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex plunged 661 points on Tuesday, dragged by losses in financial stocks amid selloff in global markets.

After touching a low of 35,877.42, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 660.63 points, or 1.80 per cent, lower at 36,033.06.

Likewise, the NSE Nifty fell 195.35 points, or 1.81 per cent, to 10,607.35.

Shares of the HDFC duo led the fall in the indices, shedding up to 2.94 per cent, after HDFC Bank said it has launched a probe into its auto lending practices following allegations against the conduct of a long-time executive who retired on March 31 this year.

IndusInd Bank, Axis Bank, Maruti, Bajaj Finserv, PowerGrid and SBI were among the other major laggards. On the other hand, Titan, Bharti Airtel and Bajaj Auto closed with gains.

"Key indices corrected close to 2 per cent on weakness in financial and metal stocks. We witnessed profit booking in key auto stocks as their volume numbers are already known to the street for the first quarter," said S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

According to traders,



besides stock-specific actions, negative cues from global markets amid escalating US-China tensions and rising COVID-19 cases dampened investor sentiment here.

Asserting that the "Chinese predatory world view" had no place in the 21st century, the US on Monday categorically rejected the territorial claims made by Beijing in South China Sea, stating that it has no legal grounds to unilaterally impose its will on the region.

On the coronavirus front, the number of cases around the world linked to the disease has crossed 1.30 crore.

In India, the number of infections spiked to 9.06 lakh, according to the health ministry.

Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul closed with significant losses.

Stock exchanges in Europe also began on a negative note. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell 0.73 per cent to USD 42.41 per barrel.

Govt working to mapping land bank available for industry: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is working on creating a "genuine" single window clearance mechanism and mapping the entire land bank available for the industry and industrial development, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

The minister also said that the government is looking at ways to promote manufacturing of electronic products like LED televisions, CCTVs and is "very keen" to have a semiconductor FAB plant in India.

Besides, to capture IT services exports data, the ministry is thinking of creating a framework by which it can capture that data.

Goyal said that he has tasked the officers to look at some framework by which the ministry can capture data of IT services exports.

"We are working in DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) to create the framework of a genuine single window where you do not open doors behind that single window. We are also working on mapping the entire land bank available for industry and industrial development," he said while addressing industry representatives of electronics and software exports. The minister said that sufficient land is available and



"We are working in DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade) to create the framework of a genuine single window where you do not open doors behind that single window. We are also working on mapping the entire land bank available for industry

— PIYUSH GOYAL, Commerce and Industry

"we can make sure that it is available at competitive prices, we can even talk to states".

He added that states can be consulted on issues like affordable power and water supply if the electronics industry wants to set up an entire ecosystem in a state.

"Talk to DPIIT, pick up an area of your choice, where the entire ecosystem can be created and supported and we are willing to go extra mile whatever it takes to create such a cluster of industry and it should be world-class," he said.

Regarding the demand of export incentives under MEIS, he said the ministry is working on Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product (RoDTEP), "so I do not know whether MEIS can really sustain or continue beyond December 2020 or when RoDTEP come to your industry".

He said that no industry can sustain in the long run on "these clutches" and industries which are not dependent on the government are flourishing.

Dr Reddy's launches OTC Nicotine Polacrilex in US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Tuesday announced the launch of over-the-counter Nicotine Polacrilex lozenges in the American market.

The company has launched Nicotine Polacrilex lozenges in the strengths of 2 mg and 4 mg in the US, the pharmaceutical major said in a filing to BSE. The product is a store brand version of GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare LP's Nicorette lozenges, it added.

"This launch truly demonstrates our ability to deliver on more complex dosage forms for the benefit of consumers who wish to quit smoking by reducing withdrawal symptoms, including nicotine cravings," Dr

Reddy's Laboratories North America Generics CEO Marc Kikuchi said. Nicotine Polacrilex lozenges are an important addition to the company's current offering of Nicotine Replacement Therapy including Nicotine Transdermal System Patches, sold as Habitrol brand and various store brand brands, he added.

According to data analytics and market research firm IRI, the Nicotine Lozenges brands and store brand markets had total US retail sales of around USD 200 million for the most recent 52 weeks ended May 17, 2020, Dr Reddy's said.

Shares of Dr Reddy's Laboratories were trading at Rs 3,938 per scrip on BSE, up 1.01 per cent from its previous close.



Apollo Tyres to reduce 500 jobs at Netherlands plant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Apollo Tyres on Tuesday said the management and workers of its Netherlands-based plant have reached an agreement to convert the facility to cater to some specific segments, which would affect more than 500 jobs.

The agreement between the two parties paves the way for the reduction of 528 jobs at the Enschede-based manufacturing facility.

"The management and the Works Council (WC) of Apollo Vredestein BV (AVBV), the company's Netherlands-based subsidiary, have reached an agreement on the specialisation of the factory in Enschede, marking the conclusion of consultation process," Apollo Tyres said in a regulatory filing.

Rs 107 cr for fire-fighting facilities at Haldia Dock

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday said it has approved Rs 107 crore for modern fire-fighting facilities at Haldia Dock Complex of Kolkata Port to ensure safe cargo operations, especially petro-chemical goods. Kolkata Port is one of the top 12 major ports in the country.

"Union Minister of State (I/C) for Shipping Shri Mansukh Mandaviya has approved Rs 107 Crore for augmentation of fire-fighting facilities on five jetties of Haldia Dock Complex, Kolkata Port," the Ministry of Shipping said in a statement.

No stay on TRAI's instructions to Vodafone Idea on priority plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom tribunal TDSAT on Tuesday did not stay TRAI's instructions that had asked Vodafone Idea (VIL) to put on hold for the time being, its plan promising faster speeds to certain priority users.

Mobile operator Vodafone Idea on Monday had approached Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal against the sector regulator's letter to the company asking it to withhold its plan that promised better speeds to certain priority users.

Sources privy to the development said TDSAT did not grant a stay on the matter on Tuesday and scheduled the next hearing on July 16.

TRAI has been asked to file its reply by Wednesday. VIL had filed a petition in TDSAT

on Monday, challenging TRAI's move, and had requested for an early hearing on the matter, after Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) asked the company as well as Bharti Airtel to put on hold specific plans that promised faster speeds to certain priority users.

The regulator had questioned the telcos on whether network preference to specific customers came at the cost of deterioration of services for other subscribers.

A TRAI source told that its objection were not about net neutrality, but whether priority to high-paying customers for those specific plans meant lower level of service to other subscribers.

TRAI has asked the operators how they are protecting the interest of other general subscribers.



Manoj Kumar re-elected as chairperson of MFN

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Microfinance Institutions Network (MFN), a self-regulatory organisation for microfinance industry, on Tuesday announced re-election of Manoj Kumar Nambiar as its chairperson for another year. Devesh Sachdev has been appointed as vice-chairperson of the governing board.

"The microfinance sector serves over 60 million end clients and impacts over 300 million lives today. I am honoured and humbled by the confidence placed in me by the members and look forward to their continued support," Nambiar said.

Debt MFs see 95% plunge in inflow on redemptions in liquid schemes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mutual funds focused on fixed-income securities witnessed a 95 per cent month-on-month slump in inflow to Rs 2,862 crore in June, mainly due to redemptions in liquid schemes.

Most individual categories that invest in fixed-income securities, or debt funds, saw an inflow. However, liquid schemes and credit risk funds saw withdrawals.

According to the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi), mutual funds (MFs) that invest in fixed-income securities saw an inflow of Rs 2,862 crore as compared with inflow of Rs 63,665 crore in May.

In April, the segment had witnessed an inflow of Rs 43,431 crore. Investors had pulled out a massive Rs 1.95 lakh crore from the segment in March, but had invested Rs 28,000 crore in February and Rs 1.09 lakh crore in January.

"The flows into fixed-income funds came down sig-



nificantly in June from the previous month. However, that's not surprising given it was quarter-end, and expectedly, liquid fund category witnessed huge net outflows," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director — Manager Research, Morningstar India, said.

Harsh Jain, co-founder of Groww, attributed the lower inflow to large amount of redemptions in liquid funds by corporate companies that withdraw to pay advance tax.

This is a routine behaviour that has been observed in the past as well, he said.

Of the total inflow seen last month, liquid funds with investments in cash assets such as treasury bills, certificates of deposit and commercial paper for shorter horizon, saw outflow of Rs 44,226 crore as against investment of Rs 61,870 crore in May.

Apart from liquid funds, credit risk funds saw an outflow of Rs 1,494 crore in the period under review.

However, low duration category saw inflow of around Rs 12,236 crore and corporate bond funds saw inflow of Rs 10,737 crore.

'Don't see any case for investment in auto sector now'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the automobile industry growing through the longest sales slump, made worse by coronavirus pandemic, auto industry body SIAM President Rajan Wadhwa on Tuesday said he does not see any case for investment in the auto sector at present.

Among the casualties of the current situation will be electric vehicles, where companies are no longer in a position to invest in the new technology and it would need government support for India not to miss the EV revolution, he added.

Speaking to reporters via



video conference, Wadhwa said after the lockdown relaxations automobile manufacturers have slowly started production but capacity utilisation remained very low.

"It will take another three to

four years to reach the peak level of 2018. So right now there is enough capacity in the sector and hence no investment is needed there. Moreover, the auto industry has invested heavily for the transition to BS-

While India has been promoting EV, Wadhwa said there is a need for a dialogue with the government for proper long term planning and for providing support to the industry and creating the infrastructure so that the country does not miss out on the "EV bus"

VI emission norms in a very short span of three years," Wadhwa said.

He further said this year the auto sector is looking at a decline of 26-45 per cent depending on the vehicle category. "Coupled with that of last year, we are looking at a decline of 50 per cent in two years. When the demand is

half, I don't see any case for investment in the sector," Wadhwa said responding to a query on how the slowdown and COVID-19 will impact investments.

When asked how the EV story will pan out in India due to the current circumstances and if OEM (original equipment manufacturer) will

rethink their plans for the same, he said: "You can't keep on borrowing money and investing. Even if you want to, if you do not have revenue you cannot invest."

Admitting that EV plans have taken a back seat for many manufacturers, he said it is not "affordable" for the industry to invest in it at the moment.

While India has been promoting EV, Wadhwa said there is a need for a dialogue with the government for proper long term planning and for providing support to the industry and creating the infrastructure so that the country does not miss out on the "EV bus".

Guardian Advisors hikes stake in Eveready by 8.48 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Portfolio managing firm Guardian Advisors on behalf of its clients has hiked its stake in Eveready Industries by 8.48 per cent by buying 61.67 lakh shares in the open market, according to a BSE filing. The transaction was carried out on July 14. Guardian Advisors on behalf of its clients increased its shareholding in the company from 11.35 per cent to 19.84 per cent, the filing said. Last month, Eveready Industries had said the coronavirus pandemic will have an impact on its profitability in the short-term and it is engaged in discussions with lenders to infuse additional fund to meet working capital gap and ensure no impact on its operations.



Huawei posts 13.1% revenue growth amid Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Huawei Technologies reported Tuesday that its revenue grew 13.1 per cent in the first half of the year compared with a year earlier, despite sanctions from the US and challenges from the coronavirus pandemic. Revenue rose to 454 billion yuan in January-June compared to 401.3 billion yuan during the same period last year. The company said its profit margin was 9.2 per cent, compared to 8.7 per cent last year. The telecommunications equipment firm, based in the southern commercial hub of Shenzhen, is facing efforts by the U.S. government to restrict Huawei's ability to procure technology and components from American suppliers.

With transgenders being equally affected or more by unemployment, lack of essential communities, etc., as a result of the lockdown, the bias they have been witnessing when food and other essentials are being distributed, they tell SHIKHA DUGGAL, adds salt to their wounds

‘HIJRA CULTURE IS BEYOND A SOB STORY’

The trans community is suffering from lack of crowdsourced funds, food, and means of livelihood thanks to all the bias while there is the distribution of essential commodities during the lockdown. The hijra community has evolved to form a unique subculture within Indian society. There are approximately half a million hijras in India and to identify as a hijra, an individual must be ritually adopted into the community in a process that can take months to years.

Their newfound prominence has arisen after receiving popularity via appearing on reality shows and by garnering followers through savvy social media teams. Over time, they have authorised a social role of blessing newlyweds and new-borns by singing and performing with their typical claps that no one misses called ‘badhai’. But things have gotten worse for them, as they’re taking to begging and sex work due to lack of employment opportunities.

“Hijra culture is beyond a sob story, it’s the oldest culture coming from the days of Kamasutra. Kinner Samaj is termed to be a very auspicious community. We still have hijras who are living under the protection of their gurus because they are disowned by their biological families. 18 years ago, my guru established a clinic for us as doctors wouldn’t consult us. They didn’t like to touch our bodies. So for every hijra, the idea is to get as many chelas working for you as possible. The money flows up and the protection from abusive customers or police officers flows down,” says Abhina Aher, associate director of India HIV/AIDS Alliance and a global transgender activist.

Calling attention to a vital facet from the current scenario, Vyjayanti Mogli, the founder of Telangana Hijra Intersex Transgender Samiti throws light on how transgender group of people is predominantly dependent on begging and sex work for their means of livelihood, which has completely shut down since the 21-day lockdown

began, bringing their earning sources to just 20 rupees a day.

“Unemployment is translating more for us now. We were occasionally invited for auspicious events like baby showers, marriages, etc. and that’s not possible for us right now due to restrictions on mass gatherings,” adds Vyjayanti.

Transgender communities experience shocking amounts of violence and discrimination. They are often the target of transphobic hate crimes and as always, it gets difficult for the officials to believe the stories of survivors in their case too. Their stories of violence often go under-reported and as a result, the community stands on the line of fire themselves to safeguard their members from such incidents. Abhina tells us that they don’t allow any individual to tamper their culture now as they have had bitter experiences, a ‘taali’ can be a nuisance for the society but for them, it’s their moment of celebrations. A Hijra begging on the streets may seem like an activity of beseech for by-

passers, but for them, it’s ‘bhiksha’.

While the whole world is combatting COVID-19, they lay ignored. Vyjayanti Mogli posted on her social media that how fear is deluding her hopes as a transgender woman. She also stated that their community has never been given its due with dedicated policies and advisories that are meant for them.

“The pandemic is adding salt on our wounds. We also have an adverse risk from Coronavirus. The majority of us are locked in our samaj with very few amenities and little access to medical facilities. We too are susceptible to the

virus having weaker immune systems with no medical insurance. What shall we do in a situation like this when we don’t get the same help as others do?” she asks.

Highlighting another concern concerning their community, Abhina Aher points out the mis-reportage by few media outlets adds insult to their injury. “How journalists report on Hijrahood is critically important to our dignity. Not naming the right gender or incorrectly name us can imply to the readers that our story is unworthy. Leaving out basic facts about us is like trying to erase it because we know the amount of pain and trauma we have suffered from. Misreporting aggravates the myths around us, there is absolutely no need for sensationalising us,” expresses the 42-year-old.

With the Telangana High Court set to embark separate isolation wards for transgenders in hospitals amidst coronavirus outbreak, the community is happy about this ray of hope.



The pandemic is adding salt on our wounds. We also have an adverse risk from Coronavirus. The majority of us are locked in our samaj with very few amenities and little access to medical facilities. We too are susceptible to the virus having weaker immune systems with no medical insurance.

— VYJAYANTI MOGLI



How journalists report on Hijrahood is critically important to our dignity. Leaving out basic facts about us is like trying to erase it because we know the amount of pain and trauma we have suffered from. Misreporting aggravates the myths around us.

— ABHINA AHER

‘Telugu girls are homely, but outsiders are professional’



DEBUT WITH FILMS...

I started my acting career at the age of 15. An uncle, who lived near my house, whose house I would frequent as my mom was friends with his wife, introduced me to Telugu cinema. He had connections with Tollywood and asked my mom to send me to the industry as he felt I had all the features to fit in the industry. Until then I didn’t know the ABC of acting. We got a photoshoot done then and my photos were circulated in the industry. Later, I was offered lead roles in two films. I quit doing movies after my third film as I felt that place wasn’t meant for me.

HIRING CAST FROM OTHER STATES...

Initially, even I felt channels hiring cast from other states was not fair. It was only after I donned the producer’s hat, that I learned outsiders are more professional. This statement comes out of my personal experience. I introduced three Telugu girls in my serials and I had to replace the cast later on. Telugu girls are more homely and they have certain restrictions and guidelines from their families. A year or so after they debut, they give some or the other reason to quit the show, like “I’m getting married, I’m not in the mood, etc.” I have faced many such problems. There are a lot of Telugu girls in the field but are choosing web series, cinema, and YouTube. I’m starting a new serial and I looked for 20 to 25 Telugu girls to cast in the serial who are famous on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, none from whom we approached, were interested. I get a lot of messages from others saying they are interested, but I’m not sure how seriously I can take them. I have seen people coming and quitting the show within six months. Even if you replace the character, we are not sure how the audience is going to take it. As a producer, we do not want to take such risks and so prefer casting

“ I’m starting a new serial and I looked for 20 to 25 Telugu girls to cast in the serial who are famous on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, none from whom we approached, were interested. I get a lot of messages from others saying they are interested, but I’m not sure how seriously I can take them. I have seen people coming and quitting the show within six months. As a producer, we do not want to take such risks.

actors from other states. Also, now that all channels need fresh faces they’re looking to hire people from other states. Speaking of payment, the channels here pay more to outsiders than the ones here. For instance, I have been working for the Telugu small screen for over 20 years and all the people know how much I charge, etc. If they are hir-

love and eventually got married. I entered the industry during my teens as an actor and have been working here for the last 20 years. The TV industry is like family to me.

LOVE ANCHORING...

I learned acting because of TV.

An actor, anchor, YouTuber, and producer, Yata Naveena has donned many hats and has been impressing the Telugu audience with her work for the last 20 years. She entered the industry when she was just 15 years old and feels Television is now her family. After a series of interviews, it is learnt that many Telugu origin artistes are unhappy with channels hiring cast from other states. Yata Naveena speaks to K RAMYA SREE and gives a producer’s point of view on why they hire cast from other states, working here for 20 years, and more...

ing from other states, they will agree to what their coordinator says. They just want a fresh face and the producers want the channel to accept the face.

TV IS JUST LIKE ANOTHER JOB...

My mother was a movie buff, so I did not have any restrictions from family, although none of my family were into acting. I’m here because of my mother and her encouragement. If it wasn’t her, I would be an engineer or something by now. While I was doing my third film, my make up artist in the film, was the chief make-up artist in ETV and introduced me to a small screen through ETV. I was offered a role in the *Aloukika* serial then. It was while I was working that serial that I gained some interest in acting and became serious about my work. Until then, I didn’t know what I was doing. I didn’t like the atmosphere at the cinema sets. I felt TV is just like any other job and the people too, are cool here.

MET MY HUSBAND IN THE INDUSTRY...

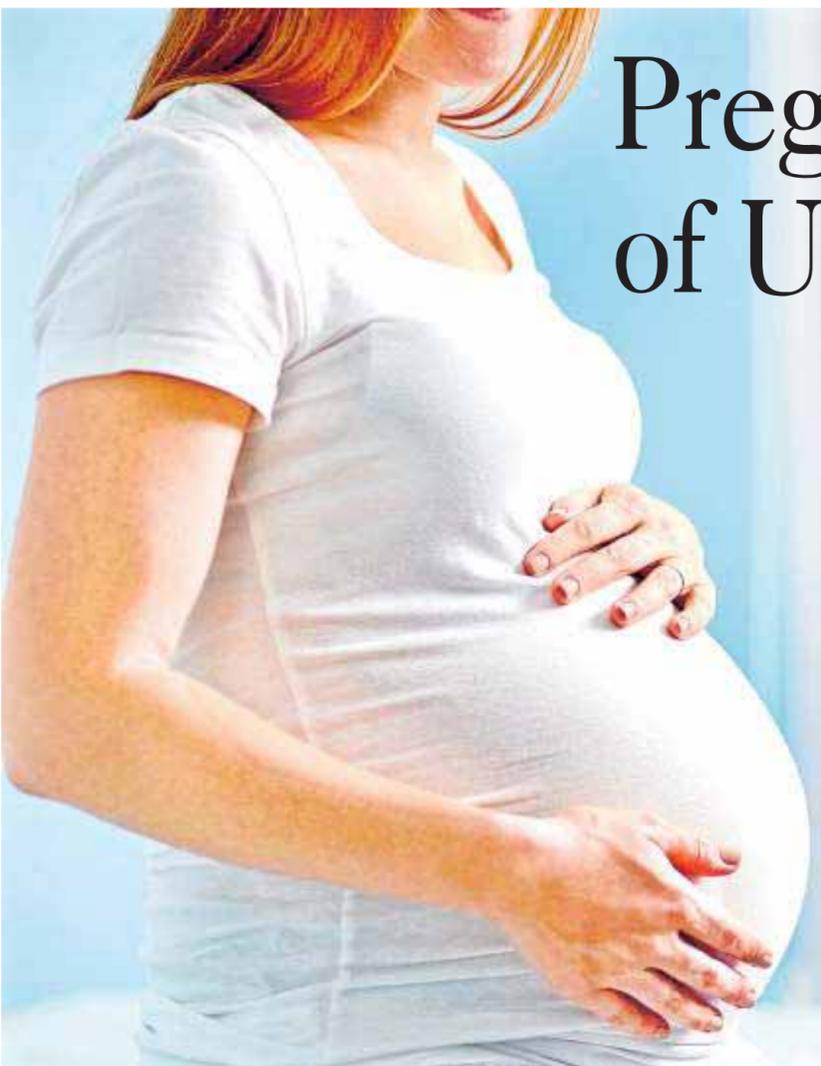
I have done over 20 serials apart from hosting a few shows as an anchor and more. During one of my projects with Zee TV, I met my husband, who was the director of the show. We fell in

Initially, I would do whatever the directors said, now I can improvise the scene and add my style to it. TV gives us the scope to improve ourselves. I am an actor, producer, YouTuber, and an anchor. Among all the roles I have done, I love anchoring. Anchoring has more scope to show your creativity and spontaneity. Anchoring is showing your real self, unlike acting, where you have to portray someone else.

STARDOM...

I got stardom with the serial *Chandramukhi*. I played the character of Menaka in the serial. It was one of the top roaring serial back then. I have worked for that serial for over three to four years. I got similar stardom for *Kalavari Kodallu*, which was my production house project. I play a comic role in the serial although I was the villain in it. I thoroughly enjoyed playing the character. But when I see myself on screen, I like to play soft, sensible characters because the audience showers their love on positive characters. When I played *Kalavari Kodallu*, people would show sympathy for me. Everyone in the serial would hit me on screen. So I had the audience coming up to me and showing sympathy and pity on me. Nowadays, the audience is smarter. They can sense what’s happening next.

Pregnant women, beware of UTIs this monsoon



Although the monsoon brings respite from summer's scorching heat, it also invites a plethora of allergies and infections. Pregnant women should be cautious because they are at a higher risk of suffering from Urinary Tract Infections (UTI).

According to Dr Pratima Thamke, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, Motherhood Hospital, Kharghar, monsoons can be worrisome for pregnant women as, during those rainy days, bacteria tend to live on our bodies and tend to multiply at a rapid rate. Moreover, the unwanted growth of the bacteria leads to UTI.

A UTI, also known as bladder infection, can be termed as a bacterial infection that occurs in the urinary tract affecting one's kidneys, uterus, bladder, and urethra. "You will be shocked to know that pregnant women are at higher risk of suffering from UTIs in the 6th week through 24 weeks owing to the changes in the urinary tract

that takes place. The uterus is located on top of the bladder. When the uterus grows, its increased weight tends to block the drainage of the urine from one's bladder, inviting a urinary tract infection during pregnancy," Dr Pratima told *IANS*Life.

The symptoms of a UTI are pain and discomfort while urinating, chills, fever, sweat, tenderness of the bladder, fatigue, cramps and lower abdominal pain, blood from the urine, urge to urinate frequently and foul smell while urinating. Thus, if the UTI is left untreated then it can cause kidney infections that in turn can lead to early labor and low birth weight in the baby. Treating it at the right time can be helpful for pregnant women.

Here are a few tips from the doctor for pregnant women to keep UTIs at bay during monsoon:

Avoid holding it back: If you tend to avoid visiting the washroom for peeing then you are doing it all wrong. Many women may hold back their urine in order to finish their

work or daily chores and doing so is a strict no-no. This can lead to the development of bacteria and putting you at the risk of a UTI.

Maintain good hygiene: If you happen to access a public washroom then make sure that you must follow proper hygiene measures. Wipe off the area with a tissue or water after urinating to avoid the spread of bacteria. Do not wear tight underwear. Avoid using soaps loaded with chemicals down there.

Drink a lot of water: See to it that you drink maximum water to stay hydrated and flush out toxins present in the urinary tract. Limit your consumption of alcohol and caffeine that can irritate the bladder.

Stick to a well-balanced diet: Include zinc and vitamin C rich foods in the diet. Opt for strawberry, broccoli, citrus fruits, sprouts, seeds, legumes, and eggs. Say no to refined foods and sugar.

If you experience symptoms, don't ignore them and seek medical attention. This can help you prevent your condition from worsening.

CANVASES OF ABSTRACTION

My Abstract Universe, an online solo exhibition of artworks by contemporary artist Yashwant Singh, depicts an unusual imagery of abstraction — replete with tattoos and piercings, kitchen artifacts, weapons, masks and textiles.

Currently open for viewing online, Yashwant's paintings take us to an abstract world of tribal and folk. Patterns, objects are magnificently spaced. His art uses a visual language of shape, form, colour, and line to create a composition which may exist with a degree of independence from visual references in the world.

"His personal inner thoughts and feelings find space in his creations. Some

prominent as signs or symbols, others are hidden away in multiple coats of colour and calligraphy. Yashwant's work comprises non-terrestrial script, geometrical forms, meditational third eyes, nature elements, and colours used layer by layer, overlapping, and mingling, manifesting his mindscape. Drawing and layering become a way of expressing an emotion visually. A meditative oasis for the viewer to momentarily find tranquility in disturbing times," says Neelam Malhotra, curator at Ampas Art Gallery.

"I am doing abstract work that has come out of the figurative. When I was in college I used to visit Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal which has permanently displayed

and exhibited Indian folk and tribal arts. After completing my MFA, I worked in the studio of Bharat Bhavan for a year. Where senior abstract artists also work in the studio, I have worked under their direction, whenever I found time to visit nearby villages and watched the working style of folk and tribal artists. During meeting and interaction with tribals and their art, I had to learn so many things and I realised my calling," said the artist.

"I really enjoy the meditative process. Coats of colour, repetition of motifs, I gradually started moving towards classical music and spirituality and the definitive figures started to disappear off the paintings," he concluded.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



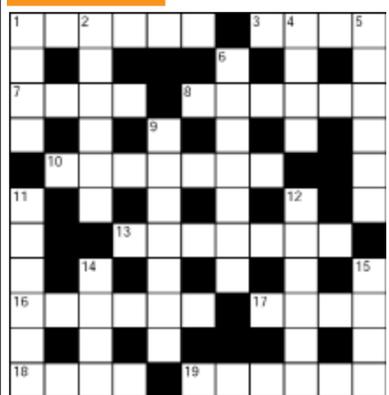
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

- Completely quiet
- Scheme
- Plenty
- A covering for fried fish
- Begged
- Inquisitive
- Middle
- Closed
- Utters aloud
- One third of ninety
- A type of spear thrown by an athlete
- A month
- These tell the time
- The writer of a book
- Jealousy
- Don't go away

DOWN

- Sprinkle this on food
- Small
- Overdue
- Opposite of wide



Tamannaah Bhatia, Satyadev pair up for a romantic drama



promising next age talent and I'm looking forward to create on-screen magic with him. *Love Mocktail* is not a story that has never been seen before. I could relate to the film as it brings together the bittersweet ingredients of life that represents the new urban trend. Besides I'm a huge fan of romance and nostalgia. There are limited characters in the film and it thrives on the actors' capabilities." Nagashekar is jointly producing the film along with Bhavani Ravi, while happening composer Kaala Bhairava has been signed on as the music director. Satya Hegde will be the cinematographer. According to a release, the yet-untitled film will roll in mid-September.

Kannada super hit romantic drama *Love Mocktail*, which released earlier this year, is getting a Telugu remake. Tamannaah Bhatia and Satyadev will be headlining the film, which will be directed by Nagashekar who is making his Telugu debut. Expressing her happiness to be a part of the project, Tamannaah said, "It's a privilege to be cherry-picked for a project that most Telugu producers and directors were keen to reproduce. Satyadev is such a



Krishna and his Leela helped him to build a romantic image and he believes it would be smart if he consolidates on it, writes NAGARAJ GOUD

I'M A HUGE ROMANTIC AT HEART: SIDDU

Siddu Jonnalagadda is pleased as punch with the response *Krishna and his Leela* has garnered and is continuing to do so. The romantic comedy, directed by his buddy Ravikanth Perepu, narrated the story of his role Krishna who is in love with two women at the same time. "The reactions have been beyond my imagination. Positive responses have poured in over from other countries as well. My Instagram is flooded with messages and I'm getting e-mails from people who I don't even know. This is what you work for as an actor. Such reactions affirm the fact that you've played your character well. Especially when women start admiring your work, it's perfect," Siddu tells us, smiling. The film dropped on Netflix without much noise last

month. There is a section which felt that OTT platform was the best avenue for a story like *Krishna and his Leela*. Sid begs to differ. "I'm of the opinion that the film would've performed equally well in cinema halls. That said it would've been a challenge to get audiences to the theatres for a newcomer's film. For that to happen, the promotions needed to be a little bit aggressive. Once the word of mouth spread, it would've been a successful venture for sure," he asserts. The film helped him to build a romantic image and he believes it would be smart if he consolidates on it. At the same time, he is quick to mention that he doesn't want people to feel that he is repetitive. "I have another love story *Maa Vinthagadha Vinuma*, which is almost ready. Love or a love track between the main

lead is an integral part of our cinema. Within the same bracket, I want to show a little versatility and not do the same kind of love story. In *Maa Vinthagadha Vinuma*, which I've written, the lead role is not as charming as say Krishna is. He is far from smart, doesn't know how to converse with women and is emotional. I wrote it when I was a boy. I've included all my college life experiences in it. I'm a huge romantic at heart, so I will keep doing love stories," he points out. There's no place for complacency in his dictionary. "I want to treat every film as my first. I don't want to get complacent or comfortable. I still want to make my films within the budget and I still want my producers to make money out of them. I don't want to fall in the trap of thought that I can

spend so much; I want to spend only on what is needed. Cinema as much as it is art and entertainment, is a business model at the end of the day. There is nothing wrong about making money," he concludes.



Lavanya flaunts acting skills on social media

Actress Lavanya Tripathi is showcasing her acting skills on social media until shooting resumes. Lavanya shared two pictures of herself on the Stories feature on her verified Instagram account. In the first picture, she is seen posing with her arm on her forehead while lying down with her eyes closed. On the image, she wrote: "Showing my acting skills on insta until we start shooting." In the second post, she shared the same image but with another caption added to it: "This is me playing dead in (the) fashion world." The actress will next be seen in *A1 Express*, co-starring Sundeep Kishan. The film, which is reportedly a remake of the 2019 Tamil film *Natpe Thunai*, is directed by Dennis Jeevan Kanukolanu.



Ileana captures her 'forever' mood



Telugu-Hindi actress Ileana D'Cruz took to social media to capture her "forever mood", and that is being a "goofball". "Forever mood. Well...90% of the time... #goofball #cantstop-wontstop," Ileana wrote on Instagram along with a short clip. In the clip, she is seen enjoying a photoshoot session. Meanwhile, in her Instagram stories, she sent

out an inspiring message to her followers, wherein she told them that "it's ok" to not feel amazing at all times. Talking about how she didn't get the expected results after her workout, she wrote, "Been a strange couple of days... Felt great yesterday but today not so much... Didn't even want to workout today but I still did it. I'd like to say that I felt frickin amazing after I finished my workout but I didn't. A tiny bit better but definitely not amazing. And that's ok. Some days are hard. That's ok."



#quarantinechoir. Nivetha Thomas sings 'Afreen'

Actress Nivetha Thomas showcased her vocal prowess on social media by singing a few lines of the evergreen song "Afreen". Nivetha took to her verified Twitter handle where she shared a one-minute video of herself singing the version that was sung by Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Momina Mustehsan on "Coke Studio". "Calling this, singing attempts. #quarantinechoir 'Afreen'" Nivetha captioned the clip, which has over 10k likes on the micro-blogging website. Last month, Nivetha completed four years in Telugu cinema. She said she is looking forward to seeing the audience in her films as many characters.

The actress said in a social media post at that time that she will forever remain a devout student of cinema. She currently awaits the release of *V*, an action thriller directed by Mohan Krishna Indraganti. The film features Sudheer Babu, Nani, Aditi Rao Hydari, Jagapathi Babu, Vennela Kishore, Nassar and Srinivas Avasara. *V* is Nani's 25th film and he will be portraying a negative role for the first time. The film was slated for a March release, but has been pushed due to the outbreak of coronavirus in the country.



Jayendra responds on Suriya's digital debut



Speculations that Tamil superstar Suriya, who is a familiar name for Telugu audiences, will be making his digital debut with the prestigious Madras Talkies production venture Navarasa has spread like wildfire in the past 24 hours. The actor's name was attached to feature in one of the nine episodes of the series, with prominent ad filmmaker Jayendra Panchapakesan attached to direct. When *The Pioneer* rang Jayendra for a confirmation, he said, "Right now, there is not any correct information that I can give you. Maybe in a week or week and half we will have the

information. At the same time, whatever is circulating online is incorrect." As of now, Suriya is awaiting the release of *Akasam Nee Haadhura* (Telugu dubbed version of Tamil film *Soorarai Pottru*), which is loosely based on the life of captain Gopinath, founder of the budget airline Air Deccan. Directed by Sudha Kongara, it is a joint production venture between Suriya and Oscar winning producer Guneet Monga, under their respective banners 2D Entertainment and Sikhya Entertainment.

Most Read NEWS

Indian newspapers recovered from glacier

Indian newspaper copies with headlines such as "India's First Woman Prime Minister", referring to Indira Gandhi's election win in 1966, have been recovered from the melting French glacier of Bossons on the Mont Blanc mountain range in western Europe, 54 years after an Air India plane crashed there. The newspapers belong to the residue of an Air India plane that crashed into Europe's highest mountain on January 24, 1966. Timothe Mottin, the owner of the cafe-restaurant La Cabane du Cerro at an altitude of 1,350 metres above the French resort of Chamonix discovered the remains. "They are drying now but they are in very good condition. You can read them," Mottin, 33, told the local French daily Le Dauphine Libere, quoted by The Guardian newspaper and other agencies in the UK. "It's not unusual. Every time we walk on the glacier with friends, we find remains of the crash. With experience, you know where they are. They are being carried along by the glacier according to their size, he said. The Air India Boeing 707 had crashed into the range after a verbal flight control miscommunication. The crash resulted in 177 fatalities including passengers and crew members. The prominent passenger on board was Homi J. Bhabha, head of India's atomic energy programme.



Dil Bechara breaks Youtube record

Sushant Singh Rajput and Sanjana Sanghi starrer Dil Bechara trailer came out on July 6, 2020. Now, within a week of its premiere, the trailer has broken a YouTube record. Yes, the trailer has become the first one to gain more than 10 million likes. The happy news was shared by the director of Dil Bechara, Mukesh Chhabra and the female lead Sanjana Sanghi. In a week, Dil Bechara trailer has also crossed 71 million views on YouTube. The film marks Sushant's swansong as he passed away a month back on June 14, 2020. After the trailer, the makers unveiled the first song titled 'Dil Bechara' which is entirely picturised on Sushant. The title track 'Dil Bechara' also has more than 42 million views gained within three days of its release. The song is crooned and composed by AR Rahman. While the lyrics are penned by Amitabh Bhattacharya. Meanwhile, Sanjana had shared a new still from Dil Bechara with Sushant which is from the song 'Taare Gin'. She had written, "One of my absolute favourite behind the scenes moments with Sushant while shooting the scene you all love. Don't know why, I just feel a little bit better every time I see this photograph." Dil Bechara is set to be streamed from July 24, 2020.



Tiger takes shelter from monsoon in goat shed

The flood situation in Assam continues to worsen affecting not just human beings but animals as well. With 95% of the Kaziranga national park and tiger reserve, spread over 430 sq km, submerged due to flooding caused by heavy rainfall, many animals have been forced to leave the sanctuary and seek shelter in higher locations. A sub-adult male tiger came out of the park's Agratoli range and took shelter in a goat shed in Kandolimari village located on the periphery of the world's largest habitat for one-horned rhinos. "Due to the rise of water and to find a safe escape, a sub-adult tiger has entered inside a goat shed in Kandolimari village, Agratoli. Utmost care is being taken to ensure safety of both people and tiger," P Sivakumar, director of the national park, informed. Photos and a video of the tiger taking shelter under the shed as water level rose and covered most of its body soon went viral on social media. Forest officials reached the spot and monitored the situation, allowing the big cat to rest at the spot without disturbing it. Later in the afternoon, the tiger moved out of the shed and went back towards the Agratoli range of the park.



Photographer builds camera-shaped house

How far can you go to express your love for your art? Well, a man who lives in Belgaum, Karnataka went all the way to express his love for photography and ended up making a house that resembled a camera. No, we are not kidding. According to All About Belgaum, Ravi Hongal loved photography ever since he was a child and used to go to the nearby rural areas to click pictures. However, his love for photography took a passionate and obsessive turn, when he built himself a camera-shaped house. Not just that, the 49-year-old photographer also named his sons Canon, Nikon and Epson after the famous camera brands, which are also written on the house. The news started trending on Twitter after people posted pictures of the house and the family in the camera-shaped home. According to the tweet, Ravi spent over USD 95,000, which is Rs 71,63,048 approximately, building the three-story house. In fact, the details that went into constructing the house are also remarkable. The exterior of the house consists of a lens, a show reel, a memory card and a viewfinder. Also, the ceilings and walls inside the home resemble various parts of the camera.



Huge chance missed

Manchester United slip at the death to remain out of top 4

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United missed the chance to move up to third in the Premier League on Monday after Michael Obafemi's 96th minute equaliser earned Southampton a 2-2 draw at Old Trafford in the latest twist in the race for a place in next season's Champions League. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men were unable to take advantage of weekend defeats for Chelsea and Leicester to remain in fifth. United had become the first side in Premier League history to win four consecutive games by a three-goal margin, but there was no cruise for the Red Devils this time even after they responded to Stuart Armstrong's early opener. Two goals in as many minutes from Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial turned the game around, but United were caught out by a corner deep into stoppage time when substitute Obafemi turned home Jan Bednarek's flick on. "It's the worst time to concede a goal but it happens in football. You have to be strong and take it,"



Southampton's Michael Obafemi, 20, celebrates after scoring his team's second goal against Manchester United on Monday

said United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. "We've won so many games that way ourselves but it's all part of the learning for this team." Manchester City's victory over UEFA in the Court of Arbitration for Sport earlier on Monday upped the pressure on United to continue their

impressive form with only a place in the top four now good enough for Champions League qualification. Solskjaer will still be confident of achieving that goal as his side have closed an eight-point gap on Leicester, who they face on the final day of the season, since the Premier League's

restart. But two dropped points were a reminder that United are far from the finished article if they aspire to challenge Liverpool and Manchester City for the title next season. "We didn't deserve three points today," admitted Solskjaer. "We never

got the rhythm in our passing today, especially after 2-1." Ralph Hassenhutt's side remain in 12th, but have lost just once in six games since the restart. "We are becoming more brave," said Hassenhutt. "You can feel the guys really enjoy what they are doing."

Pep 'incredibly happy', but rivals brand Man City let-off a 'disgrace'

LONDON: Pep Guardiola on Tuesday said a weight had been lifted from Manchester City after their European ban was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), but rival managers Jose Mourinho and Jurgen Klopp criticised the ruling.

The court on Monday lifted a two-year ban imposed earlier this year on the Premier League club by European football's governing body UEFA over Financial Fair Play (FFP) breaches.

"I am incredibly happy for the decision. It shows all the people said about the club wasn't true," said Guardiola. "People cannot understand how difficult it was for everyone as a club being under suspicion. Now we have proven it at the court, we go again on the pitch."

Tottenham manager Mourinho said the court's decision was a "disaster" and showed FFP, which limits club's spending in line with their revenue, is now dead, while Liverpool boss Klopp said City's reprieve was a bad day for football.

An initial fine of 30 million euros (\$34 million) imposed by UEFA was reduced to 10 million euros by CAS. However, the fine related only to City's failure to cooperate with UEFA's investigation rather than FFP breaches.

Mourinho said if they were guilty, City should be banned — but if they were innocent, they should not have to pay a penny.

"It's a disgraceful decision, because if Man City is not guilty then to be punished with some millions is a disgrace. If you are not guilty, you are not punished. By the other way if you are guilty you should be banned so it is also a disgraceful decision. In any case the decision is a disaster," said Mourinho.



Karim Benzema celebrates after scoring Real's second goal against Granada

One more win

Real will be crowned champions if they beat Villarreal at home tomorrow

AFP ■ GRANADA

consecutive victory. "Our vision when we start every season is to win the league," said Zidane. "There are two games left. We are close but we're not there yet." When the final whistle blew, Zidane roared with relief and Ramos clenched his fists after coming through their toughest test since the restart. "We can't relax, we're a bit closer but we have to carry on," said Ramos afterwards. "We let our guard down here a bit on the second half. We won the first half and lost the second and maybe that's a warning for us. We have to make sure we don't repeat that mistake." Madrid could win La Liga for the third time in eight years at the Alfredo di Stefano Stadium on Thursday night. "It would mean a lot," said Ramos. "We're in the race and hopefully on Thursday we can celebrate." If Madrid slip up against Villarreal, they will still have a second chance on Sunday when they finish at Leganes while Barcelona visit Alaves.

Real Madrid need one victory to secure La Liga after they held off a second-half comeback from Granada on Monday to win 2-1 and move four points clear of Barcelona. With two games left, Madrid will be crowned champions if they beat Villarreal at home on Thursday regardless of how Barca fare at the Camp Nou against Osasuna. But they were made to sweat by a Granada team that are gunning for Europe and have been arguably the division's surprise of the season after being promoted from second tier last year. Ferland Mendy and Karim Benzema looked to have set Madrid on course for a comfortable win at Los Carmenes but Granada were transformed after the break and Machis's 50th-minute strike gave them hope. An increasingly nervous Madrid were clinging on by the end and needed Sergio Ramos to clear one shot off the line as Zinedine Zidane's side dug in for a ninth

Indian team hasn't yet figured out Pant's batting position: Kaif

NEW DELHI: Former India cricketer Mohammad Kaif has tried to decode as to why young wicket-keeper-batsman Rishabh Pant has been a hit with Delhi Capitals in IPL but has failed to put up consistent performances for Team India on the international arena. Kaif, who is Delhi Capitals' assistant coach, has seen Pant from close quarters and stated his batting position hasn't been fixed by the Indian team management and that is why he hasn't been able to replicate his consistent IPL performance on the biggest stage. Before coronavirus pandemic put a stop on cricket in March, Pant saw KL Rahul take over wicket-keeping duties in New Zealand in limited-overs formats as the southpaw was dropped following a string of underwhelming scores.

He, however, kept the gloves in the two-match Test series, which India lost against Kane Williamson's troops. "Rishabh Pant is a free-flowing player. He is an attacking player and he should play attacking shots from ball one," Kaif told former India cricketer Aakash Chopra on his YouTube show AakashVani. "At first, Dada (Sourav Ganguly), (Ricky) Ponting and I decided to send him early but then we figured out he has to play 10 overs. He should get 60 balls to play. This is something that Indian team hasn't done yet. "An attacking player should get the role a finisher. I feel they haven't been able to figure out on Pant's batting position in the Indian team. In IPL, we know we have limited-overs to make him play the last 10 overs. He plays his natural game in the IPL and that is why he does well," he added.

Up to 2nd

Nerazzurri come from behind to tame Torino

AFP ■ MILAN

Inter Milan put one foot in next season's Champions League on Monday after coming from behind to beat relegation-threatened Torino 3-1 and move up to second place in Serie A.

Antonio Conte's Inter moved above Atalanta and Lazio to go eight points behind league leaders Juventus thanks to two goals early in the second half from Ashley Young and Diego Godin and another from Lautaro Martinez just after the hour mark.

The Milanese club are level on 68 points with off-form Lazio, who slumped to a 2-1 defeat at Sassuolo on Saturday, and one ahead of flamboyant Atalanta in fourth.

However, with a first league title since 2010 unlikely, the most important statistic for Inter is the



Inter's Lautaro Martinez, right, celebrates after scoring his side's third goal

14-point gap between them and fifth-placed Roma with six matches left to play.

"It's important to win matches like this any way you can... I think we deserved to win," said Godin to Sky Sport Italy. "We're second now and we want to continue winning... let's see where we can finish, but it's difficult to get closer to Juventus."

Torino meanwhile still have to look over their shoulders following their fourth defeat since the league restart-

ed last month. Moreno Longo's side are 16th, five points above the relegation zone.

Inter were dismal in the first period and the transformation after the break suggested they had been subjected to one of coach Antonio Conte's famous roasts at halftime.

"It was a very good performance with over 60% possession, 20 shots on goal, nine corners to two," said Conte. "The lads did well. That goal could have made us nervous but they stayed on their feet and kept playing and finding the goal."

Messi can play till 2025: Garcia

KOLKATA: Former Barcelona midfielder Luis Garcia feels the club's superstar forward Lionel Messi can easily continue playing till 2025.

The 33-year-old is currently contracted until the end of next season with Barcelona holding talks with the ace Argentina forward about an extension.

There is speculation that record six-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi is unhappy with the club's leadership.

"Why not? The way he is playing, adapting his style to the game is impressive. Every year he shows us something different but keeps up the same amount of goals, of assists," Garcia, who played for Barcelona in the 2003-2004 season, said during a video conference facilitated by LaLiga.

"Even getting more every year! He's adapting, he doesn't

spend so much time up front because he knows it's harder, so he drops a little more. He shows why he's so intelligent. He adapts his game to what the team needs in every game. I could see him playing in 2025, easily!" added the former Atletico Madrid and Liverpool winger. Real Madrid are closer to winning the LaLiga title after their 2-1 win against Granada on Monday which took them four points clear of Barcelona with two games remaining in the season. "There have been a couple of games where they have struggled. But they carry the momentum when even not playing well they are getting the results. (Federico) Valverde has been one of their best players so far. Key players have been Ramos and Benzema," Garcia said on Real Madrid.

Federer almost perfect tennis player: Edberg

IANS ■ STOCKHOLM

Former Swedish World No1 Stefan Edberg said that Swiss great Roger Federer is set apart by the kind of all-round ability that he possesses. Edberg coached Federer between January 2014 and December 2015.

"Like I said to Roger, he looks so easy when he plays, he floats around the court. He's got grace, he's got power, he's got touch, he's got everything you wish for. He's almost the perfect tennis player as I see it-both on and off-court. So he's very special like we all know," Edberg told Eurosport.

Edberg said that Austrian Dominic Thiem is a player he feels is closest among the younger generation of men's tennis players who can match up to the incredible career stats of Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic.

"He showed he could have won the Australian Open this year very easily," the Swede said about Thiem. "That was a big chance for him. If Rafa wasn't there, he's going to win the French Open one day. He's probably the closest one today, I would say. "But at the same time, (Alexander) Zverev has shown a lot of potential, sort of lost track a little bit, but it doesn't take much to get back on the right track again."

Turner rates Kane ahead of Kohli in tough batting conditions

DUNEDIN: Former New Zealand captain Glenn Turner has rated current skipper Kane Williamson ahead of his Indian counterpart Virat Kohli when it comes to tough batting conditions.

Kohli and Williamson are regarded as two of the finest batsmen in modern-day cricket. As per the latest ICC Test rankings, Kohli and Williamson are placed at second and fourth spots respectively and have been leading



their respective teams with great aplomb for a while now.

Turner believes Kohli's ability to play spin is second to none but he rated Williamson ahead of him to bat in challenging batting conditions.

"Kohli is less likely to have been exposed early in his development to seaming pitches and the ball continuing to swing for extended periods, whereas Williamson will have experienced those conditions more often," Turner was quoted as saying by The Telegraph.

Holder reaches career-best rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Jason Holder on Tuesday attained the highest rating points by any West Indies bowler in 20 years, reaching a career-best second place in the ICC Test Player Rankings after leading his team to a famous win over England at Southampton.

Holder, who picked seven wickets including a haul of six for 42 in the first innings, is now on a career-best 862 rating points, the best for any West Indies bowler since Courtney Walsh's tally of 866 in August 2000.

Indian cricketers, who have not taken the field since March due to the Covid-19 pandemic, have retained their positions in the top-10 of batsmen and bowlers rankings. Skipper Virat Kohli remains second in the batsmen standings behind Steve Smith while Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane remain seventh and ninth respectively. Jasprit Bumrah is the only Indian bowler in the top-10 at seventh spot. Holder retained 35th

position among batsmen after the first Test and has also reached a career-best tally of 485 points at the top of the all-rounders' list.

The competition at the top promises to gain momentum as number-two Ben Stokes has also made huge gains to attain a career-best tally of 431 points, narrowing the lead from 66 to 54 points.

Stokes, leading the side in the absence of Joe Root, has equalled his career-high ninth

position among batsmen that he achieved last November, after scores of 43 and 46 at the Ageas Bowl.

He is now only one place behind Root. Stokes has also risen three places in the bowlers' list to 23rd position with six wickets in the match. Other England players to move up the rankings include left-handed opener Rory Burns, who is in the top 30 for the first time after scores of 30 and 42, while middle-order batsman Zak Crawley is in the top 100 after accumulating 86 runs in the match.