

**ANALYSIS 7**  
FUTURE MORTGAGED  
FOR FOOD

**MONEY 8**  
PVT SECTOR CAPEX TO PLUNGE  
20-26 PC THIS FISCAL: REPORT

**SPORTS 11**  
HOLDER REACHES  
CAREER-BEST RANKINGS

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



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TAMANNAAH,  
SATYADEV PAIR UP  
FOR A ROMANTIC  
DRAMA  
Page 12

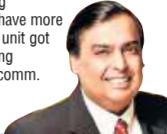
## JITENDRA SINGH, RAM MADHAV IN SELF-QUARANTINE OVER VIRUS SCARE

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.



## MUKESH AMBANI NOW WORLD'S 6TH-RICHEST; OVERTAKES ELON MUSK, GOOGLE FOUNDERS

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.



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

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.



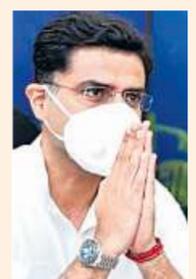
## HOMES ON STREET PAINTED SAFFRON IN UP CITY, CASES FILED

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'

4



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

5



Govt working to mapping land bank available for industry: Goyal

8

# Another industrial mishap in Vizag leaves one dead

Major fire at JN Pharma City is third accident in three months

SUMIT ONKA  
VISAKHAPATNAM

In a span of just three months, the industrial and financial capital of Andhra Pradesh, Visakhapatnam, witnessed its third mishap with a major fire engulfing the Visakha Solvents Ltd at the Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City (JNPC) at Parawada late on Monday.

The charred body of K Srinivas Rao (44), a junior operator hailing from Anakapalle Town, was recovered early on Tuesday.

Joint Chief Inspector of Factories, J Siva Shankar Reddy said that there were only four people in the plant at the time of the mishap, of whom one — Malleswara Rao — received about 30 per cent burns. He was shifted to a private hospital where his condition is said to be stable.

Srinivas Rao died on the spot and his remains were found after the fire was extinguished. Visakha Solvents Ltd recovers solvents from the waste generated at pharma units and it separates the mother solvents and sediments.

Due to vacuum fluctuations (which lead to increase the pressure and temperature) one of the reactors exploded on Monday night and fire broke out in the unit, Siva Shankar Reddy disclosed.

There were multiple blasts inside the unit and sounds of which were heard as far away as over two km and the fire was visible from a distance. Thick plumes of smoke were seen billowing and the workers in JNPC and people in the nearby areas panicked. Many in the vicinity of the pharma unit left their homes and moved to other places on Monday night itself.

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## State yet to frame norms on buffer zones

It's only the good fortune of Vizag that the industrial mishaps that are now becoming increasingly regular haven't turned into major catastrophes. However, this does not mean that the loss of lives in the recent accidents are any less heartbreaking.

With residential areas having mushroomed around high risk industries, danger lurks at every turn. The reason for this mushrooming of residential areas around industries is the absence of any specific guidelines for according residential permissions around existing chemical industries.

Residential permissions

are issued duly following AP Building Rules, 2017 and sanctioned Master Plan Land use.

There are about 265 industries (Red-75, Orange-85, Green-105) existing within the GVMC area, out of which 15 are termed as 'hazardous industries'. The VMRDA, in its statement to the High Power committee constituted by AP government to probe LG Polymers gas tragedy stated that there is no provision to notify buffer zone / no development zone around the major chemical industries.

3

## Four-member panel to probe fire mishap

A four-member panel has been constituted to probe the fire accident at the Pharma City of Visakhapatnam late on Monday, District collector Vinay Chand said.

He has asked the panel to submit its report following a detailed inquiry soon.

The deputy collector stated that the fire was caused by dimethyl sulphoxide and further investigation is underway.

Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharitha expressed shock over the incident.

She enquired about the cause of the incident and sought details from the officials and police. She also advised officials to shift the affected persons to safer places and also directed them to provide proper treatment to the injured in the incident.

3

## Pharma City turning a virtual death zone

The Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City (JNPC), that is run under public-private partnership with equity of the AP government, is facing mounting allegations that safety norms are flouted. The series of industrial mishaps that have occurred in the pharma hub at regular intervals give credence to the alle-

gations. JNPC located on the outskirts of the Vizag city and has raked up over USD 4 billion, attracting over 100 pharma units so far.

It's a Special Purpose Vehicle launched by Ramky Group and APIIC, a government of Andhra Pradesh enterprise with equity participation.

Since 2013, there have been 25 serious industrial accidents in the Pharma City in which 23 people lost their lives and 75 have been seriously injured.

JNPC has been drawing international reputed pharma companies and is seeking more land to accommodate the new units. However, the

safety appears to have taken a back seat given the number of mishaps. Former Union energy secretary and social activist, EAS Sarma said that the regulatory vacuum is responsible for the mishaps in the pharma companies and also other industries in the Vizag region.

3

# 43 deaths take Covid-19 toll past 400, tally crosses 33K

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

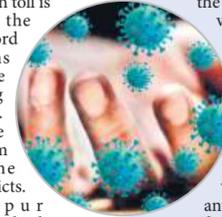
The overall Covid-19 death toll in Andhra Pradesh shot up to 408 following a record 43 deaths in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Tuesday, state health officials said.

Meanwhile, 1,916 new cases were reported during the same period, taking the overall tally to 33,019 cases in Andhra Pradesh.

Tuesday's death toll is higher than the previous record of 37 deaths reported the preceding morning. Deaths were reported from nine of the state's 13 districts.

Anantapur recorded the highest number of 10 deaths followed by West Godavari with nine deaths. Chittoor, East Godavari, and Kadapa reported five deaths each, while Kurnool and Prakasam reported two deaths each. To the north, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts reported two and one deaths respectively.

The addition of 1,916 positive cases, took the overall tally of Covid cases in Andhra



## Rs 15,000 for last rites of Coronavirus victims

Warning that no hospital should turn away Covid-19 patients, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Tuesday announced Rs 15,000 for the last rites of the victims.

He also instructed officials to take up a week-long special drive to provide qualitative services in the quarantine centres.

Chairing a review meeting on Covid-19 containment measures here, the Chief Minister stressed the need for improving the quality of preventive measures

and said that every quarantine centre should display the call centre number for complaints and the officials should take feedback regularly.

In wake of the recent unpleasant events in dealing with the Covid-19 death cases, the Chief Minister said that Rs 15,000 should be given for the last rites of the deceased and instructed the officials to issue orders immediately.

Strict action will be taken against those hospitals that refuse to treat Covid cases, Jagan said.

He directed officials to focus on hygiene, medicines, quality of food being given to patients.

3

Pradesh to 33,019 on Tuesday. State health officials said that only two districts reported double digits while the remaining 11 districts had Covid counts running into triple digit numbers.

Chittoor reported the highest day tally of 238 followed by Srikakulam with 215 cases, West Godavari with 199 cases, and Anantapur with 185 cases.

3

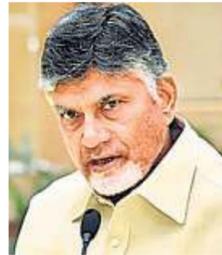
# Naidu takes dig at Jagan over Trusts

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Citing the Supreme Court's landmark judgment that upheld the rights of Travancore Royal Family to manage the affairs of Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple, TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday took a dig at Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

In a Facebook post, Naidu said that the AP government must take note of this development and stop interfering with the management of Simhachalam Board and MANSAS Trust to attain his "evil goals".

"The Gajapathi family's rights as custodians must be protected. Jagan must not meddle with God and family-run trusts to play dirty politics. The Supreme Court's ruling protects the sanctity of prior



agreements and long-running traditions of royal families in managing trusts," Naidu wrote. Reversing the 2011 Kerala High Court decision, the Supreme Court had on Monday pronounced that Travancore royal family will manage the property of deity at Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple in Thiruvananthapuram.

3

## Applauded for 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.

3

# AP at third spot in raising loans, reveals RBI data

L VENKAT RAM REDDY  
HYDERABAD

Andhra Pradesh stands at the third place among all other states in the country in raising loans, according to a report released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The report stated that the gross borrowings of AP government increased to Rs 42,915 crore in 2019-20, while the net borrowings increased to Rs 33,944 crore.

While net borrowing is the amount borrowed during the fiscal year, gross borrowing includes net borrowing for the year and the repayment of past loans.

The report stated that when compared with 2018-19, the



AP gross borrowings increased by 42.10 per cent and net borrowings by 42.47 per cent.

AP was ranked No. 6 in the tally of highest borrowings in the country in 2019-20. It has now

jumped to No. 3 in the country by raising more loans in the current fiscal 2020-21 till May.

AP government had raised Rs 10,000 crore through gross borrowings in April and May this

AP was ranked No. 6 in the tally of highest borrowings in the country in 2019-20. It has now jumped to No. 3 in the country by raising more loans in the current fiscal 2020-21 till May

fiscal due to which the State jumped from sixth place last year to third place this year in the list of highest borrowing states. Of this, the net borrowings stand at Rs 8,250 crore.

Uttar Pradesh topped the country with gross borrowings of Rs 67,453 crore and net borrowings of Rs 50,494 crore in 2019-20.

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.

Maharashtra's gross borrowings stood at Rs 48,498 crore and net borrowings at Rs 32,998 crore. Karnataka's gross borrowings stood at Rs 48,500 crore and net borrowings at Rs 42,500 crore.

## ONLINE CLASSES

# Centre limits, gradates 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 home-schooling 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 dura-

tion 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. 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.

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## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Ashadha & Krishna Paksha Panchangam  
Tithi : Navami: 08:23 pm  
Nakshatram: Ashwini: 02:07 pm  
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)  
Rahukalam: 03:36 pm - 05:13 pm  
Yamagandam: 09:07 am - 10:44 am  
Varjyam: 09:38 am - 11:25 am, 12:45 am - 02:32 am  
Gulika: 12:21 pm - 01:59 pm  
Good Time: (to start any important work)  
Amritkalam: 06:03 am - 07:50 am  
Abhijit Muhurtam: 11:56 am - 12:47 pm

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly cloudy  
Temp: 33/26  
Humidity: 77%  
Sunrise: 05:49 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

**After YSR died in a helicopter crash on September 2, 2009, his son Jagan staked claim to his father's seat. The Congress high command however opted for senior leader K Rosaiah to succeed YSR, citing seniority**



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 govern-

ment. 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 not maintain the cordial relationship with families that had been loyal to the party for generations.

In fact, the Congress lost the same generational affection in Andhra Pradesh, in the form of YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

When Jagan's father ruled the state as CM, AP was one of the bastions of the Congress and YSR remained loyal to the party till his last breath. He strove hard to bring the Congress to power with his charismatic leadership and unwavering commitment.

After YSR died in a helicopter crash on September 2,

2009, his son Jagan staked claim to his father's seat.

The Congress high command however opted for senior leader K Rosaiah to succeed YSR, citing seniority.

The high command repeated this in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, opting 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 legislature 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.



## TDP trying to dent brand image of Vizag, says Gudivada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Inordinate delay caused in Coronavirus test results was leading to the rapid spread of infections across the State, alleged TDP chief and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

Addressing a video conference here on Tuesday, the TDP chief asked how this government can contain the virus spread if it went on taking 20 days to declare test results. Another failure of the government was wasting of thousands of samples and test kits in every district. In Prakasam district alone, they wasted 27,000 samples and kits. Nearly, two lakh units were wasted all over the State. Confusion prevailing among people on test results due to lack of accuracy, he pointed out.

Naidu said it would not be enough to say that lakhs of tests were being conducted but speed and accuracy are required in the test results in curbing the virus.

Deputy Chief Minister Amjad Basha was discharged from Tirupati General Hospital and admitted to a private hospital in Hyderabad. This showed the lack of trust in the treatment

# Toe Trump's line by wearing mask, Naidu advises Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

being provided in the government hospitals, he pointed out.

Stating that even Donald Trump has started wearing masks now, Naidu demanded that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy explain what kind of message he was giving by not wearing masks in public appearances.

It is ironic that dead bodies were being taken on JCBs, while people breathing their lasts on the roads as they have been deprived of ambulance services, he lamented.

The YSRCP leaders are encouraging attacks on the TDP leaders if they bring the government's failures to the limelight.



The TDP served good food at just Rs 5 at Anna Canteens, he reminded. Naidu demanded financial assistance for the poor as lakhs of migrant workers, construction workers and daily wage labourers have lost their livelihood. The TDP will stage virtual protest meetings next week seeking justice and assistance for the workers in these troubled Covid times.

Naidu slammed the government for pushing the State into a 'financial crisis' as the burden of loans increased by 42 per cent in just one year of the YSRCP regime.

The TDP chief deplored that while their regime brought loans for development and wealth creation, the YSRCP government was bringing massive loans only to indulge in corruption and plundering.

'Looting AP' and 'attacks on TDP' seem to be the single point agenda of the ruling party, he alleged.

Deputy Chief Minister Amjad Basha was discharged from Tirupati General Hospital and admitted to a private hospital in Hyderabad. This showed the lack of trust in the treatment being provided in the government hospitals, he pointed out

Naidu slammed the government for pushing the State into a 'financial crisis' as the burden of loans increased by 42 per cent in just one year of the YSRCP regime

The TDP chief deplored that while their regime brought loans for development and wealth creation, the YSRCP government was bringing massive loans only to indulge in corruption and plundering

# Covid bed strength to be increased in Visakhapatnam

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Vizag District Collector V Vinay Chand visited VIMS and reviewed the situation. He has instructed officials to make arrangements for improving the bed strength from 548 to 750. He further instructed to make all the beds ready, along with oxygen cylinders.

He was accompanied by Arun Babu, Joint Collector, and Dr PV Sudhakar, principal, Andhra Medical College. Later, the Collector addressed the superintendents of Teaching Hospitals at a meeting held at the chambers of principal of Andhra Medical College.

He instructed officials to make CSR Block ready for occupation with 300 beds. The Collector has given directions to superintendents of GHCCD, ENT, REH & RCD hospitals to get ready for the Covid-19 testing immediately



Vizag District Collector V Vinay Chand instructed officials to make CSR Block ready for occupation with 300 beds. He has given directions to superintendents of GHCCD, ENT, REH & RCD hospitals to get ready for the Covid-19 testing immediately

These hospitals shall prepare 250 more beds for keeping the patients in isolation, while awaiting the test results. All the above hospitals will be equipped with ambulances so that all the patients, who tested positive, will be shifted to the Covid-19 treatment centres

ing the patients in isolation, while awaiting the test results. All the above hospitals will be equipped with ambulances so that all the patients, who tested positive, will be shifted to the Covid-19 treatment centres.

The TDP is trying to tarnish the brand image of Vizag going, and this could be a conspiracy of the Opposition, opined YSRCP MLA Gudivada Amarath and urged the government to conduct an inquiry over the series of mishaps taking place in the city with the recent one at Pharma City.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, the MLA said that the behaviour of TDP leaders is raising doubts over the fire mishap as everyone is well aware of Chandrababu Naidu's capability in creating such mishaps.

During his 14 years as the Chief Minister Naidu didn't arrest a single person, who was responsible for human loss. But during Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's tenure top officials of LG Polymers, who were responsible for the gas leak incident, were arrested, he reminded. "With doubt over Naidu's character, we are asking the government to conduct a probe into the fire accident and take action against those found guilty," he added.

Naidu backstabbed his father-in-law for political gains and even in Amaravati, he ruined the fields of those people who opposed giving their lands. Earlier, during the Kapu agitation, it was Naidu, who created ruckus with his people where even a train was set on fire. Even today, many are suspecting the role of Naidu in the fire accident of Visakhapatnam, as he holds a track record of creating mishaps for political gains."

**VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES**

GOLD	₹ 51,240 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 52,210 (1kg)
	₹ 260

**CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG**

Dressed/With Skin	₹191
Without Skin	₹218
Broiler at Farm	₹132

**EGG RATES ₹/100**

HYDERABAD	325
VIJAYAWADA	354
VISAKHAPATNAM	349
RETAIL PRICE	₹3.75

# Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam performed at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In view of auspicious Anivara Asthanam at Tirumala on Thursday, the temple cleansing fete, Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam, has been performed with religious fervour in Tirumala on Tuesday.

The entire temple premises were cleansed with 'Parimalam', an aromatic mixture, which is a composition of 'Kicchiliggadda' (a root vegetable), turmeric, vermilion and sandal. This thick paste is applied all over the roofs, walls and ceiling. While the entire process was underway, the presiding deity icon was closed with a veil. After the fete, the veil was removed and special pujas were performed to Sri Venkateswara Swamy followed by 'Naivedyam' and aarti. Later, devotees were allowed for darshan.



TTD EO Anil Kumar Singhal, speaking to media persons outside the temple, said Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam takes place four times in a year before Ugadi, Anivarastanam, annual Brahmotsavams and Vaikuntha Ekadasi. "The temple cleansing fete was observed from Ananda Nilayam to Bangaru Vakili. In view of Covid-19 restrictions, only a few temple staff participated in the cleansing fete", EO added.

Additional EO AV Dharma Reddy, temple deputy executive officer Harindranath and others participated. Later, TTD EO, Additional EO, TTD Board special invitee Govindahari took part in Sundarakanda Pathanam held at Nada Neerajana Mandapam.

# Teens murders granny over property dispute

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A teenager allegedly murdered his grandmother by setting her ablaze at Ellavethy village in Shankarpally on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Kansamma, who is survived by a son and three daughters. According to police, she had recently divided her property and gave a share to her daughters too. Unhappy with her decision, her grandson, the accused, 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 afternoon, 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.

# Homam performed to ward off ill effects of Coronavirus

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

On the auspicious occasion of Bhoumaswina Yogam, which occurs with the occurrence of Aswini star on Tuesday, Viswashanti homam was performed for the sake of prosperity of entire humanity and ward off ill effects of Corona from the globe at Dharmagiri Veda Vignana Peetham in Tirumala.

As a part of this, Sangopanga Astakshari Dwadasakshari Maha Sudarsana Sahita Viswashanti homam was performed by Vedic priests, which was attended by Additional EO AV Dharma Reddy. Speaking on the occasion, Dharmagiri Veda Vignana Peetham principal KSS Avadhani said Sangopanga

means Rig-Yajur-Sama-Adharva Veda parayanams, Vaikhanagama parayanam, Pancharatra Agama parayanam, Chandisapathasati parayanam, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavad Gita, Sundarakanda parayanams were recited seeking the Almighty to protect the world from the dreadful Corona.

Agama advisor Mohanarangacharyulu, who performed the yagam, said usually by performing homams, it brings prosperity and good fortunes to all the living beings. "That too on a rare auspicious occasion like Boumaswina Yogam coupled with Krishnapaksha Navami. If any homam or japam done on this day, it will give more powerful results than usual", he added.

# Woman sets herself ablaze in Hyderabad

PNS ■ 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 of husband and in-laws. The deceased was identified as 31-year-old K Sravanthi. She was married to Kankanal Santosh Kumar, a private employee, in 2017. The couple were blessed with a son, who is two-year-old now.

According to police, the couple had frequent fights over the last one year, with Santosh'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.

Police were informed by neighbours. The Chandanagar police shifted the body to the Osmania General Hospital for an autopsy. Based on a complaint, police registered a suspicious death case and are investigating the case. Police said that the case would be altered based on the statement of Sravanthi's family members.

# 44.6 per cent students prefer online classes, finds survey



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Coronavirus pandemic striking hard and spreading rapidly in the country, nearly 44.6 per cent students in the country said they will prefer a 'School from Home' concept if given an option, a new survey revealed on Tuesday.

The survey by Brainly conducted on 2,150 individuals, showed that about 68.7 per cent

of its users admitted that they had never engaged in an online class before the pandemic. The data revealed that today, the flexible form of learning has also impacted the everyday routine of about 72.8 per cent students.

The findings also revealed that around 59.8 per cent students said that 'network connectivity' was teething trouble in the school-from-home model. Brainly also asked the

students about their preferences for peer communications. All of the four listed choices — phone call, social media, messaging apps, and online learning platforms like Brainly.

The company asked students about how they cleared their doubts during the lockdown. The survey revealed that 37.7 per cent students said 'by connecting with teachers on a phone call or social media'

while 30.2 per cent did so via online learning platforms.

Lastly, the survey also highlighted that the standalone school-from-home model might not be an ideal one. A total of 35.8 per cent students experienced issues while learning certain concepts of Science online and 31 per cent of students felt the same for 'Language' while 'Maths' left a whopping 51.9 per cent students in a tizzy.



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# 'TDP painting a grim picture of State's finance has no basis'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The TDP, which has been fudging the budget during its term and giving inflating growth rate, has been trying to paint a grim picture of the State's finance with no basis, alleged Minister for Finance Buggana Rajendrnath.

Speaking to the media here on Tuesday, he said there has been slowdown worldwide, which reflects on the growth rate, yet Andhra Pradesh is doing better than Maharashtra and Karnataka as the State has turned agrarian and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been giving priority to agriculture.



**Minister for Finance Buggana Rajendrnath said there has been slowdown worldwide, which reflects on the growth rate, yet Andhra Pradesh is doing better than Maharashtra and Karnataka as the State has turned agrarian and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been giving priority to agriculture**

The TDP, which has project of a double-digit growth rate, was just a projection like its estimates, which always tumbled far down in actual terms, he said.

"There are no facts in what Yanamala said and all those numbers they have stated are completely false. While the

per capita income in the State is increasing, they claim it is falling down. Similarly, the inflation rate, while the State has recorded with the least inflation in south India and less than the national average, Yanamala says it is the highest in the country. During the TDP regime, they left over Rs 15,000 crore of debts as revenue deficit and it is us who cleared all of those," he pointed out.

He further said that TDP leaders are going with false propaganda saying that there was a huge economic progress

during 2018-19, alleging that over 40 per cent of the revenue income was decreased in our government. The difference between the revenue income of 2018-19 and 2019-20 is only Rs 3,799 crore, which is only a two per cent decrease. Although, the figures of 2019-20 were not announced, TDP members are alleging unemployment and revenue crisis.

"Our government is committed to the welfare of the poor and weaker sections and thus spent Rs 20,100 crore towards BC welfare but during

the TDP rule between 2018 and 19, it had spent only Rs 5,600 crore. In one year, the government has utilised Rs 42,000 crore for welfare activities by benefiting over three crore people across the State. Apart from clearing the debts of the previous government, we are also focused on development activities alongside welfare schemes. While the government is striving hard to overcome the pandemic crisis, opposition leaders are making baseless allegations for their political gains," he said.

## Centre limits, gradates ...

Continued from page 1

"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.

"The guidelines have been developed from the perspective of learners, with a focus on online, blended, digital education for students who are presently at home due to the lockdown. These guidelines on digital education provide a roadmap or pointers for carrying forward online education to enhance the quality of education," Nishank added.

# AU Yoga dept to conduct online pranayama classes

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As the immunity and mental fitness play a key role to fight the Covid pandemic, the Department of Yoga & Consciousness (Yoga Village), Andhra University in Vizag has decided to conduct online classes for yoga enthusiasts.

AU Yoga Department has been conducting a one-month long course consisting of regular classes as well as special classes for weight reduction for the public from July 13. Taking a step forward, the Department of Yoga & Consciousness at AU is all set to conduct an online course on pranayama.

Pranayama helps in strengthening the metabolism and respiratory system of the body, thereby boosting the immunity to fight the virus. Studies reveal that it also brings mental peace and positivity to the practitioners. The department has decided to conduct online classes of pranayama and avoid the possibility of social gatherings, yet impart the benefits of pranayama.



**The Prime Minister said that pranayama, can help boost immunity, addressing the nation on Global Yoga Day**

The one-month long online pranayama course is likely to begin from July 20 or 21. Online classes will be held via Zoom from 5 pm to 6 pm for five days a week. In order to register for the programme,

candidates are required to make a payment of Rs 700 to AU Registrar Account No: 31605969637, following which the payment confirmation will be done through WhatsApp. Those who are interested in enrolling may contact Venkat on mobile No. 8985947523 to enquire about further details.

Earlier in June, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that pranayama, the practice of breath control in yoga, can help boost immunity, addressing the nation on International Yoga Day. "Covid-19 attacks our respiratory system. What makes our respiratory system stronger is pranayama."

# 43 deaths take Covid toll past 400

Continued from page 1

Some of the other districts that reported high Covid numbers over the previous 24 hours include Kurnool with 169 cases, Nellore with 165 cases, East Godavari with 160 cases, Guntur with 146 cases, Vizianagaram with 130 cases and Krishna district with 129 cases. The test size was slightly higher at 22,670 samples in comparison to the 19,247 samples that were tested during the cycle ending the previous morning.

As many as 952 persons were discharged from hospitals and Covid treatment centres in the state. By Tuesday morning, AP reported 15,144 active cases while 17,467 have been declared as cured and discharged.

Meanwhile, the tally of positive cases detected in returnees from other states to AP contin-

ued to decline. On Tuesday, the figure fell further by five cases in comparison to the previous day even as returnees from Telangana continue to dominate this category. Four of the eight cases were returnees from the neighbouring Telugu state.

Apart from this, there were two cases each from Karnataka and Delhi. In all, 2,424 persons have tested positive for Covid among the persons who returned from other states. The active cases tally in this category is 510, while 1,914 persons have recovered till date.

Over the past 24 hours, no new cases were reported from persons with a travel history to foreign countries. The cumulative tally of patients in this category stands at 432, while 326 persons have been discharged after getting cured. As of Tuesday, 106 cases are receiving treatment.

## Rs 15, 000 for last rites of Corona victims

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Awareness should be created among people on the need and availability of undergoing tests and what a person who suspects that he has Covid symptoms should do. Tests should also be carried out as per SOP which should mention the category that has to undergo the tests, the Chief Minister said.

Tests are being conducted in containment zones after tracing the contacts and the main reason for the deaths is that the patients showing up in an advanced stage of Covid, the officials said.

The Chief Minister asked the officials to prepare an action

plan keeping future needs in view and the officials said that a database with details of medical staff is ready and the services of 17,000 doctors and over 12,000 nurses could be required in the near future.

Jagan also gave his nod for the action plan.

The Chief Minister has said that no hospital should turn away a Covid patient and strict action would be taken against any hospital that does.

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Medical and Health Alla Nani, Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney, DGP Goutham Sawang, Medical and Health Special Chief Secretary KS Jawar Reddy and other officials participated in the meeting.

# Naidu expresses shock over Pharma City blast in Vizag

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP National President N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday expressed shock at the major fire mishap that took place at the Ramky Pharma City in Visakhapatnam. He termed it as frightening as the visual images of massive fire and smoke billowing out of the factory.

Former minister Nara Lokesh condoled the death of senior chemist Srinivasa Rao in the tragedy. Expressing deep shock, he said the occurrence of industrial mishaps in a row in the Port City was raising alarm and concerns among the residents. The government was continuing its negligence despite repeated tragedies and loss of human lives, he said.

Former minister Nara Lokesh condoled the death of senior chemist Srinivasa Rao in the tragedy. Expressing deep shock, he said the occurrence of industrial mishaps in a row in the Port City was raising alarm and concerns among the residents. The government was continuing its negligence despite repeated tragedies and loss of human lives, he said.



Lokesh, in a Twitter message, asked what happened to the promises made by the government and the ministers on safety measures being taken after LG Polymers fatal leak

Stating that the YSRCP regime was complacent towards industrial tragedies, Devineni Uma said CM Jaganmohan Reddy sent a wrong message by not taking immediate action against LG Polymers management.

Lokesh, in a Twitter message, asked what happened to the promises made by the government and the ministers on safety measures being taken after LG Polymers fatal leak. Despite that, mishaps were continuing to take a toll on human lives. The YSRCP ministers should explain to the people why the mishaps took place at Sainar and Ramky. It was alarming that within a period of 15 days, two tragedies occurred in Ramky SEZ. A detailed inquiry should be launched into Ramky fire and stringent action should be initiated against those responsible, he said.

Meanwhile, addressing a press conference, former minister

Devineni Umamaheswara Rao demanded that the government give Rs 1 crore ex gratia to the kin of the deceased in Ramky blast and also other mishaps.

He blamed the YSRCP government's negligence as the reason for the occurrence of industrial mishaps in a row since LG Polymers leak on May 7. Over 13 persons were killed in LG Polymers fire while two persons succumbed in Sainar mishap and one person each in SPY and Ramky tragedies.

Uma described it as unfortunate that the ministers concerned did not even bother to extend help to the family members of SPY Agro General

Manager Kadiyala Srinivasa Rao, who sacrificed his life, while trying to plug ammonia leak there. "Everybody knows that very poor quality liquor brands were being made at SPY Kurnool unit. The government has not initiated any action against the company till now. No minister visited when GM Srinivasa Rao was shifted to the General Hospital," he reminded.

Stating that the YSRCP regime was complacent towards industrial tragedies, Devineni Uma said CM Jaganmohan Reddy sent a wrong message by not taking immediate action against LG Polymers management.

# Vizag sees highest daily Covid infection cases

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam district saw the highest daily infection with 179 new Covid cases on Tuesday. The total count of confirmed Covid-19 cases in Vizag increased to 2,375.

Covid-19 Special Officer for Visakhapatnam Dr PV Sudhakar said 1,124 patients are undergoing treatment in the district and 1,216 individuals have been discharged after recovering from the virus. In the past 24 hours, the district death toll increased to 35, as six

patients succumbed to Covid-19.

Andhra Kesari Nagar, Anjaya Colony, APBH Colony, PM Palem, BS Royal Enclave, Venkannapeta and Visalakshinagar Co-op have been declared as the new containment clusters in Vizag district.

On Tuesday, the very active clusters in the district stood at 151. In Vizag, 183 clusters have been marked as

I, RC Palem, Pedagantyada, Subbalakshmi Nagar, Thimmapuram, Thotaguruvu, Tulasi Nagar, Vambay Colony New, Veluguri Royal Enclave, Venkannapeta and Visalakshinagar Co-op have been declared as the new containment clusters in Vizag district.

On Tuesday, the very active clusters in the district stood at 151. In Vizag, 183 clusters have been marked as

active and 122 are considered as dormant clusters. While 39 containment clusters were identified after no new case has been reported in those areas in the past 28 days.

As the unlock phase began, the number of Covid-19 cases see rapid increase in Vizag. In June alone, as many as 787 individuals were infected by the virus. While it took more than two months for the district's Covid-19 count to hit the 1,000-mark, more than 1,300 cases have been reported since July 2.

# Jagan adopts divide and rule policy, alleges Varla

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP Politburo member Varla Ramaiah on Tuesday accused the government machinery of taking sides and discriminating against all those other than the ruling YSRCP supporters and activists. He said that the Jagan's tenure was dividing the people into 'supporters' and 'non-supporters' while officials were only acting in favour of ruling party sympathisers in violation of laws.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, the TDP leader pointed out that officials were quickly acting and filing cases and making arrests on receiving complaints from YSRCP leaders. But when the Opposition members file complaints with evidence, they are not taking any action, he alleged.

He objected to how former

The TDP leader pointed out that officials were quickly acting and filing cases and making arrests on receiving complaints from YSRCP leaders. But when the Opposition members file complaints with evidence, they are not taking any action, he alleged.



minister Atchannaidu was arrested as if he was a dacoit with police jumping over his compound wall while arresting him. But there was no action even though YSRCP Vinukonda MLA himself raised concern over smuggling of sand. Similarly, there were allegations against MP Vijayasai Reddy for his involvement in Rs 307-crore scam in 108 ambulances purchase. Neither the Chief Minister nor any minister came forward to give an explanation in that

regard, he deplored.

He further stated that Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy has no moral right to continue after he stated that two lakh metric tonnes of sand was not traceable at the stock points.

No effort was made to tell about the untraceable sand till date, he said and added that officials were keeping mum and for all these omissions and commissions they would be made accountable.

## Applauded for fight against...

Continued from page 1

Debdatta Ray had been in-charge of trains carrying migrants into Hooghly district in Bengal and the camps where they were housed upon arrival. She had been applauded for her humane and sensitive handling of the difficult situation. On Monday, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee expressed her condolences via Twitter, saying, "Grieved to hear about the untimely passing away of Debdutta Ray... A young WBCS (EXE Officer), she was at the forefront, fighting the pandemic and displayed outstanding devotion in discharge of her duties."

Mamata has also reached out to Ray's husband.

A resident of Lichu Bagan in Dum Dum, Debdatta Ray was an officer of the 2010 batch of West Bengal Civil Services (WBCS) and stationed as a Block Development Officer (BDO) at Purulia before transferring to Chandannagar as Deputy Magistrate. Colleagues are shocked and devastated at her passing.

# Naidu takes dig at Jagan over Trusts

Continued from page 1

The apex court said that as per customary law, the shebait rights (right to manage the financial affairs of the deity) survive with the members of the family even after the death of the last ruler.

The ruling brought an end to the legal battle between the temple management and members of the king family who fought with the government for decades over control of one of the richest temples in the world. The row over MANSAS trust founded by the Vizianagaram erstwhile royal family erupted when YSRCP government brought

Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju, a lawyer, NGO activist and BJP women's wing leader, into picture and made her the chairperson of the trust.

Sanchaita Gajapathi Raju is the daughter of former MP P Ananda Gajapathi Raju, elder brother of senior TDP leader and former Union minister P Ashok Gajapathi Raju.

Ananda Gajapathi Raju was the chairman of all Gajapathi family trusts, including MANSAS and after his death, Ashok became the chairman. However, YSRCP government made Sanchaita chairwoman of MANSAS which is being opposed by her uncle Ashok.

# 1 dead, 1 hurt in major fire at JN Pharma City in Vizag

Continued from page 1

The fire mishap comes close on the heels of the one at Sainor Life Sciences in the JNPC on June 30 and the styrene vapour leakage from LG Polymers in Vizag city on May 7.

At Sainor, two employees died and four were hospitalised after inhaling hydrogen sulphide gas that leaked out of a reactor. In the styrene vapour leakage incident from LG Polymers, 12 people, including two children, died and over 580 persons were hospitalised.

Soon after coming to know about the major fire-mishap at JNPC at around 10.30 pm on Monday, the district administration led by Collector V Vinay Chand and city police chief RK Meena swung into action and started efforts to contain the fire. The administration pressed

## Pharma City turning a virtual death...

Continued from Page 1

Sarma emphasised the need to conduct special safety audits in all the industrial units in North Andhra Pradesh, comprising Vizag, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts to avert recurrence of the fatal mishaps. He called for a comprehensive

investigation into and criminal prosecution of plant management for the death of two persons and injuries to several others.

HRF representative K Sudha and VS Krishna said this accident once again underlined the extremely disquieting situation in respect of industrial safety in Visakhapatnam. The Jawaharlal

was in the distillation process. When one of the four people in the unit tried to remove some samples from the reactor, the blast took place and it spread to the storage facility and resulted in the inferno.

Fortunately, the flames were confined only to Visakha Solvents Ltd and they didn't spread to other units and there were only four people inside the

Nehru Pharma City has become a virtual death zone with employees dying at regular intervals due to mishaps, they said.

The trade unions demanded that the families of the victims be paid Rs 1 crore and arrest of the managers apart from conducting an inquiry by industrial experts.

plant at the time of the mishap. Meanwhile, Home Minister Mekathoti Sucharitha enquired about the incident and directed the police officials to provide better medical care for the injured. There are around 85 units operating at Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City (JNPC) which is run under public-private partnership with equity of the AP government.

## State yet to frame norms on buffer zones

Continued from page 1

The VMRDA further reported that all industrial permissions accorded as per the AP Building Rules, 2017 and sanctioned Master plan Land Use.

The High Power committee has suggested the AP government to formulate rules on industrial category wise development activity restrictions like residential areas in the surrounding of the existing and proposed industries. There was lacuna in the town planning decisions that allowed VMRDA to take up residential colonies around the hazardous LG Polymers in RR Venkatapuram in Vizag. The

Committee noted that as seen from the reports of the above departments, residential permissions are issued without considering industrial activities in the proximity. The local bodies follow the approved Master Plans, which often fail to take into account the hazardous and polluting nature of the industries located in the industrial zones nearby.

Ideally, the Industries Department and the DTCP / MA&UD Department along with APCCB should work on creating earmarked industrial zones that are suitable for Industries. A clear buffer should be provided from the residential areas.

SHORT READS



**Bihar announces total lockdown from July 16-31**

**PATNA:** There will be a total lockdown in Bihar from July 16-31 to contain the spread of COVID-19, Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi on Tuesday announced. On his official Twitter handle, Modi said the 15-day lockdown will remain in force at all municipal, district, sub divisional and block headquarters level and that guidelines were being prepared. "The government has taken a decision to this effect... Corona has neither any vaccine nor any medicine," Modi said in a virtual rally, details of which were shared on his Twitter handle. The move comes close on the heels of recent spike in positive cases which had necessitated lockdowns, imposed by the local administrations, in several districts.



**Escaped rape accused re-arrested within hours in J-K**

**JAMMU:** A rape accused was re-arrested from Pathankot in Punjab within hours of his escape from custody here, police said on Tuesday. Pankaj Gupta, a resident of Sunder Nagar, escaped from police post Talab Tillo in Jammu on Monday by scaling a boundary wall after pushing a sentry while he was out to attend nature's call. A police team led by in-charge police post Talab Tillo Sub Inspector Kalicharan swung into action and re-arrested the accused from Pathankot, a police official said. Gupta was wanted in a rape case registered against him a few days ago and was arrested on Sunday. However, he escaped police custody the next day with the help of his wife who arranged a two-wheeler for his escape, the official said. Meanwhile, the police suspended the policeman guarding him and also ordered an inquiry into the incident. A fresh case was registered against Gupta and his wife who arranged for the vehicle to help him escape police custody, the official added.

**COVID-19: UP reports 28 more deaths, 1,594 fresh cases**

**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh reported 28 more deaths due to the coronavirus and a daily spike of 1,594 cases on Tuesday, the health department said. With this, the death toll rose to 983 and the caseload increased to 39,724. "In the past 24 hours, 1,594 fresh cases of COVID-19 and 28 deaths were reported," according to the health department. The maximum 94 deaths have been reported from Agra, followed by 91 in Meerut. The state has 13,760 active cases as 24,981 patients have recovered, Additional Chief Secretary (Information) Awanish Kumar Awasthi told reporters. He said over 11.57 lakh samples have been tested in the state so far.

**Kerala IAS officer to be quizzed in gold smuggling case**

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is likely to quiz senior IAS officer M. Sivasankar in connection with the ongoing probe into the Kerala gold smuggling case, reports indicated on Monday.

Even though Sivasankar has washed his hands off the matter in the past, the NIA is said to be probing the IAS officer's alleged role since he was reported to be very close to prime accused Swapna Suresh, who was put in a top post in the IT Department where Sivasankar was the Secretary before her arrest in the case.

Sivasankar was ousted as Secretary to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan after the case came to light early this month.

Vijayan has said he is not worried if the central agency reaches his office in connection



with the probe.

Meanwhile, the Congress-led United Democratic Front is

set to move a no-confidence motion against the Pinarayi government in the Kerala Assembly in the wake of what it calls numerous scams in the IT Department, which is headed by Vijayan.

The Congress-led opposition is also likely to move a motion to remove Assembly Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan since he had allegedly inaugu-

rated a new business venture of Swapna in her presence.

The NIA had arrested Swapna and Sandeep Nair from Bengaluru on Saturday for their alleged involvement in the Kerala gold smuggling case.

On Sunday, the NIA brought them by road on a transit remand and presented them in a NIA court at Kochi, which remanded them in custody.

The NIA took over the case on Friday and filed a FIR against the accused under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Swapna, a former employee of the UAE Consulate in the Kerala capital, is among the four accused by the NIA had booked for allegedly facilitating smuggling of 30 kg gold in the diplomatic baggage to Thiruvananthapuram from Dubai on July 5.

**Vikas Dubey's aide arrested, 2 looted rifles recovered: UP police**

PNS ■ LUCKNOW/KANPUR

An aide of gangster Vikas Dubey has been arrested and two rifles of the Uttar Pradesh police looted during the Kanpur ambush earlier this month have been recovered, police said on Tuesday.

With this, all weapons looted during the ambush have been recovered, they said.

Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said Dubey's aide Shashikant alias Sonu Pandey was carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 on him.

"Shashikant was an accused in the killing of eight policemen (in the Kanpur ambush). He was arrested from Chaubeypur around 2.50 am," the police officer told reporters in Kanpur. "During interrogation, he admitted to his involvement in the encounter at Kanpur's Bikru. It was revealed that the looted AK-47 rifle of the police was hidden



at Dubey's house while the INSAS rifle was at Shashikant's house," the ADG said.

Based on the information, an AK-47 rifle, its 17 cartridges, an INSAS rifle and its 20 cartridges have been recovered. These weapons were looted from the police during the ambush and hidden in the houses of Vikas Dubey and Shashikant on the suggestion of the former, Kumar said.

"With the recovery of these lost weapons, the Uttar Pradesh Police has recovered all the lost weapons during the

ambush," the ADG told PTI.

He said of the 21 named accused in the Kanpur ambush, six have been killed and four arrested so far, while a hunt is on for 11 named accused.

Those still on the run are Gopal Saini and Heeru Dubey, carrying a cash reward of Rs one lakh each, and Chhotu Shukla, Shiv Tewari, Ram Singh, Ramu Bajpai, Shivam Dubey, Bal Govind, Bauwan Shukla, Vishnu Pal Yadav and Monu carrying a reward of Rs 50,000 each, according to a police statement.

**Grandmother clears class 12 board exams in Meghalaya**

PNS ■ SHILLONG

Defying age, a 50-year-old school drop-out and a grandmother from a remote village in Meghalaya has cleared the Class 12 board examinations, earning kudos for her achievement and becoming a social media star of sorts.

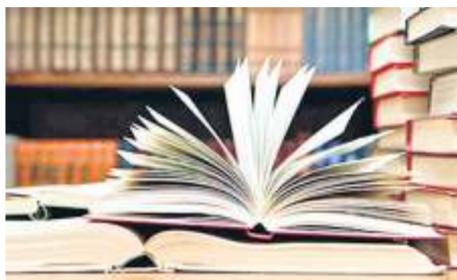
The results of the Meghalaya board's Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate (HSLC), Arts stream, were announced on Monday and Lakyntiew Syiemlieh passed the exams, according to the boards website.

Lakyntiew was the oldest student and proudly adorned the uniform while attending classes in Balawan College in Ri-Bhoi district for two long years.

"I am so happy to have cleared the examinations," Lakyntiew told PTI.

She said she wants to pursue higher studies with vernacular language as her major subject.

The grandmother had dropped out of school in 1988



because mathematics was a headache-inducing experience for her.

"I stopped going to school because mathematics was too difficult for me to understand. I was offered a job to teach preschoolers in 2008 and that was the beginning of my love for re-learning," she said.

In 2015, Lakyntiew took up a distance education course offered by IGNOU after a gap of 26 years to retain her post at SSA School, where she used to teach.

"I was happy because mathematics was not included in the IGNOU course," she said.

Education Minister Lahkmen Rymbui congratulated Lakyntiew for her feat despite her age.

"Age is not an issue when one is in search of education. Lakyntiew Syiemlieh is an example for everybody and especially those who give up studies midway. I congratulate her and appreciate her hard-work and dedication," Rymbui said.

**Resolve complaints of high power bills: HC**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday directed the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd (MSEDCL) to give prompt hearing to complaints of high power bills and act on them at the earliest.

A bench of Justices P B Varale and Milind Jadhav was hearing two public interest litigations filed by Mumbai businessman Ravindra Desai and Sangli resident M D Shaikh over high electricity bills they had received.

Desai, through his lawyer Vishal Saxena, had approached the high court on June 29, claiming that his electricity charges for the previous month were "10 times more than his usual bill".

The petitioner had sought relief from having to pay the bill till the court decided the matter finally.



**VIKAS DUBEY ENCOUNTER**

**UP to file status report, SC may consider panel**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Uttar Pradesh government told the Supreme Court Tuesday that it would file a status report on encounters of gangster Vikas Dubey and his associates. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde said it may consider appointing a committee headed by a former judge to inquire into the encounters of Dubey, his aides as well as the killing of eight Uttar Pradesh policemen by the gangster.

The apex court said it would hear on July 20 the pleas seek-

ing court-monitored probe into the encounters.

The bench, also comprising Justices R S Reddy and A S Bopanna, observed that monitoring of investigation is something which the court is very reluctant to do.

The top court said it may consider doing something similar to what was done in the case of encounter of four accused in the gang-rape and murder of a veterinarian in Telangana, in which the apex court had appointed inquiry commission headed by a former apex court judge.

**Young leaders not be neglected, says Mahajan**

PNS ■ INDORE

Amid the crisis in the Congress government in Rajasthan, senior BJP leader and former Lok Sabha speaker Sumitra Mahajan said young leadership should not be neglected in politics and claimed her party had started thinking in this direction.

She said the young should also get an opportunity to show their abilities in politics.

Queried on the turn of events in Rajasthan, Mahajan (77) said, "There is an internal battle (in the Congress) going on in Rajasthan. But the time has come that there should be no neglect of youth leadership (in politics). BJP, in a way, has started thinking that young leaders should not be ignored. The young should also get a chance to show their abilities in politics."



**SC seeks report on help to poor lactating mothers**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought a status report from the Centre on a plea of an NGO seeking monetary reliefs for lactating mothers during the ongoing pandemic situation in the country.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices R Subhash Reddy and A S Bopanna asked solicitor general Tushar Mehta to file the status report giving details of the steps taken in helping the poor lactating mothers in the country. Senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for NGO Peoples Union For Civil Liberties (PUCL), said the government had sanctioned amount of Rs 6,000 each to pregnant or lactating women

during the period of lockdown under a scheme.

He said that a status report be sought from the government on the steps taken to extend financial help to such women in the event of cessation of the lockdown.

Pregnant women receive incentive given under the 'Janani Suraksha Yojana' (JSY) for institutionalized delivery and the incentive received under JSY would be accounted towards maternity benefits.

Gonsalves said the issue was very important in view of the fact that there was a very high mortality rate of children and women here.

The bench was hearing an application filed in a pending PIL of the NGO in which the notice was issued in 2015.

**IIT Delhi's low-cost COVID-19 test kit to be launched**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A low-cost COVID-19 test kit developed by Indian Institute of Technology Delhi that uses an alternative testing method will be launched on Wednesday, according to the IIT director here.

IIT Delhi, which became the first academic institute to develop a COVID-19 testing method, gave non-exclusive open licence to companies for commercialising the test, but with a price rider.

While the institute had kept a price rider of Rs 500 per kit, the company Newtech Medical Devices, which is launching the kit named 'corosure' on Wednesday, has not announced the price yet. Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' and Minister of State for HRD Sanjay Dhotre will launch the kit.

"This should change the paradigm of COVID-19 test-



ing in the country, both in terms of scale and cost. The product, approved by ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) and DCGI (Drug Controller General of India), is being launched tomorrow. "The company Newtech Medical Devices, using IIT Delhi technology, can do two million tests per month at an extremely affordable cost. This is a true example of lab to market," said IIT Delhi Director V Ramgopal Rao.

According to the team at IIT Delhi, the current testing methods available are "probe-based", while the one developed by them is a "probe-free" method, which reduces the testing cost without compromising on accuracy.

Using comparative sequence analyses, the IIT Delhi team identified unique regions (short stretches of RNA sequences) in the COVID-19 and SARS COV-2 genome.



**Cong leader sought Priyanka's bungalow to party MP**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday claimed that a "powerful" Congress leader contacted him to request allotment of the government bungalow that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has to vacate to a parliamentarian from the party so that she could stay on.

In her response, the Congress general secretary said she has made no such request and that she will be vacating the house by August 1 as asked by the government.

On July 1, the government issued an eviction notice to Priyanka Gandhi asking her to vacate the 35, Lodhi Estate bungalow before August 1 as she was no longer eligible for it after her security cover was downgraded last year. "Facts speak for themselves! A powerful Congress leader with much clout in the Party called me on 4 July 2020 at 12:05 pm to request that 35, Lodhi Estate be allotted to another INC MP so that Priyanka Vadra can stay on. Let's not sensationalise everything please," Puri said on Twitter.

**SC refuses to grant parole to Godman Rampal**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to grant parole to self-styled Godman Rampal from Haryana, who is undergoing life imprisonment in murder cases.

A bench of Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices R Subhash Reddy and A S Bopanna dismissed the plea of Rampal seeking parole to attend the wedding of his granddaughter, scheduled for Wednesday.

On October 17, 2018, engineer-turned self-styled godman Rampal and his 13 follow-



ers were sentenced to life imprisonment in a second case of murder registered at Barwala police station in the Hisar district of Haryana on

November 19, 2014.

Rampal and his followers were convicted under charges of murder, wrongful confinement of people and criminal conspiracy.

A woman was found dead at Rampal's Ashram in Hisar district on November 19, 2014. Rampal was arrested the same day for murder and other charges were slapped on him.

He was also sentenced for life in another case of murder on October 16, 2018, involving the death of four women and a child at the Hisar ashram on November 18, 2014.

**Take action on unsolicited communications: HC to TRAI**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday asked telecom regulator TRAI to start taking action in accordance with law against those persons not complying with its regulations to curb the problem of unsolicited commercial communications (UCC).

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan asked the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) what was it waiting for till now and why it has not taken action against anyone.

"Start taking action in at least five cases. Don't show too much friendship. Show that you are interested in execution of the law. Ensure that there is more registration (of headers, unreg-



istered telemarketers and principal entities) as per the regulations and if someone is too much adamant, start taking action," the bench said.

It gave TRAI six weeks time to show that it was making progress with regard to registration of the headers, unregistered telemarketers and principal entities, like Paytm, Swiggy and SBI, and listed the matter for hearing on August 28.



The observations and direction by the bench came while hearing a plea by One97 Communications Ltd, which runs online payment platform Paytm, alleging that telecom operators are not blocking "phishing" activities over various mobile networks. Phishing is a cyber crime where people are contacted by e-mail, phone calls or text messages by someone posing as a legitimate represen-

tative of a organisation to lure them to part with their sensitive data, including banking and credit card details and passwords. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for Paytm, said he was only seeking strict implementation by TRAI and the telecom companies of the regulator's Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preferences Regulations (TCCPCR) 2018.

**Cong loses a stalwart: Priya Dutt**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

On a day when Sachin Pilot was sacked as Rajasthan Congress president and deputy chief minister for rebellion, former MP Priya Dutt on Tuesday said it was "unfortunate" the party has lost stalwart young leaders with great potential like him and Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Dutt said she did not believe that being ambitious is "wrong".

"Another friend leaves the party both sachin and jyotiraditya were colleagues & good friends unfortunately our party has lost 2 stalwart young leaders with great potential. I don't believe being ambitious is wrong. They have worked hard through the most difficult times," the former MP from Mumbai tweeted.

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 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



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 Gujar 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



ASHOK K MEHTA

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:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

**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 not 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 ₹12/3 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.

# 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 —



locking 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 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 MFIN

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN), 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’

**T**he 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-

**OVER TIME, THE COMMUNITY 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’**

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.



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— VYJAYANTI MOGLI



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— 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.

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.

**TV IS JUST LIKE ANOTHER JOB...**

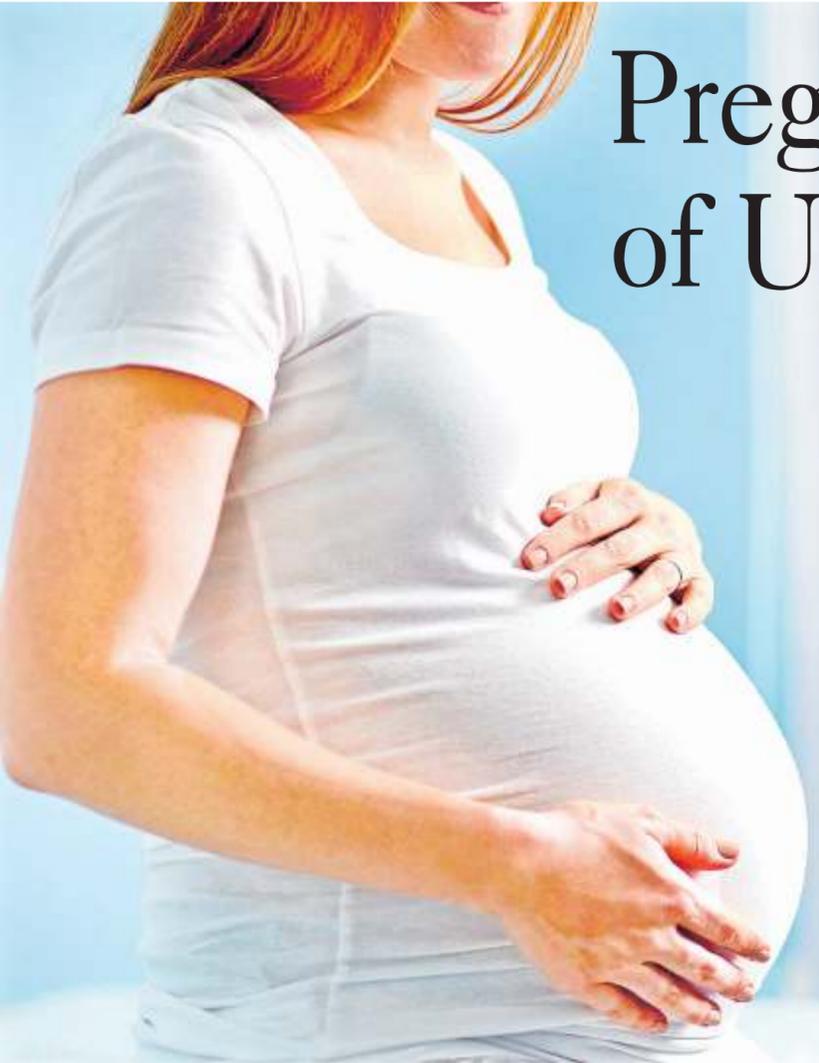
My mother was a movie buff, so I did not have any restrictions from family, although none of my family were into acting. I’m here because of my mother and her encouragement. If it wasn’t her, I would be an engineer or something by now. While I was doing my third film, my make up artist in the film, was 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

**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 *Kalavaru 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

**A**lthough 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

**M**y 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 mindspace. 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.

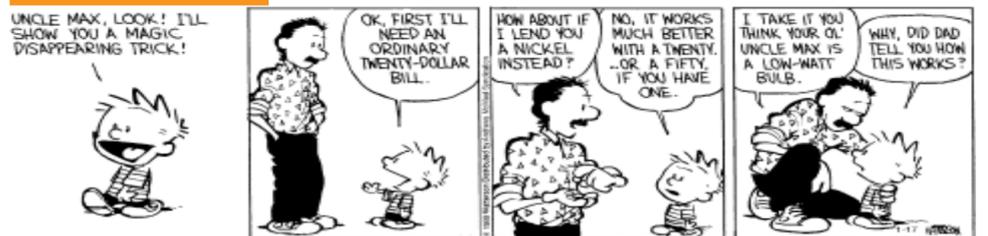


## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



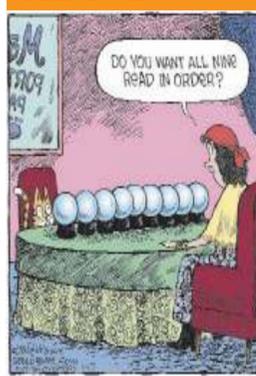
### GARFIELD



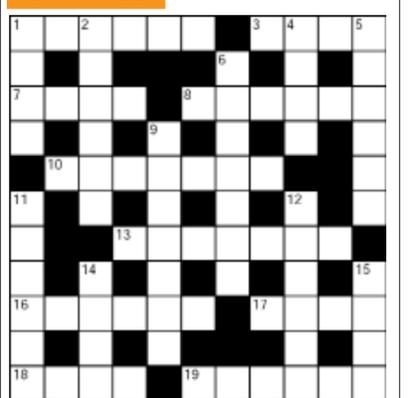
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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

#### Yesterday's solution

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



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," 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



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

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 Hasenhuttl's side remain in 12th, but have lost just once in six games since the restart. "We are becoming more brave," said Hasenhuttl. "You can feel the guys really enjoy what they are doing."

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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.

"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.

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-

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



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.



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.

## 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.

**K**annada 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

**S**iddu 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*. Siddu 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

**A**ctress 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

**T**elugu-Hindi actress Ileana DCruz 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."



## Jayendra responds on Suriya's digital debut



**S**peculations 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 *Soorari 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.

## #quarantinechoir. Nivetha Thomas sings 'Afreen'

**A**ctress 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.

