

ANALYSIS 7 HOPE SPROUTS IN THE FARM

MONEY 8 COVID-19 TO SHAVE \$25 BN OFF FROM TOP 100 DOMESTIC BRANDS

SPORTS 11 ADVANTAGE FOR AUS IN D/N TEST: SMITH

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY JUNE 2, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

PURI IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE DIRECTORS: MAHESH BABU

Page 12



MHA PUTS LIST OF NON-SWADESHI ITEMS FOR CAPF CANTEENS ON HOLD

Hours after making it public, the Ministry of Home Affairs on Monday put on hold a list of non-Swadeshi products not to be sold at Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) canteens...



CENTRAL GOVT HIKES PADDY MSP BY RS 53/QTL FOR 2020-21

The government on Monday hiked the MSP of paddy marginally by Rs 53 per quintal to Rs 1,868 per quintal for the 2020-21 crop year...



SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS, MASKS MUST IN RELIGIOUS PLACES FROM JUNE 8

Social distancing norms and use of masks and sanitisers will be a must in religious places from June 8 as people will be returning to the shrines...



ELECTIONS FOR 18 RAJYA SABHA SEATS TO BE HELD ON JUNE 19

Elections for 18 Rajya Sabha seats will be held on June 19, the Election Commission has said. The elections, which were to be held in March...



Under Modi, India has emerged stronger on world stage

Attacks on healthcare staff unacceptable: PM Modi

Odisha joins 'One Nation-One Ration Card'

Covid-19 reaches AP Secretariat

Staff returning from Hyd allowed to resume work before test results are received

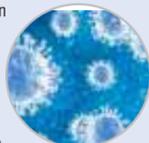
Glaring lack of judgment and gross neglect by the authorities concerned resulted in two blocks of the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat at Velagapudi being sealed on Monday...



virus on Friday. However, there were no efforts made to explain why employees were allowed to return to work at the Secretariat even before the test results were received.

105 NEW CASES REPORTED IN AP; TALLY RISES TO 3,674

Andhra Pradesh reported 105 fresh cases on Monday, taking the overall count to 3,674. The Covid-19 toll mounted to 64 with two deaths reported from Kurnool district...



Jagan in a quandary over Lockdown 5.0

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is yet to take a decision on Lockdown 5.0, even as his counterparts in other states have already come out with their plans.



AP Govt to move SC over HC order on SEC: Vijayasai Reddy

YSR Congress Party national general secretary V Vijayasai Reddy on Monday disclosed that the State Government would move the Supreme Court on the High Court's order directing it to reinstate N Ramesh Kumar as the State Election Commissioner.



part of the State government, but Ramesh Kumar took unilateral decisions and went

HC quashes challenge to GO on adverse reports

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday quashed a writ filed in the court (petition number 273/2019) challenging GO Rt No 2430 prohibiting publishing of reports that are baseless and far from true in print media and other mediums to 'tarnish the image' of the Government.

Jagan for Delhi today; funds, CS term extension in wish list

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is scheduled to visit Delhi on Tuesday where he is expected to meet key functionaries in the Central government and also the top brass of the BJP and discuss several important issues.

The Chief Minister might discuss the recent developments over the removal of the State Election Commissioner and his subsequent reinstatement by the AP High Court

Naidu politicising even trivial issues: Sajjala

Government Advisor (Public Affairs), Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Monday lashed out at TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu, accusing him of politicising every issue, major or trivial, un mindful of the fact that he was a total failure in providing succour to the weaker sections during his 5-year stint.



People regretting voting for Jagan: Kanna

Preparations for holding the monsoon session of Parliament with coronavirus-induced norms like social distancing and exploring 'virtual Parliament' as an option in the long run were discussed by Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla during a meeting on Monday, sources said.

HC issues contempt notices to Suresh, 93 others

Advocate N Ashwani Kumar on Monday said that AP High Court has issued a notice to 94 respondents, including YSR Congress MP Nandigam Suresh to show cause for not proceeding with a contempt of court case against them.



Venkaiah, Birla discuss holding monsoon session

Preparations for holding the monsoon session of Parliament with coronavirus-induced norms like social distancing and exploring 'virtual Parliament' as an option in the long run were discussed by Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla during a meeting on Monday, sources said.



TODAY ALMANAC: Month & Paksham, Jyeshtha & Shukla Paksha, Panchangam, Tithi, Nakshatram, Time to Avoid, Rahukalam, Yamagandam, Varjyam, Guhika, Good Time, Amritkalam, Abhijit Muhurtham, VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Under Modi, India has emerged stronger on world stage

Eminent gurus like Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo proved how a country's ties with the world enhance its greatness.

The world was always in awe of the cultural and spiritual wealth of India. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country's culture has spread to other nations. Moreover, India has risen to the position of leading the world on cultural affairs.

In one word, India is emerging as a Global Guru for the whole world.

There is no doubt that India will emerge as a crucial destination to fulfil the needs of the Covid-19 afflicted nations.

Modi knows how to turn challenges into opportunities. That is why he took strategic measures in declaring lockdown and its subsequent lifting. He is acting with alacrity initiating measures to set the econ-

omy back on track.

Ever since Modi came to power in 2014, India became one of the important countries on the global map. It was amply clear that a strong leader, strong policy and a stable government are essential for the whole world to respect a nation.

At one time, Pakistan used to call the shots, but after the Pulwama incident, the world stood by India. This was not achieved merely in a day. For over five years, Modi made whirlwind tours of the globe, building rapport with not only developed nations but also other countries. With a long-term strategy, Modi developed relations over trade, commerce, investment, production and technical cooperation and so on.

At the global fora, Modi left his indelible mark as demonstrated mammoth crowds, jam-packed stadia, selfies with fans, meetings with businessmen and global leaders.

Modi knows how to turn challenges into opportunities. That is why he took strategic measures in declaring lockdown and its subsequent lifting. He is acting with alacrity initiating measures to set the economy back on track. Ever since Modi came to power in 2014, India has become important on the global map.

Entering into cordial ties with countries like Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates was a bold step in international policy. Since these countries support Pakistan, earlier rulers ignored them and maintained relations with countries like Egypt.

But Modi observed the political changes occurring in Arab nations and moulded them to be favourable to India.

Not merely with an eye on the Gulf oil, he maintained close ties with the Gulf countries keeping in mind a long-term political strategy. Accordingly, he moved the pawns on the global political chessboard.

At the same time, Modi extended the hand of friendship to Japan and has had good rapport with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to speed up cooperation between the two nations. Modi knows that it will hold in check the China's hyperactive role in international arena. Around the same period, the USA became the most strategic partner of India.

India has been playing crucial role in G-20 and BRICS.



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

ago and is leading the country on the road to self-sufficiency. He announced Atmanirbhar package only to change the country into a major production hub.

To weaken China, which is ruling the roost in the manufacturing sector, the PM is implementing series of measures acting with alacrity. He announced Rs 3 lakh-crore package to MSME sector. Also, the decision to extend the loans was not taken casually. The world identified India is the country where manufacturing can develop on par with China.

The country has geographic area, capabilities, intelligentsia, cheap labour. Unlike China, the country has no language problem. The incentives announced to MSME sector by Modi government is a decision in the direction of overtaking China in

manufacturing. There is no doubt that the companies using China to manufacture their products will look towards India if the MSME sector is stronger here. Japan, the USA and Europe have evolved overseas investment policies to facilitate shifting of their companies from China to India. In the future, more companies will commence their operations in India, lending support to our economy.

Reforms announced as part of the Atmanirbhar package and the decisions giving thrust to private sector and start-ups are aimed at making the Make in India campaign successful. In fact the package is an extension of the Make in India policy.

Modi has been acting fast to ensure that red tapism and corruption in the country cause no hurdles to economic growth in the country.

If India exceeds China in production sector, Pakistan which is dependent on China has no option except to maintain a low profile. That is why Modi is paving the way for overtaking China in production activities on one hand and on the other, to check atrocities in Pak-occupied Kashmir.

China has been concerned over at these measures sensing that the posture adopted by India is harmful to its interests.

Meanwhile, India has been sending strong signals that it will not tolerate any steps that would put its interests in jeopardy. Defence-wise, the country is not weak like earlier. The world knows that India can teach a lesson to anyone that meddles in its affairs. Moreover, India is not alone in global political scenario. On account of the rapport Modi enjoys with world leaders, there is no doubt that they would come to its rescue in case of any trouble.



Woman, son die after consuming sanitiser

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A woman and her son died after they consumed sanitiser unable to find liquor in Kadapa district. The shocking incident was reported from Yellama Gudi Street in Chennai mandal of Kadapa district.

According to Chennai police, 24-year-old Sriram Naik and his 52-year-old mother Vijayalakshmi were addicted to alcohol.

They tried to get wine on Sunday evening, but their efforts proved futile. Someone had told them that sanitiser contain alcohol and that could give them a kick, so they got a sanitiser and consumed it.

They fell unconscious and neighbours, who found them in that state, informed police. The mother-son duo was rushed to RIMS hospital in Kadapa. While Vijayalakshmi died at around 11 am on Sunday, Sriram died in the early hours of Monday. Police said consuming sanitiser in high quantity might be the cause of their deaths.

Online sand booking to be user-friendly

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sand online booking will be more user friendly and would take measures to curb online fraud, said Minister for Mining Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy. He convened a review meeting at the APMDC office here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that they are planning to booking sand through Village Secretariats through APMD. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said that through Village Secretariats supply of sand to the beneficiaries will be easier and this new initiative would be discussed with Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy before implementing it. He said that with the new sand policy, there will be more transparency in the transaction sale and transport of sand.

He said that for bulk booking new regulations will be brought into force and all the bulk bookings will be verified at the district-level. Ten per cent sand will be supplied for domestic works and for government works, 20 per cent sand will be delivered per week.

Measures will be taken to minimise the transport cost and ensure that sand stockyard will be 10 km from the sand reach, said the minister and added that the transport cost was reduced from Rs 4.90 to Rs 3.30 per km from Rajahmundry to



● Minister for Mining Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy said that for bulk booking new regulations will be brought into force and all the bulk bookings will be verified at the district-level. Ten per cent sand will be supplied for domestic works and for government works, 20 per cent sand will be delivered per week

● Measures will be taken to minimise the transport cost and ensure that sand stockyard will be 10 km from the sand reach, said the minister and added that the transport cost was reduced from Rs 4.90 to Rs 3.30 per km from Rajahmundry to Visakhapatnam

Visakhapatnam.

He said the Chief Minister has ordered to stock as much as 70 lakh tonnes sand to overcome the shortage in the forthcoming rainy season, however, 40 lakh tonnes was stocked by now, and in 20 days, remaining 30 lakh tonnes will be stocked, said the minister.

For the ensuing season, 20 lakh tonnes of sand was required for Krishna district and about seven lakh was made available and the remaining

Pensions reach beneficiaries' doorstep

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Distribution of pensions at the doorstep has begun on the first day of the month on Monday across the State. For the fourth successive month, third in lockdown, pensions were distributed at the doorstep of beneficiaries by the village and ward volunteers. Braving scorching heat and the Corona pandemic, 2,37,615 village/ward volunteers completed the commitment of the government by distributing pensions at the doorstep of beneficiaries on the first day of the month, according to the department of rural development.

By 7 pm, 54.88 lakh beneficiaries received the pension and under YSR Pension Kanuka as many as 58.22 lakh will be benefited, while the government is spending Rs 1,421.20 crore towards the initiative. Amidst Covid-19, officials have started using geo-tagging technology replacing the biometric for safe distribution.

To prevent the virus spread, volunteers have used photo-identification method instead of



biometric system and a separate app was used to capture the beneficiary picture through geo-tagging. Volunteers have taken strict measures while distributing the pensions.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been firm on his promises and proved that the YSRCP government would not compromise in delivering welfare schemes to the people even at these tough times. The old-age pensioners and physically challenged are facing difficulties due to the lockdown, and now, providing them pensions at their doorsteps has instilled confidence in them.

The government officials are monitoring the distribution of pensions to every beneficiary, while the Chief Minister has asserted that everyone will receive the pension and need not worry about it. While the pension distribution is a monthly exercise for volunteers, their work during the Corona is laudable, he pointed

● Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has been firm on his promises and proved that the YSRCP government would not compromise in delivering welfare schemes to the people even at these tough times

● The old-age pensioners and physically challenged are facing difficulties due to the lockdown, and now, providing them pensions at their doorsteps has instilled confidence in them, said officials

● To prevent the virus spread, volunteers have used photo-identification method instead of biometric system and a separate app was used to capture the beneficiary picture through geo-tagging. Volunteers have taken strict measures while distributing the pensions.

Opportunities beckon in Data Science, Artificial Intel

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Data Science is playing an important role in the software industry, said Prof Hemachandra Reddy, Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh State Higher Education Council, while inaugurating the month-long training programme for the assistant professors of engineering colleges, along with Ram Tavva, CEO of Hyderabad-based ExcelR, at the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) office here on Monday.

Hemachandra Reddy said that there was much demand for data science, artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, big data and others in the competitive world. The training would



help the assistant professors to improve their skills. He suggested to the assistant professors to teach coding to students to enable them to secure software jobs.

In all, 2,500 faculty of various engineering colleges across 13 districts registered their names to take part in the training programme.

Challa Madhusudan Reddy,

Chairman of APSSDC, said that the APSSDC has been providing free training in all wings to the assistant professors of engineering colleges and students to enable them to secure employment in the software industry. "The training would help the assistant professors to improve their skills," he said.

Arja Srikanth, Managing Director and Executive Officer of APSSDC, said that faculty development programme for the staff of engineering colleges and polytechnic colleges is being undertaken with the help of specialists in various fields from various companies.

He said that online free certification course for students introduced summer internship, which would help the students to improve their skills.



World Milk Day celebrated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heritage Foods Limited celebrated the World Milk Day by striving for farmers' welfare here on Monday. The company engaged farmers across the States where in it has a presence for better cattle management, higher milk yields, fodder management and providing insurance. Dairy sector continues to be one of the major livelihood sources for rural India and a significant contributor to the country's agrarian economy.

The World Milk Day is an international day announced by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations on June 1 to acknowledge the important contributions of the dairy sector to sustainability, economic development, livelihood and nutrition.

Commenting on the development, Brahmani Nara, ED, Heritage Foods Limited, said, "Farmers' empowerment and their welfare have been the vision with which Heritage Foods had started dairy 28 years ago, we are very fortunate to play a role in empowering dairy farming with variety of programmes like cattle feed distribution, free veterinary care, educating on better cattle management practices, facilitating credit flow from banks."

Sortex rice to be supplied for Anganwadis

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sortex rice would be supplied to all the Anganwadis across the State from this month as per the directive of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, said Kritika Shukla, Director of Women and Child Welfare.

In a statement here on Monday, Kritika Shukla said that as per the standard set by the Food Corporation of India

there would be 25 per cent of broken rice but in the Sortex rice there would be only 15 per cent of broken rice.

She said that quality rice supply would commence for this month and instructions were given to



the ICDS officials to receive the rice bags with the mark of ICDS on them. She personally verified the rice here on Monday.

She said that in the backdrop of extension of lockdown, children up to six years and preg-

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES

GOLD
₹ 49,170 (10 gm)
₹ 370 ▲

SILVER
₹ 50,100 (1kg)
₹ 1550 ▲

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin ₹220
Without Skin ₹251
Broiler at Farm ₹152

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD 340
VIJAYAWADA 315
VISAKHAPATNAM 350
RETAIL PRICE ₹3.15

AP, other States express concern over special trains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a marathon meeting that ended hours before the Railways began operating 200 special passenger trains, the national transporter said its trains will run as per schedule with minor changes in stoppages to address the concerns expressed by Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra about the planned services from June 1.

Sources said a high-level meeting was convened at the railway headquarters to resolve the matter. They indicated that the three states have raised concerns over the rising cases of the Coronavirus as the reason behind their opposition to movement of trains.

"Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have expressed



reservations about running of trains or number of stoppages as planned. The matter is being discussed with the states. Any further development in this regard will be intimated," a railway spokesperson said.

The spokesperson, at 11 pm, minutes after the meeting ended said that "all trains are running as planned".

An official however said the changes requested by the states in regard to stoppages will be allowed. Andhra Pradesh requested that only 22 trains

The South Central Railway, under which Andhra Pradesh falls, said in a statement late Sunday night that all intra-state movement of passengers within the state of Andhra Pradesh by railways stands restricted

should come to the state, and instead of the planned 71 stoppages it asked for one halt at an intermediary station along with the terminating station.

Sources said Jharkhand requested that four trains to the state be dropped, while 20 others have fewer stoppages.

The South Central Railway, under which Andhra Pradesh falls, said in a statement late Sunday night that all intra-state movement of passengers within the State of Andhra Pradesh

by railways stands restricted.

"All passenger movements where both the boarding and deboarding station for a passenger falls within the state of Andhra Pradesh stands restricted under further advice," it said.

The statement said full fare refunds will be given to passengers who have booked their train journey with an intention to travel within the state.

Earlier on May 21, the railways had cancelled tickets of all

passengers of these special trains whose originating and terminating stations fell within Maharashtra after the state government prohibited inter-district travel.

In an order, the railways said all the tickets of the special trains scheduled to run from June 1 in Maharashtra will be automatically cancelled and full refund will be provided to passengers.

It also said that till further notice, intra-state bookings within Maharashtra should not be permitted. This, however, does not mean that trains cannot originate from stations in Maharashtra, a railway spokesperson said. This meant that if a passenger boards a train from Maharashtra, s/he cannot de-board within the state borders.

'People regretting voting for Jagan'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

BJP AP state president Kanna Lakshminarayana on Monday said that a year after the YSRCP government came to power in 2019 highlighting the flaws of TDP government, people are regretting voting for YS Jaganmohan Reddy as the Chief Minister.

Kanna opined that the one year of Jagan rule reflects inexperience, incompetence, corruption, lack of understanding, ego, and misuse of state power. He claimed that Jagan's inabilities have been exposed and the legal implications in Polavaram project corruption issue by the previous government lost.

On the state capital issue, both the TDP and YSRCP have resorted to crude politics, while the ruling party has stirred the pot further by coming up with the three capital



proposal, Kanna said.

"Despite the involvement of CB-CID in the case of Vishakhapatnam lands issue, the inability to prove corruption charges is a big failure," he said and added that the pending projects in Rayalaseema were neglected and demanded a white paper on this.

The BJP leader said that

sand mafia was at its peak during TDP rule and there has been no change in the situation after the YSRCP took over the reins. He added, "65 cases against the government is a clear example that the people have lost faith in the rulers."

Kanna went on to say that Jagan resign as CM accepting that he has been a failure.

■ Kanna opined that the one year of Jagan rule reflects inexperience, incompetence, corruption, lack of understanding, ego, and misuse of state power. He claimed that Jagan's inabilities have been exposed and the legal implications in Polavaram project corruption issue by the previous government lost

■ On the state capital issue, both the TDP and YSRCP have resorted to crude politics, while the ruling party has stirred the pot further by coming up with the three capital proposal, Kanna said

He reminded that the allegation that Chandrababu Naidu possessed a pink diamond has gone unspoken even as the government failed to take action in the data theft case during the last one year.

"The case regarding the attack on Jagan during his padayatra has faded from public memory. Of the 70 letters to the CM, not even a single letter was replied to," Kanna

claimed. He found fault with the ruling party for relating every issue with caste and religion which was seen in the case of State Election Commissioner. "Despite getting a mandate of 151 Assembly seats, the YSRCP could not contest the local body elections bravely and had to resort to various crimes. This shows that Jagan is not an able Chief Minister," said Kanna.

Nimmagadda has criminal mentality, alleges Vijayasai

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

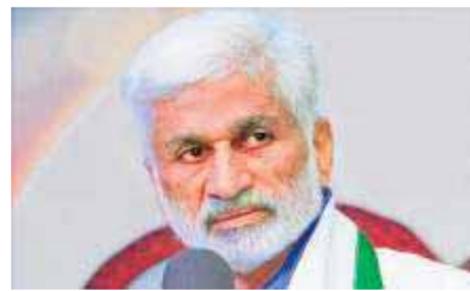
It seems fight between Nimmagadda and YSRCP leaders was turning murkier with each passing day as none wanted to relent and intensifying tirade against each other.

YSRCP General Secretary and MP V Vijayasai Reddy came down heavily on Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar terming him as a person with 'criminal mentality'.

"Being in a Constitutional position, he cannot spew venom on the government. Everybody knows what he had said in the letter. He called the ruling party leaders as factionists and goondas. His attitude is an affront on the democracy," Vijayasai Reddy said on Monday.

He further stated that the letter was fabricated in the office of the Telugu Desam Party and he had lodged a complaint with the DGP in this regard and the CID was investigating the same.

"There is no doubt that Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar resorted to a criminal act. I wonder whether he was there to protect the democracy or devouring it," he said. The YSRCP leader pointed out that if the High Court judgement was to be studied carefully, it would definitely indicate that Nimmagadda's appointment was illegal. "We are approaching the Supreme Court highlighting



The YSRCP leader wondered why the TDP had moved the court in favour of Nimmagadda. "One can understand Nimmagadda approaching the court to protect his tenure. What is the interest of the TDP in this? In what way does it make a difference if Nimmagadda, or some other person stays in the SEC post?" V Vijayasai Reddy asked

these issues," he said. Reddy said Nimmagadda had no answer to the points raised by the Advocate General. "He is, too, eager to get back to his post and issued his own reinstatement orders. This is unprecedented, as every order has to come from the government. This is nothing but Axis of Evil. There is a need to protect the democracy from such people, who are an affront on society," he said.

The YSRCP leader wondered why the TDP had moved the

court in favour of Nimmagadda. "One can understand Nimmagadda approaching the court to protect his tenure. What is the interest of the TDP in this? In what way does it make a difference if Nimmagadda or some other person stays in the SEC post?" he asked.

He alleged that TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu wants that his close followers should continue in the same posts even after he had lost power in the State.

Venkaiah, Birla discuss holding monsoon session

Continued from Page 1

The two officials were also directed to examine in detail various technical and other arrangements to be ensured to enable smooth functioning of both the Houses.

Parliament usually meets in July-August for the monsoon session. It was adjourned sine die on March 24, ahead of schedule, amid growing concerns over the COVID-19 outbreak.

At the meeting on Monday, both the Secretary Generals briefed the Chairman and Speaker on issues connected with the proposed virtual meetings of various committees of Parliament, the sources said.

These include providing a safe technological platform, complying with the rules of confidentiality of deliberations in such meetings and the difficulties in ensuring the same in case of virtual meeting, they said.

Infrastructure upgrade to be undertaken to enable virtual meetings and the time likely to be taken in this regard were also discussed.

Taking cognizance of the



long existing rules regarding confidentiality in respect of meetings of the committees and the implications of holding virtual meetings, Naidu and Birla opined that it would be necessary to refer the issue of virtual meetings to the Rules Committees of both the Houses, the sources said.

Regarding the view expressed in some quarters that presiding officers can suspend the Rules, officials have pointed out that such suspension requires a motion to be carried in the House and presiding officers cannot supersede rules by issuing directions.

Both Naidu and Birla noted that the chairmen of various committees of Parliament

including the department-related Standing Committees are empowered to convene regular meetings of respective committees on their own.

However, in view of the feedback being received from some members of Parliament about their inability to travel on account of quarantine norms in various states, they felt that it may be better for the chairmen of various committees to convene meetings after ascertaining the likely attendance in various states. Officials informed that the average attendance in the meetings of the eight department-related Standing Committees of Rajya Sabha over the last three years has been about 45 per cent.

Govt closes 535 liquor shops in State

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has taken a crucial decision as a part of prohibition in the State. The excise department on Monday closed 535 liquor shops across the State with immediate effect.

There are 3,500 liquor shops in the State and now the number could be reduced to 2,965. Soon after the YSRCP government came to power in 2019, the number of shops has been reduced by 20 per cent and the combined total has been now reduced by 33 per cent.

However with the reopening of liquor shops across the State after lockdown relaxation on May 4, the decision was taken to increase the price of liquor. Prices were initially increased by 50 per cent and again 25 per cent to prevent the tippers from consuming liquor. The Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) was launched by the government to curb the illegal sand and liquor activities in the state.



■ With the reopening of liquor shops across the State after lockdown relaxation on May 4, the decision was taken to increase the price of liquor. Prices were initially increased by 50 per cent and again 25 per cent to prevent the tippers from consuming liquor

■ There are 3,500 liquor shops in the State and now the number could be reduced to 2,965. Soon after the YSRCP government came to power in 2019, the number of shops has been reduced by 20 per cent and the combined total has been now reduced by 33 per cent

Web series story contest

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Drusya Vedika, city-based cultural organisation, has announced competition for web series story contest. Organisers said that the last date for accepting the stories is on or before July 20. The writers may send their stories to drusyavedika2017@gmail.com. Organisers also stated that the writers may choose the subjects in the following areas like science, fiction, human relations, historical, love and romance, crime and family and the story submitted should have minimum for 10 episodes. Drusya Vedika will announce three prizes each Rs 5,000.

Man from LG Polymer gas-hit village dies

■ CPM LINKS TO TOXIC GAS LEAKAGE

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A 45-year-old man from Venkatapuram, where hundreds of people hospitalised and 12 people died due to Styrene gas leak from the LG Polymers Private Limited, passed away on Monday. The CPM alleged that the man, Y Kanaka Raju, died because of the effect of the toxic gas.

He was admitted to a private hospital here on Monday after

complaining of uneasiness in breathing and nausea. CPM city secretary B Ganga Rao said five days ago B Venkayamma, 75, also died.

He demanded Rs 1 crore compensation be given to these victim families. The death toll could go up because more people are showing illness symptoms following the gas mishap, he added. The district health administration is yet to ascertain the cause of the death.

Jagan for Delhi today; funds, CS term extension...

Continued from Page 1

It may be mentioned here that earlier, the YSRCP government announced decentralisation of administration, with the state having three capitals with Visakhapatnam as the de-facto capital, thus shifting power from Amaravati. However, in a major setback, AP High Court pronounced that no government office shall be shifted anywhere till it completed hearing a batch of petitions on the state capital issue.

The YSRCP government on April 24 gave a commitment to HC that it would not take any steps to shift the capital from Amaravati to Vizag till the state Legislature passes Bills pertaining to decentralisation of administration and repeal of AP Capital Region Development Authority Act.

The two Bills were stilled by the Legislative Council. Jagan is likely to broach the subject of dissolution of the AP Legislative Council during his meeting with the Union Home Minister.

The Chief Minister is likely to seek further extension of the tenure of Chief Secretary

Nilam Sawhney by a further six months. On May 20, the Central government had extended her tenure by three months. Sawhney was set to retire on June 30, 2020.

According to sources, the reason for the Delhi visit could be in the wake of recent political developments in the state. The CM is likely to explain the important decisions taken by the state government and the Jagan would also seek more support from the Centre keeping in view of the state's poor finances position.

Meanwhile, there are reports that State Cabinet is scheduled to meet on June 5, in which Jagan is likely to discuss the rising number of Coronavirus cases.

Key decisions regarding steps to contain the spread of the virus, while relaxing lockdown restrictions further to open up the economy are likely to figure in the Cabinet meeting.

This will be the first Cabinet meeting of the YSRCP's second year in power, and the Ministers are expected to renew their pledge to fulfil the remaining promises made to the people.

Commodore Rahul Vilas Gokhale takes over command of INS Circars

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Commodore Rahul Vilas Gokhale took over command of INS Circars from Commodore KA Bopanna. Later, the outgoing Commanding Officer was given a farewell by the officers and sailors of INS Circars through the traditional Pulling out Ceremony. Commodore KA Bopanna retired from active Naval Service after an illustrious career of 35 years on May 31.

INS Circars is the oldest naval establishment on East Coast and the base depot ship providing administrative and logistics support to the head-



quarters, Eastern Naval Command and a large number of units based in and around Visakhapatnam.

Commodore RV Gokhale, who will be the twenty-third Commanding Officer of INS Circars, is an alumnus of National Defence Academy and was commissioned into

the Indian Navy on Jan 1, 1992. A navigation and direction specialist, he has commanded in ships INS Khukriand and INS Kolkata. His other tenures include Director Personnel Policy at Naval Headquarters, New Delhi and Naval Advisor, High Commission of India in Islamabad.

Jagan in a quandary...

Continued from Page 1

Those passengers who tested positive should join Covid-19 designated hospitals while passengers tested negative should take seven-day home quarantine. They will be sent to quarantine, depending upon requirements. Those coming from other coun-

tries should undergo government or paid quarantine. The DGP further said that all the passengers entering the state should register in Spandana app. Incidentally, when the AP government announced that it wants to bring people stranded in Hyderabad by arranging special buses, the TS government objected.

HC quashes challenge to GO on adverse reports

Continued from Page 1

The court took the contention of the GAD into consideration. The court also took into consideration the contention of the GAD that it has no intention to take criminal action. Limiting the free-

dom of the press, denial of permission for gathering news reports, preventing the publication of news or distribution was not the intention of the GO, the respondents said.

The court took this also into consideration. The court announced the decision as it is

satisfied with the GAD contention that the GO's objective is to promote publication of news reports with a sense of responsibility and moral values.

The court felt that its intervention is not necessary at this juncture in the matter. The High Court felt that it was advisable to

publish new reports as per the rules of the Press Council of India.

The GO dated October 30 last year said that government action is subject to the jurisdiction of relevant courts and provides for conducting suitable enquiry into the reports.

Indian Railways to ply 200 Time Tabled trains

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In addition to the services of Shramik Special trains, Indian Railways has announced to run 200 new Time Tabled trains from June 1.

Hence, it has been decided to run Special trains from and through Waltair Division of East Coast Railway jurisdiction. Entry and exit at railway stations over the Division will be restricted and bonafide passengers will be allowed into the station.

The entry to railway station for boarding any trains will be from Platform No.8 at Visakhapatnam railway station.



The exit from platform to outside of the Visakhapatnam station for any train is from platform No.1. In order to monitor the movement and to check the health conditions of

the passengers entry and exit at stations restricted and allowed after thorough checkup. Hence, any passenger having confirmed ticket should enter Visakhapatnam railway sta-

tion from platform No.8 side and the exit will be from platform No.1 side after medical checkup. Health protocol will be strictly observed as per the Ministry of Health of respective States.

Originating trains:

- AP Express Special between Visakhapatnam and New Delhi
- Godavari Express Special between Secunderabad and Visakhapatnam

Passing through trains

- Konark Special Express between Bhubaneswar and Mumbai

- Falaknuma Special Express between Howrah and Secunderabad.
- The AP Express Special train will run as Train No 02805 from Visakhapatnam to New Delhi with effect from June 1 and as Train No 02806 from New Delhi to Visakhapatnam with effect from June 3 with the timings and stoppages as that of 20805/20806 AP Express.
- Passengers are advised to carry their own food during journey. No blanket and linen will be provided in the train and passengers may their own arrangements.

'Langar on Wheels' to feed over 15,000 daily in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Carrying forward the tradition of serving food through community kitchens beyond the walls of Gurdwaras, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee on Monday started 'Langar on Wheels' to provide food and water to the destitute.

Even though the lockdown restrictions have been relaxed, lack of income and dwindling finances have pushed people into a state of deep despair and distress. To ensure that no one sleeps empty stomach, estimated 15,000 people

living in Jhuggi-Jhopri clusters, railway stations, bus stands, rain shelters and pavements will be served food daily.

Committee president Manjinder Singh Sirsa said that 15 vans will leave Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, situated in the heart of the national capital, in the wee hours of the day and serve food to people at various places across the city. "They will be left in the lurch if proper food is not provided to them," Manjinder Singh Sirsa added. He said that the vow was taken after several NGOs and institutions, which were

providing food to the needy amid lockdown, withdrew their services. The Committee padded that the initiative has been started for one month but will be extended from time-to-time till the economic activities are restored and disadvantaged people are able to sustain themselves. The Committee will remain in touch with the Sikh leaders, government officials and resident welfare associations of the respective areas to gauge the demand of the food. He added that additional food will be rushed to any place if the demand escalates.



People happy, buses back on roads in TN after two months

PNS ■ CHENNAI

After a hiatus of 68 days, government run buses resumed operations in a limited manner in Tamil Nadu on Monday except here and three nearby districts while autorickshaws, which were already plying in other parts of the state, hit the roads in Chennai.

Also, intra-state passenger train services were back on track in Tamil Nadu connecting keyplaces for the first time since the COVID-19 lockdown was announced on March 24 and the resumption of public transport, albeit, curtailed, brought cheers to the general public.

Buses and trains were operated following disinfection process in addition to screening of both crew and passengers using thermal scanners. Several people in cities, including Tirunelveli and Madurai, said the resumption in bus services will help them get their life back to normalcy. "I am happy to commute using bus than my two-wheel-



Intra-state bus and train services to and from Chennai and adjoining Chengelpet, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts, were not operated in view of comparatively high number of virus cases

er," said a passenger in Madurai. Intra-state bus and train services to and from Chennai and adjoining Chengelpet, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur districts, were not operated in view of comparatively high number of virus cases. Of the 22,333 positive cases as on May 31, Chennai accounted for 14,802, Chengelpet 1,177, Kancheepuram 407 and Tiruvallur 948 which is a whopping 77.61 per cent of all the positive cases in Tamil Nadu. Most people in buses and trains wore masks

and sanitisers were provided to them to clean their hands. Buses in six zones of Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Villupuram, Thanjavur, Madurai, and Tirunelveli were operated with approximately 50 per cent fleet strength. Though the government has said 60 per cent occupancy rate will be allowed in buses, preliminary inputs indicated that passengers who opted to travel were less than expected. Autos, meanwhile, were back on roads in Chennai and sanitiser bottles could be seen

Amid lockdown, Kerala govt boat ferries girl to exam centre

PNS ■ ALAPPUZHA

In a heart-warming gesture, a 70-seater boat of the Kerala State Water Transport department was sent to ferry a lone passenger, a 17-year-old student, to enable her to appear for the plus one examination (11th standard) on two days last month in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

The student, Sandra Babu, who stays in a remote backwater island in Kuttanad in Alappuzha district, had to appear for the examination on Friday and Saturday at Kanjiram in Kottayam district.

Boats are the only means of transport in this region and due to the COVID-19 induced lockdown the services had stopped plying when the dates of the examination, postponed earlier, were announced.

The Kuttanad region has the lowest altitude in India and is one of the few places in the world where farming is carried on around 1.2 metre to 3.0 metres below sea level (average level of the surface of one or more of earth's bodies of water from which heights such as elevation may be measured).



Sandra, whose parents are daily wagers, were wondering how to get her to the examination hall, when she approached the department.

On hearing about her plight, the department did not think twice but decided to extend a helping hand, KSWTD Director Shaji V Nair said.

However, there were two issues — as two districts were involved. The student, from Alappuzha, had to write the examination in Kottayam district and they had to deviate from the normal route to pick and drop her. But this was the only option as it was the question of a child's future, Nair said.

Transport minister A K Saseendran also supported the move, he said.

Normally, the student has to take another boat to reach the embarkation point of the KSWTD. A five-member crew, which was entrusted the task of transporting the girl, took the boat to the nearest point from her home, and she walked about five km to reach this point, another official said.

The boat dropped her, waited for the examination to be over and dropped her back home on both days, Nair, whose daughter also appeared for the plus one examination, said.

Zoom app releases latest encryption, security features

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Videoconferencing platform Zoom has released an enhanced and encrypted version of the application in order to ensure protection and privacy of personal information, country's federal cyber security said on Monday, asking users to update its latest version.

"The latest version 5.0 of Zoom has been released which supports AES 256-bit GCM encryption of meeting data and greater resistance to tampering," said a latest CERT-In advisory, accessed by PTI.



Other security improvements include changing the minimum default password length to six characters for meetings, webinars and cloud recordings and giving the capability to admins to disable sharing on cloud recordings and setting their expiration

times, said the national technology arm to combat cyber attacks and guarding of the Indian cyber space.

The latest addition of security features in the platform, whose usage spiked due to the nationwide lockdown, is believed to have been carried out in view of security-related advisories issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs and CERT-In to its users.

In April, the Union home ministry had issued an advisory and said that the Zoom meeting platform is not safe and it is not to be used for official purposes by government officials.

Arunachal rolls out long term policy for developing health infrastructure

PNS ■ ITANAGAR

The Arunachal Pradesh government has initiated a long-term policy for developing robust health infrastructure in the state to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said on Monday.

The government has decided to utilize funds under North East Special Infrastructure Development (NESID) and North East Council for upgrading the states health sector, he said.

"A long-term policy for robust infrastructure and facilities for all 25 district hospitals in the state has been rolled out with proposed allocation of Rs 350 crore," Khandu told reporters in his



The government has decided to utilize funds under NESID and North East Council for upgrading the states health sector, he said

office here. He said Corona cases in the state is quite low with only three positive cases being reported and it was possible only because of the nodal officers appointed by the state government in various states of the country who took tremendous

pain in taking all precautions for the stranded people by supplying them food items and essentials for which the spread of the virus was minimized.

"The government in order to tackle the pandemic has provided funds to all 26 deputy com-

missioners by providing an amount of Rs 12 lakh each from the state disaster response fund to deal with the situation. A separate fund of Rs 1.3 crore has been released from the CMRF to all the superintendent of police, he said.

SP announces financial assistance of Rs 50,000 for 'Border'

PNS ■ BAHARACH (UP)

The Samajwadi Party on Monday announced a financial assistance of Rs 50,000 for a baby boy named 'Border' who was born in the no man's land between India and Nepal.

The financial aid was announced by SP MLA Rajpal Kashyap on the directives of party chief Akhilesh Yadav, SP district president Lakshmi Narain Yadav said. The money will be provided to the newborn's family residing in Prithvipura village in Motipur tehsil.

On Saturday, a woman named Jantara gave birth to

the child in the no man's land between India and Nepal. She named her son 'Border'.

Akhilesh Yadav, in a tweet on Sunday, had said, "It's a request that someone write a true letter on the future of 'Border' born on the India-Nepal border and 'Lockdown' and 'Ankesh' born on a train coming from Mumbai to Uttar Pradesh. The BJP should issue a white paper and not a letter on the plight of the country in the past six years."

The tweet was an apparent reference to an open letter written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the first anniversary of his second term.



White tigress at Delhi zoo undergoes dental procedure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A five-year-old white tigress in the Delhi zoo underwent a month-long dental procedure after she stopped eating due to swelling in the lower gum.

On finding that the tigress, Sita, was under stress and had stopped her feed intake, Delhi zoo officials in May first week conducted a preliminary examination which revealed swelling in the lower gum close to the lower left canine.

It was causing the tigress immense pain and discomfort, requiring immediate medical intervention to help alleviate pain, non-profit Wildlife SOS, which assisted in the dental procedure said in a statement.

The zoo officials also consulted experts from the Indian Veterinary Research Institute in Bareilly to carry out digital radiography and biopsy for proper diagnosis. A Wildlife SOS veterinary



team transported a digital X-ray machine and a dental X-ray machine all the way from Agra to New Delhi for the procedure, the statement said.

"As the lockdown prevented normal vehicular movement, Delhi Zoo Director Suneesh Buxy sent a vehicle with an officer from the zoo to Agra to bring the Wildlife SOS veterinary team and the equipment," it said. The X-ray equipment

enabled the veterinary team to examine and detect a root abscess in the lower left canine of the tigress' jaw. "The abscess was drained and treated with antiseptic solution and anti-inflammatory medication. The tigress has been placed under observation and is recovering well," the statement said. The entire procedure concluded last week, the officials said. Just like humans, animals

suffer from dental issues like gum disease, gingivitis, broken teeth and tooth decay. In some cases, animals need root canal treatment. Wildlife SOS veterinarians have been carrying out specialised dental procedures to help tigers, bears, leopards, elephants, among other animals. "The NZP vet team and Wildlife SOS have done a

good job with providing treatment. This has brought significant improvement in the overall health of the tigress. The lockdown is a difficult time, but we are doing our best to provide necessary care and treatment to our animals," Buxy said.

Kartick Satyanarayan, CEO of Wildlife SOS, said, "We are happy to assist the Delhi zoo with veterinary support. Dental problems can be extremely painful for animals and may lead to further infection, if not treated immediately. We were happy to be of service to the tiger and the Delhi zoo."

Ilayaraja, Deputy Director - Veterinary Services, Wildlife SOS, said that big cats like tigers are greatly dependent on their canines and the painful abscess in the lower canine was affecting the tigress' behaviour and feeding pattern. The treatment rendered will help ease the pain.

Yoga, music, Bible: How frontline workers keeping calm amid COVID-19 storm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From doing yoga routines to listening to music and reading literature to holy books -- this is how many doctors and nurses working in the frontline of the war against COVID-19 are coping with the tremendous stress and anxiety that comes with their critical jobs.

Senior doctor V K Verma, who works at Delhi government-run Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital, begins his day by performing 'pranayams' and a few other 'asanas' before heading to work everyday.

For Dolly Massey, a senior nurse at a Max hospital here, the Bible is her constant companion at the facility that she says keeps her "calm amid this storm".

"I keep a pocket Bible in my bag all the time and even an e-Bible on my mobile phone," Massey said. "I read Psalms and texts from the holy book dur-



ing breaks, and before and after finishing work. It keeps me anchored, mentally and physically."

The 27-year-old said she never felt afraid even in the beginning when coronavirus had just come up or during the lockdown when the cases kept rising, and deaths were happening. "But, now, I'm a little bit afraid that I might get infect-

ed too," she said. Delhi-born Massey, who hails from Dehradun, said she had been working with the Max Smart Hospital for the past four years.

"I'm a very God-fearing person and so, believe this pandemic is also a sign from Him for us humans to introspect, and repent for the mistakes that we have committed, whether it's damaging of our nature or

not being sensitive to fellow human beings," she said. From government hospitals to private facilities, doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers are at the forefront of the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, and nearly 500 of them have tested positive for the disease in Delhi.

The healthcare workers are at a very high risk of contracting the infection as they are on the frontline of this COVID-19 war, according to Kumud Bharti, a senior doctor at the LNJP Hospital.

"I keep a pocket Bible in my bag all the time and even an e-Bible on my mobile phone," Massey said. "I read Psalms and texts from the holy book during breaks, and before and after finishing work. It keeps me anchored, mentally and physically."

"While doctors are taking precautions with personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, gloves and other measures, and we know our duty to serve humanity in such situations, doctors, after all, are also humans," Bharti said.

The LNJP Hospital, run by the Delhi government, is a dedicated COVID-19 facility and hundreds of coronavirus patients are admitted there. A senior technical supervisor who worked in the operation theatre at the hospital, had recently died of COVID-19.

Uttarakhand CM, 3 ministers in self-quarantine after colleague tests +ve

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat and three cabinet colleagues were in self-quarantine Monday following a meeting last week with Tourism Minister Satpal Maharaj, who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Satpal Maharaj, his wife and 21 other people - family members, staff and his followers staying in the same household - have tested positive, an official said on Sunday.

On Friday, Satpal Maharaj had attended a meeting of the state cabinet.

The state health department said there was no need for the ministers and officials who attended Friday's meeting to isolate themselves, going by the Centre's guidelines. "The ministers and officials fall into the category of low risk contacts as they were not in close contact with Satpal



Maharaj. They can function in a normal way and there is no need to quarantine them," state Health Secretary Amit Negi said.

But the CM and the three other ministers - Harak Singh Rawat, Madan Kaushik and Subodh Uniyal - decided to remain in self-quarantine as a precautionary measure, an official at the Chief Minister's

SHORT READS



DG BSF reviews border domination plan along IB in Jammu

JAMMU: Director General of Border Security Force (BSF) S S Deswal visited forward areas along the International Border (IB) in Jammu frontier and reviewed the border domination plan, the border guarding force said on Monday. Deswal, who arrived here on May 30 on a two-day visit, also reviewed the prevailing COVID-19 situation and advised the troops to indulge in physical activities for improved immunity to deal with the pandemic, a spokesperson of the BSF said. Accompanied by Additional DG, S Panwar and Inspector General, Jammu frontier, N S Jamwal, he said the DG BSF visited the critical areas of the entire border stretch and held discussions with various sector and unit commanders besides police officers regarding border domination and other security measures being adopted.

2 teens, 7-year-old boy drown in UP's Ballia

BALLIA (UP): Two teenagers and a seven-year-old boy drowned in two separate incidents on Monday while taking a bath in Ganga river on the occasion of 'Ganga Dussehra' here, police said. At Maldepur ghat in Fefna area, Ankush (14) and Golu (15) slipped and fell into the Ganga river while taking a bath and drowned, police said. Their bodies were later fished out from the river and sent for postmortem. In another incident, Prince Patel also drowned in the river while taking a bath at Haldi area. His body has not been traced yet, police said.

Pune village uses umbrella as social distancing tool

PUNE: A village in Pune district has decided to use an umbrella as a social distancing tool amid the coronavirus outbreak, taking a cue from a much-feted idea implemented in Thaneermukkom in Kerala's Alappuzha. An official said the umbrella as a social distancing tool in Manchar gram panchayat on Pune-Nashik Highway, with a population of 50,000, was producing results as not a single COVID-19 case has been reported here so far. "With lockdown norms being eased gradually, and a lot of people traveling to these parts from Mumbai, the danger of transmission also increased. Therefore, it became important to ensure the village was safe from the outbreak. Since the Kerala model of using umbrellas for social distancing was effective, we too adopted it here," said Datta Ganjale, sarpanch of Manchar village. He said the use of social media, powered by hashtags, selfies with umbrella etc encouraged people and went a long way in making the idea a success.

SHORT READS



Swarm has diverted to other states; no need to be afraid

BENGALURU: Karnataka agriculture minister B C Patil on Monday sought to allay apprehensions among farmers about locust attack, saying there was no need to be afraid as the swarm had "diverted" to other states. In the wake of locust attacks in many northern states, the Karnataka farmers were also worried, especially those from North Karnataka region such as Bidar and Kalaburagi. The minister, however, said there was no need to be afraid. "There is no need to be afraid of locusts. It was never a problem in Karnataka," Patil told reporters in Tumakuru. He said that he was also worried when the news broke that a large swarm of locusts had entered the country. "We were also afraid that it may reach Bidar, Kalaburagi or Yadagiri and we had made preparations accordingly but luckily it diverted to other states," Patil said.

Lucknow institute develops affordable coronavirus test

LUCKNOW: Lucknow's Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences has claimed to have developed a cheap rapid test that can detect coronavirus in less than 30 minutes. Developed by the Department of Molecular Medicine and Biotechnology at the premiere government institution, the RNA-based test will cost just Rs 500 after it gets approval from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The test uses the same process of RNA testing which is followed in the RT-PCR technology presently used on the directions of the ICMR. Currently, a coronavirus test costs Rs 5,000 and it takes three to four hours to give results. The new technology is cost-effective and takes just 30 minutes to give results, said Swasti Tiwari, head of the Department of Molecular Medicine and Biotechnology.

First physical meet of EC in nearly 3 months

NEW DELHI: A meeting of the "full commission" -- the chief election commissioner and two election commissioners -- took place at the Nirvachan Sadan here on Monday for the first time in nearly three months. The poll panel had been holding virtual meets as Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, who was visiting the United States on leave in the first half of March, got stranded there due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Arora returned to India recently and underwent the mandatory quarantine before joining office on Monday. A key decision taken in one such virtual meeting was to allow the legislative council election in Maharashtra to pave the way for Uddhav Thackeray becoming a member of the state legislature within the stipulated six months of becoming chief minister. The polls were deferred due to the coronavirus outbreak.

Govt's locust control policy focuses on chemical spray

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the country faces the worst ever desert locust outbreak in three decades, a farm expert has said the government is just focusing on chemical spray on the migratory pest, ignoring other natural methods for controlling the menace.

Presently, locusts have affected five states — Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra — and the Centre has issued a warning to the border-sharing states.

The Centre has plans to step up aerial spray using drones and helicopters. "Despite the known side effects of aerial spraying of pesticides, the government's locust control policy is focused on chemical spray only and other non-chemical measures are being completely ignored," Haryana-based Kudrati Khethi Abhiyan Advisor Rajinder Chaudhary said in a statement.

There is no doubt that the locust attack is a menace that cannot be ignored, but along with locust control, it must also be ensured that the control mea-



sures do not pollute air, water, environment and food chain, he said.

A representation has been made in this regard to the agriculture ministry.

To control locusts without side effects, a number of effective non-chemical remedies have been suggested by experts from India and abroad, including by Padma Shri awardee Chintala Venkata Reddy, an organic farmer from Telangana, he said.

Chintala has shared safe and effective measures with the government for control of locusts through biological and non-

chemical methods, he said.

"If chemical methods cannot be junked all together, then at least in the areas near the population and close to catchment/storage areas of water bodies, Government must adopt the safer non-chemical measures instead of adopting chemical measures," Chaudhary said.

Listing out some of the non-chemical measures, he said locusts, which do not travel or eat during night, can be collected and used as poultry feed. Economic and physical feasibility of this method has been established. A person can catch up to

There is no doubt that the locust attack is a menace that cannot be ignored, but along with locust control, it must also be ensured that the control measures do not pollute air, water, environment and food chain, he said

10 quintals of locust in a night and use them as poultry and duck feed, thereby helping control locusts, he said. Another way to control locusts within 24 hours is by spraying a concoction of linseed oil, edible soda/sodium bicarbonate and extracts of garlic, cumin and orange. This mixture also has no side effects on crops. Timely measures can be taken by understanding the cycle of locusts and one can use available parasitic fungi that can kill locusts, he added.

Delhi's borders to be sealed for a week, announces Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's borders will be sealed for a week in the wake of rising coronavirus cases in the city, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced on Monday as he sought suggestions from people by Friday to reopen the same.

Kejriwal also expressed apprehensions that people from other states will come to Delhi to avail "best health services" amid the ongoing COVID-19 crisis once borders are reopened and that will lead to a shortage of beds for those living in the national capital.

Addressing an online media briefing, Kejriwal said people having passes and engaged in essential services will be allowed to enter the national capital while government employees working in Delhi can pass through on the basis of their identity cards.

Some people say borders should be reopened after one week but healthcare services in the city should be available only for Delhiites, Kejriwal said.

"For now, we are sealing Delhi's borders for a week. We will take a concrete decision after one week once we have taken into consideration the sugges-



tions of everyone including experts," he said.

Seeking "guidance" from Delhiites on the reopening of borders with Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, the chief minister asked them to send their suggestions on WhatsApp number 8800007722, delhicm.suggestions@gmail.com or by dialing 1031 by 5 pm on Friday.

Delhi Chief Secretary Vijay Dev in an order said: "In view of the current public health situation in Delhi, inter-state movement of non-residents of Delhi shall be allowed only on the production of e-passes issued for essential services or in case of emergent circumstances by authorities of respective

states/UTs and/or district magistrates of Delhi." Kejriwal further said that in the last five years, the Delhi government has done "phenomenal work" in the health sector, adding that several new hospitals and mohalla clinics were constructed.

He said that there is availability of a good number of beds, ICUs and ventilators in Delhi.

At a time when the healthcare systems in several parts of country and the world have collapsed due to rising numbers of COVID-19 cases, sufficient health facilities, including beds, are available in Delhi despite the fact that the number of infectious has been rising, the chief minister said.

Not advisable to open religious places now, says noted epidemiologist

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Guidelines allowing opening of religious places from June 8 has earned a thumbs down from a noted public health expert and epidemiologist, who said it would risk higher number of infections in view of greater density in such places, particularly elderly.

Professor and Head of Life Course Epidemiology at the Public Health Foundation of India, Giridhara R Babu said it is not the most advisable thing to do at the current stage.

"First of all, religious institutions are not the most vital factor for survival, though for a lot of people, mental health is affected because of the sudden lockdown and lack of normal ways of functioning," he said.

"Most of the religions have provision to worship from their



houses. It is risky to open religious institutions because most of them are closed spaces, density is highest inside most places and the vulnerable like the elderly visit the most," Prof. Babu said. The gathering of elderly together at one place along with the young and healthy ones would pose a higher risk as the latter may ignore mild symptoms and not follow the guidelines, he said.

Prof. Babu, who has worked with World Health Organisation for nearly six years, during which his efforts included stopping polio transmission in the state of Karnataka and initiation of Measles surveillance, blamed influx of people from other States for the spike in COVID-19 cases.

Giving an example, Prof Babu said Karnataka reported 248 COVID-19 cases last Friday, including 227 with inter-state travel history, especially Maharashtra.

Attacks on healthcare staff unacceptable: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Violence against healthcare personnel and rude behaviour towards them are not acceptable, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday, noting that such incidents are a result of "mob mentality".

Addressing the 25th foundation day of the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences in Bengaluru via video, Modi said he is aware of "an area that is of great concern to you all".

"Due to a mob mentality, those working on the frontlines, those on duty -- be it doctors, nurses, safai (sanitation) workers, others are subject to violence," he said.

The prime minister said he wanted to make it clear that "violence, abuse and rude behaviour is not acceptable".

The prime minister said at the root of India's brave fight against COVID-19 is the hard work of the medical community and the corona warriors.



"Due to a mob mentality, those working on the frontlines, those on duty -- be it doctors, nurses, safai (sanitation) workers, others are subject to violence," he said

"In fact, doctors and medical workers are like soldiers, but without the soldiers' uniform. The virus may be an invisible enemy, but our corona warriors, medical workers are invincible. In the battle of invisible versus invincible, our medical workers are sure to win," he said.

The prime minister noted that steps have been taken to protect healthcare personnel. "Steps have been taken to pro-

tect you against any form of violence. We have also provided an insurance cover of Rs 50 lakh for those on the frontline (of fighting the pandemic)," he said.

In April, the government had issued an ordinance making acts of violence and harassment against healthcare personnel deployed in combating COVID-19 a non-bailable offence, meeting a key demand of health professionals in the wake of recent attacks on them while discharg-

ing their duty. The maximum sentence under the new provision is seven years imprisonment and Rs five lakh fine.

A person can be sentenced anywhere between three months and five years of jail, besides a fine between Rs 50,000 and two lakh, for such crimes.

In cases where injuries caused are serious, the punishment will range from six months to seven years, and carry fine between Rs 1-5 lakh.

Focused on development and containing COVID-19, no comments on discontent, says Yediyurappa

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Amid speculation about discontent within the ruling BJP in Karnataka after a section of legislators held meetings last week, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday said he was focused on the state's development and containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I'm working for the development of the state and towards containing the spread of COVID, I'm focused on it, I'm not worried about other issues. I would not like to react about it," Yediyurappa told reporters here in response to a question. Reacting to reported comments by certain BJP legislators stating that Yediyurappa is not their leader, he merely said he would not wish to comment on it.



This was the first response by the Chief Minister in person after recent meetings by a section of legislators set alarm bells ringing in the ruling party. However, Yediyurappa not giving any direct reaction regarding the recent meetings or denying any discontentment against his leadership

has given some credence to the speculation, party sources said.

Ministerial aspirations of some senior legislators and impending elections to the Rajya Sabha and state legislative council is said to have triggered the politicking, as over a dozen party legislators, mostly from north Karnataka,

"I'm working for the development of the state and towards containing the spread of COVID, I'm focused on it, I'm not worried about other issues. I would not like to react about it," Yediyurappa said

met at senior MLA Umesh Katti's city residence over meals on Thursday.

Katti, an eight-time MLA, who has been sulking for not being made minister, is also making frantic efforts for his brother Ramesh Katti to be chosen for the Rajya Sabha seat that will fall vacant soon.

Ensure thermal scanners are available at all railway stations: UP CM to officials

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday directed officials to ensure thermal scanners are available at all railway stations in the state to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Addressing a review meeting with senior officials on the COVID-19 situation in the state, he said officials of police, health and administration should be deployed at the railway stations to make sure social distancing norms are being followed.

"Everyone going inside stations should be thermally scanned and handbills regarding coronavirus prevention should be given to the passengers," Adityanath said.



The chief minister said latest directives of the Centre should be followed on the coronavirus lockdown.

The Union Home Ministry on Saturday had announced that the nationwide lockdown in containment zones would continue till June 30, while religious places and shopping malls would be

reopened in a phased manner from June 8.

Adityanath said industrial units should be run keeping in mind the standard operating procedures.

He said the needy should be given food grains and the officials should ensure that no one sleeps hungry in the state.

DGCA to airlines: Keep middle seats vacant to extent possible

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aviation regulator DGCA on Monday asked airlines to keep middle seats vacant to the extent possible in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

However, if a flyer has been allotted the middle seat due to a high passenger load "then additional protective equipment like wrap-around gown of the Ministry of Textile approved standards" must be provided to him or her in addition to a three-layered face mask and face shield, said the DGCA order, which has been accessed by PTI.

While hearing a petition on whether to keep middle seats in flights vacant or not, the Supreme Court had on May 25 said that the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is free



to alter its norms in the interest of public health and safety of passengers "rather than of commercial considerations".

The DGCA, citing this Supreme Court observation, in its order on Monday said, "The airlines shall allot the seats in

such a manner that the middle seat/seat between two passengers is kept vacant if the passenger load and seat capacity permits the same."

"However, members of the same family may be allowed to sit together," it added.

Squeezed dry Delhi Golf Club lays off 59, as head cook walks off with Rs39L

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One of the most prestigious institutions of the national capital, the Delhi Golf Club had to lay off 59 staff of its food and beverages division as membership fee has not been sufficient to support their high wages which were over Rs 1 lakh per month for the head cook, and nearly Rs 90,000 for a waiter.

Were the club to continue paying such high salary for a few more months then in four to five years it would go bankrupt, said President Delhi Golf Club R.S. Bedi.

"Rs 11 crore was paid as full and final settlement to 59 workers. This money has come from our reserves. For example, the head cook got Rs 39 Lakh. On an average every



worker had between Rs 15 to 16 Lakh compensation, and plus the provident fund. As a gesture, we will ask our F&B outsourcing partner to consider these employees for contractual engagement," said Bedi.

Last week, the club put up a statement shutting down its food and beverage division citing a high wage bill, negotiated by a committee in 2015, which led to huge losses and threatened its financial stability.

"Rs 11 crore was paid as full and final settlement to 59 workers. This money has come from our reserves. For example, the head cook got Rs 39 Lakh. On an average every worker had between Rs 15 to 16 Lakh compensation, and plus the provident fund

As a result, the lay off happened, and the club had to outsource the division.

Speaking to IANS, Bedi said the coronavirus pandemic has run havoc on the financial

health of the club, there was no revenue in the past three months, and it seems the situation, in the backdrop of social distancing norms, will not improve till the end of 2020.

He added that the membership fee of the club is not enough to support the wage bill of F&B division. "We were paying 40 percent higher salaries than any other club in India. In the past two years, we were in constant touch with the employees of this division and asked them to renegotiate the wage agreement."

Bedi said as per 2015 wage agreement, the committee agreed to pay 250 per cent more than the market rate, insisting that the club has taken every step in compliance with the labour laws of the state.

Another push

Cabinet decisions on MSMEs and the agricultural economy are well-intended but depend a lot on implementation and sub-text



The Coronavirus and its shape-shifting effect on the economy have been debilitating but the Government has been reacting to it in fits and starts. And while the stimulus packages announced in a series so far haven't been as stimulating, the Cabinet decisions with regard to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the agricultural economy are well-intended but depend a lot on implementation and details. The definition of MSMEs has been changed, their turnover limit revised upward to ₹250 crore from ₹100 crore. The Government has infused ₹20,000 crore into

the sector as subordinate debt for stressed units. And although the Finance Minister in her first tranche of the stimulus had included ₹3 lakh crore collateral-free automatic loans for them, many MSME owners claimed that about 97 per cent were not in the corporate sector and were either partnerships or proprietorships. So only a minuscule number of firms, that were either private limited or LLP, were benefitted. Besides, this badly-hit sector, which contributes up to 30 per cent of the GDP, has not quite recovered from demonetisation and many units are almost on the verge of closure. And for all the detailing, the fact of the matter is that credit channels like banks and NBFCs will have to ease loans to this sector no matter what the Government says. Even now, MSME credit is a very small percentage of total outstanding bank credit and that pie was declining even before the pandemic, decelerating industrial growth. The proposed fund of funds would help list MSMEs on stock exchange, hoping it will encourage private sector investments in them. But without good ratings and financials, that would not deliver immediately. Farmers, too, got some incentive in the form of a hike in Minimum Support Price (MSP) for 14 crops, which will be 50-83 per cent more than the cost of production. But the Government's loan facility to farmers (₹3 lakh with a two per cent interest subvention) and the credit scheme for street vendors still do not address the dire need for fund infusion. Of course, more decisions guaranteeing farmers' incomes, encouraging crop rationalisation and making agri-business investment worthy are expected like getting rid of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act and facilitating easy inter-state trade for farmers. Farmers currently are bound to sell agriculture produce only through APMC mandis, which restrict the free flow of farm products and lead to cartelisation. Though APMCs were meant to protect farmers from commission agents and middlemen, over time they embodied the very ills that they were meant to cure. But to their credit, they did ensure a steady procurement of foodgrains to avoid our food crises. So though farmers may have free market benefits, dismantling a regimented procurement structure would have to be followed up by creating an efficient marketing and distribution system that does not compromise our food security. Free market policies may not look at such altruistic priorities as creating a buffer. Yet we must remember that at least our surplus food reserves helped us somewhat during an emergency brought about by the pandemic. The dairy industry would be a good comparison. With private dairies refusing to buy extra milk produced, only cooperative dairies picked it up and converted it into other milk products, thereby easing the pressure on dairy owners. The Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation is even providing free milk to migrants to take care of the glut in supplies. Also, over 90 per cent of our farmers do not have access to regulated markets, so dismantling them wouldn't really have a cascading impact. A better bet would be to widen a network of well-distributed mandis and invest in longer shelf life of produce by way of attendant infrastructure like cold chains, storage, grading, transportation and so on.

Also, many of these measures were intended and discussed before to revive a slowing economy and are not particularly a palliative to the pandemic. We still have a slowing GDP to take care of and that will need big bang reforms and a fund infusion in the short run. Second, this year's GDP projection has fallen to 4.2 per cent and a consistent downward revision of growth means that figures aren't sacred. And for all the push to the agricultural sector, nothing is being done to generate demand in urban hubs or joblessness without which no reform would make sense. Our manufacturing and construction growth is almost flatlining and certain sectors are just not being considered for incentivisation. Till this piecemeal approach continues, no matter how reinvigorating each is, there is no rescuing the economy.

Back to space

The privately-funded SpaceX mission not only marks America's return to manned space flight but is much more



A comment on Twitter read, "2020 in the US resembled 1968." A statement by aviation journalist Jon Ostrower has a historical context to it. For those of us in India, it is worth recalling that in the late 1960s, as the US reached for the moon, race riots and civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King reached a crescendo. Similarly, protests following the "effective" murder of an unarmed Black man George Floyd, just as America launched its first manned mission to space after almost a decade, is a telling commentary on the US: The world's only superpower can

climb the greatest heights and plumb the lowest lows all at once. However, one must not lose sight of the tremendous achievement of the SpaceX Crew Dragon mission to the International Space Station (ISS) undertaken by astronauts Robert Behnken and Douglas Hurley. For one, while funded in part by the US' space agency, NASA, the rocket that carried the astronauts to space, the Falcon 9, the Dragon capsule and even the spacesuits the astronauts wore, were all developed by the Elon Musk-promoted SpaceX. Musk, who also founded electric carmaker Tesla, is a divisive figure for many but only the most petulant will deny that he is a technology visionary. Developing a commercially-viable space launch system from scratch and now using it to launch astronauts from American soil, he has done something that was previously unthinkable. A private, commercial organisation without Government support, funded by Musk's billions among other investors in a sector previously dominated by Government money across the world, he has proven, like he himself with electric cars, that change is possible.

This acquires even more significance as India, too, is opening up its space sector for commercial opportunities. Of course, we might not be able to find a man like Musk but even small private sector development, starting with a satellite that can use existing technology from the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), can drive India's space industry. Musk's development with SpaceX alongside the work by fellow American billionaire Jeff Bezos with his "Blue Origin" has created large volumes of research as well as high-tech jobs across the US. India can emulate this and create jobs for legions of its best and brightest engineers, many of who emigrated to the US to work with the likes of Musk and Bezos as well as the larger aerospace and space industries. Arguing that opportunities exist and allowing industry access is not, however, the be-all and end-all of policy. The Indian Government, ISRO and private Indian industry will have to walk the talk if we want to emulate Musk.

Age of reason

Amid border tensions, India must beat China at its own game by playing to its strengths, lowering rhetoric, strengthening its military-economic muscle and posturing peace



BHOPINDER SINGH

The crest and trough of the Sino-Indian relationship has been witnessing its lowest ebb ever since the Doklam standoff of 2017. Now, an expected reportage of counter-narratives is ensuing on both sides. Hard facts have become a casualty. The primary driver for the present jingoistic fervour is the cold reality of extreme "political vulnerability" following mismanagement of the COVID pandemic and its accompanying impact both in Beijing and New Delhi. Thus, the common urge for some societal distraction. The ability to spin the situation (however severe) towards their own advantage has been the hallmark of both regimes.

While this is certainly not the sort of distraction that would appeal to New Delhi's sensibilities, it is clearly up the Chinese path of circumstantial preference. The Xi regime is legitimised and galvanised by the hegemonic "Chinese Dream" and the sudden undoing of the same due to the socio-economic cost of COVID-19. Alongside came the trade war with the US, impulsive tendencies flaring up in Hong Kong, Tibet and with the Uighurs. The re-election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-Wen, who has brazenly slammed the door on the Chinese offer of "one country, two systems," dealt a further blow. Chinese President Xi Jinping is desperately looking for distraction and is showcasing some "wins." He is punting on the tried and tested formula of patriotism to "manufacture" distraction.

In such times, the media becomes the foremost weapon for subterfuge and inflaming passions that tend to divert passions from real issues. It is in this backdrop that a rather bizarre, loaded and factually questionable goad was made by Xi when he said, "It is necessary to explore ways of training and preparing for war because epidemic control efforts have been normalised." The supposed "enemy" was not named. It could be anyone — Taiwan, the US or India — given the prevailing dissonance. The Indian media does no service in biting the bait with its own proclivity for war-mongering and provoking the citizenry to adopt their own diversionary views. Uber-nationalism is also fodder for TRPs. Besides, it also ostensibly projects a "positive" outlook of Indian capabilities.

Amid the media din, the official dispensation has maintained an unusual silence, unlike the fuming free-for-all against Pakistan. Somewhere, the chinks in our foreign policy (especially with our neighbours) are getting embarrassingly exposed with traditional allies like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, too, rolling their eyes gently at China. Indian diplomacy seems to have got carried away with its own supposed stridency and circumstantial "pivot" with an ultimately fickle



US ignoring the virtues of quiet diplomacy and humility.

The fact is that China has an expansionist agenda while India does not. This is reflected in Chinese realpolitik and its chess-board moves. Denial and deception are a standard feature of Chinese diplomacy and no amount of serving tea on a swing can undo that basic instinct. When Xi was being personally charmed in Ahmedabad, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was engaged in a border fracas at that very moment. The same China, which selectively posits a "Dragon-Elephant tango," will have no qualms to veto India in favour of an international terrorist like Masood Azhar.

To get carried away by "hometown diplomacy" is reminiscent of *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* (India and China are brothers) naivety. Border issues between India and China date back to decades but a consensus on delimiting the same was established by way of improving bilateral relations. Today, a breakdown of that diplomatic understanding is apparent. Rhetoric on both sides needs to be lowered and not escalated. Beyond a point, the Chinese themselves cannot afford to open yet another "front" in these trying times.

So when the dust settles, both sides will claim to have "bloodied each other's nose," their cadres will be electrified and then, the leadership on both

sides will move on to the next set of distraction after having "won" this round. But the essential point of "tripping diplomacy" is well-nigh forgotten.

Reality is that 2020 is not 1962 even though the Indian armed forces are numerically and materially lesser than the PLA. However, the Chinese would know better than most that numeric superiority is not enough. Limited combat operations against India in 1967 at Nathu La and Cho La or the more expansive war against the Vietnamese forces in 1979 would validate this but the Chinese did get a bloody nose, both times.

Worse for the Chinese, today's PLA is also the largest military to have never partaken in any tangible combat experience whereas Indian soldiers are combat-experienced and tested. The Chinese are masters of knowing when to bargain as also just how much. They will limit their activism to the levels already established and keep the kettle boiling with existing and new-found proxies in the sub-continent. They just found a convenient opening for limited distraction as the Indian diplomacy and the Government inadvertently afforded the chance.

The foremost lesson for India is to not be taken in by its own charm offensives and instead strengthen its "core" in defence and economy. As it is, the diplomatic dice is loaded and

we make it worse with thundering blusters that unsettle smaller neighbours and send them scurrying into the willing arms of China. Uber-nationalism that is seen and heard in political rallies need to be inked where it matters, that is in defence budgets. All talk of mass exodus of US firms from China to India is more social media fantasy, like the cadre call for boycotting Chinese products. A bulk of this lopsided trade with China is done by the Indian Government itself.

Instead, the citizenry has to put pressure on the Government to revert to old-fashioned and professional diplomacy that is not necessarily conducted under the glare of the media lens or with one eye permanently fixated on electoral prospects. China fears India as a "moral idea" which intrinsically resonates across global capitals. We cannot look and sound like China. Xi's "thought on diplomacy" is unapologetic about its hegemonic intent. India needs to "manage" the same by lowering rhetoric, strengthening military-economic muscle and yet posturing peace and reason. Basically, beat China at its own game by playing to its strengths. The elephant needs to remain calm, wise and powerful. It must never forget the ignoble fire-spewing instincts of the dragon.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

THE CITIZENRY HAS TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO REVERT TO OLD-FASHIONED AND PROFESSIONAL DIPLOMACY THAT IS NOT NECESSARILY CONDUCTED UNDER THE GLARE OF THE MEDIA LENS OR WITH ONE EYE PERMANENTLY FIXATED ON ELECTORAL PROSPECTS

SOUNDBITE

If you take the modern-day game, India has two best players in Virat and Rohit, who play orthodox cricket but they are absolutely destructive in any format of the game.

Former Sri Lanka captain —Kumar Sangakkara



I've never been hell-bent on having a birthday celebration. I find great joy in the simplicity and modesty of things. I like and find comfort in a lack of pomp and flair.

Actor —Shobhita Dhulipala



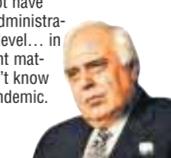
The WHO needs to reform. What the President said, if it reforms, ends corruption and reliance on China, the US will very seriously consider coming back.

US NSA —Robert O'Brien



It (the BJP) does not have any experience of administration at the national level... in States, it's a different matter... Now they don't know how to face this pandemic.

Congress leader —Kapil Sibal



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Condemnable act

Sir — This refers to the editorial, "Racist attack" (June 1). George Floyd's death is a dastardly and brutal act. The image of him begging for air to breathe is tragic. The circumstances around his death are a shame not only for the US, which still follows racism in this computer age, but also for the rest of humanity. It is nothing but a vulgar display of authority and arrogance by the police and is a case that must be condemned in harsh terms. It is a sheer violation of human rights. The hope is that the law and judiciary will do justice to Floyd.

NR Ramachandran
Chennai

Ill-effects of e-learning

Sir — Though just some time ago, youngsters, especially school-going kids, were prohibited from using mobile phones and computers for a longer period of time, nowadays, they are the ones who use digital devices for long hours as online classes have become a norm, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Things Government must set right

On March 24, when a three-week nation-wide lockdown was announced, the Government's concern was to save human lives. Prime Minister Narendra Modi borrowed an idiom from Urdu poet Meer Taqi Meer, "Jan hai toh jahaan hai" (If you have life, you have the world) to drive home his point. The Corona pandemic had just begun spreading its tentacles then. On the day when lockdown 4 ended to be replaced by unlock 1, India reported 8,380 cases and 193 deaths, taking the total tally to 1,82,143 cases and 5,164 deaths — a big leap from just 10 earlier. The idiom, too, was tweaked to, "Jaan bhi and jahaan bhi" (Life also, the world also). All of this seemed to echo the insensitivity shown by US President Donald Trump and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, though to a lesser extent. There has been a marked attitudinal change by the Government towards the virus and life. However, the notion of the two Western nations is too obsessive to be emulated in India, which has to take care of millions of people on the roads, under tin roofs and in thatched huts across the country; in short those who have been facing myriad existential issues for ages. The Central Government is insistent on adopting a uniform strategy. There is perceptible reluctance on its

The education sector was one among the first to cope with the Coronavirus crisis. It started adapting various methods to be in touch with the learners. In India, lakhs of students are now glued to their laptops and mobile screens, listening and interacting with

their teachers, who have become "regular visitors" right on their table and in their hands.

Now that online classes have become a go-to solution, helping educational institutions beat the pandemic so as to push their academic calendars, concerns have

been raised by experts. They fear that overuse of digital devices and too much exposure to the internet can harm young minds in a hazardous way and that is unpredictable.

Haridasan Rajan
Kozhikode

M Pradyu
Kannur

Be a responsible citizen

Sir — The Corona pandemic has affected almost every sphere of our lives. All sectors of the economy remain paralysed, thus affecting their financial position. It's only now that the economy is resuming activities. But with life slowing down, this is the time for us to inculcate positive changes.

The vacuum created due to COVID-19 also reminded us of an old saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention." Even as life remained stagnant, we learnt to remain "self-dependent" and practise "self-reliance." Barring a few cases, in general people were cooperative, confining themselves to their homes and maintaining minimum interaction. Now that our fight against the COVID pandemic will continue until a vaccine/cure is found, it is for the people to stay safe. The lifting of curbs will see a spontaneous rise in cases. But people must voluntarily observe safety protocols while going about their lives.

Gobardhan Singh
Ranchi

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Beware the dragon's moves

China's recent actions at the LAC have only gone to prove the long-term and diverse strategies that the nation follows



AMRIT PAL SINGH

China is doing what it does best — confuse and confound. Its recent actions have only gone to prove the long-term and diverse strategies that the nation follows. It began with the sequential escalation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) at Naku La in Sikkim and then at Pangong Tso in Ladakh. This has been followed by a face-off at the Galwan Valley in the Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) sector of the LAC in Ladakh. The activities, with soldiers engaged on three border points, have the potential to escalate due to the intrinsic linkages between and the changed circumstances of the present clashes from the earlier incidents. There were also some indirect actions on both sides that have been in focus like the objection by Nepal to the development and inauguration of the road from Dharchula to Lipulekh pass in Uttarakhand. This is despite an agreement between India and China to have trade across the pass in the tri-junction of Nepal-India-China. Beijing accepted the pass as one of the commercial and cultural transit points with India under its 1954 Peace and Tranquility Agreement. This was reiterated when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China in 2015. The route has deep-rooted spiritual and civilisational significance for India. In contrast, the recent broadcasting of weather reports of Gilgit-Baltistan on Indian news channels and the pre-conditions set for Foreign Direct Investment in segments of the Indian economy have definitely upped the ante for the Chinese.

The three sectors where India and China have recurrence of disputes are in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh. The Arunachal sector is largely dormant despite China's claim to the entire State. The Sikkim sector is strategic as any Chinese road and infrastructure development in its proximity can threaten the narrow Silihuri Corridor which is the gateway from India to the seven States of North-East India. The Doklam stand-off for 73 days from June to August 2017 amply demonstrated the strategic relevance of this sector.

It is in the Ladakh sector that the geo-strategic implications of the face-off and incursions assume significance. The Chinese have made an immense investment of \$62 billion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. Recent assertions by India on its right to Gilgit-Baltistan through which the CPEC passes on its way to the Karakoram Pass in the Shaksgam valley (illegally conceded by Pakistan to China) have obviously rocked the boat. China does not make short-term tactical moves without a long-term plan which may unfold in the winter when terrain and weather put India at a disadvantage. Unlike Doklam, where the Chinese movement was restricted to the single track which they were trying to develop along a narrow valley, in Ladakh the LAC is open and rugged. There are various "disputed areas" and "areas of differing perceptions" from the DBO in the north to Fukche in the south (the point of entry of the Indus river from Tibet to India). The scene of the recent scuffle has been on the banks of the Pangong Tso Lake. Its centrality to the entire LAC in Ladakh and proximity to the Spanggur Gap and Chushul make the south bank of the lake a secure flank for large-scale moves by the Chinese. Hence, it holds operational importance to both armies.

The western Ladakh region of DBO provides a buffer against Chinese direct access to Shaksgam valley and the Siachen heights. India therefore, strongly holds on to DBO. Here the Galwan valley has witnessed similar stand-offs in the past with Chinese encampments detected far inside the alignment of the LAC into the valley. Strong deployments along the Line of Control (LoC) at Kargil and Drass opposite Pakistan have also to be maintained by India at all times. Reinforcements and additional forces will have to be moved into Ladakh mostly from the plains and will require acclimatisation to operate in high-altitude areas of 11,000 to 16,000 feet. Logistics and sustenance of forces are a key factor, especially in Ladakh.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces involved in the skirmishes are not their regular army but the Border Defence Regiments (BDR) backed by PLA garrisons and camps with acclimatised troops along the Chinese East-West Highway. In contrast, Indian regular troops get sucked in as reinforcements and readjustments of command and control are necessitated as the Indo-Tibetan Border Police force (ITBP) readjusts from its border posts held in peacetime.

Hence, two imperatives for the Department of Military Affairs and Ministry of Defence to resolve in the present will be in the fields of command and control of border management forces and logistic preparedness. The office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is best suited to resolve intra-service coordination of both areas as also inter-ministerial resolution of the command and control lacunae of forces on the LAC. India's approach must include a myriad of agencies and all elements of national power. The annual defence allocations have been shrinking regularly (experts say the percentage available for modernisation has shrunk from 40 per cent to almost 32 per cent) and cannot sustain the human and equipment inventory needed to effectively deter China. In such a situation and in the post-Corona reduced resource basket, the prioritisation of requirements rather than a dilution of weapon qualitative requirements, is recommended. There must be a push towards operationalising the Rohtang tunnel to full capacity especially in view of logistic sustenance and troop reinforcements for the road closed period starting in November.

(The writer is a veteran and co-author of 'Maoist Insurgency and India's Internal Security Architecture'.)

THESE THUGS ARE DISHONORING THE MEMORY OF GEORGE FLOYD, AND I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN. WHEN THE LOOTING STARTS, THE SHOOTING STARTS.

—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

POINT COUNTERPOINT



AFTER STOKING FIRES OF WHITE SUPREMACY YOUR ENTIRE PRESIDENCY, YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO FEIGN MORAL SUPERIORITY BEFORE THREATENING VIOLENCE?

—SINGER TAYLOR SWIFT

Hope sprouts in the farm

The Government deserves some credit for at least putting on the table long-pending reforms in agri-marketing, which if carried through, will be truly revolutionary



UTTAM GUPTA

Heralding a new chapter in agricultural market reforms in India, on May 15 Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made three major announcements under the "Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan." The first announcement was about the Centre's decision to enact a legislation to enable direct purchase of specified commodities — under entry 42 of the Union List and entry 33 of the Concurrent List — from farmers outside the designated Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs). Next was the move to enact a Central law on contract farming to provide a legal framework for farmers to engage with processors, aggregators, large retailers and exporters in a fair and transparent manner. Third was the decision to amend the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1954 and take off pulses, cereals, edible oil, oil seeds, onions and potatoes from the purview of this archaic law.

To understand the full ramifications of the proposed enactments, at the outset, let us take a look at the existing regulations. At present, trade in agri-commodities is governed by a highly-restrictive legislation viz. the APMC Act. This empowers State Governments to specify market areas — where farmers bring their produce for sale. These are operated and regulated by market committees. There are a total of about 5,000 such markets or *mandis* across the country.

The stated objective of the APMCs is to promote organised marketing of farm commodities to ensure fair play, achieve an efficient system of buying and selling of commodities, protect farmers from intermediaries and traders and to ensure better prices and timely payment for the produce. Far from achieving these objectives, farmers are being exploited by a network of licenced traders and middlemen, who have a complete stranglehold over these platforms.

While on one hand, farmers don't get to sell their entire produce at the Minimum Support Price (MSP), on the other, no alternative platforms are available where they could sell. Even Government agencies don't come forward to buy when the market price dips below the MSP. Actually, the problem is much deeper.

This has to do with a cozy nexus between politicians and grain traders that has existed and flourished for decades. A grain trader has a fundamental interest in ensuring that he minimises his payout to the farmer for the grains he buys. He can succeed in this gameplan if the farmer is left high and dry by State agencies. So, he collaborates with the politicians in the ruling establishment to ensure that State agencies remain weak and de-motivated.

This nexus has also come in the way of amending the APMC Act to make way for alternative channels of selling, such as direct purchase by bulk buyers, processors, exporters and so on (the revenue State Governments get from levy of market fee on transactions at the *mandis* has proved to be another major deterrent. In 2017, the Modi Government had passed a Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing [Promotion and Facilitation] Law containing provisions to give more options to farmers for selling their crop and greater flexibility to traders such as 'single pan-State licence' for buying from anywhere in the State).

True to its nomenclature, the model law is a mere showpiece as until hitherto (prior to the COVID-19 crisis, to be specific), a majority of the States showed no interest in amending their



“THESE FARM REFORMS ARE INTENDED TO CREATE A PARALLEL ARRANGEMENT FOR SELLING FARM PRODUCE AND CAN CO-EXIST WITH THE APMCS. THESE AIM AT BREAKING THE MONOPOLY OF A FEW LICENCED TRADERS AT MANDIS, CREATE COMPETITION AND THUS HELP BOTH FARMERS AND CONSUMERS. WHETHER OR NOT THESE ACTUALLY SEE THE LIGHT OF THE DAY REMAINS TO BE SEEN”

In a daring move, the then BJP Government, led by Devendra Fadnavis, had approved in August 2018, an amendment to the Maharashtra Agricultural Produce Marketing (Development and Regulation) Act, 1963, in sync with the Centre's model law. That was done through the ordinance route. But Fadnavis was forced to withdraw the Bill on November 28, 2018 from the legislative council, a day after it was passed.

The continued writ of the APMCs has meant that there is no free movement of farm products even within the State, forget free inter-State trade. With several pieces of State legislation creating impregnable zones, even the much-trumpeted electronic national agriculture market (e-NAM) has failed to take off. The processors, exporters and other large buyers have no incentive to invest in agri-infrastructure. The archaic ECA (1954) with its draconian provisions, especially with regard to stock limits, acts as a further disincentive.

All this boils down to farmers not getting a remunerative price for their produce on the one hand and consumers having to pay a high price on the other — even as a number of intermediaries in the supply chain appropriate a major slice of what the latter pays. Needless to say, that the resulting low income not only keeps farmers poor but also boomerangs on overall economic growth through reduction in rural purchasing power. The extant state of affairs is not good for boosting exports on a sustainable basis either.

The COVID-19 crisis may have come as a blessing in disguise. It gripped India at a time when the Rabi crop, mostly the winter staple wheat, was ready for harvest. April–May is the period when farmers congregate at the *mandis*. Being the only platform where farmers could sell their produce, this would have led to overcrowding at the markets

which comes in conflict with "social distancing" — a pre-requisite for preventing the spread of the deadly virus.

Due to the dire need for adhering to "social distancing", Modi asked the States to suspend certain provisions of their respective APMC laws for three months to make way for purchase of farmers' produce directly from their doorsteps by large farmers' producers organisations (FPOs), large buyers such as processors, millers, exporters, cooperatives, individual traders and so on.

Some States like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Karnataka responded by making amendments in their APMC laws (using the ordinance route as none of the State Assemblies are in session, courtesy the prevailing emergency). As per the amendment, the entire State is declared as a "single market" wherein a trader can get a single licence for purchase of agricultural produce from any *mandi* within it. Further, it allows trade in all farm commodities, including livestock, outside the regulated APMC markets.

This has not only kept COVID-19 at bay (as the traders went to the farmers' doorstep instead of the latter having to go all the way to the *mandi*) but also fetched a remunerative price for their produce by offering more choice, resulting in higher income. No wonder, amid the gloom and doom in most other sectors of the economy, agriculture is expected to show a positive growth rate of over three per cent during the current year (of course, this will be helped by normal monsoon predicted by the meteorological department).

In retrospect, there is some reason to rejoice over the changes in APMC laws by the aforementioned States, which has enabled private trade to complement efforts of State agencies in ensuring record procurement from the farmers. While Modi had asked for suspension of the relevant provisions for

three months, these States have gone a step further by bringing an element of permanence. That serves as the icing on the cake. But some doubts remain.

For one, most States continue to turn a deaf ear to the Centre's wish. Even in the four States, where the changes have been brought about, these will have to be passed by the State Assemblies in the end. Given the deep-rooted vested interest, a Maharashtra-type fiasco can't be ruled out. In this backdrop, the Centre's decision to enact a Central law, wielding the rarely-used power under the Constitution to regulate inter-State trade and intra-State trade, makes major sense. The law will enable an entity to buy farm produce from farmers directly anywhere in the country, even outside the regulated market yards.

At the same time, the amendment in the ECA to remove fetters such as stock limits (these limits will be imposed only in exceptional circumstances) will enable large buyers viz. processors, millers, exporters and so on, to scale up purchases, thus providing sustained support to farmers. The proposed Contract Law — enforceable in all States — will clearly lay down rules of the game for a processor/large retailer that it must follow to ensure that farmers are not taken for a ride.

These farm reforms are intended to create a parallel arrangement for selling farm produce and can co-exist with the APMCs. These aim at breaking the monopoly of a few licenced traders at *mandis*, create competition and thus help both farmers and consumers. Whether or not these actually see the light of the day remains to be seen. For now, the Government deserves some accolades for at least putting on the table long-pending reforms in agri-marketing, which if carried through, will be truly revolutionary.

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

Don't take their right to life away

Having given legal protection to intersex kids against unnecessary surgeries, India must proactively put an end to intersex and female infanticide



PRASHANT SINGH GOOPI MADURAI

The recent killing of a one-day-old girl child in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvannamalai district has brought to the fore the unending practice of female infanticide. The murder was discovered on the complaint of an alert medical officer who suspected foul play.

Being the second reported instance of female infanticide from the region, this case has demonstrated that this evil practice is alive even during the current pandemic. Nearly 30

years ago, economist Amartya Sen argued that 100 million women were "missing." However, much before this usage was coined, the phenomenon behind the phrase was a reality in India, reflected in the practice of sex determination, selective abortions and female infanticide. There were no official numbers on female foeticide until the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) started collecting data on this crime in 2014. However, the consequences of killing the girl child before or after birth are clearly reflected in the skewed sex-ratios in the country.

In 2016, the Government released data based on the civil registration system. It showed that the sex ratio at birth (SRB) had fallen from 946 girls for every 1,000 boys in 1949 to 877 in 2014. A deeper crisis is revealed when the data on girls in the age group of zero-six years is examined. In 2011, the number of girls below six per

1,000 boys stood at 914 — which is the lowest since Independence. Now that the registration of births is compulsory, the SRB data is considered to be quite accurate. The problem is graver in five States (Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttarakhand, and Tamil Nadu) which have an SRB equal to or below 840.

Prevention of female foeticide and infanticide has been the focus of a wide range of the Government's efforts since the 1990s, with some successes and many challenges. The child sex ratio has continued to be on the decline even after the enactment of a Central law in 1994 banning the use of prenatal diagnostic tests for sex determination. Aside from this legal measure, the Union and State Governments have undertaken several policy initiatives such as the National Action Plan of 1991 to Balika Samridhhi Yojana in 1997 to the latest Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

campaign of 2015, to incentivise retention of the girl child. Several State Governments have also implemented innovative initiatives like the "Cradle Baby" scheme of the Tamil Nadu Government. Launched in 1992, the aim of the scheme was to encourage parents to give female children up for adoption by providing for cradles at Government hospitals and Primary Health Centres (PHCs). The two-fold objective was to prevent female infanticide and also stop illegal sale of babies.

This measure of the Tamil Nadu Government also encouraged reporting of this crime unlike other States where the cases are massively under-reported. In addition to improving law enforcement and preventing access to ultrasonography, measures like "Cradle Baby" scheme are critical.

The preference for the male child leading to a skewed sex ratio has been well-documented. However, another

major consequence of such preference poses a serious risk to bodily integrity of intersex infants and children. Intersex children in India are at constant risk of forced surgical and medical intervention in the form of sex normalising surgeries to align their body as per the normative definition of traditional gender identity i.e. male and female. In most cases, intersex children are assigned as male at birth.

This heinous practice is widespread in several Indian States, including Kerala, which claims to be a model State in terms of human development indicators. Even worse, the medical community also justifies such procedures, displaying a shocking ignorance of intersex human rights. For instance, doctors working in a hospital in Kerala have admitted performing such surgeries on intersex children and have also highlighted the preference of parents for the male child. In 2019, the Madras High Court outlawed this

practice and directed the Tamil Nadu Government to pass an order implementing the ban. However, infanticide of intersex babies and children continues to be an ignored issue in India. It is estimated that every year, more than 10,000 intersex children are born in India.

Still, our official statistics, including the census, do not provide any authentic population data of intersex children in the country.

Over the years, various United Nations (UN) committees have highlighted this issue. In 2019, expressing concern over the "mercy killing" of intersex children with disabilities, the UN Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommended the Government to "protect intersex children from attacks against their lives and any related harmful practices."

The "missing intersex children" phenomenon is not limited to India. There is an urgent need for more

research and documentation on this subject globally. Further, it is also critically important to initiate a dialogue on the need for an international instrument to prevent intersex infanticide and a complete ban on sex normalising surgeries.

Having already established a legal protection regime for intersex children against unnecessary surgeries, India has a unique opportunity to lead the intersex human rights movement if it can proactively put an end to intersex infanticide. To achieve these goals, the Centre and States must undertake urgent steps to ensure prevention and prosecution in cases of female and intersex infanticide.

(Singh is Executive Director, Srishti Madurai-LGBTQA+ student volunteer movement and Madurai is the elected Intersex Representative and Executive Board Member of International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, Geneva)

CAPSULE



A K Srivastava is new BEML Director (Defence Business)

BENGALURU: A K Srivastava assumed charge as Director (Defence Business) of BEML Limited, a schedule 'A' company under the Ministry of Defence, on Monday. He was also nominated as member of the Board of the company where, prior to this elevation, he was Chief General Manager, BEML Defence (Marketing). He graduated from IIT Kharagpur in Mechanical Engineering and joined BEML as an Engineer Trainee in 1987, a BEML release said. In his professional career spanning over three decades in BEML, he has worked in various 'critical functional areas' in the company, at different geographical locations including overseas, it said.



BSE launches options on gold mini, silver kg

NEW DELHI: In its endeavour to offer new products to commodity market participants and to deepen the market ecosystem, the BSE on Monday launched options on goods contracts like gold mini and silver kilo. The two contracts launched are gold mini (100 gram) and silver kilo, the exchange said in a statement. These contracts were launched by S K Mohanty, whole-time member of markets regulator Sebi, who emphasised that this is the right time for the launch of these contracts. "The options on goods contracts shall enable small-time jewellers, retailers to come forward and hedge their price risk on the BSE's commodity platform," said Ashish Kumar Chauhan, MD and CEO of the BSE.



BMW India resumes ops post temporary suspension

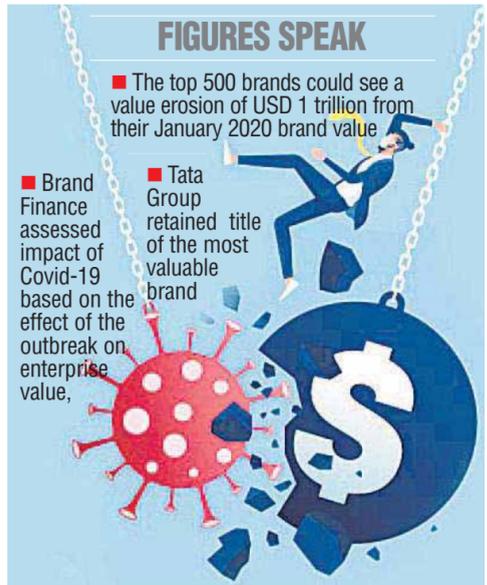
NEW DELHI: German luxury carmaker BMW on Monday said it has resumed operations in accordance with the government guidelines. Consumers can once again safely explore and experience the complete range of BMW, MINI and BMW Motorrad products at company dealerships, BMW Group India said in a statement. Production at Chennai plant has resumed with less than 50 per cent of the regular workforce catering to the production demand in the country, it added. "It brings us great joy to finally restart operations at our dealerships, plant and corporate office.

COVID-19 to shave \$25 bn off from top 100 domestic brands

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The coronavirus pandemic is likely to shave at least USD 25 billion off from the January 2020 cumulative brand value of top 100 domestic brands, says a report. According to the latest report by Brand Finance, globally, the top 500 brands could see a value erosion of USD 1 trillion from their January 2020 brand value, following COVID-19 disruptions. "As the new coronavirus pandemic wreaks havoc on the global and national economy, the country's top 100 most valuable brands could lose up to 15 per cent of brand value cumulatively, a potential drop of nearly USD 25 billion compared to the original valuation as of January 1, 2020," the report said. Brand Finance has assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic based on the effect of the outbreak on enterprise value, compared to what it was on January 1, 2020.

The report further said the Tata Group has retained the title of the most valuable brand, breaking USD 20 billion brand value mark for first time this year and the group's luxury hotel brand Taj is the strongest brand in the country with brand strength index score 90.5 out of 100. This is despite the fact that the value has increased by only



2 per cent to touch the USD 20-billion-mark, making it the only domestic brand to touch this milestone.

LIC retained its second position with value of USD 8.1 billion, followed by Reliance at third (USD 7.9 billion), Infosys fourth (USD 7.08 billion), SBI at fifth slot (USD 6.4 billion).

Others in the top 10 list include, HDFC Bank at sixth place, up one notch from last year, followed by Mahindra (7th) which is down a notch from last year, IndianOil (8th) gaining a whopping 15 notches, HCL at ninth slot losing one notch from last year and Airtel was at the tenth slot losing eight

notches. Also, the Tata Group is the only domestic brand to feature in the top 100 of the Brand Finance global 500 2020 list, the agency said in a statement on Monday.

Savio D'Souza, director of Brand Finance, said, the sheer size and diversity of the Tata Group, which employs over 720,000 across 100 countries, could mean that it emerges from the pandemic, relatively speaking, unscathed.

Thanks to the strategic industry shift from oil & gas to the retail, media and telecoms sectors, the brand value of Reliance Industries moved up one notch to the third, following a 25 per cent value growth to USD 7.9 billion. The brand now claims 34 per cent share of market revenue in the telecom sector.

Despite the troubles plaguing them, banking brands did see solid growth in the year with 14 of them in the ranking list, with a cumulative brand value of USD 24.9 billion, recording an average brand value growth of 25 per cent.

State Bank of India (up 8 per cent to USD 6.4 billion) and HDFC Bank (up 22 per cent to USD 5.9 billion) have retained their positions in the top 10, with the latter climbing one spot to sixth in the ranking following a healthy 24 per cent growth over the previous year.



Sensex soars 879 pts as India begins to unlock; Nifty tops 9,800

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex surged 879 points on Monday, driven by gains in Reliance Industries, HDFC twins and TCS as investor optimism heightened after the government began the process of unlocking the economy.

Positive cues from global markets too buoyed investor sentiment here. After skyrocketing 1,250 points during the day, the 30-share index settled 879.42 points or 2.57 per cent higher at 33,303.52.

Similarly, NSE Nifty surged 245.85 points or 2.57 per cent to finish at 9,826.15.

Bajaj Finance was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising around 11 per cent, followed by Titan, Tata Steel, SBI, M&M, HDFC, IndusInd Bank and Reliance Industries.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Nestle India and UltraTech Cement were

Bajaj Finance was the top gainer, rising around 11 per cent, followed by Titan, Tata Steel, SBI, M&M, HDFC, IndusInd Bank and Reliance

among the laggards.

According to Narendra Solanki, Head- Equity Research (Fundamental), Anand Rathi, Indian markets started the week on a positive note following upbeat Asian market peers and the sentimental positive news of 'Unlock-1' and hopes of economy gradually opening up took hold.

"The market further rallied in the afternoon session with much broad-based buying seen in both large and mid cap stocks tracked by respective

indices," he added. The home ministry on Saturday said 'Unlock-1' will be initiated in India from June 8 under which the nationwide lockdown effectuated on March 25 will be relaxed to a great extent, including opening of shopping malls, restaurants and religious places.

The number of coronavirus cases in India crossed 1.90 lakh and the death toll climbed to 5,394, as per the health ministry data.

Globally, the number of cases linked to the disease has crossed 61.66 lakh and the deceased tally stood around 3.72 lakh.

Meanwhile, bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul settled up to 3 per cent higher, and those in Europe opened with significant gains.

International oil benchmark Brent crude futures were trading 0.21 per cent higher at USD 37.91 per barrel.

Lockdown in metro cities need to be addressed, says Puri

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several factors like the lockdown in metro cities and the ban imposed by various countries on the entry of foreigners need to be addressed before resuming international passenger flights in India, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Monday.

Domestic services were suspended in India due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown and resumed after a gap of two months on May 25. Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in the country.

"Numerous citizens have been approaching us to restart international flights. Several factors need to be addressed. Many international destinations are not allowing incoming passenger traffic, except for their own citizens or

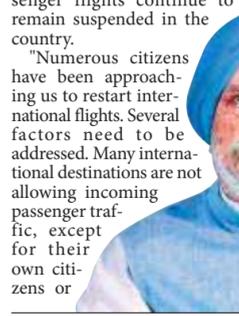
diplomats," Puri said on Twitter.

Within India, most international flights operate from the metro cities where travellers arrive from the neighbouring cities and states, he said.

"Our metro cities were under various degrees of lockdown which are beginning to be lifted. Some of them are still allowing only limited flights to operate," the minister noted.

Airports in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have been allowed to handle a restricted number of daily flights as these states do not want a huge influx of flyers amid the rising number of COVID-19 cases.

The minister said: "MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs)



Domestic services were suspended in India due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown and resumed after a gap of two months on May 25

guidelines for lockdown 5.0 have further opened up inter & intra-state travel, and will facilitate calibrated reopening of the sector. As we move towards the critical mass of 50-60% operation of domestic flights, our ability to resume international operations will also improve."

Indian carriers operated a total of 3,370 domestic passenger flights till May 31 -- 428 on May 25, 445 on May 26, 460 on May 27, 494 on May 28, 513 on May 29 and 529 on May 30.

During the pre-lockdown period, Indian airports handled around 3,000 daily domestic flights, aviation industry sources said.

Assam eco advisory panel to fight lockdown woes

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam Economic Advisory Committee, formed to suggest measures to boost the economy during the lockdown, Monday recommended to the government to form a Farmers Commission in Assam to address the problems of the agriculture sector.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal announced to form a three-member ministerial committee under the leadership of Finance Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma with Industry Minister

Chandra Mohan Patowary and Agriculture Minister Atul Bora as its members for implementing the suggestions.

Submitting the report, Committee chairman Subhash Das said the report has given thrust on agriculture and allied sectors for reviving the economy of the state.

Lockdown: Retail credit at record low

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown have made Indian consumers risk-averse if one were to go by data showing a growth in deposits and retail credit plummeting to its lowest level since 2008, economists at SBI said.

On the deposit growth front, it has been a mixed bag, but the extension of the lockdown for a fifth time will ensure that the savings continue to surge, the economists said in a note.

Consumer confidence is a deeply-cherished aspect by policy makers because it is the primary driver of growth in the Indian economy for many years now. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a lot of commentary about the need to revive confidence and consumer demand.



Consumer confidence is a deeply-cherished aspect by policy makers because it is the primary driver of growth in Indian economy

Retail credit declined by 2.5 per cent, the lowest level since 2008, from when the data series started, it said, expecting that the decline will continue as Maharashtra has extended the lockdown till June 30.

Pichai: Google stands in support of racial equality

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Google stands in support of racial equality, the tech giant's Indian-American CEO Sunder Pichai has said expressing solidarity with the African-American community in the US in wake of protests sparked by the death in police custody of African-American George Floyd. Floyd, a 46-year-old African American restaurant worker, died in Minneapolis on Monday after a white police officer pinned him to the ground. Video footage showed the officer kneeling on Floyd's neck as he gasped for breath, sparking widespread protests across the US. The police officer has been fired, and on Friday was arrested and charged with third-degree murder and manslaughter.

Odisha joins 'One Nation-One Ration Card'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three more states -- Odisha, Sikkim and Mizoram -- have joined the 'One Nation-One Ration Card' scheme, taking the number of states and union territories (UTs) which have joined the scheme to 20, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said on Monday.

By August, Uttarakhand, Nagaland and Manipur will also be added to the national



Ram Vilas Paswan

cluster, he added. Under the 'One Nation-One Ration Card' initiative, eligible

beneficiaries would be able to avail their entitled foodgrains under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) from any Fair Price Shop in the country using the same ration card.

The Food Ministry aims to implement this facility across the country by March 2021.

"Today three more states namely - Odisha, Sikkim and Mizoram have been included in the scheme," Paswan said in a statement.

He said necessary infrastructure work -- upgradation of electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) software, integration with central Integrated Management of PDS (IM-PDS) and Annavitrans portals, availability of ration cards/beneficiaries data in central repository and requisite testing of national portability transactions -- required for ration card portability has been completed in these three states.

Govt's locust control policy focus on chemical spray alone: Farm expert

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the country faces the worst ever desert locust outbreak in three decades, a farm expert has said the government is just focusing on chemical spray on the migratory pest, ignoring other natural methods for controlling the menace.

Presently, locusts have affected five states -- Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra -- and the Centre has issued a warning to



the border-sharing states.

The Centre has plans to step up aerial spray using drones and helicopters.

"Despite the known side effects of aerial spraying of pes-

ticides, the government's locust control policy is focussed on chemical spray only and other non-chemical measures are being completely ignored," Haryana-based Kudrati Kheti Abhiyan Advisor Rajinder Chaudhary said in a statement.

There is no doubt that the locust attack is a menace that cannot be ignored, but along with locust control, it must also be ensured that the control measures do not pollute air, water, environment and food chain, he said.

Satya MicroCapital, Sindhuja Microcredit raise Rs 170 cr from global investors

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Notwithstanding risk aversion the sector is facing, two micro-finance institutions Satya MicroCapital and Sindhuja Microcredit have managed to raise a total of Rs 170 crore from international investors.

While New Delhi-based Satya MicroCapital has raised Rs 105 crore from Japan-based Gojo & Company, Uttar Pradesh-based Sindhuja Microcredit was able to get funds worth Rs 65 crore from Norway-based Nordic Microfinance Initiative (NMI) and Mumbai-Based Carpediem Capital.

Microfinance Institutions Network (MFIN) Chief Executive Officer Harsh Srivastava said the confidence extended by international investors in the country's



few days, showing resilience of the sector," Srivastava said.

Noida-based Sindhuja Microcredit co-founder and Managing Director Abhisheka Kumar said that of the Rs 65 crore capital, it has already received Rs 25 crore and for the balance Rs 40 crore, it has sought the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) approval.

"This is the Series-B funding round for us. We had raised Rs 25 crore in Series-A funding from Carpediem Capital in 2019," Kumar said. After this second round of funding, Sindhuja's capital position will rise to Rs 100 crore, which, according to Kumar, will take care of any liquidity requirement for the next 18 months, he said. In July 2018, Gojo & Company had invested Rs 40-42 crore in Satya MicroCapital.

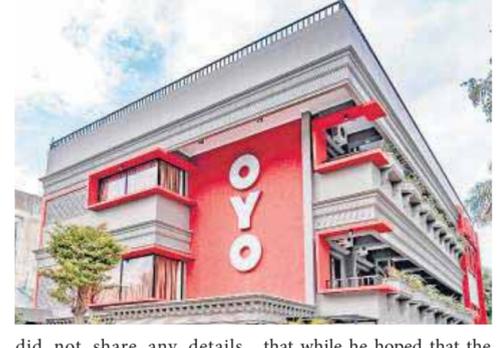
OYO announces ESOPs for all furloughed employees impacted by COVID-19

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hospitality firm OYO is granting employee stock ownership plans (ESOPs) worth a total of around Rs 130 crore to all its furloughed employees impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as part of its efforts to minimise the disruption being experienced by them, an internal e-mail from its founder Ritesh Agarwal said on Monday.

On April 8, OYO founder and Group CEO Ritesh Agarwal had said in a letter and video message that the company will place a certain number of employees on furloughs or temporary leaves, globally.

According to the sources, the number of furloughed employees globally could run in thousands. The company, however,



did not share any details regarding the number of the impacted employees.

In an internal town hall note to the impacted employees, Agarwal on Monday said

According to the sources, the number of furloughed employees globally could run in thousands

tinue for sometime.

"I would like to recognise your contributions and this love and passion for OYO by making you a co-owner and shareholder of the company. I would like to inform you that all impacted OYOpreneurs would be eligible for ESOPs worth around Rs 130 crore (around USD 18 million)," he added.

Details on employees' specific grant will be shared on e-

mail separately, which will be detailed as per their band and geographies, he added.

"In addition, we also understand that some of you may already have stock options. For those employees, we are dropping the one-year cliff on the vesting of stock options for everyone we have hired in the past year. This will ensure that everyone departing, regardless of how long they have been with OYO, can become a shareholder," Agarwal said.

The company will also provide stocks to employees not impacted, thereby making 100 per cent team members co-owners, he added.

"This is the first time in the history of the company that such a large part of the organisation is being inducted as a stakeholder," Agarwal said.

The lockdown called and being extended due to the pandemic has left students, of schools and colleges, and teachers, with the only option of making use of the web. Sritama Maitra, Assistant professor at Loyola Academy, and a research scholar in English literature speaks exclusively to SIDDHESH SUMAN on how good or bad this is, for the education sector



ONLINE CLASSES nowhere close to classroom experience



“ONLINE EDUCATION IS THE POOR COUSIN OF CLASSROOM EDUCATION AND IT TAKES AWAY THE REAL EXPERIENCE BOTH FROM A TEACHER AND A STUDENT. AT THE END OF THE DAY, IT IS ALL ABOUT FINISHING UP THE SYLLABUS,” SAYS SRITAMA MAITRA, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LOYOLA DEGREE COLLEGE

those recorded lectures or don't remember a thing from those online classes

which makes us worried about how they will perform in their exams. If this

becomes a norm, it will affect the performance of the students. And in times

like this, we cannot blame the students because we don't know what kind of situation they are going through and we can't even motivate them. Online education is the poor cousin of classroom education and it takes away the real experience both from a teacher and a student. At the end of the day, it is all about finishing up the syllabus but what we taught and how much a student learns from it, is something impossible to gauge from this online method of teaching,” Sritama Maitra concludes. Avinash Denduluri a final year BA Mass Communication student, on whether or not online education can become a primary method of education, says, “There's a lot of factors to consider. Access to tech-

nology, and education of proper usage of said technology, both to the students and the teachers, is essential before one proceeds with an online class. It's a secondary, choice-based accessory to the system we have globally, it can't be an effective primary method of education.” Shubha Pai, a final year student pursuing Psychology, Journalism, and English literature shares her personal experience of online classes. She says, “Personally, I do not have any complaints with the online classes. My lecturers have made enough efforts to make the classes as efficient as possible. I do realise that a lot of teachers are not trained to take online classes but everyone is trying their best. It's heartbreaking to see so many students

make fun of their teachers during Skype calls which are not cool.” But are these anywhere close to actual classroom teaching? “Not really. In classrooms, most of the time at least, you have to pay attention to the class but here you have the option of switching off your video and running your errands during a Skype call. But in conditions such as the pandemic, this is the best option. Students should understand that though life is at a halt during the lockdown, teaching, and studying needs to continue for their own good. On the other hand, it's also important for teachers to understand what the students are going through and help them to be mentally sound and motivated to study for their exams,” she opines.

Wajid Khan of composer duo Sajid-Wajid no more

Bollywood composer-singer Wajid Khan of the popular sibling composer duo — Sajid Wajid is no more. He passed away in the early hours on Monday.

Confirming the news, singer Sonu Nigam posted on his official social media handle: “My brother Wajid left us.” The cause of death has not yet been confirmed, though unconfirmed reports have stated the artiste was suffering from COVID-19. A report in filmibeat.com, on the other hand, stated Wajid had been suffering from a kidney problem over the past few years, and had reportedly been on ventilator after being hospitalised recently.

Sajid-Wajid recently composed songs for Bollywood superstar Salman Khan during the ongoing lockdown, one of which was a number titled *Pyaar karona*, a pop anthem encouraging all to fight the coronavirus. The song released in April was sung by Salman and also featured the actor in the video.

The composer duo also recently composed Salman's Eid special song, *Bhai bhai*, which talks of communal harmony. Sajid-Wajid frequently collaborated as composers for Salman Khan. In fact, they made their debut in the 1998 Salman superhit, *Pyaar Kiya To Darna Kya*, scoring one song in that film, *Teri jawani badi mast hai*.

The duo shot to fame with the Salman Khan blockbuster *Dabangg* in 2010, and there



has been no looking back. Among numerous hits they composed were *Tere mast mast do nain* and *Hud hud Dabangg (Dabangg)*, *Do you wanna partner* and *Soni de nakhre (Partner)*, *Mujhse shaadi karogi* and *Laal dupatta (Mujhse Shaadi Karogi)*, *Mashallah (Ek Tha Tiger)*, *Chinta ta chinta (Rowdy Rathore)*, *Fevicol se (Dabangg 2)* and *Raat bhar (Heropanti)*.

As a singer, Wajid recorded many hit songs, including *Do you wanna partner* and *Soni de nakhre (Partner)*, *Hud hud Dabangg (Dabangg)*, *Chinta ta chinta (Rowdy Rathore)*, *Tujhe*

Aksa Beach (God Tussi Great Ho) and *Jalwa (Wanted)*.

Sajid-Wajid also composed for a few non-film albums. These are Son Nigam's *Deewana*, Alka Yagnik and Babul Supriyo's *Khoya Khoya Chand* and Rahul Vaidya's *Tera Intezaar*.

Wajid also was a mentor of the music reality show *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Singing Superstar* and *Sa Re Ga Ma Pa 2012*.

As the news of Wajid's demise spread, Bollywood took to social media to express grief and shock.

“Terrible news. The one thing I will always remember is Wajid bhai's laugh. Always

smiling. Gone too soon. My condolences to his family and everyone grieving. Rest in peace my friend. You are in my thoughts and prayers,” tweeted Priyanka Chopra.

Among the first to confirm the news with a tweet of condolence was composer Salim Merchant of the Salim-Suleiman duo. “Devastated with the news of the passing away of my brother Wajid of Sajid-Wajid fame. May Allah give strength to the family.”

“Shocked to hear about the cruelly untimely demise of Wajid of the renowned Composer duo of Sajid Wajid. Incredible loss of a very very dear friend & a very very talented musical mind — a Gr8 sport.”

Vishal Dadlani wrote on Twitter, “Wajid Khan is gone far too soon. His talent and heart were never appreciated enough. All the times we planned to meet & never did because we were busy, those will always rankle. Sajid Khan, mere bhai. You will never be alone & our brother will forever be remembered.” “Heartbreaking news.

Wajid no more. Spent time on the SRGMP show with him as a co-judge and he was so kind and generous. I know he was ailing for a while, regret not picking up the phone on him in this lockdown. Stunned and sad,” wrote singer Sonu Mohapatra on Twitter.

Singer Harshdeep Kaur tweeted, “My deep condolences to #WajidKhan Ji's family. Still can't believe that he is no more. Have always seen him smiling and spreading joy around him. Huge loss to the music industry.”

“This cannot be true! I can't believe that Wajid bhai has left us. In state of complete shock! Worked with u on so many songs and just met u a while ago @wajidkhan7.. May your soul Rest In Peace.. May god give strength to the family to bear this huge loss,” tweeted singer Tulsi Kumar.

Singer-Politician Babul Supriyo also expressed his condolence on Twitter: “Shocked to hear about the cruelly untimely demise of Wajid of the renowned Composer duo of Sajid Wajid. Incredible loss of a very very dear friend & a very very talented musical mind — a Gr8 sport.”

UPASANA WOWS WITH HER PERSONALITY & PRINCIPLES

FICCI FLO Hyderabad chapter hosted a scintillating conversation titled *Freedom to be me*, between noted Indian entrepreneur Upasana Kamineni and well-known TV journalist Swapna. Upasana Kamineni, Vice-Chairperson of Apollo Life, winner of Dadasaheb Phalke Philanthropist of the year award, and also the wife of Bollywood actor Ram Charan Tej candidly said that she has a huge bucket list of things to do and has many goals to reach still, as she swayed the viewers with her witty retorts to some head-on, rapid-fire questions from Swapna.

“The conversation with Upasana Kamineni is the second in our Power-Hour series in which we present outstanding personalities, who epitomise the principles of leadership, passion, creativity, and be capable of showing the way to be a truly global citizen. Upasana is spell-binding in her honesty, earnestness, her commitment to various causes, and we are delighted to have been able to host this session with her,” says Said Usharani Manne, Chairperson of FICCI FLO Hyderabad chapter, Founder-Director, Polmon Instruments Pvt. Ltd.

For the urban workforce, FLO Hyderabad has tied up with McLean Group that works with Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) to impart employable vocational skills as well as guaranteed employment for the graduating trainees, with NSTI for customized courses to enhance employability, with ITI for Training in various trades. FLO is also looking to work towards identifying and mobilizing probable candidates for these courses.

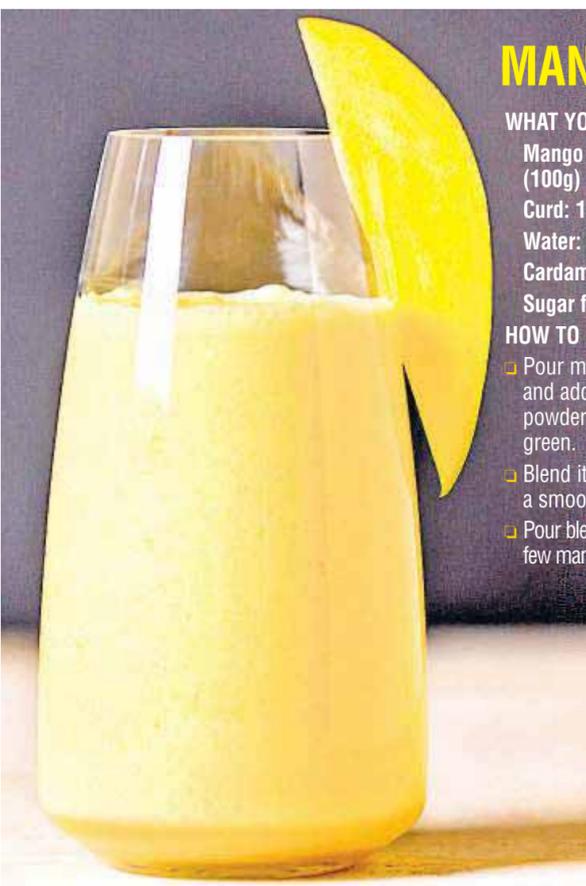


Guilt-free SUMMER DRINKS

We are facing one of the hottest summers ever recorded in the country. With these kind of temperature, it becomes extremely difficult to maintain health and stay fit. Staying hydrated is the most important factor to deal with the blistering heat. Enjoying your favourite beverages to beat the heat and proper hydration to the body sounds like a great idea. But these beverage delights come loaded with sugar and calories. Sugary beverage intake is significantly associated

with a number of health issues. Even WHO guideline recommend adults and children should reduce their daily intake of free sugar to less than 10 per cent of their total energy intake. A further reduction to below 5 per cent or roughly 25 grams (6 teaspoons) per day would provide additional health benefits. "Believe it or not but you can now enjoy your favourite thirst quenching summer coolers and beverages without compromising on the taste or on your health. It is

time to replace sugar with a natural, zero calorie and great tasting sweetener such as Stevia to make your favourite beverages healthy, hydrating and refreshing. It can be part of a healthy lifestyle when it comes to looking for ways to reduce sugar and calories for your family," says Navneet Singh, VP Asia Pacific and Head of South Asia region at PureCircle. Try these great tasting and refreshing summer beverages sweetened with Stevia to beat the blistering heat and enjoy summer.



MANGO LASSI

WHAT YOU NEED: (1 SERVING)
Mango pulp/mango slice: 1 cup (100g)
Curd: 1/2 cup (50g)
Water: 1cup (100g)
Cardamom powder: 1 tsp (0.5g)
Sugar free green: 3 scoops

HOW TO MAKE:

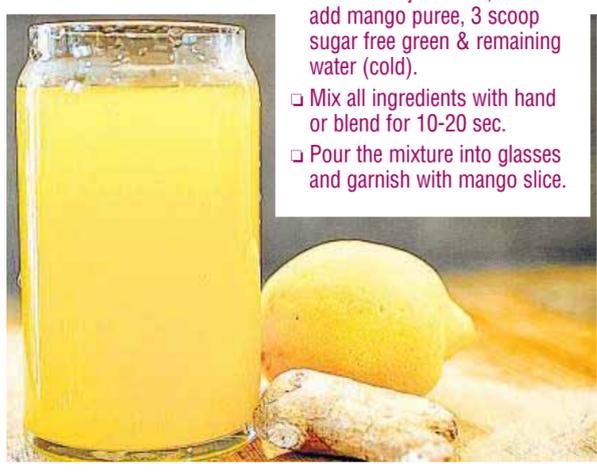
- Pour mango pulp in a blender and add curd, cardamom powder, water & sugar free green.
- Blend it for 2 min or until it form a smooth blend.
- Pour blend in a glass, garnish with few mango cube shape pieces.

MANGO GINGER LEMONADE

What you need: (1 serving)
Mango puree: 1/2 cup (50ml)
Water: 2 cup (250ml)
Ginger shredded: 1 tsp
Sugar free green: 3 scoops
Lemon juice: 2 tsp

HOW TO MAKE:

- Take half cup of water in a pan and add 1 tsp fresh ginger.
- Simmer for 10 minutes at low heat then keep aside and steep for another 30 minutes.
- After 30 min strain the ginger extract in a bowl.
- Add lemon juice to it, then add mango puree, 3 scoop sugar free green & remaining water (cold).
- Mix all ingredients with hand or blend for 10-20 sec.
- Pour the mixture into glasses and garnish with mango slice.



GINGER MINT LEMONADE



WHAT YOU NEED (1 SERVING)
Water: 1 cup (2000ml)
Lemon: 1 tbsp
Mint: 15-20 leaves
Ginger: 1 tsp
Sugar free green: 2 e scoops

HOW TO MAKE:

- Take a cup of water in a pan and add 1 tsp fresh ginger.
- Simmer for 10 minutes at low heat then keep aside and steep for another 30 minutes.
- After 30 min strain the ginger extract in a bowl.
- Lightly Crush mint leaves in another bowl with help of rolling pin or in pestle mortar.
- Add lemon juice, ginger extract, sugar free green & remaining water (cold).
- Mix all ingredients, remove mint leaves.
- Pour the mixture into glasses and garnish with a slice of lemon.



MANGO SHAKE

WHAT YOU NEED: (1 SERVING)
Milk: 1 cup (125ml)
Mango slices: 3/4cup (100ml)
Sugar free green: 3 scoops
Almond: 2 pieces
Raisins: 4 pieces

HOW TO MAKE:

- Chop mango slice into small pieces.
- Add mango pieces, 3 scoop of sugar free green & milk into the blender.
- Blend until everything mix uniformly.
- Pour shake into the glass and garnish with chopped almonds and raisins.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



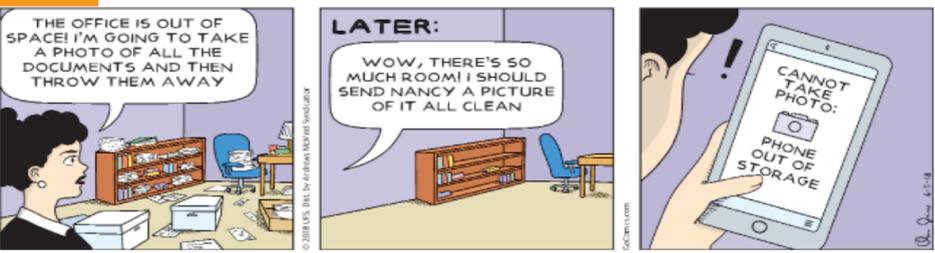
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

GINGER MEGGS



ACROSS

- 1 Fish tank
- 7 Fewest
- 8 Narrow shell
- 9 Ottawa is the capital of this country
- 10 Journey
- 12 Slightly hot
- 14 Thief
- 17 Sweeten a drink with this
- 18 A feeling of rage
- 19 Obstinate

DOWN

- 1 Once more
- 2 Messy, disorganised
- 3 Tumble over and over
- 4 Beneath
- 5 A watch's hands move in this direction
- 6 Not permanent
- 11 A red fruit used in salads
- 13 Correct
- 15 Start
- 16 A creature with nippers

SOLUTION

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

We need an alternative to saliva: Bumrah

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Premier India pacer Jasprit Bumrah won't miss the hugs and high-fives as part of a wicket celebration but he will certainly miss applying saliva on the ball and feels an alternative should be provided to maintain the red cherry.

The ICC Cricket Committee, led by former India captain Anil Kumble, recommended a ban on using saliva on the ball as an interim measure to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Committee did not allow the use of artificial substances as a substitute move.

The new rule makes life tougher for the bowlers and Bumrah, like many former and current fast bowlers, feels there ought to be an alternative.

"I was not much of a hugger anyway and not a high-five person as well, so that doesn't trouble me a lot. The only thing that interests me is the saliva bit," said.

"I don't know what guidelines we'll have to follow when we come back, but I feel there should be an alternative," he added.

Bumrah said not being able to use saliva makes the game more batsman-friendly.

"If the ball is not well maintained, it's difficult for the bowlers. The grounds are getting shorter and shorter, the wickets are becoming flatter and flatter."

"So we need something, some alternative for the bowlers to maintain the ball so that it can do something - maybe reverse in the end or conventional swing."

When former West Indian



pacer Bishop pointed out that the conditions have been favourable to the fast bowlers over the last couple of years, Bumrah nodded in agreement. "In Test match cricket, yes. That is why it's my favourite format, because we have something over there. But in one-day cricket and T20 cricket... one-day cricket there are two

"I WAS NOT MUCH OF A HUGGER ANYWAY AND NOT A HIGH-FIVE PERSON AS WELL, SO THAT DOESN'T TROUBLE ME A LOT. THE ONLY THING THAT INTERESTS ME IS THE SALIVA BIT."

new balls, so it hardly reverses at the end.

"We played in New Zealand, the ground (boundary) was 50 metres. So even if you are not looking to hit a six, it will go for six. In Test matches I have no problem, I'm very happy with the way things are going."

He finds it amusing that

the batsmen keep complaining about the swinging ball.

"Whenever you play, I've heard the batsmen - not in our team, everywhere - complaining the ball is swinging. But the ball is supposed to swing! The ball is supposed to do something! We are not here just to give throwdowns, isn't it? (laughter)

"This is what I tell batsmen all the time. In one-day cricket, when did the ball reverse last, I don't know. Nowadays the new ball doesn't swing a lot as well. So whenever I see batsmen say the ball is swinging or seaming and that is why I got out - the ball is supposed to do that."

"Because it doesn't happen so much in the other formats, it's a new thing for the batsmen when the ball is swinging or seaming," said the 26-year-old.

The Ahmedabad-born pacer finds himself in an unusual position as he has not bowled for over two months due to the lockdown imposed in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

When India will play next is not clear yet and Bumrah said he is not sure about how his body will hold up when he returns to action.

"I really don't know how your body reacts when you don't bowl for two months, three months. I'm trying to keep up with training so that as soon as the grounds open up, the body is in decent shape."

"I've been training almost six days a week but I've not bowled for a long period of time so I don't know how the body will react when I bowl the first ball."

"I'm looking at it as a way to renew your own body. We'll never get such a break again, so even if you have a small niggle here and there, you can be a refreshed person when you come back. You can prolong your career," he said.

Bumrah has risen rapidly in international cricket despite experts having reservations about his longevity due to his unorthodox action.

Rohit & Virat defining pair of modern era



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Every cricketing era has a "defining pair" which builds the narrative and the duo of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma is a special one for India in modern times, says Sri Lankan legend Kumar Sangakkara.

Kohli and Rohit have aggregated nearly 36,000 runs (35,930 runs) across three formats and Sangakkara feels the duo has the same aura which Sourav Ganguly and Rahul Dravid had in the late '90s and early 2000s.

"There is something very special about Virat and Rohit. That fact that rules have changed and run-scoring might have become slightly easier in one-day cricket, but it's incredibly hard, the volume of cricket that India athletes play," Sangakkara said on Star Sports' 'Cricket Connected'.

Sangakkara feels that Kohli and Rohit deserve the respect also for the fact that players from bygone era didn't have to constantly play three formats.

"So, I think you have to have a lot of respect for Rohit and Virat but understand that it's all because of the players that

have gone before and have done all the hard work then as well.

"So, it's a knock-on effect, so in every era, there's always a defining pair and in the modern era, it's Rohit and Virat for India for sure." Sangakkara recollected the era of Dravid and Ganguly and drew a parallel with Kohli and Rohit where batsmen have been destructive despite being orthodox in their technique.

"If you look at Rahul and Dada, both of them are orthodox batsmen. They play beautiful cricket shots and are very technically correct. Dravid may be a little bit more so, but the ability to be as destructive with such rate and precision stroke-making is something that has to be really admired."

"If you take the modern-day game, India has two of the best players in Virat and Rohit, who play orthodox cricket but who are just absolutely destructive in any format of the game. You don't have to muscle the ball or put too much effort or look ugly doing it, they just play good cricket shots and results come," he concluded.

Advantage for Aus in D/N Test: Smith

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Star batsman Steve Smith says the experience of having played more pink ball games than India would give Australia 'slight advantage' when the two sides clash under flood lights in December but the Virat Kohli-led side has the batsmen to stand up to the challenge.

Cricket Australia last week confirmed that India will tour Down Under for a full tour comprising four Tests, three ODIs and three T20s. The second Test will be a day-night affair, starting from December 11 in Adelaide.

"We played a few more pink ball games, perhaps, than India which might be a slight advantage," the Aussie star batsman said in a Facebook session, hosted by Sony Sports India.

"India played pretty well in the day-night game they played at Kolkata. It's a different game but they certainly got the baters that can stand up to the conditions when it gets tough with the Pink Ball. And their bowlers, they stand the seam up with quality."

"They are world class play-



ers who are able to adapt to anything, so I see it being a pretty amazing contest," he said.

India will first clash with Australia in a T20I series beginning October 11 and then return to defend the Border-Gavaskar Trophy with the opening match at Gabba, where the hosts have tremendous record.

"Our record at Gabba (Brisbane) against anyone, is good to be fair, that is a fortress

Smith in best shape despite not picking up bat

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Top Australian cricketers resumed training on Monday at the Sydney Olympic Park with batting mainstay Steve Smith saying that he is in his best shape in years after putting the bat aside for two months to focus on physical and mental fitness.

David Warner and Mitchell Starc were among those who reported for training as the domestic pre-season began behind closed doors. Australia is one of the less-affected countries from the

COVID-19 pandemic with little over 7000 cases reported so far.

"I'm probably in the best shape I've been in in years, doing lots of running, lots of gym stuff at home. It's been a couple of months of good hard work," said Smith.

"I haven't touched a bat, really. A couple of little drills at home but that's about it. I've just tried to switch off from it a bit, which I don't do very often. I was just focusing on getting myself fit and strong and refreshing mentally," he said.

for us, we wanted to play first Test there for a long period of time," the 30-year-old said.

Smith, one of the world's best Test batsmen, also admired the way the Indian captain goes about chases in white-ball cricket.

"Look at his average in winning chases in one-day cricket. It's phenomenal. He's so good under pressure and calm. Just gets the job done and unfortunately for an

opposition player. You got to admire someone like that and what he has done for Indian cricket."

Asked about his comparisons with the Indian icon, he said, "I admire Virat a lot. He's an amazing player. The way they play the game now, the sheer passion he has for cricket... His body sort of transformed over time. He's so fit, strong and powerful now. Pretty amazing for cricket."

ECB to resume cricket behind closed doors

AFP ■ LONDON

The ECB has welcomed the UK government's decision to allow the resumption of professional sports behind closed doors which allows the board to go ahead with its plan of hosting international cricket starting next month.

In the latest health and safety guidelines designed to prevent the spread of coron-

avirus, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Oliver Dowden on Saturday gave the green light for live competitive sport to return behind closed doors in safe and carefully controlled environments from June 1.

"We are extremely heartened by Saturday's announcement from the Secretary of State, which will support the return of professional, domestic

cricket behind closed doors, and provides a meaningful next step for recreational players to begin playing at their clubs again," England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said in a statement.

The board added that it will study the guidelines laid down by the government to safely resume the game.

"Over the coming week, we will seek to understand the spe-

cific guidance from Government's medical teams so that we can provide support for cricket clubs who will be eager to see their communities safely playing in small groups."

"We extend our thanks to all those in Government who have worked hard to support the return of sport and we look forward to seeing players from across the game start returning to the field," it added.

Everyone entitled to their own opinion: Rabada on his aggression

IANS ■ CAPE TOWN

South Africa speedster SKagiso Rabada reflected on the previous season and admitted he felt out of place and rusty. Rabada, who has been leading the Proteas' bowling attack for a while now, also opened up regarding his on-field aggression, which has gotten him into trouble many-a-times in recent past.

The 2019-20 season was rather indifferent for Rabada, according to his own high

standards. He failed to live up to the expectations on the India tour and scalped just seven wickets in three Tests as the hosts romped to a 3-0 victory.

"The past season was a disappointment," Rabada was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. "Even though I see that my stats are okay, I just feel really rusty and a bit out of place."

Rabada did better on home soil against England, where he scalped 14 wickets in three

matches. Rabada couldn't feature in the fourth Test as he was handed a one-Test ban for his celebration after taking the wicket of England Test captain Joe Root in the third Test.

"It's passion, but everyone has their opinion and they are entitled to their own opinion," Rabada said.

"I have identified things that I needed to identify and I will address them with the people that are closest to me and who I feel should be helping me address it."



Man U extend Ighalo's loan deal

AFP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United extended Odion Ighalo's loan spell until January 2021 on Monday to ensure the Nigerian striker will be able to finish the 2019/20 season with the Premier League club.

Ighalo's initial loan deal from Shanghai Shenhua expired at the end of May, but the 30-year-old has been rewarded for an impressive return of four goals in eight appearances for United before football was shut down by the coronavirus pandemic in March.

"Manchester United have reached agreement with Shanghai Greenland Shenhua to extend the loan deal for Odion Ighalo," United said in a statement.

"He will now remain with the Reds until 31 January 2021, enabling him to build on an impressive start to life with the club he supported as a boy."

Ighalo could prove an important addition to Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's squad ahead of a packed schedule once games get back under way later this month.

"They (Shanghai) have been great towards us, allowing him to play for his dream club," said Solskjaer last week.

"It's been a dream for him and hopefully he can finish what he started and win a trophy with us."



BFI to nominate Phangal for Khel Ratna

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World Silver-medallist Amit Panghal and the seasoned Vikas Krishan were on Monday nominated for the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award by the Boxing Federation of India, which picked only Olympic-bound names as its nominees for the annual honours.

The BFI has nominated world Bronze-winning trio of Lovlina Borgohain (69kg), Simranjit Kaur (64kg) and Manish Kaushik (63kg) for the Arjuna awards. Of these, Borgohain has won the world Bronze twice, the most recent being last year.

For the Dronacharya awards, the BFI has finalised the names of national women's coach Mohammed Ali Qamar and assistant coach Chhote Lal Yadav. "The nominations of the athletes and coaches have been on the basis of their performance during the last four years," the BFI said.

The 24-year-old Panghal (52kg), also an Asian Games champion, has not won any national sports award. He was being nominated for the Arjuna award for the past three years but was not considered by the selection committee because of a 2012 "inadvertent" dope offence.

"He is allowed to compete for the country and his medals are celebrated. He deserves to be honoured as well," BFI Executive Director R K Sacheti told PTI.

"Youth level ki galtiyan to sab jagah maaf hoti hain. I didn't do it intention-



ally. I only took a medicine prescribed to me without knowing the consequences. I am hopeful I will be considered," Panghal had told PTI in a recent interaction.

Commonwealth and Asian Games Gold-medallist Krishan (69kg) won the Arjuna award in 2012. The 28-year-old had turned professional in 2018 after his CWG top finish followed by a third Asian Games medal — a Bronze.

He returned to the amateur circuit last year with the South Asian Games, winning a gold there before qualifying for the Olympics at the Asian qualifiers in Jordan in March this year.

Of the three Arjuna contenders, Kaushik has had a great run for the past couple of years, winning a Bronze in his maiden world championship (2019) to qualify for the Olympics after a Silver at the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Both Kaur and Borgohain booked their Tokyo tickets at the Asian qualifiers. Qamar, an Arjuna awardee, was India's first Commonwealth Games gold-medallist in boxing and has been in charge of the women's camp for over a year now. This was after serving as an assistant coach for one year.

Yadav is closely associated with six-time world champion M C Mary Kom and she has been crediting him for keeping her focussed in the past couple of years.

Former world-medallist N Usha has been nominated for the Dhyana Chand award for lifetime contribution to sports.

Real to play at training center on La Liga restart

AP ■ MADRID

The Spanish league is resuming in less than two weeks with Real Madrid playing its games at the club's training center.

Madrid will host Eibar on June 14 at the 6,000-capacity Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium, a venue used mostly by the club's "B" team at the Ciudad Real Madrid center on the city's outskirts.

Madrid is not stopping renovation work at the Santiago Bernabéu Stadium as all remaining league games are likely to be played without fans because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The league on Sunday confirmed the dates and times of the first two rounds of matches to be played after the competition was stopped mid-March because of the pandemic. The first game will be the Sevilla derby between Sevilla and Real Betis on June 11 at 1 p.m. Local time (2000 GMT).

Defending champion Barcelona, which has a two-point lead over Real Madrid after 27 rounds, will resume at Mallorca on June 13, while Atlético Madrid visits Athletic Bilbao the following day.

The league has announced that every game will include an 'applause

to infinity" tribute to the "heroes who are fighting to overcome" the pandemic. Pre-recorded applause uploaded in videos by fans will be played in the 20th minute of matches.

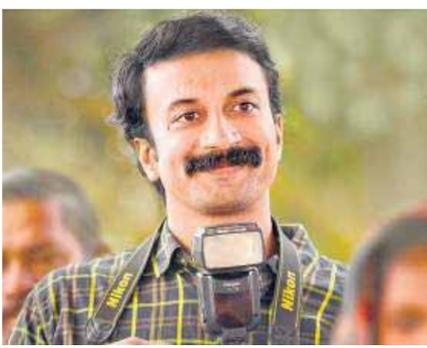
"We have created this initiative to help fans be a part of La Liga's return and also as an opportunity for them to show their support for the heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic," said league president Javier Tebas, who gave his weekly interview to league broadcaster Movistar on Sunday.

"We want them to feel close to their team, even if they cannot be in the stadiums cheering them on, and for players to feel the support of their fans."

Most games will be played late in the day to take into account high temperatures in Spain, but some will be brought forward based on favorable weather forecasts. There will be a couple of matches at 1 p.m. Local time in the first weekend.

The second division will resume June 11 with the second half of the game between Rayo Vallecano and Albacete, which was suspended at halftime in December after Ukrainian Roman Zozulia of Albacete was subjected to Nazi taunts by opposing fans.

The still-untitled film on Karnam Malleswari, helmed by Sanjana Reddy, will go to sets next year. It will be shot in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil simultaneously, finds NAGARAJ GOUD



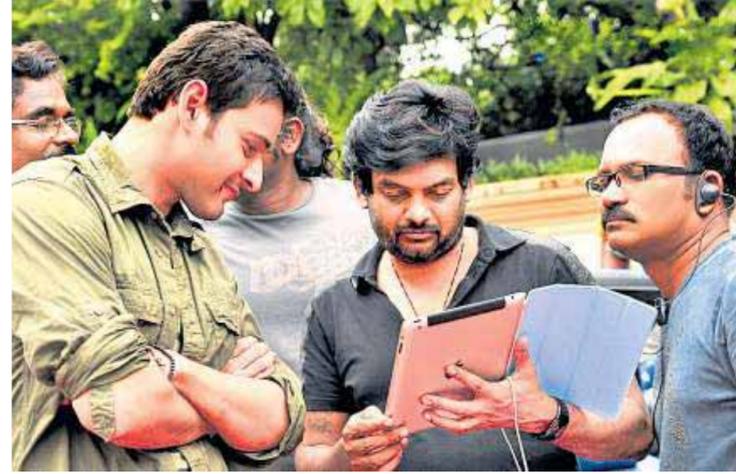
From aha to Netflix

Mid last month, we've reported that *Uma Maheswara Ugra Roopasya* (UMUR), directed by C/O *Kancharapalem* fame Venkatesh Maha and fronted by Satyadev, will be dropping directly on 100 per cent first Telugu OTT platform, *Aha*, bypassing cinema halls. There seems to be a significant development to this end, as we've learnt that the deal has exchanged hands. According to our source, the film has now been picked up by Netflix. The source informs, "As the team of *Aha* was ready to announce the date of streaming last month, they've received the sudden jolt of film slipping out of their hands. With Netflix offering the makers of UMUR more than what *Aha* offered, there was no way that Arka Media and Praveen Paruchiri and Venkatesh Maha would've let go of the offer. The fact that the streaming giant has a wide reach to that of *Aha* was also another reason. Netflix will update the arrival of the film shortly." *UMUR* — an official remake of Malayalam hit *Maheshinte Prathikaaram* — tells the story of an Araku-based studio photographer owner (Satyadev) who publicly vows that he will not wear his slippers again until he has avenged the humiliation that he has been meted out to, by a group. Maha has tailored the original to suit Telugu nativity. Wrapped up in flat 35 days, it was shot in a non-stop start-to-finish schedule in Araku. Naresh, Kushalini, Chandana Koppiseti and Meghana Appikonda have essayed other key roles in the drama. - NG



Puri is one of my favourite directors: Mahesh babu

In a rare conversation with fans on social media, superstar Mahesh Babu revealed what he has been up to during the quarantine period with family. "It's been an experience of a lifetime. I've done so many things with them that I wouldn't be able to do, had I be working," he said. When a user asked what he would like to be remembered as, he replied, "I would like to be remembered as a great actor, an amazing father to my children and a great husband to my wife." To a question on what keeps him so determined, he stated, "My hunger for perfection." Does his son Gautham want to follow in his footsteps, asked a fan. "He wants to I guess. Only time will tell," the actor said. About the Sunday announced Sarkaru Vaari Paata with director Parasuram, he added, "SVP is a complete entertainer with a strong message! I am really excited about it." Stating Iron Man and Hulk are his favourite Marvel super heroes and that test cricket has his vote over other formats of the game, the actor also said that he is open to be directed by Puri Jagannadh again. The director gave the actor Pokiri, a landmark film his career and went to collaborate with the actor again for Businessman. His subsequent efforts to work with the actor didn't fructify. He even recently suggested that Mahesh will do a film with him only when he delivers successful films. "Absolutely I would! Puri Jagannadh is one of my favourite directors... I'm still waiting for him to come and narrate to me" was the actor's reply when a fan asked about a possible reteaming with Puri in the future.



THE STORY BEHIND A SPORTING ICON'S BIOPIIC

As Karnam Malleswari — the first Indian woman to win an Olympic medal — rung her 45th birthday on Monday, producers Kona Venkat and MVV Satyanarayana officially announced a biopic on her. She joins other sporting icons like Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Mary Kom, Milkha Singh and Mohammad Azharuddin on the list of Indian sportspersons on whom films have been made in the past several years. In a historic moment for India, Malleswari lifted 110 kg in the snatch and 130 kg in the clean and jerk categories for a total of 240 kg at the 2000 Sydney Olympics to win a bronze medal that made her the first Indian woman to win an Olympic medal. The still-untitled film, to be helmed by Sanjana Reddy, will go to sets next year. It will be shot in Hindi, Telugu and Tamil simultaneously.



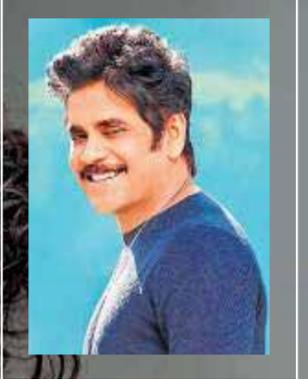
FOR SANJANA, MALLESWARI IS HER "SUPER HERO" AND SHE FEELS BLESSED TO TELL THE TALE OF THE IRON LADY AS THE DUO COMES FROM SAME DISTRICT IN AP

her. "I stayed with her story for four years without a producer in hand. In fact, when I first broached the movie topic to her, she casually said who would watch it. But it was only after the monster success of Dangal that she began to consider that her story be told to a large audience so that it motivates other athletes," the director recalls. Kona admits that he will fictionalize the story a bit and dramatise some episodes of the weightlifter's life for cinematic purposes but overall, he wants to stay true to the real story. "Any sport has certain moments of high, especially when it comes to representing a country. If this story was that of a male weightlifter, it wouldn't have got the traction it did. But here was a female athlete from a poor family who did the unimaginable. I believe choosing a sport like weightlifting in an orthodox society like ours back then is a story worth telling on the screen. As a story, the film will focus on her journey — through her highs and lows — rather than on the sport in particular," he states. The final screenplay of the film will be ready in the coming months and Sanjana believes that times are such that a writer has no option but to revisit a script they have locked. "People have consumed a lot of content on digital platforms due to lockdown in the past two and half months. So a writer, I feel, needs to update his/her work regularly. What he/she writes needs to be lapped up two years from now because you never know when films will start and release! Luckily for us, Kona garu is an expert in fleshing out strong women protagonist characters as is evident from his work in the past. That makes his inclusion a big blessing for the project," the director concludes.

the soul of reel Malleswari and who better than Sanjana, as she lived with the story of the athlete for years. Plus, being a female herself, I felt she would understand the story better and portray it effectively on screen." For Sanjana who hails from Srikakulam, Malleswari is her "super hero" and she feels blessed to tell the tale of the iron lady (as Malleswari was referred to back then) who hails from Voosavanipeta, a hamlet in the same district of Andhra Pradesh. "She put our district on the global map and things improved for better as a school-going child growing up for us because of her accomplishment. She proved that women from a small village can be world beaters," she exults, adding: "In the industry they say stories chose you. I don't know why I didn't touch any other story than that of Malleswari for the past four years. The project took time but it progressed organically. It is where it is now because of Kona garu. He is both Malleswari garu's and my strength." Sanjana observes that the way she spoke and the presentation she offered to tell the story of Malleswari might have led the latter to repose faith in

Jayaram lands a key role in Prabhas' next?

Popular Malayalam actor Jayaram, who was recently seen in the Telugu box office smash *Ala Vaikunthapuramlo*, is said to have signed Prabhas' next with *Jil* fame Radha Krishna. According to the grapevine, Jayaram will be seen playing a key character in the film who's supporting cast names are not fully out yet. Besides UV Creations, the fact that his role has a lot of prominence in the story drove him to green-light the film, it is believed. An official confirmation thought is awaited. Meanwhile, UV Creations has decided to announce the untitled film's title in a couple of weeks from now. They are in plans to release a couple of stills as well to quench the thirst of Prabhas fans who have been waiting for new developments about the film for the past couple of months. A romantic drama, the film sees Pooja Hedge alongside Prabhas.



When Nagarjuna insisted Seerat should not call him 'sir'

Actress Seerat Kapoor on Monday recalled how, while shooting with Nagarjuna for *Raju Gari Gadhi 2*, the Telugu superstar had insisted that she should not call him "sir". "We were amidst a conversation about spirituality when Nag sir recollected his role in *Shirdi Sai*, which is when this moment was captured. He noticed I was glued to the visuals till the very end and said, 'It's okay, you don't have to watch the entire video!' and laughed it off. He also tried his best to wave me off from addressing him as sir. That's the kind of camaraderie we shared off sets. Wisdom and fun, the best of both worlds," Seerat shared. On Instagram, she posted a throwback picture that shows her sitting next to Nagarjuna. On the work front, Seerat will be next seen in *Krishna And His Leela* and *Maa Vintha Gaadha Vinura*.

A film on modern relationships

Filmmaker Madhura Sreedhar, who promotes fresh talent, is presenting a new film, *Love Life & Pakodi*, which narrates the journey of a couple (played by new faces Karthik Bhimal Rebba, Sanchitha Ponacha) who face complications and their confusions honestly, while rediscovering themselves at every step. The film is a production and directorial debut of Jayanthi Gali, who says that it addresses a lot of questions the current youth have with regards to relationships. He is confident that the youngsters will relate and connect to the story and elder generations will appreciate it, as it has something to take back home for every generation. He is planning to release the film once cinema halls open. Akarsh Raj Bhagavathula, Krishna Hebbale, Kalajyothi and Anuradha Mallikarjun have played significant roles in the film.