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NATURAL GAS

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CHINESE APPS VIOLATES WTO RULES'

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CHOWMAHALLA PALACE:
CASTLE IN THE AIR

Beware, 'they' create clashes CM KCR alerts police

CM asks police to tackle them with iron hand to maintain law and order

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As a way to ensure that the TS Police do not let their guard down amidst a politically turbo-charged but highly vitiated atmosphere, Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao on Wednesday instructed the police brass to take stern action against "certain anarchic forces, which, out of their deep despair and disappointment, may try to create clashes and incite communal tensions in Telangana State".

The Chief Minister held a high-level review meeting on law and order situation in the State. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, DGP Mahender Reddy, Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda Commissioners of Police Anjani Kumar,



Mahesh Bhagwat, VC Sajjanar, Additional DGP Jitendra, IGs Stephen Ravindra, Y Nagireddy, Nizamabad IG Shiv Sankar Reddy, Warangal IG Pramod Kumar and others participated.

Without naming the forces, the Chief Minister said that the government had 'definite infor-

Without naming the forces, the CM said that the government had 'definite information' about the designs of these anarchic elements

mation' about the designs of these anarchic elements. Maintaining law and order in the state was top on the state government's agenda and any

attempts by these elements to disturb peace and harmony should be dealt with firmly. The anti-social elements should be crushed with an iron hand, he declared. The Chief Minister made it clear that the police had been given a free hand to deal with anti-social elements.

"During the GHMC polls, certain leaders are trying to get political mileage through several conspiracies. At first, they have used social media to spread fake news. They tried to divert people with morphed photos. Later they have indulged in provocation through their utterances. But yet, peace-loving people in Hyderabad did not fall for their falsehoods.

2

KTR: BJP is anti-Telangana

TRS working president KT Rama Rao on Wednesday skewered the BJP-led Union government, giving the expansion of 'BJP' as 'Build-up Jumla Party' and characterizing the Centre as patently 'anti-Telangana'.

The Narendra Modi government's actions and approach towards Telangana over the past six years had proved beyond doubt that BJP was 'anti-Telangana', KTR averred in an interview to The Pioneer, while decrying the BJP's partisan approach in respect of ties between Centre and states.

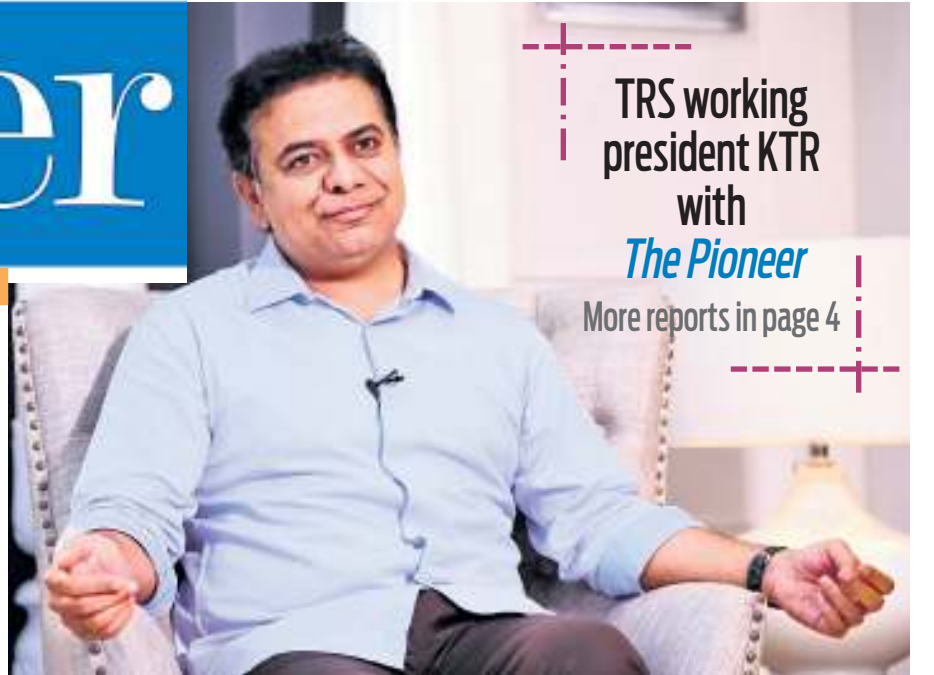
Pointing to the disproportionate interest shown by the saffron party in the GHMC elections, KTR said: "BJP has become jittery seeing the public support for the TRS and is losing any hope of a victory in the GHMC polls, which is why they are bringing in party heavyweights like Union Ministers, MPs of other states and others to campaign in a mere municipal corporation election, which is known as a gully elections."

"By sending Delhi leaders to gully elections, the BJP has lost the elections already," KTR said, adding that people were with the 'pucca local' party (TRS), as they knew that only the local TRS party would stand by them, come what may.

Launching a scathing attack on the saffron party, he said: "This is not Ahmedabad but Ushaar Hyderabad and people here will not fall for false promises of BJP leaders."

Sending out a loud and clear message, KTR said that stern action would be taken against those trying to disturb peace and harmony in the city.

4



TRS working president KTR with *The Pioneer*
More reports in page 4

'Our rival is MIM, not BJP'

- TRS will hit a century this time in GHMC polls
- We are fighting with gully and silly parties
- TRS corporators will assume Mayor and deputy mayor posts
- Hyderabadis don't believe BJP's communal propaganda

L VENKAT RAM REDDY
■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president and IT Minister KT Rama Rao, who is leading the party's GHMC poll campaign, on Wednesday put the record straight on its equation with the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen by asserting that the pink party considered MIM as its 'main rival' in the GHMC elections scheduled for December 1.

Interacting with select media persons here on Wednesday, KTR said TRS would break its own 2016 record of winning 99 seats in GHMC polls by hitting a 'century' this time. He reiterated that a woman TRS corporator would assume the post of GHMC Mayor, following declaration of the election results on December 4.

"Opposition parties are indulging in a malicious campaign that TRS and MIM are in alliance for GHMC polls. They are misleading people by spreading lies that TRS will hand over GHMC Mayor post to AIMIM. How idiotic is this?"



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—KT RAMA RAO
TRS working president and IT Minister

people by spreading lies that TRS will hand over GHMC Mayor post to AIMIM. How

'TRUMP MIGHT CAMPAIGN FOR BJP'
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In biting sarcasm, IT Minister K T Rama Rao remarked on Wednesday that outgoing US President Donald Trump may also come to the city to campaign for the saffron party in the GHMC elections as he is a 'friend of BJP'. KTR was alluding to the apparent bonhomie between Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, particularly to 'Howdy, Modi!', a community summit organized in honour of Modi on September 22, 2019 in Houston, Texas with the theme 'Shared dreams, bright futures'. 'BJP has forgotten that this is 'gully election'.

4

idiotic is this? Last time, we won 99 seats out of 150. This time, we will hit a century.

4

49 with criminal background in GHMC fray

DURGAPRASAD SUNKU
■ HYDERABAD

At least 49 candidates with a criminal background are contesting the GHMC elections now, according to the Forum for Good Governance, which has analyzed affidavits and data pertaining to candidates of four political parties that are in the fray viz. the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), Indian National Congress (INC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen(AIMIM).

2

POLITICS OVER MEMORIALS

MIM challenges TRS to demolish PV-NTR ghats, Bandi retaliates, KTR condemns

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

After a war of words around India-Pakistan and Hindu-Muslim, on Wednesday the GHMC election campaign veered to the macabre topic of demolishing memorials. MIM leader Akbaruddin Owaisi

kicked off talks on graveyards at a public meeting in Erragadda, where he attacked the TRS government for either failing to act on or selectively acting on encroachments of nalas. Akbaruddin said, "Hussain Sagar was built on 4,700 acres and today it is not even on 700 acres. Where did these 4,000 acres go?

It has gone into Necklace Road, shops, Narasimha Rao ghat, NTR Rama Rao ghat and Lumbini Park. If the poor build their houses on Nalas, they come to beat them up and break the house. I will challenge you to go and remove those graveyards and let me see how much guts you have.

2

MHA rejects lockdown possibility, issues 19 SOPs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of ongoing Covid-19 cases, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday issued a 19-point Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) giving nod to states and UTs to impose local restrictions if necessary.

The SOPs, part of a month-long guidelines issued by the MHA, will be effective from December 1 and will remain in force up to December 31.

States and Union Territories (UTs) have been allowed to impose night curfew but "shall not be allowed impose any local lockdown outside the containment zones, without prior consultation with the Centre".

Staggered office timings and other suitable measures shall be implemented in the cities with the positivity rate in 10 per cent so as to ensure social distancing.

The MHA has also not restricted any inter-state or intra-state movement.

People above 65-years of age, persons with co-morbidities, pregnant women and children below the age of 10 years have been advised to stay home while advising the general public to use Aarogya Setu mobile application.

The district authorities have been asked to carefully demarcate containment zones considering prescribed MoHFW guidelines.

2

Centre asks states to reopen medical colleges from Dec 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry Wednesday asked state governments to initiate steps for reopening of medical colleges from December 1 or before it, but with strict adherence to all COVID-19 related guidelines.

Educational institutions in the country have been closed since March in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter to the chief secretaries and the administrators of all states and Union Territories, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan also suggested making non-COVID beds available in sufficient numbers in affiliated medical college-hospitals to facilitate undergraduate training.

The Health Ministry has obtained concurrence from the Ministry of Home Affairs for reopening of medical colleges, the letter mentioned.

Accordingly, the states and UTs may take necessary steps to open the medical colleges on or before December 1, 2020, the health secretary said in his letter dated November 25.

Needless to say, all SOPs/guidelines with respect to social distancing and prevention of spread of epidemic issued by Central/states and UT government-

ments will be followed scrupulously by all the colleges, he said.

The Centre's directive comes in the wake of the National Medical Commission recommending reopening of medical colleges from December 1 or before it for the MBBS students already pursuing their courses.

The NMC, which has received representations from students and medical colleges, noted that the current batch of interns (2020) have not completed their required clinical training and unless they do it, they would not be eligible for appearing for the PG-NEET exam.

It also noted that the PG-NEET exam for the academic year 2021-22 has been delayed as the eligible candidates will be completing their training late.

2

Use of foul language by netas hurt people: Prez Kovind

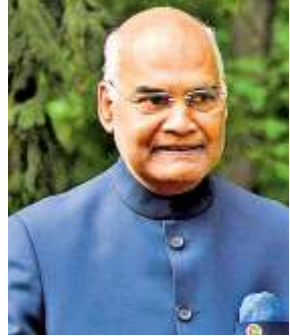
PNS ■ KEVADIA (GUJ)

President Ram Nath Kovind on Wednesday said that elected representatives should engage in a healthy dialogue in Parliament and legislative assemblies and refrain from using unparliamentary language during debates.

Addressing the inaugural session of the 80th All India Presiding Officers' Conference at Tent City in Gujarat's Kevadia village, his first outdoor public event in the last eight months, Kovind said such indiscipline by public representatives in legislatures hurts the sentiments of the people.

It is expected from elected representatives that they remain committed to democratic values. The biggest challenge for elected representatives and democratic institutions is to fulfil the expectations of the people, he said.

"I believe that people of this



country expect that their elected representatives will follow parliamentary norms. People get hurt when their elected representatives use unparliamentary words or indulge in indiscipline in Parliament or in the assembly," Kovind said.

He also asked Speakers to facilitate a healthy dialogue in the House to keep away unnecessary bitterness in the discussion,

2



Diego Maradona dies of heart attack at 60

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One of the greatest players of all time, Diego Maradona has died at the age of 60.

The former Argentina attacking midfielder and manager suffered a heart attack at his Buenos Aires home.

He had successful surgery on a brain blood clot earlier in November and was to be treated for alcohol dependency.

Maradona was captain when Argentina won the 1986 World Cup.

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Kartik & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi: Dwadashi: Full Night

Nakshatram: Revati 09:20 pm

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 01:26 pm – 02:49 pm

Yamagandam: 06:31 am – 07:54 am

Varjyam: 07:50 am – 09:38 am

Gulika: 09:17 am – 10:40 pm

Amritkalam: (to start any important work)

Good Times: 06:38 pm – 08:26 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:41 am – 12:25 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Scattered showers

Temp: 23/18

Humidity: 83%

Sunrise: 06:27am

Sunset: 05:39pm

Current Weather Conditions
Updated November 25, 2020 5:00 PM

SC stays AP HC gag order on Amaravati land scam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday stayed the Andhra Pradesh High Court direction restraining the media from publishing news regarding an FIR lodged on alleged irregularities in land transactions in Amaravati.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said that the high court shall not decide till January last week the pending matter which relates to the alleged illegal land transactions during shifting of the state capital to Amaravati.

The bench, also comprising Justices R S Reddy and M R Shah,

2

Heavy rain alert for Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Under the influence of cyclone Nivar enhanced rainfall is expected, with isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall over the state from 26th to 27th November. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Wednesday issued a red alert for the southern districts of Jogulamba Gadwal, Wanaparthi, Nagarkurnool, Mahabubnagar, and Narayanpet in Telangana. Extremely heavy rains are likely to occur in these districts in the next 48 hours due to the cyclone Nivar.

According to IMD director Naga Ratna, "Heavy to very heavy rain with extremely heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in erstwhile Mahabubnagar district.



And heavy to very heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of Nalgonda, Khammam and Suryapet.

2

Swamy Goud joins BJP

P4

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Secrets will travel with me to my grave . That was Congress leader Ahmed Patel's matter-of-fact response a few months ago when asked if he would pen his memoirs to share his experiences as the party insider with a finger on its power buttons.

Patel, who died on Wednesday at a Gurugram hospital where he was admitted with COVID-19, could have been the tell-all leader offering insights and information with his inside view of the workings of the Congress and the political world. But he would have none of it.

Author and journalist Rasheed Kidwai met the Congress' trusted backroom strategist and troubleshooter at his 23, Mother Teresa Crescent residence after the lockdown and asked him the question on many a mind.

We had a freewheeling chat about the Congress and politics, and I asked him why don't you pen your memoirs as it will be a treasure trove of information to which he responded, The secrets will travel with me to my grave," Kidwai told PTI.



Kidwai who has authored several books, including 24 Akbar Road: A Short History

Of The People Behind The Fall And Rise Of The Congress , added that Patel had gone too soon.

Kidwai described Patel -- Rajya Sabha MP, AICC treasurer and Sonia Gandhi's political secretary as the man for all seasons for the Congress. He said Patel, both crisis manager and consensus builder, was never one to hold any grudges, citing how he stitched an alliance with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra despite the party making grave allegations against him in the past.

2

KCR expresses shock at Ahmed Patel's demise

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao on Wednesday expressed shock at the passing away of senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel.

The Chief Minister recalled his association with Patel and conveyed his condolences to members of the bereaved family, an official release said.

The Congress party's top strategist Patel died in a Gurugram hospital on Wednesday.

He was suffering from complications related to Covid.

Heavy rain alert for Telangana

Continued from page 1

And heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of Vikarabad, Ranga Reddy, Hyderabad, Yadadri and Janagana of Telangana".

Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning is very likely to occur at isolated places over Telangana on Thursday and Friday.

State lowest temperature of 9.1oC was recorded at Mominpet mandal, Vikarabad district.

In GHMC lowest temperature of 11.9oC was recorded at Central University, Ranga Reddy district.

Across the state, maximum temperatures are expected to be in the range of 31 oC to 33 oC, while the minimum temperatures are likely to be in the range of 17oC to 20oC.

As per TSDPS, "Light to moderate rain/thunder-shower is expected at many places with isolated heavy rainfall in GHMC area.

Maximum temperatures in GHMC are expected to be in the range of 30oC to 32 oC, while the minimum temperatures are to be in the range of 17oC to 19oC".

Principal secretary Arvind Kumar advised people to exercise caution and care.

Diego Maradona dies of heart attack at 60



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scoring the famous 'Hand of God' goal against England in the quarter-finals.

In a statement on social media, the Argentine Football Association expressed "its deepest sorrow for the death of our legend", adding: "You will always be in our hearts."

Maradona played for Barcelona and Napoli during his club career, winning two Serie A titles with the Italian side.

He scored 34 goals in 91 appearances for Argentina, representing them in four World Cups.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
	₹ 49,750 (10 gm)
SILVER	
	₹ 64,200 (1kg)
CHICKEN RATES	₹/kg
Dressed/With Skin	₹165
Without Skin	₹188
Broiler at Farm	₹114
EGG RATES	₹/100
HYDERABAD	420
VIJAYAWADA	445
VISAKHAPATNAM	435
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.45

PMSVANidhi: Centre lauds TS government on implementation

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Government lauded for being the topmost performer in the implementation of Prime Minister Street Vendors AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PMSVANidhi). Secretary Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Durga Shankar Mishra informed the Prime Minister that Telangana state stood first in the identification, disbursement and providing bank loans to the street vendors, an official release here said on Wednesday.

As many as 5, 88,099 street vendors were identified and 4,29,250 loan applications were uploaded which is 72 per cent of the total identified vendors in the state. Nearly 3, 07,279 loans were sanctioned and 1, 76,628 loans were disbursed in the state. Mobile application was developed with which all



street vendors could be surveyed within three months time.

There is 602.91 per cent increase in the number of street vendors in the quick survey. The government has also

tied up with digital payment aggregators like Phone Pe, Bharath Pe, Paytm, Airtel Payment Bank, Pay Swift etc for generation of UPI IDs and issue of QR code to street vendors.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday held a PRAGATI video conference with the Chief Secretaries of all states and reviewed the progress achieved in rural housing, public grievance redressal, various infrastructure projects and PMSVANidhi. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, Principal Secretary MAUD Arvind Kumar, Principal Secretary Finance K Ramakrishna Rao, Principal Secretary Industries Jayesh Ranjan, Secretary Agriculture Janardhan Reddy, Secretary PR & RD Sandeep Kumar Sulthania, Secretary Labour Ahmed Nadeem, Secretary Health and Family Welfare Rizvi, Commissioner PR & RD Raghunandan Rao, Commissioner Civil Supplies Anil Kumar and CDMA Satyanarayana attended the conference.

SC stays AP HC gag order...

Continued from page 1

refused to stay at this stage the other directions of the high court including the stay on probe into the FIR in the matter.

The apex court passed the order while hearing an appeal filed by Andhra Pradesh government against the September 15 order of high court.

The top court, which did not issue notice to chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on the appeal, sought responses from others including the Director General of Police of Andhra Pradesh and the state's former advocate general Dammalapati Srinivas on whose plea the high court had passed the order.

The bench has posted the matter for hearing in January.

The Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government had earlier constituted the 10-member SIT, headed by a Deputy Inspector General of Police- rank IPS officer, on February 21 to conduct a comprehensive investigation into various alleged irregularities, particularly the land deals in the Amaravati

Capital Region, during the previous Chandrababu Naidu regime.

The report of a Cabinet Sub-Committee on the "procedural, legal and financial irregularities and fraudulent transactions concerned with various projects, including the issues related to land in the CRDA region will form the basis for the SIT probe, the government had said. During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing, senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for Andhra Pradesh government, argued the high court could not have said that no investigation should take place in the case.

He said high court should not have given directions that no coercive action be taken and no gag order could have been passed.

What is so special about this petition? The essence of this case is malafide but where it is reflected in the petition, the senior advocate said.

Dhavan argued that the writ petition before the high court is political and against the chief minister and is based on

reliable sources.

There is evidence in the complaint and it runs into pages and pages. Now why will farmers purchase land in June and July and sell it in January. Now I ask myself whether this kind of complaint should be probed or not. There were series of transaction and whether it should not be probed, he said.

Taking note of his submissions, the bench observed We are of the view that the issue requires consideration and therefore we will issue notice.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for former advocate general Dammalapati Srinivas, said, We have no objection and let the matter be heard." "It is absurd to say that someone had prior knowledge of the land being taken by state for capital. It is a public knowledge when such plans come up," he said.

It is worst than emergency, Rohatgi said, adding, It is easier to target somebody but it is tough to build reputation. A lawyer was targeted because he was advocate general for the previous government.

Use of foul language by netas hurt people: Prez Kovind

Continued from page 1

as there has been a steady increase in the hopes and awareness of the general public.

Underlining the significance of opposition in parliamentary democracy, Kovind said it has an important role along with the ruling party, and so there is a need for understanding, cooperation, and meaningful exchange of thoughts between the two.

"The ultimate goal of a democratic system is public welfare, which can be assured with the uplift of the backward and deprived of the country. I believe all three wings of state together will continue to work towards achieving this goal," Kovind said.

Concluding his speech, Kovind paid tribute to Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP from Gujarat Ahmed Patel, passed away this morning

Active Covid cases drop below 11K

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Continuing to report more daily recoveries of Covid-19 patients than new infections, Telangana recorded a drop in the number of active Coronavirus cases below 11,000, health officials said on Wednesday. During the last 24 hours, the state recorded 1,150 more recoveries, bringing down the active cases to 10,886, including 8,594 individuals in home or institutional isolation. The recovery rate improved further to 95.35 as against the national average of 93.7 per cent.

Telangana also reported 993 new cases, taking its tally to 2, 66,042. Of these, 2, 53,715 have recovered. Four more persons succumbed to the virus, taking the state's death toll to 1,441. The fatality rate remains 0.54 per cent as against the national average of 1.5 per cent. According to Director of Public Health and Family Welfare Department, 44.96 per cent of the deaths were due to Covid-19 and the remaining 55.04 due to comorbidities.

Of the new cases, Greater Hyderabad accounted for 161,



Medchal Malkajgiri district 93, Bhadradi Kothagudem (67), Rangareddy (62), Khammam (57) and Nalgonda (45). According to the official media bulletin, 47,593 tests were conducted during the last 24 hours, taking the cumulative numbers to 52,48,807. Of the latest tests conducted during the last 24 hours, 44,148 samples were tested in government-run laboratories and 3,445 samples in private ones.

Eighteen government-run and 50 private laboratories and 1,076 Rapid Antigen test centres are conducting the tests in the state. Samples test-

ed per million population ratio rose further to 1,41,021. The daily testing target for the state is 5,600 as against World Health Organisation (WHO) benchmark of 140 per million per day. Out of 2, 66,042 positive cases so far, 70 per cent (1,86,229) were asymptomatic while the remaining 30 per cent (79,812) were symptomatic. The data shows that 63.9 per cent corona positive patients were aged between 21-50, 22.91 per cent aged above 51, and 13.18 per cent below 20. Of the total cases, 60.44 per cent were males and 39.37 per cent females.

Secrets will travel with me to my...

Continued from page 1

He was also a devout Muslim and interestingly would switch mosques every week for Friday prayers because Congress ticket seekers would queue up outside if he went to one mosque regularly.

Babubhai and AP to friends and Ahmed Bhai to colleagues, Patel remained Sonia Gandhi's most trusted lieutenant for most of her tenure as the longest serving Congress president, standing by her side through sun and shade.

Sonia Gandhi said she has lost an "irreplaceable comrade, a faithful colleague and a friend".

According to political analysts, Patel was privy to innumerable party secrets, anecdotes and internal decision making.

Patel, who kept a low profile, was the quintessential organisation man who had an unflappable temperament and was a very effective crisis manager and troubleshooter, senior party leader Jairam Ramesh said as tributes for the

veteran politician and eight-term MP flowed in.

Patel's importance in the Congress dates back to the days of the late Rajiv Gandhi. When Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister, he did away with the post of principal secretary to the PM which his mother Indira Gandhi had created for PN Haksar and appointed three parliamentary secretaries -- Ahmed Patel, Arun Singh and Oscar Fernandes.

The trio -- a photograph of them taking oath as parliamentary secretaries did the rounds on social media on Wednesday -- was famously referred to as Amar, Akbar, Anthony'.

Just three months ago, in August, Patel had stepped in to quell a rebellion. His firm rejection of the public stand taken by 23 party leaders against Sonia Gandhi helped the Congress Working Committee snub the demand for replacement of a Gandhi as party chief and repose faith in her presidency after she offered to quit.

MIM challenges...

Continued from page 1

Akbaruddin blamed the TRS government for targeting only the poor over Nala encroachments and pointed out that the very GHMC building was constructed on an encroached land. Responding to these comments, Bandi Sanjay said, "Is this your father's or grandfather's jagir. The moment you demolish PV Narasimha Rao or N T Rama Rao's memorials, within two hours BJP karayakartas will demolish Darussalam. Are you so gutsy to demolish graveyard of PV Narasimha Rao, who is revered by Hindus and who protected the religion?"

Sanjay then vowed to go to the memorials on Thursday and promise to the departed leaders that he would protect their memorials. The BJP Telangana president said, "If noise is being made in Darussalam, why is the resound being heard in Pragati Bhavan? Darussalam is reading TRS script".

It may be mentioned here that PV memorial and NTR ghat were constructed with the approval of the state cabinet and a resolution was also passed in the Assembly in this regard. Even AIMIM party supported these resolutions.

Beware, 'they' create clashes...

Continued from page 1

People are not reacting despite the attempts to whip up communal passions. They have realised that their attempts to get votes by throwing money did not work in Hyderabad. With this, they are stooping down to low levels to create communal clashes in Hyderabad and take political mileage of it. They want to create communal clashes in Karimnagar, Warangal, Khammam and other places and campaign about them in Hyderabad. They want to create some trouble in Hyderabad

and paint it as communal and they want to foment trouble at places of worship. With these acts, they want to whip up the communal passions. They want to create such a communal disturbance so that the GHMC polls are not held and postponed. This their actual plan. The state government has definite information about this plan," the CM said.

"The aim and objective of the government is to maintain law and order situation, come what may. Don't allow anti-social elements' plans (to fructify) under any circumstances. We have fought relentlessly to

get Telangana State. We have worked with commitment, dedication, honesty and sincerity and brought the State to a certain level. We are not compromising as far as maintenance of the law and order situation is concerned. We have eradicated playing cards clubs and illicit liquor. People have witnessed how the TRS government dealt with an iron hand against the anti-social elements, mafia and other divisive forces. People are extended their unflinching support to the measures taken by the government in this regard," he said.

MHA rejects lockdown possibility, issues 19 SOPs

Continued from page 1

The authorities have also been asked to notify the list of containment zones on the website of respective district collectors.

While only essential activities shall be allowed in the containment zones, strict perimeter control will be there to ensure that there is no movement of people, except for medical emergencies and for maintaining supply of essential services.

There shall be intensive house-to-house surveillance by surveillance teams formed for the purpose.

Testing shall be carried out as per prescribed protocol. Listing of contacts shall be carried out in respect of all persons found positive, along with their tracking, identification, quarantine and follow up of

contacts for 14 days (80 per cent of contacts to be traced in 72 hours).

Quick isolation of Covid-19 patients shall be ensured in treatment facilities or home (subject to fulfilling the home isolation guidelines).

Clinical interventions, as prescribed, shall be administered and surveillance for Influenza-Like Illness or Severe Acute Respiratory Infection cases shall be carried out in health facilities or outreach mobile units or through fever clinics in buffer zones.

Awareness shall be created in communities on Covid-19 appropriate behaviour and local district, police and municipal authorities shall be responsible to ensure that the prescribed containment measures are strictly followed and state or UT governments shall

ensure the accountability of the officers concerned in this regard.

It is directed to state and UT governments to take all necessary measures to promote Covid-19 appropriate behaviour and to ensure strict enforcement of wearing of face masks, hand hygiene and social distancing.

In order to enforce the core requirement of wearing of face masks, states and UTs may consider administrative actions, including imposition of appropriate fines, on persons not wearing face masks in public and work spaces.

For observance of social distancing in crowded places, especially in markets, weekly bazaars and public transport, MoHFW will issue a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which shall be strictly enforced

by states and UTs.

All activities have been permitted outside Containment Zones, except for some which have been permitted with certain restrictions -- international air travel of passengers, as permitted by MHA; cinema halls and theatres, with upto 50 per cent capacity; swimming pools, only for training of sports persons; exhibition halls, only for business to business (B2B) purposes; social, religious, sports, entertainment, educational, cultural, religious gatherings, with upto a maximum of 50 per cent of the hall capacity, with a ceiling of 200 persons in closed spaces, keeping of the size of the ground in open spaces.

However, the MHA said, based on their assessment of the situation, state and UT governments may reduce the ceil-

ing to 100 persons or less, in closed spaces.

The main focus of the guidelines is to consolidate the substantial gains that have been achieved against the spread of the deadly disease which is visible in the steady decline in number of active cases in the country.

"Keeping in view the recent spike in new cases in few states and UTs, ongoing festival season and onset of winter, it is emphasised that to fully overcome the pandemic, there is need to maintain caution and to strictly follow the prescribed containment strategy, focused on surveillance, containment and strict observance of the guidelines or SOPs issued by MHA and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW)," it said.



Let the development continue: KTR

‘Our rival is MIM, not BJP’

Continued from Page 1

Are we fools to hand over Mayor post to AIMIM after winning majority of the seats in GHMC?” KTR asked.

KTR alleged that BJP was resorting to false propaganda of “TRS-MIM alliance” with the malafide intention of dividing people on religious and communal lines to win GHMC polls, polarising Hindu votes in favour of TRS, and distancing Hindus from TRS. “BJP leaders are day-dreaming that they can beat TRS if they project AIMIM as our ally and that TRS will make MIM corporator as GHMC Mayor. Our main rival is MIM. We will beat MIM in at least 10 seats now, against five we won against MIM in 2016. We are not interested in who will be No.2, No.3 and No.4 in GHMC polls because TRS will emerge as No.1 yet again,” KTR remarked.

Comparing the GHMC electoral battle as a fight between gully party (local party TRS), lolly party (nuisance party BJP) and silly party (Congress), KTR exuded confidence that Hyderabad voters will opt for ‘pucca local party’ TRS again.

Hyderabad had made a lot



of progress in the last six years under the TRS regime, KTR stated and added that in order to continue the good work in the city; the pink party should win the GHMC elections. He pointed out that it was the TRS government that developed roads, flyovers, and other infrastructure in the city, apart from ensuring uninterrupted power supply, peace and security for people. All of this ensured conditions that attract international organisations and multi-national companies. He pointed out that Hyderabad had been declared the Best City in India consecutively by international agencies such as Mercer.

“Such international ranks and recognition cannot be achieved with mere words, but only through hard work. The TRS government could achieve them under the leadership of CM KCR,” he said.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president KT Rama Rao said that the decision to go for ‘early polls’ to Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) was part of TRS strategy and has nothing to do with the Dubbak Assembly by-poll results, which TRS lost to BJP by a whisker. In an interview to media, KTR remarked, “Each party has its own political strategy. There is no need that we should disclose all our strategies to all.”

The existing GHMC Council term is set to end on February 10, 2021 and the term of Warangal and Khammam municipal corporations are set to end in March 2021.

When asked why only GHMC polls were advanced by two months while leaving out Warangal and Khammam and was Dubbak debacle prompted this, KTR gave an unconvincing reply saying, “GHMC elections can be held anytime three months before it term expires. That’s why we opted to advance GHMC polls to December 2020 against original schedule of February 2021.”

However, he remained silent on why Warangal and Khammam elections were not advanced. KTR later



claimed that TRS government has guts to face elections anytime and go to people seeking votes anytime. “Never in the history of erstwhile MCH (Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad) prior to 2007 or after formation of GHMC in 2007, any ruling party had dared to hold polls prior to schedule. These elections were delayed by years. They were run by government through special officers. But TRS government and CM KCR has guts to go for elections anytime. Advancing GHMC polls should be viewed in this direction,” KTR stated.

Ridiculing the arguments

that TRS fears BJP because of Dubbak result and TRS advanced GHMC polls with a fear that BJP will get even stronger if GHMC elections are held in February 2021, KTR said, “BJP won Dubbak with a mere 1,000 votes. Why should we fear with such a win, which is not at all be viewed as victory. There are several reasons for Dubbak win. BJP’s false propaganda, fake promises and many other factors were behind Dubbak result. I don’t want to go into more details now. There is no point in talking or thinking about milk that fell on the ground.”

‘TRUMP MIGHT...’

Continued from Page 1

Leaders from Delhi are coming, international leaders might also come. Trump Saheb may also come as he is their friend,” KTR said that they just need the blessings of the public of Hyderabad. BJP has lined up visits by prominent leaders of the party to the city, including those of UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, party president JP Nadda and Union Home Minister Amit Shah to campaign in the GHMC elections. Already Union Ministers Prakash Javdekar, Smriti Irani and MP Tejasvi Surya have visited the city and campaigned in the elections.

KTR: BJP is anti-Telangana

Continued from Page 1

BJP leaders were stooping to a new low every day in their desperate attempts to get a few votes. Dividing and threatening people on the basis of religion and instigating people to break the law was their modus operandi to try to win a seat, KTR observed.

Cautioning people against falling prey to ‘communal politics’ of the BJP, KTR said (referring to prominent BJP national leaders campaigning for GHMC polls) the ‘Delhi tourists’ would come and go, but it would be the TRS that would keep its promises to the people.

Ridiculing the BJP’s Telangana wing for failing miserably to bring any new project for Hyderabad or Telangana even though BJP-led NDA government was ruling at the Centre, KTR said that the saffron party’s leaders were good only at “making false promises and spreading lies and fake news or making atrocious statements like carrying out surgical strikes on Hyderabad, which has been a city that loved peace, remained peaceful without a single incident over the last six years, apart from registering growth on all

fronts. Going ballistic at the BJP-led NDA government, KTR said the economy of the country was hit much before the Covid-19 pandemic. “Eight consecutive quarters of slowdown landed in the lockdown which resulted in a recession. This is because of the demonetization, which impacted small, micro and medium enterprises and the growing economy was badly hit. Today, the results of it are seen and the lockdown has hit it further.”

The IT Minister wondered as to how many people might have benefited from the Rs.20 lakh crore stimulus package announced by the NDA government. The BJP government at the Centre did not release even a single paise of relief fund to Hyderabad, though the city witnessed one of the worst rains in its history. Highlighting the ignorance of BJP government in granting projects and funds to Telangana, KTR said that the Centre had done great injustice to the unemployed youth of Telangana by cancelling the ITIR (Information Technology Investment Region) project, which would have created employment for thousands directly and indirectly.

MIM-TRS enlisting illegal immigrants as voters: Smriti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of Textiles Smriti Irani on Wednesday alleged that the ‘unholy’ alliance of the TRS-MIM is enlisting illegal immigrants in Hyderabad as voters for their political gains. She said that leaders of the MIM misused their political positions to include Rohingya Muslims in the voter list. She claimed that two television channels have shown how the MIM leaders used their letterheads to ensure that illegal immigrants are included in the voter list.

The Central Minister, who is in the city to campaign for the BJP in GHMC elections, was addressing a news conference. “One of the clips showing a Rohingya Muslim openly expressing gratitude not only to MIM but also to the Chief Minister for including him in



the voter list, is a testimony that this corrupt alliance between the MIM and the TRS seeks to depend on illegal immigrants for political gains,” she said.

The BJP leader asked why the TRS did not order a probe into the media reports about illegal immigrants finding a place in the voter list. When asked about the MIM chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi’s challenge to show at

Why the TRS did not order a probe into the media reports about illegal immigrants finding a place in the voters list, asked Union Minister Smriti Irani

least 1,000 Rohingyas in the voter list and also the statement as to why the Centre was not taking any action against the illegal immigrants, the Union Minister said law and order being the state subject, it was for TRS government to take action.



Setback for TRS, Swamy joins BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a huge setback to the ruling TRS, party’s politburo member and Telangana first Legislative Council chairman Kanakamamidi Swamy Goud joined the BJP on Wednesday. Swamy joined BJP in presence of BJP national president JP Nadda and others at Delhi. BJP leaders-BL Santosh (BJP general secretary, organization) CM Ramesh (MP-RS) and N Ramchander Rao (MLC), Central BJP Coordinator (TS) Nune Balaraj were also present. Swamy is staying away from TRS party after his tenure as Legislative Council Chairman.

Efforts of BJP leaders Bandi Sanjay Kumar, G Kishan Reddy and Dr K Laxman succeeded as they went to Swamy Goud’s residence a few days ago and invited him to join the BJP. However, Swamy Goud said that BJP leaders came to his residence as friends and said that he had friends in all political parties. He also stated that he will reveal to the

Swamy Goud was associated with the TRS for many years, and was also the president of the Telangana Non-gazetted Officers Association

media if he switches his loyalties to any other political party.

Congress senior leaders--- Surve Sathyanarayana and Vijayashanthi are also in the queue to join the BJP. BJP national vice-president DK Aruna two days ago stated that Vijayashanthi will join BJP on November 24. However, she didn’t join and according to reports she will join BJP any moment.



ALL ABOUT MONEY

Though it is a violation of child rights, children are dragged into electioneering by some contestants in the city. Children wearing party t-shirts and caps and holding political flags and party symbols are seen accompanying party workers. Most of the children hail from poor families living in slum areas of the city.



BJP spreading hatred, says HM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The electorate should remember that a vote cast in favour of Congress would end up benefitting the BJP, said Home Minister Mohd Mahmood Ali. During a campaign in Banjara Hills with TRS candidate for the division, Gadwala Vijaya Lakshmi, Ali expressed dismay at parties trying to create rift between religions and create hatred among people. “In the past elections, parties used to speak about works and highlight the manifesto. Now the tone and tenor has changed,” he said.

Bandi a ‘chillar corporator’: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President N Uttam Kumar Reddy has strongly condemned BJP State President Bandi Sanjay for his controversial remarks aimed at disturbing peace and communal harmony of Hyderabad. Addressing a press conference, Uttam called Bandi Sanjay an ‘outsider’ who knows nothing about Hyderabad or its history. He said Bandi Sanjay lacks political maturity and he doesn’t even understand the meaning or implications of his communal remarks. “Bandi Sanjay was a ‘chillar Corporator’ of Karimnagar who incidentally got elected as MP and even made the BJP State President. He is a complete outsider to Hyderabad and he knows nothing about the city and is trying to disturb its peace,” he said.

Later, in the day Uttam addressed road shows in Kukatapally, Moosapet and Old

Bowenpally divisions. “I was born in Charminar Hospital and I know and love everything about

my Hyderabad including its rich history, culture, heritage, people, customs, religion, its cosmopolitan nature and every other aspect. People of this city have been living peacefully for over 400 years. But some outsiders like Bandi Sanjay are trying to vitiate the atmosphere of Hyderabad through their communal speeches. I appeal to the people of Hyderabad to reject communal parties like BJP and MIM and corrupt parties like TRS and vote in favour of Congress candidates,” he said while addressing the road shows. He said that the Congress, if voted to power in the GHMC elections, would give Rs 50,000 to every affected family and Rs 5 Lakh and Rs 2.5 Lakh to fully and partially destroyed houses. He said an ex-Gratia of Rs 25 lakhs to the families of those who lost their lives due to floods.



Candidates go the extra mile to outsmart their rivals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In order to ensure victory in the coming GHMC elections, the political parties and their candidates are going the extra mile to pin down their rivals. In this regard, they have come up with a two-pronged strategy.

The candidates are keeping a tab on their opponents and keeping the rebels in their own parties under tight leash, so that he or she is not able to harm the prospects of the candidate in the fray. The police, in turn, due to these activities of the politicians, are on their toes to ensure that no untoward incident takes place and absolute harmony in the society is maintained.



Each candidate is trying to keep a tab on his rival candidate, in terms of who all the rival is meeting and what is the ramification of such meetings, what is their gains etc. They are

also keeping a tab on each other to find out whether they are trying to influence the electorate in an unethical way by giving cash or liquor, and if such plans are there who all are

According to sources, some parties have constituted ‘shadow teams’, which are working round-the-clock keeping tabs on the rival candidate and the rebels within the party

the helping hand and where have they stored the cash and liquor. The intension obviously is to inform the police and the election commission of such intended underhand means of their rival, with a view to jeopardizing their poll prospects.

Candidates themselves, it has been reliably learnt, are not

doing this as they are extremely busy with the campaign. They have constituted ‘shadow teams’, consisting of the loyalists of the candidate, who are working their guts out in keeping a tab on the rival candidate and the rebels within the party. Members of this ‘shadow team’ may not be directly taking part in the campaign, but their

sole work is to find out everything about the rivals and the rebels and pass on the information to the candidate, who is taking every precaution to keep the identity of the shadow team members a closely guarded secret.

These ‘shadow team’ members are also indulging in many covert operations with a view to weakening the standing of the rival candidate and the rebel in the party. Experts are of the opinion that such covert operations may come handy for the candidate, who is commissioning those with a view to winning the election. It is also learnt that people indulging in successful covert operations are being hugely rewarded.

Nivar to intensify into ‘very severe’, TN declares one more day holiday

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Severe cyclone ‘Nivar’ would intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm and it is likely to cross the coast between Tamil Nadu and Puducherry before dawn on Thursday, the India Meteorological Department said. Chief Minister K Palaniswami, meanwhile, declared Thursday a public holiday for 13 districts including Chennai, Vellore, Cuddalore, Villupuram, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur, Chengelpet and Kancheepuram considering the safety of people in view of the cyclone.

Wednesday has already been declared a holiday. In its latest bulletin, the IMD said Nivar would cross over between Karaikal and Mamallapuram “during the midnight of November 25 and early hours of 26 November.”

The storm, 250 km off Chennai and 190 km and 180 km from Puducherry and



STORAGE ALMOST FULL, AUTHORITIES START WATER RELEASE FROM KEY RESERVOIR

Chennai: As the storage level touched 3,000 million cubic feet in the Chembarambakkam reservoir as against its full capacity of 3,645 Mct, authorities on Wednesday began releasing about 1,000 cusecs into the Adyar river as a precautionary measure. As the surplus waters gushed forth with the opening of shutters after about five years, Chief

Minister K Palaniswami inspected the dam premises and reviewed the precautionary measures and the outflow. Palaniswami said he advised the officials to “carry out their work cautiously and without causing any inconvenience to the people.” On the dam’s storage position, the Chief Minister told reporters that it has reached 21.5 feet.

Cuddalore respectively is very likely to move northwards and cross coasts as a “very severe cyclonic storm with a

wind speed of 120-130 kmph gusting to 145 kmph.”

Under the influence of the cyclone, coastal and north inter-

FLOOD RELIEF KITS FROM RAHUL GANDHI FOUND ABANDONED, TRIGGER STIR

Malappuram: Flood relief kits provided by Wayanad MP and senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to his constituency have been found abandoned in a vacant shop at Nilambur near here. This triggered widespread protest from various quarters, including local residents and the Left parties.

The kits, including food packets, clothes and other materials, were found in the shop on Tuesday when a few people arrived to rent the space. The DYFI, youth wing of the ruling CPI-M, staged a protest-march against the

Congress party and asked its leaders to tender an apology to the people. Nilambur MLA P V Anwar (independent supporting LDF) on Wednesday sought a probe by the district Collector K Gopalakrishnan. He claimed after the matter came to light, Congress leaders allegedly destroyed other such stocks from across the constituency. “This is not an isolated matter from Nilambur. They (Congress party) had stocked food materials at many other places to influence voters in the upcoming local body elections.

rior Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal regions are likely to receive rainfall on Wednesday at most places with heavy to very heavy showers at a few places and extremely heavy rains at isolated places. South coastal Andhra Pradesh is also likely to witness showers at most places today.

Rainfall is expected to continue in many places in these regions Thursday too with heavy rainfall at some places. Surplus water was released from Chembarambakkam lake, one of the key drinking water sources to the city, since it almost neared its capacity, the government said.

INDIA CORNER

Goa approves employment scheme for young engineers

The Goa cabinet on Wednesday approved a scheme under the Chief Minister’s Rojgar Yojana (CMRY), which will help engineering graduates and diploma holders win government contracts for small works. Speaking to reporters here, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said the state cabinet has approved the CMRY 2020 for Engineers, which will create a separate slot for young diploma and degree holders, where they can bid for small works in the state PWD. Engineers who have just earned their diploma or degree, and are below the age of 35, are eligible for the scheme, he said. Projects of up to Rs 5 lakh will be allotted to engineers with a diploma, while those holding a degree can bid for works of up to Rs 10 lakh, the chief minister said. The state-run EDC will issue loans to engineers who take up such projects, he said. Sawant said the scheme will weed out the monopoly of some contractors who often bid for small works and also provide employment for new engineers.



BJP, TMC clash in Birbhum, bombs hurled

Crude bombs were hurled and stones thrown at passing vehicles when ruling TMC and BJP activists clashed on way to a rally by the saffron party’s state unit president Dilip Ghosh in West Bengal’s Birbhum district on Wednesday. Police said the clash broke out when BJP activists travelling in a mini truck to the rally at Suri had an altercation with the local TMC workers while passing through Simurali in the district. As the vehicle’s windscreen was broken in the brick batting, the BJP men alighted from the vehicle and a clash ensued in which crude bombs were freely hurled. Many other vehicles, including two wheelers, which were passing through the area were damaged by the warring groups. A police team from Bolpur rushed to the spot and burstfire gas shells to quell the mob and cleared the highway. The clash, however, spilled to nearby village roads and the police intervened to bring the situation under control. BJP supporters have alleged that two of their supporters were injured in the firing by TMC activists during the clash but this was not confirmed by police.



Punjab, Haryana Congress leaders condole death of Ahmed Patel

Congress leaders from Punjab and Haryana on Wednesday condoled the demise of senior party leader Ahmed Patel and described him as a selfless politician whose death has left a void which will be difficult to fill. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said Patel was a dedicated worker, strong anchor of the Congress and steered it through difficult times. “Shocked & saddened to learn about the untimely passing away of senior Congress leader & friend #AhmedPatel ji,” Singh said in a tweet. “He was a dedicated worker, strong anchor of our party & steered it through difficult times. My heartfelt condolences to his family, friends & workers. We will miss you,” Singh added. Former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda described Patel as a “selfless politician” and said he was deeply saddened to hear his demise and added that he has lost a “close and important friend”. His passing away has left a vacuum in the Congress Party, which will be difficult to fill,” Hooda, who is the Leader of the Opposition in Haryana, said.



Uproar over Covid deaths in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The three BJP-ruled municipal corporations here Wednesday again alleged the AAP-led Delhi government was under-reporting deaths due to coronavirus, a claim refuted by the ruling party which accused the MCDs of “politicising” the issue. According to Delhi govern-

ment data, the total number of coronavirus deaths in the city was 8,512 as on November 23, while the civic bodies claimed they carried out 10,318 funerals following COVID-19 protocols. East Delhi mayor Nirmal Jain said the Delhi government should explain why the official figures were lower than the numbers provided by the MCDs.

‘Tarun Gogoi was my guru’, says Rahul Gandhi

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Calling former Assam chiefminister Tarun Gogoi his guru, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday paid tributes to the grand old party stalwart and said his demise is a “personal loss”.

He said talking to Gogoi was like speaking with the entire state as the three-time chief minister used to only talk about Assam and its people.

After arriving in Guwahati on a special flight from Goa, Gandhi straightaway reached Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra, where Gogoi’s body has been kept for the public to pay their last respect.

He offered floral tributes to Gogoi’s mortal remains in the presence of the veteran Congress leader’s parliamentarian son Gaurav. “I think Gogoi ji was not just a leader of Assam. He was a formidable CM and a national leader. He inspired us by bringing



people of Assam together and bringing peace to the state,” Gandhi told reporters after having the last glimpse of the Congressman.

Gogoi did a “great service” to Assam and also a “tremendous service” to India, he said.

“I have spent many hours with Gogoi ji. He was my teacher, my guru. He explained to me what Assam is and what the people of Assam are. He explained to me the beauty of Assam. It’s a personal loss for me,” Gandhi said while stand-

ing beside Gogoi’s body.

The senior Congress leader died here on Monday while undergoing treatment for post-COVID-19 complications. He is survived by wife Dolly Gogoi, daughter Chandrima and son Gaurav.

From Kalakshetra, Gandhi went to Gogoi’s official residence in Dispur to meet his wife and daughter. He spent about 30 minutes with them before going to the airport to leave the city.

“Whenever I used to come, I used to sit with him in the car for hours. Gogoi ji never spoke about himself for a single minute. He used to talk only about Assam and its people. He had his views for Assam.

“So, whenever I used to talk with Gogoi ji, it was not like talking to one person but with the entire state. For him, everyone was equal. Assam is of all religions, all languages and it was in his heart. I learnt a lot from him,” Gandhi said.

ROSHNI ACT

Farooq’s sister, prominent hoteliers in second list

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

National Conference president Farooq Abdullah’s sister and two prominent hoteliers including a Congress leader figure in the second list of 130 people who have availed land under now-scrapped Roshni Act.

According to the fresh list uploaded on the website of Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, majority of the beneficiaries including a former bureaucrat and his wife legalised their residential places under the scheme, while there are also names of dozens of businessmen who have got

the ownership of their commercial buildings.

This is the second list of beneficiaries issued by the divisional administration in accordance with the October 9 directive of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court which has declared Roshni Act “illegal, unconstitutional and unsustainable” and ordered a CBI probe into the allotment of the land under this law.

The administration uploaded a list of 35 beneficiaries which included former finance minister Haseeb Drabu, some of his relatives and top hoteliers and a former bureaucrat earlier.

‘Ban on firecrackers an example of judicial overreach’

PNS ■ KEVADIA

Citing court verdicts on firecrackers and denying the executive a role in the appointment of judges, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday said some judgments gave a distinct impression of the judiciary’s overreach. He stressed that the legislature, the executive and the judiciary are bound to work within their respective domains as defined in the Constitution.

Addressing the 80th All India Presiding Officers’ Conference on “Harmonious Coordination between Legislature, Executive and Judiciary - Key to Vibrant Democracy”, Naidu said har-



mony lies in each organ doing its job, without interfering with that of the others.

This warrants a spirit of mutual respect, responsibility and restraint. Unfortunately, there have been several instances of crossing the

boundaries, he said.

Naidu said there have been quite a few judicial pronouncements that gave a distinct impression of an overreach.

“Since independence, the Supreme Court and the high courts have delivered several far-reaching verdicts in furtherance of socio-economic objectives, besides making correctional interventions. But occasionally, concerns have been raised as to whether they were entering the domains of the legislative and executive wings.

The higher judiciary deciding on Diwali fireworks, denying the executive any role in the appointment of judges through collegiums, invalidating the National Judicial

Appointments Commission Act seeking to enforce accountability and transparency were some of the instances of judicial overreach cited by the vice president.

“There have been quite a few judicial pronouncements that gave a distinct impression of an overreach. These actions have resulted in an avoidable blurring of the contours demarcated by the Constitution,” Naidu said.

“At times, the legislature too has tended to cross the line. The 39th Constitution amendment placing the election of president, vice president and prime minister beyond the scope of judicial scrutiny in the circumstances in 1975 is one such instance,” he said.

Plea in HC claims traffic challan mechanism ‘faulty’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been moved in the Delhi High Court claiming that the mechanism of issuing challans under the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act of 2019 was “arbitrary and faulty” and needs to be rectified using better technology.

Challans were being issued without proper and reliable technology in place and there was need for “standardization of the technology used for monitoring traffic violations”, the petition by Sonali Karwasra, a lawyer, has contended.

She has claimed that there are “several lacunas” in implementing the Act efficiently due to “obsolete and outdated technologies used by the authorities to detect traffic violations”. Her petition has alleged that there have been instances where hefty fines have been issued due to faulty equipment and then the penalties had to be revoked. One



such instance referred to in the plea is the alleged bulk recall of more than 1.57 lakh challans issued by the traffic department for over-speeding on NH 24 between August and October 10, 2019. “The speed violation detection technology, the drunken driving breath analyzing technology and the red-light violation technology are not in accordance with the changing times,” it has said.

It has also contended that the government “has not put the information regarding the

technology being installed to monitor these traffic violations and as such no information is available in public domain with respect to errors/limitations/restrictions of the technology used”.

The plea has sought directions to the Centre and Delhi government to ensure proper infrastructure is in place for monitoring traffic violations and to standardize and upgrade the technology being used so that it is in consonance with international norms.

FARMERS’ MARCH

Authorities put up barricades on borders

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Ahead of the farmers’ protest march to Delhi against the Centre’s farm laws, authorities in Haryana on Wednesday began setting up road barricades on borders with Punjab and deployed additional police forces to prevent farmers’ entry into the state.

A Punjab Police official on duty at Khanauri inter-state border told reporters that the Haryana Police used cranes to put boulders on roads and the movement of traffic to the other side has been stopped.

“We are diverting traffic from alternate routes now. We are also ensuring that movement of essential goods is not affected,” he said.

Asserting that farmers of Punjab will not be allowed to enter Haryana, police said they have placed water cannons and ambulances on the borders.

Haryana Police’s Ambala Range IG Y Puran Kumar told reporters that the Shambhu

inter-state border will be sealed for two days from November 26.

“Once movement of farmers takes place from Punjab side, the Haryana Police will act accordingly. So far, the border has not been sealed, those instructions are for November 26-27. But if movement (of farmers) takes place before that, we will act accordingly,” the IG said.

He said sufficient police force has been deployed to maintain law and order in the state. Restrictions have also been imposed at other inter-state border points with Punjab, including in Sirsa, Kurukshetra and Jind districts. Police have deployed additional force on Ambala-Rajpura Highway and Ambala-Chandigarh Highway and done multi-layer barricading on the highways.

Haryana Police officials said they cannot allow movement of a large number of people towards the national capital in view of restrictions due to COVID-19.

Farmers fined for burning stubble

PNS ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR

Yet another farmer was imposed a fine for allegedly burning stubble in the field amid growing resentment against the air-pollution control measure that saw BKU activists dumping harvest residues in the office campus of a revenue official in Khatauli near here.

Ashok Kumar, a farmer from Sikandarpur village in Muzaffarnagar district was imposed a fine of Rs 2,500 on Tuesday, said Additional District Magistrate Amit Singh. Kumar was the 38th farmer in the district who was imposed the fine for burning stubble, said Singh adding 37 others were fined earlier -- some of them for burning stubble to clear the field, others for burning garbage or doing it to get relief from cold. A total of Rs 38,500 has been raised till now as fine from the erring farmers, he said. The demonstration, however, was called off following the intervention by district officials, he said.

Army recruitment racket: Kingpin questioned

PNS ■ SHAHJANPUR

The alleged kingpin of a gang involved in facilitating recruitment in the Army on the basis fake documents was remanded in police custody and questioned to find out if he had any links with the Pakistan’s ISI, an official said. Superintendent of Police S Anand said Suresh Som was taken in 12-hour custody on Tuesday and thoroughly questioned by the ATS, IB and the military intelligence.

The SP said he gave a list of 40 people who are working in the Army on the basis of fake certificates and are residents of Shahjahanpur and other places. The gang had got a large number of people recruited in the Army without police verification and so there are doubts about their links with the Pakistan’s ISI, he said.

An era ends in Congress

With the passing away of Ahmed Patel and Tarun Gogoi, the old order has receded further. Rebuilding just got tougher



Perhaps, the Congress is in its last year indeed. Perhaps that's the trigger for that emboldening moment among its legacy holders to rescue the party. Electorally, it is quite done with trying to make a difference. Organisationally, it has been torn asunder like never before. And now an era that justified its bigness and relevance has ended with the passing away of two of its senior and indispensable leaders, Ahmed Patel and Tarun Gogoi. Both were organisation builders who used dissent as an opportunity to strengthen and glue the party further. But Patel's loss is indeed irreplaceable as the Congress has lost its Chanakya. And the Gandhis, their lone warrior and the gatekeeper, who kept them safe and convinced everybody else that the party indeed needed them. A self-effacing man, who masterminded the shrewdest backroom strategies, he ran the party much like the late Pranab Mukherjee ran the Government under successive Gandhis, from Indira to Sonia. But he never let his ambition show unlike the latter, helming the party through crisis after crisis, propping up Governments with coalition partners when the numbers seemed impossible, raising funds and building a worth that would be bigger than any chair. He became the party, the Gandhis the representable face. That doesn't mean he was a courtier, far from it. Or that he was shy, being socially one of the most accessible of Congressmen. He was just sagacious and discreet that made him the most trustworthy leader and the party's ablest troubleshooter. He got the job done. A fact that he put to good use to build connections within the party and outside. He was accessible to cadres, had his ear to the ground and addressed their grievances, a quality that junior leaders are yet to imbibe, believing in data analytics than the human connect. A failing described by the well-meaning and weathered senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad as "five-star" culture. In fact, Patel was the bridge in the perennial tussle between the old guard and the young Turks, between the Congress and its allies in the coalition era and between the party and the Opposition. And he endeared himself to corporates, a fact that even compelled Rahul Gandhi to bring him in as Treasurer though the latter was not too close to him unlike his parents. Patel never went public, choosing to settle matters in private, his last manoeuvre being calming the 23 senior "letter writers" and keeping the party leadership out of an ugly spat. In short, he embodied all that held the Congress together. And he had deep political foresight, winning the Bharuch seat swearing loyalty to Indira Gandhi in 1977, post-Emergency, when the tide was against her even in her own party. Rajiv Gandhi noticed his deliverer capabilities and made him party general secretary, a most wanted post back then. Then he became part of the first family circle. Obviously, he was left out in the cold after Rajiv's assassination but he never embarrassed PV Narasimha Rao despite being sidelined or chorused the then Prime Minister's critics. He had that stabilising quality. By the time Sonia Gandhi warmed up to politics and was ready for the 2004 Lok Sabha election, Patel became her strategist and advisor, finding relevant talk points in the campaign that demolished the "India Shining" blitz by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Government. And despite the Modi wave, Patel made sure that the Congress at least had a moral victory by narrowing the BJP's margins in the Gujarat Assembly elections or clinching his own Rajya Sabha victory. But the best part was that for all the Congress' appeasement politics, Patel never ever played the Muslim card himself. Personal heft and consensus-building were also the virtues of Tarun Gogoi, who steadied the party's presence in Assam in the post-militancy years as Chief Minister, ensuring development, peace and growth and rescuing a ravaged State from the brink. Both these stalwarts did pull the party out of its morass and kept it on course.

The problem with the Congress now is that none of them is around to steer it back. The senior leaders are understandably adrift, unable to convince the leadership that the party should now give up the culture of nomination and restore organisational democracy first before renewing and rebuilding itself. Sonia, bereft of fresh ideas and now Patel, continues to be reluctant about anything that could challenge the continuity of the Gandhi bloodline at the helm of affairs. And with divisions so sharp, anybody with a prescriptive formula to revive it is usually considered a rebel than a well-meaning loyalist or dismissed as a defector, usually to the other national party. Yet the dynastic entitlement has outlived its purpose in a politically empowered India, one that sees no potential in the leadership of Sonia's children but would certainly believe in a rebuilt party. The Congress last held CWC elections 1998 and holding one now would keep the field workers and grassroots leaders invested in the party. All of them are currently cut off by a sedimentary layer of loyal courtiers, who are interested in simply playing along as long as their posts are secure. Yet State leaders like Chhattisgarh's Bhupesh Baghel and Punjab's Amarinder Singh have proven that they are able organisers and can even articulate and take a stand on national issues. If the Congress wants to stick around, this is its last chance to self-correct, rise above ego, value honest counsel and appear selfless in the interest of a larger political legacy. Unless its leadership just wants to exist for the sake of it. Dynastic stubbornness would have to give way to reason, wisdom and reconciliation. And if Rahul Gandhi still wants the adulation, he has to earn the confidence of the rank and file to be elected, not foisted, in the hardest of times. At least, he would have made a brave choice.

Beating Twitter?

While the makers of Tooter are hoping that a home-grown social network can take off, that bird has long flown



This is not the first time a new social network has popped up to take on the might of Twitter. A few months ago another network called Mastodon created a buzz and while many, particularly those of a certain liberal persuasion, populated the site, sadly its fate wasn't very different from the animal it was named after. The latest site to float up on your device is called Tooter, which is really just a rebadged version of the social network called Gab in the United States (US). While its makers claim it to be Indian or *swadeshi*, it turned out that even the "Terms Of Service" were copied almost verbatim from the American service. Without disparaging the efforts of those trying to create a new service, it would be good if Indian software engineers could create a new social network, one that integrates the best of the others and adds features, rather than blithely copying another product. On this front, India would be well served to learn from the Chinese internet experience.

That said, can Twitter or Facebook ever be replaced? There is an argument that says yes, given their monolithic power now as opinion makers themselves. Twitter has, in particular, played a dubious role in restricting access to certain information during the US election, or so the losing candidate, President Donald Trump, alleges. Then again, one could argue that without Twitter, Trump's popularity would never have soared. It is important that services like Facebook and Twitter, which are transnational, should come under some sort of regulatory mechanism and should not become some extra-constitutional force in nations like India. That said, the arguments for free speech and misinformation make for a dubious grey area and territories have to be clearly demarcated by the Government of the day. Also, a lot of the lamenting about Twitter being right or wrong for one side or another disguises the fact that it is what it is because of such issues and cannot be equal to the electorate. Much of what goes on in social media is happening at a level that the elite, on either side, have little or no idea about, on messaging applications like WhatsApp. Yes, social networks should be subjected to Indian regulations and it may not be a bad idea to create an Indian social network, but clearly, Tooter, like Mastodon, isn't the answer.



opinion

Bengal's revival

It is possible to make a quick start in reviving the State's economy without large investments but through governmental will and management



PRAFULL GORADIA

If I were still a resident of West Bengal, my first priority in the coming Assembly elections would be to retain the identity of our State. It should not in any way get compromised by Bangladesh or its concerns. We need to recall that on the eve of the Partition of 1947, Sir Abdul Rahim and the popular peasant leader, Fazlur Rahman, had come to Calcutta to convince Netaji's brother Sarat Bose that a united Bengal should be the third dominion besides Hindustan and Pakistan. The Communist Party then began to support the idea of an undivided Bengal. Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah also backed it because a Muslim-dominated Bengal would willy nilly side with Pakistan rather than India.

When it comes to song, music, language and literature, all Bengalis take pride in them. But when it comes to memories, most Bangladeshis would recall their social oppression at the hands of the zamindars and their camp followers. Many remember that even when they were invited to dinner at wedding celebrations, they would be asked to sit separately and after meals were expected to clear their clay *thalis*. This hierarchical rift ran so deep that a united Bengal would eventually be torn from within. In conversation a few years ago with some acquaintances from Dhaka, I was surprised to find that they resented how East Bengal was not given Calcutta during the Partition, although the city was, as it were, a stone's throw from Jessore. They believed it was unfair of the British to change the allocation at the last minute, and while conceding Lahore to Pakistan, they had done grave injustice to them. Calcutta was sought after because it was an economic hub and a port city; it supplied all the raw jute and the merchant princes of Kolkata reaped the benefit of jute mills and many other industries.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah was anxious to acquire Calcutta and the impression was that he was a capable negotiator. But obviously, he lost out, perhaps because his lungs were failing and his heart was set on getting Pakistan. The interests of East Bengal had a lower priority for him. Incidentally, the Qaid had never visited East Bengal until February 1948. The only so-called industry given to it was the Sylhet district, which was rich in tea gardens. Bangladesh has very few economic means, other



than subsistence resources, such as rice and fish. That is why, it needs to follow the Japanese model of importing raw materials from overseas and converting them into products with high technology for export. It is difficult for any people to have such techno-entrepreneurial genius as the Japanese. The legend of *Sonar Bangla* is now threatened because six of the western districts no longer receive the rainfall of yesteryears and they badly need river water from India. The other misfortune is that most of the land is low-lying and the sea level is rising. According to scientists, in two decades' time, 17 per cent of Bangladesh's land area is expected to be submerged. All these factors make Bangladeshis the highest number of migrants to other parts of the world. But West Bengal has borne the brunt of this influx.

My heart throbbed with delight when a few years ago, Mamata Banerjee, with all the fury at her command, threw a sheaf of papers on the Lok Sabha Speaker's table. She was then demanding an infiltrator-free West Bengal. The State has limited land and plentiful people and its resources have undoubtedly been stretched over the years, the refugees bulging that burden. Then the many industries — small, medium and heavy — that the State was proud of rapidly turned into industrial graveyards thanks to trade unions and poor management in years past.

Bengalis are a gifted people and certainly intelligent right down to the illiterate. If for

“BENGALIS ARE A GIFTED PEOPLE. IF FOR NOTHING ELSE, FOR THEIR TALENT, THE STATE DESERVES A BETTER ECONOMY. A REVIVAL IS OVERDUE AND IT SHOULD TOP THE NEW AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT”



nothing else, for their talent, the State deserves a better economy. A revival is overdue and it should soon set a new economic agenda. Setting up a new industry is like creating a brand, which would have to compete in this age of globalisation. On the other hand, education is a sphere in which Bengal enjoys a natural advantage as well as reputation. The first major thrust should be in the field of schools, colleges and universities. There is scope for developing a big knowledge economy because the catchment area can sweep UP, Bihar, Nepal, Assam and the Northeast, as well as Bangladesh. None of these regions is able to provide young people with quality education.

I would begin with medical studies. With efficient management and capable doctors, as many hospitals as possible across the State could be improved by deploying professional managers supported by medics. Let the doctors do their own specialised work. Management and medicine/surgery should not be mixed up. Thereafter, medical colleges along with as many hospitals as possible could be set up. The significant investment would largely be in creating medical colleges. The World Bank could lend the money since the Government could guarantee the loans. There should be an option, wherever possible, for expanding the hospital and adding another college, considering the best of technology is already available in India.

There is a crying need not for ordinary schools but for excellent ones with hostel facilities. The

New Education Policy (NEP) should be used as the lodestar for these schools to come up in the private sector with improved facilities. The land could be allotted by the State or there could be private-public partnerships. A similar strategy should be followed for colleges and universities. This would restore Bengal's pride as the seat of intellect.

Next, the Government should attend to sub-Himalayan West Bengal. There is space for a splendid international airport in and around Bagdogra, which is near the town of Siliguri. This is the place for proceeding to either Darjeeling, Kalimpong or Gangtok in Sikkim. The most glorious mountains in the world form the backdrop of these hill stations. Darjeeling is at 6,000 ft, and another 6,000 ft above that is Sandakphu, which is motorable, too, and from where one can view the Everest on a clear day. World class hotel groups and enterprising airlines could be lured with promises of support, a stable law and order situation and assurance that any obstacles in their path would be removed. Himalayan Bengal would become a brand in itself for Nature has indeed done its best to give North Bengal an unparalleled beauty. It is, therefore, possible to make a quick start in reviving the economy of West Bengal without undue large investments but with governmental will and excellence of management.

(The writer is a well-known columnist and an author. Views expressed are personal)

SOUND BITE

I am satisfied with the discussions with Tamil Nadu Governor Banwarilal Purohit on the issue of release of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassins.



DMK President
—MK Stalin

We cannot take any risks. We still have to wait and see when educational institutions can be opened. We will take up the matter with the experts.



Kerala Chief Minister
—Pinarayi Vijayan

I share a special bond with Mumbai. I have experienced failure way more than the success that I am enjoying now. Perhaps that is one of the reasons I value success!



Actor
—Angad Bedi

I remember missing a couple of Ranji Trophy matches to be with my wife for the delivery of my daughter. It is a very important feeling, especially when you are going to get your first child.



Former cricketer
—VVS Laxman

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Best of luck, boys

Sir — Cricket is also a game of luck and like any other sport has its ups and downs. India's top-most spinner has been neglected and put under quarantine by the Indian cricket board despite showing superb performance with the ball in all the three formats of the game.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) decennially honours some of the most prolific names in men's and women's international cricket. These players are voted for by respected members of the cricket fraternity and the general public.

Virat Kohli and Ravichandran Ashwin are two Indians among seven players nominated for the prestigious "Player of the Decade" category. Ravichandran Ashwin is the only bowler in the ICC "Player of the Decade" repertoire. He finished the decade with the most number of wickets across formats (564). Let us all wish that the ball rolls in favour of India's top spinner and our captain Kohli, too, bags the prestigious honour. Let both the men walk into the hall of fame.

Gundu Maniam
Mumbai

Maharashtra's COVID plan a good move

It is good that the Maharashtra Government has made it compulsory for all travellers coming to the State from other parts of the country to carry RT-PCR negative reports. Due to the second wave of COVID-19, the State Government has issued new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to contain fresh triggers for a pandemic spread. Just like in international travel, fliers to Maharashtra should get themselves tested 72 hours before boarding. Those passengers who do not have the RT-PCR test reports will have to compulsorily undergo tests at the airports at their own expense. The Airports Authority of India has been requested to check the report before allowing the passengers to board flights.

People arriving in the State via train will have to carry an RT-PCR negative test report from a sample collected 96 hours before their scheduled arrival in Maharashtra. Those rail passengers who do not have an RT-PCR report will be screened for symptoms at the alighting railway stations. And only passengers without Coronavirus symptoms would be allowed to go home.

For those travelling by road, the District Collectors of the State's border districts shall make arrangements to ensure that people are tested for symptoms, includ-



ing body temperature. Those with Corona symptoms will have to undergo an antigen test and will be allowed entry in the State only if the report is negative. People with COVID-19 symptoms would be turned back.

This is being done as Maharashtra's COVID-19 tally has risen to 17,84,361 infections with 46,653 deaths. It is the first State under the Shiv-Sena-Congress-NCP rule to introduce such tough restrictions through notifications. This is a step in the right direction as the State will have to clamp down on imported infections if it has to get a grip on the pandemic on its own turf.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Better sense prevails

Sir — We appreciate the LDF Government in Kerala for bowing to public opinion and agreeing to put on hold the regressive Ordinance empowering the police to prosecute persons disseminating "defam-

atory content." Unlike other Governments, the Leftist Government in the State listened to sane voices, realised the scope of potential abuse of the Ordinance and made amends by keeping it in abeyance. One wishes that the Centre, too, would pay heed to

the voice of the people on undemocratic laws. Clearly, the text of the law was not drafted by those with a clear understanding of the niceties of constitutional provisions. A staggering ignorance of the landmark rulings of the Supreme Court on criminal

defamation was writ large on the Ordinance that had to be put in cold storage. The State Government may have had the good intention of curbing defamatory social media posts. But then the Ordinance, in the form in which it was promulgated, was seen as an attempt to gag the freedom of expression, which is the bedrock of democracy. The phraseology of the Ordinance, built on sweeping generalisations, did not indicate either discernment or sensitivity and gave the police blanket powers of crackdown.

The State cannot be seen to be arrogating to itself or arming itself with arbitrary powers in the guise of curbing abusive or offensive online content. Had the Ordinance been shown to Sitaram Yechury or the Politburo, the Kerala Government could have avoided the embarrassment of promulgating such a dubious law. Better sense has prevailed in the nick of time and saved us another round of Left-Right whataboutery.

David Milton
Maruthancode

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

A different ball game altogether

It is crucial to understand the financial behaviour and practices of SMEs which are totally separate from those of larger firms



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Although capital is a scarce resource for any business, it is even more scant for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Therefore, cash flow and working capital management are the most crucial challenges of organisations in general and SMEs in particular. Working capital is short-term in nature and refers to the funds required for the daily functioning of a firm. In business parlance it consists of accounts receivables (debtors and any pre-payments, stock or inventory) and accounts payable (creditors and short-term provisions). The timeline of any enterprise is the flow of cash and other liquid assets through a business cycle — a journey of collecting receivables from the debtors to pay off the creditors. This is also known as the cash conversion cycle. The efficiency and, therefore, the success of a business depends upon how fast the goods are converted into cash. SMEs differ in many ways from large firms in terms of their financial behaviour and decision-making, mainly because of their characteristics and ownership. This ultimately reflects in their financial habits. So, what are the factors that affect the availability of capital to small enterprises? One of the most important issues is the size. According to researchers, during the start-up phase, the owner's personal savings are an important source of funds. Young and small firms do not have an established track record and may be characterised by informational opacity, making banks and other financial institutions reluctant to lend to them. In general, firms which are less than four years old, rely more on informal sources of funding.

However, when the SMEs increase in size and become larger, they have a greater network of banks willing to fund their business. The firm's ability to deal with multiple banks and other credit agencies generally grows with size, too. So, they rely more on long-term debt and external financing, including bank loans.

Second, the type of ownership is another important determinant for the source of funding. Any SME with a concentrated ownership, like in a proprietorship, should be more prepared to use bootstrap financing, as it would have greater difficulty in accessing a formal source of credit. From the lender's perspective, in such SMEs, there is no clear distinction between the owner and the firm, information asymmetry is prevalent and an ability to provide collateral is missing. On the other hand, a private limited SME may be viewed by financing agencies as more structured and credible. As a result, formal financing options are freely available to it. Third, the location of the start-up makes a huge impact. A firm's proximity to the banks has an influence on its ability to gain external funding. Research also suggests that one of the reasons for a company's failure is poor location that prevents customers and suppliers from reaching it. Therefore, despite high rentals, SMEs prefer to move to urban areas for the sake of better infrastructure and the ease of raising external finance.

Fourth, several researchers have provided evidence that the sector where the SME is operating has an impact on the short and long-term debt available to it. For example, short-term credit is used more in wholesale and retail trade as compared to manufacturing SMEs. Whereas the construction sector, hotel, hospitality and mining industries appear to depend more on long-term finance. And finally, availability of assets plays an important role in raising funds. From a lender's point of view, collateral, which is also known as the lender's second line of defence, is highly relevant while approving loans. Researchers Ono and Uesugi studied the Japanese SME loan market and found a positive relationship between the use of collateral and the ease of access to bank loans and external financing. It can also be understood that firms with lower tangible assets would face difficulties in accessing funds.

Additionally, the characteristics and gender of the owner too influence a firm's capability to raise external funding. According to several researchers in different countries, men and women differ in the way they raise cash for their businesses. There is empirical evidence that women entrepreneurs start their business with a smaller start-up capital, in fact less than half of the amount used by men. In addition, women also face discrimination from banks and other financial institutions. This is evident from the higher rates of interest charged from women entrepreneurs, the requirement of additional collateral, higher loan denial rate and so on. The age of the owner, too, impacts the personal financing preference. Older SME owners are less likely to take additional finance into their firms. Younger owners tend to use a variety of external cash sources like loans, overdrafts, credit cards and personal savings.

SMEs are the backbone of any growing economy. Therefore, it is crucial to understand their financial behaviour and practices which are very different from the financial management of large corporations. This would help policymakers come up with ways to improve the external financing scenario for such firms, as stronger SMEs make a stronger economy.

(The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)

A FEW DAYS AGO, THE HOME MINISTER WAS HERE. THE FOOD THAT HE ATE WAS COOKED IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS AND TAKEN TO THE DALIT HOUSEHOLD. —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE TMC HAS A HABIT OF PLAYING POLITICS ON EVERY ISSUE. THE FOOD THAT AMIT SHAH ATE AT BANKURA WAS COOKED AT THAT VERY HOUSE. —BJP NATIONAL SECRETARY ANUPAM HAZRA

A case for natural gas

Consumption of one fossil fuel over another will, on its own, not offer a long-term solution to climate change, but employing less emission-intensive fuels can reduce pollution significantly



JONATHAN SYIEMLIEH

As the winter approaches, Delhi-NCR is under its annual envelop of smog. Caused by an unhealthy combination of low wind speed, change in wind direction, dip in temperatures and stubble burning in parts of North India, air pollution is back in the headlines and our daily lives. According to a study of 28 cities by IQAir and Greenpeace Southeast Asia, air pollution in Delhi-NCR was linked to the loss of an estimated 24,000 lives and 5.8 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the first two quarters of this year, despite a strict COVID-19 lockdown since March. In fact, the linkage between rising air pollution levels and increase in COVID 19-related cases and deaths is being confirmed by several studies from around the world.

A recent study published in *Cardiovascular Research*, which was the first of its kind to distinguish between fossil fuel-related and other human-generated sources of air pollution, estimated that long-term exposure to air pollution has been linked to an increased risk of dying from COVID-19. The study estimated that about 15 per cent of deaths worldwide from the virus could be attributed to long-term exposure to air pollution. In Europe, the proportion was about 19 per cent, in North America it was 17 per cent and in East Asia about 27 per cent.

A recent study by Harvard University indicated that an increase of only one microgram per cubic metre in PM2.5 is associated with an eight per cent increase in the Coronavirus death rate. Long-term exposure to chronically-high PM2.5 levels weakens the ability of the lungs to fight off infections, therefore making people more susceptible to COVID complications.

In 2016, the national Capital ranked third on a list of cities around the world reporting close to 15,000 deaths due to air pollution. Shanghai was ranked first among the cities with most premature deaths at 17,600, followed by Beijing with 18,200 premature deaths due to PM2.5 pollutants. A study undertaken by *Lancet Planetary Health* the following year stated that Delhi had recorded the highest annual population-weighted mean PM2.5 levels in its air. Further, in 2019, the World Air Quality Report, compiled by IQAir, listed Delhi on top of the list of the capital cities with most polluted air for the second consecutive year with annual PM2.5 levels nearly 10 times the limit prescribed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Other prominent NCR cities were also listed among the top 10 cities in the world with most polluted air.

Source apportionment studies, such as the ones conducted by IIT Kanpur (2013-2014) and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (2017), have pointed out that secondary particles are a significant contributor to PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations in Delhi-NCR, with industrial point sources being the top four major contributors to PM2.5. Polluting fuels such as coal, diesel, pet coke and heavy fuel oil used by industries in Delhi-NCR are a major reason for this.

In such a dismal scenario, natural gas provides a good alternative to not only meet the energy needs of industries, but also as a less polluting option that can contribute to addressing environmental problems. The burning of natural gas for energy results in lower emissions of green house gas (GHG), Carbon Dioxide (CO2) and nearly all types of air pollutants in comparison to burning coal or other fossil fuels to produce an equal amount of energy. However, natural gas has not seen much penetration in industries, especially those situated in Delhi-NCR. According to British Petroleum, India's share of natural gas in the energy mix is lower than

“THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR NATURAL GAS PENETRATION IN THE MSME SECTOR PROVIDED THE PRICES ARE RATIONALISED, ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES ARE PUT IN PLACE, AND PROPER REGULATIONS IMPOSED TO RESTRICT CONSUMPTION OF POLLUTING FUELS. A POLICY DIRECTIVE FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT TO ENFORCE THE BAN ON USAGE OF NON-CLEAN FUELS LIKE COAL, WOOD AND SO ON COULD BE INTRODUCED IN A PHASED MANNER”



many large economies. It had reached a mere 6.2 per cent in 2019; this when the Government aims to raise the share of natural gas in the country's energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030.

Switching to natural gas and displacing polluting fuels has contributed to lower GHG emissions and improved air quality in New York, Toronto and Beijing, according to a 2015 report by the International Gas Union (IGU). The benefits of increasing the use of cleaner-burning natural gas in the industry were acknowledged and put into force by policymakers in Northern China in 2017 where the shift from coal to natural gas in industries led to extensive reduction in GHG and air pollution. In Turkey, the industry around Istanbul, too, witnessed a reduction in air pollution as a result of switching from coal-lignite to natural gas in the early 2000s.

According to the 2019 *World Energy Outlook* special report analysis, an estimated 98 per cent of natural gas consumed today has lower life cycle emissions intensity than coal, when used for power or heat. The analysis incorporates both CO2 and methane emissions and indicates that, on an average, coal-to-gas switching reduces emissions by 50 per cent when producing electricity and by 33 per cent when used for heating purposes.

The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in 2019 had assessed the potential and impact of a switch to natural gas from heavier polluting fuels among Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) units operating in Delhi-NCR. Data collected showcased the presence of thousands of MSME units operating in this region and using a variety of fuels ranging from coal to low sulphur heavy stock, light diesel oil, wood, bagasse, rice husk, other biomass fuels, high-speed diesel and natural gas. By and large, MSMEs were found to be disinclined to migrate to natural gas owing to high upfront costs such

as connection costs and security deposit, limited access to natural gas and economic viability in terms of increased unit price compared to other fuel options. To add to this, end users were also charged a conversion cost and had to bear the cost of internal piping infrastructure.

Obtaining the right of way and other clearances from State/local Government to lay natural gas pipelines also contributes to delays in setting up adequate pipeline infrastructure. Notably, micro units among MSME clusters in Delhi-NCR were found to be located in non-conforming areas and were especially not in favour of switching to alternative cleaner fuels as this would entail putting themselves under the ambit of regulatory compliances.

However, a switch to natural gas in MSMEs is not without precedent. The case of Uttar Pradesh's Firozabad glass bangle industry is a prime example of how switching from coal and wood to natural gas, coupled with the adoption of energy-efficient technologies, can reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions. Similarly, the Morbi-Wankaner area in Gujarat witnessed immediate reduction in air pollution as a result of the local ceramics industry shifting from coal to natural gas in 2019, following an NGT order the same year. The area recorded a 75 per cent reduction in PM2.5 levels, 72 per cent reduction in PM10 levels and an 85 per cent reduction in sulphur dioxide (SO2).

Further, in case of a shift to natural gas at a metal casting unit in Faridabad, Haryana, the learnings have highlighted that along with fuel switching, there is also scope for further reduction in energy consumption if MSME units follow best operating practices to improve energy efficiency. This requires understanding of technological best practices and their assimilation and adaptation to meet the needs of individual MSME units.

The provisions for upgrading and introducing new clean technologies in

MSME regulations can be capitalised in favour of natural gas augmentation in their energy mix. However, the diverse Government departments that have programmes and schemes related to enhancing clean energy measures in this sector are working in silos. It is important to achieve proper coordination among departments and link related programmes and schemes on clean energy, energy efficiency, technology upgradation, database generation, reporting and monitoring and capacity-building. This could ensure effective targeting and a confluence of actions at the intended delivery point.

There is an opportunity for natural gas penetration in the MSME sector provided the prices are rationalised, energy efficiency measures are put in place and proper regulations imposed to restrict consumption of polluting fuels. A policy directive from the Central Government to enforce the ban on usage of non-clean fuels like coal, wood and so on could be introduced in a phased manner. The city gas distribution companies could also be mandated by the Centre to completely erect the gas pipeline infrastructure in urban areas.

With the overall objective of increasing the adoption and usage of natural gas in the MSME sector, adopting a cluster-based approach would make natural gas penetration more effective. The Central and State Governments can play an important role in this area by facilitating the creation of necessary infrastructure and greener investments to ensure reliable and affordable supply of natural gas to MSMEs. Unabated consumption of one fossil fuel over another will, on its own, not offer a long-term solution to climate change, but employing less emission-intensive fuels such as natural gas can result in significant reduction in both CO2 emissions and air pollution.

(The writer is Associate Fellow, TERI)

A major leap for science and the Corona war

The mRNA technique may mean that future pandemics can be dealt with far quickly. The vehicle is available to carry the next vaccine



GWYNNE DYER

All the usual caveats apply: Don't go out and celebrate. Don't let your guard down because it is still going to be a long haul. This winter will be "hard", warns Ugur Sahin, co-founder and CEO of BioNTech, the German company that announced the first effective COVID-19 vaccine recently. "The vaccine can't be rolled out fast enough to reduce infections much in the current wave," he says.

The publication on November 16 of positive results for a second vaccine, this time by the US company Moderna, strengthened the optimism as did the fact that the AstraZeneca

vaccine is also ready to roll out, even if it does have an average efficacy of just 70 per cent. Clearly, this Coronavirus can be beaten, and there are nine more potential COVID-19 vaccines already in the third and final stage of human trials.

But again, the riders: There will be at least half a million more COVID-19 related deaths this winter — or over a million if people don't observe the lockdowns and other restrictions like social distancing and use of sanitisers and face masks that are meant to contain the spread of the virus.

"What is absolutely essential," says Sahin, "is that we get a high vaccination rate before autumn/winter next year." That's when it could really be over. And yet there is cause to celebrate, because of the 11 vaccine candidates that were already in third-stage trials, both the front-runners are "messenger ribonucleic acid" (mRNA) vaccines, an entirely new approach that allows a much faster response to Novel viral infections.

Traditionally, new vaccines took around ten years to be developed, tested and approved for general use. For the new mRNA vaccines, it has been ten months. It's a revolutionary science at work here.

After Chinese scientists posted the full genetic sequence of the COVID-19 virus online on January 10, says Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania, "we were making RNA within a week or so". Weissman then supplied that RNA to both BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna.

RNA carries the genetic instructions from the nucleus of the cell to build whatever protein is needed, and for the past decade researchers have been trying to fabricate "messenger RNA" that could be inserted into human cells. The mRNA would then use the cell's own genetic machinery to make vaccines and other medically useful proteins.

By 2018, several companies had cracked the problem of getting the mRNA past the body's immune

defences. With the full RNA sequence of the new Coronavirus in their possession, all they had to do was choose which bit of the Coronavirus RNA to use in the vaccine.

Obviously not the whole thing, or it would rebuild the entire virus in the cell. Just a harmless segment of the virus' RNA, copied millions of times by the vaccinated person's cells, would alert the body's immune system and train it to destroy any invading virus with that sequence. Scientists chose the "spike" that the virus uses to attach itself to the human cell.

Several companies had mRNA vaccines ready for testing within two or three months, and the results have been spectacular. BioNTech/Pfizer has just reported 95 per cent efficacy for its vaccine and Moderna has reported 94.5 per cent success.

Even better, both BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna included all major ethnic groups and a significant number of elderly people in their third-phase trials. All categories responded well to

the shots (which is not always the case with trial vaccines).

Yet another mRNA vaccine in third-phase trials could be even better because it will be far cheaper than the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine (priced at ₹2,896 for two shots) or the Moderna jab (priced at ₹5,495 for two shots) if it pans out. At Imperial College in London, Robin Shattock's team is working on a "self-amplifying RNA" vaccine that may require as little as one-hundredth of the amount of vaccine.

The mRNA technique may mean that future pandemics can be dealt with far more quickly. Pfizer boss Albert Boura goes even further to say: "It is the greatest medical advance in the last 100 years." Well, maybe, though a vote taken today would probably plump for antibiotics instead. But we are only beginning to see the potential of the mRNA technique. There are already trials under way for a wide variety of other illnesses. Not just safer, more effective influenza, polio and

HIV vaccines, but immunotherapies for cancer, heart conditions, cystic fibrosis and other systemic and congenital diseases.

Whether or not mRNA now becomes the preferred way to make Novel vaccines, it is clear that a global health emergency on the scale of the present pandemic spurs scientific innovation at a much faster rate now. This is not just the consequence of all the resources and funding made available to those with solutions that might usually be regarded with more scepticism; it is also driven by the remarkable things that humans can achieve when thrust together by circumstances and given a common purpose.

There is a long, dark winter still ahead of us, no doubt, but miracles may await us over the horizon. And we can now be sure that the light at the end of this particular tunnel is not an oncoming train.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'Growing Pains: The Future of Democracy and Work')



FOREIGN EYE



COMBATING RAPE CULTURE IN NEPAL

The Oli Cabinet has approved an ordinance proposing stricter laws on rape. Thankfully, lawmakers have let go of their demand of incorporating regressive provisions like the death penalty and chemical castration. Such provisions, if included, would have dealt a body blow to the principles of the modern criminal justice system. (Kathmandu Post editorial)

'India's decision to block 43 more Chinese apps violates WTO rules'

PNS ■ BEIJING

China on Wednesday said it was firmly opposed to India's decision to block 43 more Chinese apps on national security grounds, claiming the move violated WTO rules.

India on Tuesday blocked 43 more Chinese mobile apps, including Alibaba Group Holding's e-commerce app AliExpress, in a fresh wave of web sanctions amid its border standoff with China.

The banned applications, which include a few dating apps, were a threat to the 'sovereignty and integrity of India', an official statement said in New Delhi.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT issued the order for blocking the access of these apps by users in India based on the comprehensive reports received from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Center,



The Ministry of Electronics and IT issued the order for blocking the access of these apps by users in India based on the comprehensive reports received from Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Center, Ministry of Home Affairs, the release said

grounds under the pretext of national security," he said.

"This behaviour violates market principles and World Trade Organisation rules, severely undermines the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies. China firmly rejects it," the spokesman said.

Zhao said Chinese government always asks its companies to abide by international rules and local laws and regulations when doing business overseas.

"Following the market principles, the Indian government has the responsibility to protect their lawful rights and interests of international investors, including Chinese companies," he said.

He said the nature of China India economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial. "We urge the Indian side to immediately correct its discriminatory behaviour and avoid further damage to bilateral cooperation," he said.

Union Cabinet approves MoU between ICAI, VRC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and the Netherlands-based Vereniging van Register Controllers (VRC).

The MoU would help in strengthening and development of accounting, financial and audit knowledge base between the Netherlands and India, according to an official release. "The engagement between the premier institutes of both the countries would help to generate greater employment opportunities for Indian chartered accountants and also greater remittances back to India," it added.

Central govt approves merger of Lakshmi Vilas Bank with DBIL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday approved merger of crisis-ridden Lakshmi Vilas Bank (LVB) with DBS Bank India Ltd (DBIL) and removed restrictions on withdrawal of deposits by depositors.

The Union Cabinet has approved the merger of the LVB with DBS Bank India Limited, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar told reporters, adding the decision will provide comfort to 20 lakh depositors and protect the services of 4,000 employees.

"Cabinet approves Scheme of Amalgamation of Lakshmi Vilas Bank with DBS Bank India Limited; with this there will be no further restrictions on the depositors regarding withdrawal of their deposits," the official spokesperson said in a



tweet. The minister said that those responsible for deteriorating financial health of the LVB would be penalised.

The government had earlier on November 17 on the advice of the RBI imposed a 30-day moratorium on the crisis-ridden LVB restricting cash withdrawal at Rs 25,000 per

depositor. The RBI simultaneously placed in public domain a draft scheme of amalgamation of LVB with DBIL, a banking company incorporated in India under Companies Act, 2013, and having its Registered Office at New Delhi. The Reserve Bank had also superseded the board of the

The minister said that those responsible for deteriorating financial health of the LVB would be penalised

LVB and appointed T N Manoharan, former non-executive chairman of Canara Bank, as administrator of the bank for 30 days. LVB is the second private sector bank after Yes Bank which has run into rough weather during this year. In March, capital-starved Yes Bank was placed under a moratorium. The government rescued Yes Bank by asking state-run State Bank of India to infuse Rs 7,250 crore and take 45 per cent stake in the bank.

Stock market rally to continue in 2021 on virus vaccine hopes

PNS ■ BENGALURU

India's stock market rally is set to continue and hit new record highs in 2021, according to a Reuters poll of equity strategists who overwhelmingly expected corporate earnings to return roughly to pre-pandemic levels within a year.

The Nov. 12-24 Reuters poll of over 35 equity strategists predicted the BSE Sensex index, which is currently trading at a record high, would set new all-time peaks in the next year. It was forecast to rise about 3% from Tuesday's high to 45,750 by mid-2021.

It was then predicted to rise another 4% to 47,550 by the end of 2021, with forecasts ranging from 36,000 to 54,400.

Those forecasts were based on recent progress in developing COVID-19 vaccines even as cases rise around the world, according to over three-quarters of strategists, or 26 of 34, who answered an additional question.

Global stock markets have rallied since a sharp sell-off in March, ignoring deep recessions in most economies and driven largely by billions of dollars of fiscal and monetary stimulus and hopes for a swift economic recovery.

Emerging market assets have also gained on the weakness in the dollar, which hit a three-month low against a



basket of currencies on Monday. The Sensex has repeatedly hit record highs this month, surging more than 10% on hopes for an economic revival on coronavirus vaccine progress.

"Looking ahead, continued improvements in global risk appetite will further boost Indian equities, despite the weakness of the economy," said Shilash Shah, senior India economist at Capital Economics.

From a low of 25,638.9 on March 24 at the start of the pandemic, the Sensex has rallied over 70% to a record high of 44,601.6 on Tuesday, marking about an 8% gain for the year.

That was despite Asia's third-largest economy shrinking nearly a quarter in April-June, much worse than forecast and pointing to a longer road

to recovery.

India - the world's fastest-growing major economy until a few years ago - now looks to be headed for its first full-year contraction this fiscal year since 1979, according to a separate Reuters poll which predicted gross domestic product would take over a year at least to reach pre-COVID-19 levels.

But asked in the latest poll when corporate earnings would return to pre-COVID-19 levels, 28 of 32 strategists said within a year, including 10 who said within the next six months.

"We remain in a bull market that started in March, and even though one should expect corrections along the way, the equity market may have more legs before it tops out," said Ridham Desai, equity strategist at Morgan Stanley.

Rupee settles 10 paise higher at 73 against \$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 10 paise to close at 73.91 against the US dollar on Wednesday as positive development on the coronavirus vaccine front enthused investor sentiment.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened at 73.98 against the greenback, and witnessed an intra-day high of 73.88 and a low of 74.02.

The local unit finally closed at 73.91 against the American currency, registering a rise of 10 paise over its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee had climbed 10 paise to close at 74.01 against the US dollar.

Traders said risk appetite increased on news that US



Aleor Derma gets tentative nod for testosterone gel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Wednesday said its joint venture Aleor Dermaceuticals has received tentative nod from the US health regulator for generic Testosterone Gel used for treating testosterone deficiency.

Aleor Dermaceuticals has received tentative approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for its ANDA for Testosterone Gel, 1.62 per cent (20.25 mg/1.25 gm actuation), Alembic Pharmaceuticals said in a regulatory filing.

The product is a generic version of AbbVie Inc's AndroGel in the same strength, it added.

MONEY MATTERS

JSW Cement aims listing by December 2022

JSW Cement has again pushed back its plans for an initial public offering by two years to around December 2022 due to slowdown and COVID-19 disruptions, a top company official said on Wednesday. The company has already drawn an ambitious plan to expand its combined cement capacity to 25 million tonne by 2023 from 14 million tonne at a Capex of Rs 3,600 crore.



SIDBI inks MoU with Tamil Nadu govt to develop MSMEs



Small Industries Development Bank of India on Wednesday said it has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Tamil Nadu government to develop micro, small and medium enterprises eco system

in the state. As per the MoU, SIDBI would deploy a project management unit (PMU) for training and capacity-building programmes in areas like technology transfer, intellectual property rights and research and development, among others. The setting up of the PMU aims at bringing focused engagement in various forms leading to a stronger 'Atma Nirbhar' state and country, SIDBI deputy managing director V Satya Venkata Rao said. The PMU is expected to bring a deeper engagement in financial and non-financial fronts, he said. SIDBI is also structuring a cluster development fund to support the infrastructural aspects of cluster development, he added.

RNLI takes 40,000 sq ft on lease at Adani to house corporate HQ

Reliance Nippon Life Insurance (RNLI) has taken a 40,000 sq ft space on a five-year lease at an Adani Realty project in the BKC business district to house its corporate headquarters, officials said on Wednesday. Rental details of the transaction, one of the largest in recent times, were not immediately available. "RNLI has signed up to have 40,000 sq ft in Bandra Kurla Complex's (BKC) Adani Inspire for five years," a source said. When contacted, RNLI's chief executive and managing director Ashish Vohra confirmed the development while officials at Adani Realty were not available for comment. Corporate office relocations are a matter of long term commitment and the recovered business sentiment regarding the value of life insurance product gives us the confidence to make this decision.



ESIC scheme adds 11.49 lakh new members in Sept

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Around 11.49 lakh new members joined the ESIC-run social security scheme in September against 9.47 lakh in the previous month, official data showed on Wednesday, giving a perspective on formal sector employment in the country.

The latest data is part of a report released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Wednesday.

Gross new enrolments with the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) were 8.27 lakh in June, 4.87 lakh in May and 2.62 lakh in April, showing an increase in enrolments after easing of the lockdown, the latest data showed.

Later in July this year, the gross enrolments dipped to 7.61 lakh but improved to 9.47 lakh in August as per the latest data released on Wednesday.

The government had



imposed a nationwide lockdown on March 25 to contain the spread of coronavirus infection. Later restriction were eased for various economic activities in phases.

In March, as many as 8.21 lakh new members had joined the scheme run by ESIC, against 11.83 lakh subscribers in February, according to the

payroll data released in May. The NSO report showed gross enrolments of new subscribers with ESIC were 1.51 crore in 2019-20, against 1.49 crore in the previous fiscal.

During the period September 2017 to March 2018, around 83.35 lakh new subscribers had joined the ESIC scheme.

Govt to come out with model tenancy law soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra on Wednesday said the government will soon come out with the model tenancy law, giving a major boost to real estate sector especially rental homes.

The ministry had in July 2019 floated the draft model tenancy law.

Addressing a webinar organised by realtors body NAREDCO, he said the government's Affordable Rental Housing Complex (ARHC) scheme for migrants, which was launched few months ago, has been progressing well and the programme has the potential to stop creation of slums in cities.

Mishra said the housing sales have revived after unlocking of the economy on the back of several measures taken by the Centre as well as state governments.

He said some states like



Maharashtra and Karnataka have reduced stamp duty on registration of properties to boost sales.

The secretary said the Centre had advised all States/UTs to cut stamp duty for giving flip to the housing segment.

"Model Tenancy law is ready. It has been translated into various

languages as it has far reaching implications," Mishra said.

The deadline for feedback on the proposed model tenancy law ended on October 31 and now States have been asked to send those feedbacks after compiling it, he said.

The secretary said the model tenancy will come "very soon".

Mishra pointed out that 1.1 crore homes were vacant as per 2011 census as people fear to give their homes on rent.

The model tenancy law will eliminate anomalies and give a boost to real estate sector, he said.

The Centre will send the Model Tenancy Law, after approval from the Union Cabinet, to States for its adoption. The draft model tenancy law proposes that landowners will have to give a notice in writing three months before revising rent. It advocated appointing a district collector as rent authority and heavy penalty on tenants for overstaying. On the ARHC scheme, Mishra said the initial response has been very encouraging and the already completed units have been handed over in cities like Surat and Chandigarh.

"This scheme is the answer for ending slums in the country. No one wants to live in

slums," he said.

Talking about the Rs 25,000-crore stress fund to complete stuck real estate projects, Mishra said around Rs 13,000 crore has been committed so far in 135 real estate projects, which would benefit 87,000 homebuyers.

He said the government is regularly reviewing the progress of this stress fund -- Special Window for Affordable and Mid Income Housing (SWAMIH).

The secretary asked builders to take advantage of recent tax relief announced by the government in clearing their unsold inventories.

Recently, the government relaxed income tax rules to allow primary or first sale of housing units of up to Rs 2 crore at a price that can be 20 per cent below the stamp duty circle rate. Earlier, the law restricted differential between circle rate and agreement value at 10 per cent.

Cabinet approves Rs 6,000 crore infusion in NIIF debt platform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved equity infusion of Rs 6,000 crore in NIIF Debt Platform sponsored by National Investment and Infrastructure Fund.

This was informed by Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar after the Cabinet meeting. The proposal to invest Rs 6,000 crore as equity into NIIF is part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat 3.0 package announced earlier this month. To support the funding of the National Infrastructure Pipeline of Rs 111 lakh crore, Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech this year had said that about Rs 22,000 crore has already been provided.



Common citizens to one another's rescue

It was about 9 pm when a 40-year-old woman fell from her bike accidentally while moving over a speed breaker. She was a pillion rider on the two-wheeler. An Active bleeding control volunteer Narsimha, an auto driver witnessed the incident and approached the victim. He controlled the mob and ensured scene safety. On reaching the incident site, he assessed the victim and identified that there was active bleeding on her left thigh region. He also observed bleeding injuries on the forehead and on right lower limb. He took immediate steps in controlling the bleeding by applying direct bandage. Once the patient was stabilised, attenders requested the ABC volunteer to shift the victim to a hospital for further evaluation and management. As per follow up from the Research Assistant, Ravinder Odela, she was treated and discharged from the hospital after two days of In-Patient care after complete recovery.

Ever since, the volunteers/auto drivers and police saved nearly 30 accident victims lives. They are not only proud of the fact that they are in a position to save lives but are also humbled that they have become role models for others.

GV. Ramana Rao, GVK EMRI informs that the idea behind ABC was to enable common citizens to help each



Auto drivers in the city were able to save over 30 lives in the past year, thanks to the Active Bleeding Control programme. Here's to a few ordinary citizens, who turned saviours. They're not doctors, but socially conscious individuals. They volunteered, got themselves enrolled, trained themselves in the ABC programme, and saved lives. **By PNS**



other through Active Bleeding Control. GVK EMRI launched world's first Active Bleeding Control (ABC) Project & Research on a pilot basis to save accident victims by controlling bleed-

ing with a simple technique called Direct Pressure two years ago. The project is a joint collaboration between GVK EMRI and PediSTARS, India, PHFI, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Road Safety Club at Hyderabad,

Transport Department, Police department of Telangana. The initiative has been yielding very good response. Nearly 40 per cent deaths in accidents are occurring due to uncontrolled bleeding. It takes at least 15 minutes for the

ambulance to reach to the accident spot. Lives can be saved by controlling bleeding with direct pressure. Everybody, even common people, with little training and understanding, can use this technique and save lives.

Under this program a total of 1,004 volunteers from various occupation groups have been trained. Of this 41 are auto drivers, 196 are police men, 113 are students; 21 shopkeepers, 51 Toll Plaza employees, and 54 bus drivers among others.

These ABC Volunteers who involved in saving the lives were also felicitated recently by ABC team to encourage and motivate them towards saving more lives. GVK EMRI wants more people to get involved in the ABC Volunteer program. It wants to reach out to more policemen, bystanders, auto drivers, bus drivers, students, NSS volunteers, petrol bunk staff, shop owners and others. All they need to do, is attended the 90 minutes training program, learn the bleeding control technique practically by demonstrating on their co-participants. Each of the participants will be given away certificates and ABC Kits also. The initiative hopes to save lives by educating bystanders on techniques to help stop severe bleeding.

Project Coordinator Devendar Karabu, can be reached on 9966673108, devendarkarabu@emri.in for training if any wants to get in ABC.

Towards safe food DELIVERY



For fans of the exquisite cuisines at Taj Krishna, you can now enjoy their signature dishes through their newly launched Qmin, Indian Hotels Company Limited's (IHCL) gourmet food delivery platform.

Food lovers can now order a repertoire of culinary experiences from the celebrated restaurants, Golden Dragon, Encounters, and Firdaus at the Taj Krishna Hyderabad. Qmin offers Curated dishes made with the highest Quality of ingredients, offering a variety of their favourite Quisines, delivered at your doorstep in the comfort and convenience of your home. This gourmet food delivery platform also offers a differentiated delivery experience with stringent protocols of safety and hygiene, including contact-less delivery and the mandatory use of protective gear for delivery executives. The delivery platform

came in at the right time when customers are still wary of the COVID situation.

Qmin's packaging is eco-friendly, utilising biodegradable materials, and with customized insulation boxes to preserve the food whilst being delivered.

Hyderabadi specialties like Kebab-e-Firdaus, Haleem and Shirmal, Murgh Tariwala, Lehsuni palak, Kacche Gosht ki Dun Biryani and Double ka Meetha are some of the most loved recipes, which guests can order from Qmin. The menu also offers a wide selection of Golden Dragon signatures, like Butter Chilli Garlic Prawns, Fish Scheszwan, Mapo Tofu and Shandong Veg Fried Rice, and Global specialties like Atlantic Salmon Grills, Fusilli Alfredo Con Pollo, Pizza Marinara, and more.

Yumm, is your mouth watering already? Experience these rich gastronomic delights at home, by calling 1800 266 7646 to place your order now!



Just the right mix!

Gujarati music is reaching a crescendo. After several musical experiments, searching for that perfect melody and composing songs that resonate with the sensibilities of the regional audience, Gujarati music is no longer about following a hit formula but also about creating a unique musical identity that is just as rooted in the Gujarati spirit.

Positioned as India's first Gujarati Hip Hop compilation, the new smashing record of UK-based rapper RaOol combines the musical aptitude of exceptional artists from across four continents and hailing from diverse musical backgrounds. RaOol has also collaborated with Bollywood playback singer Divya Kumar, British-Indian singer-songwriter Jaz Dhami who will be making his debut in Gujarati singing with Bollywood songstress Neeti Mohan who also will be seen rapping in Gujarati for the very first time!

Music director, rapper and a lyricist, RaOol who enjoys the patronage of being the only Gujarati rapper to have forayed in the Indian music industry has previously given hits in Bollywood films like *Housefull 3*, *Tum Bin 2*, *Dobaara* as well as crafted the theme song of *Star Plus*'s flagship dance reality show *Dance Plus*. RaOol, who frequently shuttles between Mumbai and London and is currently represented by Akon's Konvict Muzik Label, states, "When major labels told me to follow the trend of the Punjabi music scene to simply blend in rather than draw attention to my Gujarati heritage, I knew I had to do the opposite. This project is Gujarati music reimagined in my way and my first step in bringing Gujarati Hip Hop to the world. Punjab has made its mark, now it's our time so Gujarat Stand Up."

Be it giving Gujarati folk a contemporary makeover or experimenting with international genres like hip-hop, RaOol created a perfect musical balance of modern and traditional while being appreciated and accepted by the Gujarati music lovers. Who would have imagined a Gujarati rap with hip-hop beats? That's what this international rapper has brought to the table this time. Further

on Aishwarya Majmudar shares, "When I heard it, I was like, 'I'm definitely going to sing this song!'. This song is incredible. The drops and the growth, the lyrics! Oh, love love the lyrics. The thought is extremely relatable, especially to the generation today, and the music is a brilliant blend of cultures. I'm so proud of RaOol, this song couldn't have been better. I'm also so grateful to be a part of such an amazing international project! It's going to hit the Billboards and is here to stay!"

Move over Punjabi music and rap, it's Gujarat's time to shine, believes the first rapper from the community, RaOol! In an exclusive interview with *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL, he and Aishwarya Majmudar talk about their upcoming song, the uniqueness of it and how proud they are of it!



Women dominate 2021 Grammy nominations

The 2021 Grammy Awards nominations are all about women power with Beyonce, Taylor Swift and Dua Lipa leading the way. Beyonce is leading the con- tender at the 2021 Grammy Awards with nine nods. She is fol- lowed by Taylor Swift, Roddy Ricch and Dua Lipa, who earned six nominations each. Brittany Howard, of Alabama Shakes fame, earned five nomina- tions for her solo debut. Earning four each were Billie Eilish, Megan Thee Stallion, DaBaby, Phoebe Bridgers, Justin Bieber, jazz pianist John Beasley and clas- sical producer David Frost, reports *Variety*.

As a shocker, *The Weeknd* didn't get nominated. Despite being pre- dicted to dominate the nomina- tions at the 63rd annual Grammys, the pop-R&B super- star's *Blinding lights* single and *After Hours* album got zero nomi- nations. Beyonce will be competing against herself in the Record of the Year category. She is nominated in the category for *Black Parade* as well as *Savage*. She fights Black Pumas, DaBaby, Doja Cat, Billie Eilish, Dua Lipa, and Post Malone for the trophy. Swift's six nominations include five for her *Folklore* album or its *Cardigan* single and one for her collaboration with Andrew Lloyd Webber on an original song for the film version of *Cats*. Her competition in the Album of the Year category include Dua Lipa, Post Malone, Coldplay, Jhen Aiko, Jacob Collier, HAIM and Black Pumas. K-pop super band BTS got a Best Pop Duo/Group Performance nod for their first single sung entirely in English, *Dynamite*. Dua Lipa got nominations in the categories of Record of the Year and Song of the Year for *Don't Start Now* and Album of the Year for *Future Nostalgia*. Dua Lipa and Beyonce are joined in the Song of the Year category by fellow six-time nominees Roddy Ricch and Taylor Swift. Ricch has the most Grammy nominations for any male artiste this year. He is up for Song of the Year for *The Box* and Record of the Year for *Rockstar* with *DaBaby*. The 63rd Grammy Awards will be held on January 31, 2021 and will be showcased live in India on Vh1 India.

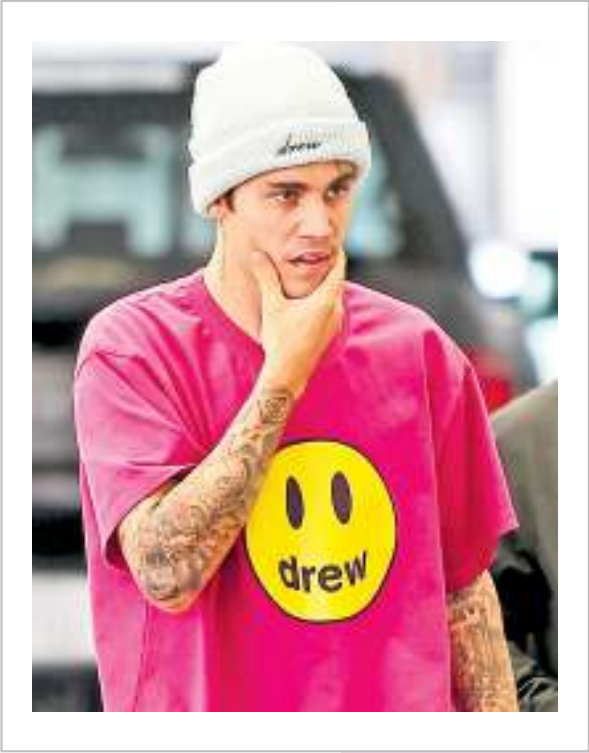


Justin Bieber upset over his Grammy nominations

Pop star Justin Bieber finds his Grammy Award nominations strange, and is upset that his nominations were in pop instead of R&B categories. Bieber earned four Grammy Award nominations for his album *Changes*, including Best Pop Solo Performance (for *Yummy*), Best Pop Duo/Group Performance (*Intentions* featuring Quavo), Best Pop Vocal Album, and Best Country Duo/Group Performance (for his feature on Dan + Shay's *10,000 Hours*). A little after the nominations were announced, Bieber wrote a short letter to the Recording Academy on Instagram, sharing his thoughts on how his mission to make an R&B album was not honoured properly by placing it in the wrong category. "To the Grammys," he started his letter, writing: "I am flattered to be acknow- ledged and appreciated for my artistry. I am very meticulous and intentional about my music. With that being said, I set out to make an R&B album. *Changes* was and is an R&B album. It is not being acknowledged as an R&B album, which is very strange to me. I grew up admiring R&B music and wished to make a project that would embody that sound. For this not to be put into that category feels weird, considering from the chords to the melodies to the vocal style, all the way down to the hip-hop drums that were chosen, it is undeniably, unmistakably an R&B album." He continued, "To be clear, I absolutely love Pop music, it was just wasn't what I set out to make this time around. My gratitude for feeling respected for my work remains and I am honored to be nominated either way." "Please don't mistake this as me being ungrateful, these are just my thoughts take em or leave em. Thank you to the people who fought for me to even have any noms," he wrote on Instagram while sharing the letter.




The Weeknd calls Grammys 'corrupt'

The *Weeknd* has called the Grammy Awards corrupt after the singer was overlooked for nomination in even one category this year. The three-time Grammy winner took to social media to criticise the Recording Academy after he was snubbed despite having the successful album *After Hours*. He had also topped the Billboard Hot 100 chart with *Blinding lights* and *Heartless*. "The Grammys remain corrupt. You owe me, my fans and the industry transparency..." he wrote on social media. The singer was referencing the process by which nominations are picked, which continues to be a well-guarded process with hidden identities of the people on the committees that select the nominees. Recording Academy chief Harvey Mason, jr. has responded to his claims. "Congratulations to today's Grammy nominees, who have earned their peers' recognition for their incredible work. There were a record number of submissions in this unusual and competitive year," he said. He continued, "We understand that The Weeknd is disappointed at not being nominated. I was surprised and can empathise with what he's feeling. His music this year was excellent, and his contributions to the music community and broader world are worthy of everyone's admiration. We were thrilled when we found out he would be performing at the upcoming Super Bowl and we would have loved to have him also perform on the Grammy stage the weekend before." "Unfortunately, every year, there are fewer nominations than the number of deserving artists. But as the only peer-voted music award, we will continue to recognise and celebrate excellence in music while shining a light on the many amazing artists that make up our global community." *The Weeknd's* absence from the Grammy nominations is being termed as the biggest snub in recent history.






FUN




ARCHIE






CALVIN AND HOBBS






GARFIELD




NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1 Nearly

2 Wide smile

3 Tame animals

4 This colour plus red makes orange

5 One hundred years

6 Parts of a minute

7 Tired and drowsy

8 Meat and vegetables boiled slowly

9 Drink made from grapes

10 Happening every twelve months

11 The one bought most recently

12 Sleep in this room

13 Try

14 A puzzle with many pieces

15 A newspaper boss

16 A plant with fronds that grows in shady places

17 Absent

DOWN

1 Mountains

2 A parent

3 A law

SOLUTION

E	V	E	R	E	D	E	D	E
E	O	E	R					
E	N	D	S					
E	U	E						
A	L	S	O					
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L	E	S	S	O	N			
E	P	L	P					
S	M	A	L	L				
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Seasoned 'Mega' fan set to nurture young talent



Society looking down upon fans of film stars and not supporting the good work these fans do, is a common sight in the country, especially the Telugu states. It is considered that these fans cannot have a life of their own or can't bring bread to the dining table every day if they are involved in fan activities and do no other work. But a diehard Mega family fan has proved everyone wrong and rose to a level where he can now help other underprivileged people to his capacity. Remember SRK's dialogue from *Chennai Express*: "Don't underestimate the power of a common man"? This mega-fan has proved it true!

Meet Siva Cherry, all of 26 years old, who is currently an executive producer with Venkatadri Talkies, a production house run by actor Sundeeep Kishan and whose own production house is underway. Speaking about his entry to Tollywood, Siva explains, "When I was a

child, in our village, there lived a fans' association president and during every release of a film, at least 10 people would run behind his bike for movie tickets. Since my dad too was Chiranjeevi *garu*'s fan, I turned out to be one too. I

From growing up idolising Megastar Chiranjeevi and the entire Mega family, and becoming the youngest Fans' Association president at 18, to now becoming a producer to help several others like him, Siva Cherry has come a long way. He talks to *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE about the struggle to get tickets, pursuing his engineering, working with Sundeeep Kishan and more.

always wanted to become fans' association president of Ram Charan *Tej garu*. Even the 'Cherry' in my name is added because I'm a huge fan of Charan *garu* whom everyone fondly calls Cherry. During the release of his first film — *Chirutha*, I became the youngest fans' association president in the entire country. I was not even 18 years old then. I was way too involved in social activities and that helped me become a president." Looking at his social work he does

under the name of Megastar Chiranjeevi and the outgoing nature of Siva, Chiranjeevi blood bank CEO Swamy Naidu called Siva to Hyderabad and got him admitted into an engineering college here. "While pursuing my engineering itself, I started meeting Bunny *garu*, Charan *garu* and I gained more interest in films and the Mega family. I now take care of most of the Mega events," he said. Siva says his fate changed after his work came under the notice of actor Sundeeep Kishan at an audio function. "I was working for an audio function when Sundeeep noticed me and rang me up the next day to know if I would be interested in working with him. It's because of him, I came to know more people from the industry personally, and it's because of him and my hard work that I now reached a stage where I can help other young talents." From not having money, to buy a bicycle for himself as a child, to now being the owner of a Mercedes Benz, nothing came easy for Siva and he says, he is forever indebted to Sundeeep Kishan and Swamy Naidu. Siva, who plans to set up a production house soon, says he wants to provide a platform for young talent where they can showcase their skills and help people from his hometown.



Malayalam actor Suresh Gopi to play VD's father?

Actor Vijay Deverakonda, who is currently awaiting a big hit after his two previous projects couldn't fare well at the box office, will next be seen in Puri Jagannadh's *Fighter*, a pan-India film starring Bollywood beauty Ananya Pandey. According to a few reports doing rounds in media circles, Puri Jagannadh has roped in Malayalam actor Suresh Gopi to play the role of Vijay's father in the film. Sources close to the

film unit say that the father and son relationship is one of the major highlights of *Fighter* and actor Suresh Gopi, who is a known face among Telugu audiences can do justice to the role. The makers are planning to resume the shoot of *Fighter* from December and it is expected to hit theaters during summer next year. Puri Jagannadh, Charmee Kaur and Karan Johar are jointly producing this big-budget film.



'Seethayanam' will give me the much-needed break'

Akshith Shashi Kumar's Trilingual debut *Seethayanam* 2nd single *Manasu Palike* was launched by actress Rashmika Mandanna on Wednesday. Written by Chandrabose, Shweta Mohan crooned this crazy lyrical song. Releasing as a Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil Trilingual film, *Seethayanam* is produced by Lalitha Rajyalakshmi under Color Clouds Entertainments banner and presented by Rohan Bharadwaj. The recently released teaser and anthem received a great response from the audience. Speaking about the same, Rashmika Mandanna says, "This melodious *Manasu Palike* will be loved in all the 3 languages. I'm sure this crazy

song will turn out to be a chart-buster. The teaser and songs seem very different and garnered interest. I wish the entire team the best." Hero Akshith Shashi Kumar says, "Our *Seethayanam*'s tagline 'Respect Women' is so apt and 100% justifies our story. I'm pretty confident that it'll give

me the much-needed break in all three languages. Also, I'm sure the audience will have a wonderful watch time experience." Director Prabhakar Aaripaka and Producer Lalitha Rajyalakshmi said, "Our 2nd single *Manasu Palike* launched by

Rashmika Mandanna will be a trendsetter. The breathless songs often attempted by the male singers have been extraordinarily crooned by Shweta Mohan with the beautiful stanzas written by Chandrabose in this song. The trailer will be released by a renowned celebrity soon. As we are close to wrapping up the movie post-production works, we are aiming for a grand release of it in 3 languages at the same time." The cast includes Anahitha Bhushan, Ajay Ghosh, Madhunandhan, Vidyulekha Raman, Bithiri Satti, Krishna Bhagavan, Gundu Sudarshan, Anant, Jabardast Apparao, TNR, Madhumani, and Meghna Gowda in impactful roles.



Mohan Babu's Son Of India Hyd schedule begins

Versatile actor Dr Mohan Babu, who has an in-depth knowledge of each department in film-making, has become very selective as he now wants to take up roles and films which will be remembered for ages. The actor is playing a lead role after a long time in a patriotic film titled *Son Of India* where he will be seen in a never-seen-before powerful role. The first look poster of the film has grabbed several eyeballs. The storyline and genre are said to be the first of its kind in Tollywood. Actor Mohan Babu is also the screenwriter for the

film. Diamond Ratnababu is directing the joint production venture of Sree Lakshmi Prasanna Pictures and 24 Frames Factory. Vishnu Manchu's wife and Mohan Babu's daughter-in-law, Viranica Manchu, turns stylist with the film and will be presenting Mohan Babu in a completely new *avatar*. Few important scenes and a song were canned in Tirupati and the shooting schedule in the temple town has wrapped up. On Wednesday, the team commenced a new schedule in Hyderabad, where major portions of the film with the lead cast are being shot.

Maestro Ilayaraja scores music for the film, while Sarvesh Murari is the cinematographer. The film has dialogues by Diamond Ratnababu and Thotapalli Sainath. Suddala Ashoka Teja pens lyrics, while Gautham Raju is the editor and Chinna is the art director.



Rakul denies doing film with Mohan Babu

News that Rakul Preet Singh will be seen alongside Mohan Babu in *Son of India* is doing the rounds for a while now. However, the actress manager, on Wednesday, clarified that the actor is not part of Mohan Babu's next as she is busy with her other projects. Her manager G Harinath said the actress has tight schedule going on with hand full of projects both in Tollywood and Bollywood. Nithiin starrer *Check*, and an untitled film of Krish has been wrapped up where Rakul will be seen in a village belle role. She also has a Tamil film with Sivakarthekeya and three Bollywood films i.e., one each with Arjun Kapoor, John Abraham and Ajay Devgn are in pipeline. With exciting projects in hand, Rakul is quite confident of delivering her best, said Harinath. Currently on a vacation, once Rakul returns, she will get back to being busy.





Chowmahalla Palace: CASTLE IN THE AIR

The history of Hyderabad is so enticing that it feels like reading a wonderful love story and its glorious past is no less than a fairy tale. And the most interesting part of this novel forms the rule of the Nizams, which fills pages of history with legendary contributions of art, architecture and science.

A testimony to this aspect is seen in the form of the many exquisite monuments scattered all over the city. One such monument that in its striking sumptuousness still shows off the power of time immemorial is the engrossing Chowmahalla Palace. The name Chowmahalla refers to four palaces. The construction of the palace was initiated in the year 1750 by Nizam Salabhat Jung but it was Nizam Afzar-ud-Dawla Bahadur who saw that the palace was completed between the years 1857 and 1869.

Originally, the palace covered 45 acres from Laad Bazaar on the north to Aspan Chowk Road which is on the south. The Chowmahalla

complex is a replica of Shah's Palace in Teheran, Iran. Presently the palace consists of two courtyards with graceful palaces, the grand Durbar Hall or the Khilwat. Gardens and fountains add to the elegance.

Southern Courtyard is the

The Chowmahalla complex is a replica of Shah's Palace in Teheran, Iran. Presently the palace consists of two courtyards with graceful palaces, the grand Durbar Hall or the Khilwat

oldest part of the complex. It comprises of four graceful palaces Tahniyat Mahal, Mahtab Mahal, Afzal Mahal, and Aftab Mahal. Northern Courtyard has been restored and is open to the public. The main attraction of this area is the Bara Imam, which

is a long corridor. It has rooms on the east wing, which once served as the administrative wing. Another stunning construction is the Clock Tower. It houses the Khilwat Clock which still works perfectly.

The restoration of Chowmahalla project was embarked upon in the year 2000 and was structured to be executed in three phases. The first phase involved a detailed mapping, fabric survey and the preparation of conservation reports for both the restoration of the buildings as well as potential re-use patterns that might help review the usefulness of these historic structures. The second phase involved stabilizing the buildings under threat of collapse and carrying out other emergency repairs such as waterproofing and propping to check further deterioration. The final phase involved the actual restoration of the complex and the introduction of amenities to facilitate reuse of these structures.

The restoration of these buildings was carried out

using traditional craftsmen and techniques, and a range of elements in the buildings were conserved in order to maintain the integrity of these historic structures. Besides structural repairs and stabilization, the restoration of several architectural features such as granite arches, decorative work in lime plaster, and terracotta balusters were some of the tasks carried out for the restoration project. Actual restoration work on the project commenced in the year 2002 and the first phase which includes the Crafts Center and Khilwat was completed in December 2004.

However, an architectural projection at the main gate of Chowmahalla Palace, which houses the famous clock tower, collapsed after recent heavy rains that lashed the city. The 'chajja', which is a decorative balcony on the Khilwat clocktower, collapsed and fell on the Motigali street, located at a stone's throw from Charminar.

Along with chunks of lime plaster, wooden beams also got dislocated on Saturday evening. Luckily, there were

no injuries and further damage inflicted on the age-old structure. Sources also clarified that there was no damage to the main palaces -- Afzal Mahal, Mahtab Mahal, Tahniyat Mahal and Aftab Mahal.

Sources in Chowmahalla Palace said that the portion that collapsed was to be taken up for restoration, but the plans got delayed due to the Coronavirus lockdown. This palace has been witness to important durbars of Hyderabad's Asaf Jahi dynasty -- the coronation of Mukarram Jah in 1967 as the titular Nizam.



Hyderabad Commissioner of Police Anjani Kumar along with other police officials flagging off Election Awareness March at Charimar on Wednesday

BJP bigwigs to campaign for polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an unusual move for a local bodies' election, BJP stalwarts including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, national president J P Nadda and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will campaign in the State capital beginning on Thursday. The State unit on Wednesday announced a packed campaign schedule for these leaders aimed at contact campaigning with section of society particularly those

from other States who have made Hyderabad their home.

While former Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will release the party's GHMC manifesto on Thursday, Yogi Adityanath will participate in road shows in Hyderabad and Chevella Parliamentary constituency on November 27. He will also address a public meeting during his campaign. Nadda will participate in an intellectuals meeting on November 28 and will also participate in a road show in Malkajgiri Parliamentary constituency. On the last day of cam-

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Kishan Reddy said the party manifesto will stress more on infrastructure, housing and youth

paigned, November 29, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will participate in a road show in Secunderabad Parliamentary constituency represented by his deputy G Kishan Reddy. "Already the State leadership has

embarked on a door to door campaign to meet every single voter. We are involving all the available national leadership in the GHMC campaign to highlight the failures of the TRS party," party OBC Morcha national president K Laxman said, addressing a press conference at the party office here on Wednesday.

Kishan Reddy said the party manifesto will stress more on infrastructure, housing and youth. "If voted to power in GHMC, we will concentrate on totally revamping the defunct storm drain system of the city on a war-footing so that there will be no flooding in the next monsoon season," he said. State president Bandi Sanjay Kumar also participated in the press conference.

Tagore dares BJP to probe TS Govt's graft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC Incharge for Telangana Manickam Tagore on Wednesday dared the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to order an inquiry into the TRS Government rather than accusing it of rampant corruption. Tagore, along with TPCC President Uttam Kumar Reddy and other leaders, was addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan.

He accused Minister K T Rama Rao and his associates of following unethical practices and sought an inquiry by the Income Tax Department, ED, CBI or other Central agencies. He pointed out that the silence of the Centre suggests a tacit understanding between the BJP and the TRS. It's like the 'Dosti in Delhi, Kushti in Hyderabad', he said. "Why is it that any Central Minister, who comes to Hyderabad, talks only of TRS corruption when they have all the authority to order an investigation?" he asked.

Owaisi dares BJP to carry out surgical strike on China

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Reacting sharply to Telangana BJP chief's promise to carry out surgical strikes in the old city area here should his party win the December civic polls of Greater Hyderabad, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi dared Bandi Sanjay's party to carry out the act of bravado in Ladakh, where China has occupied Indian Territory. The Hyderabad MP wanted to know why no surgical strikes are being carried out against China which has occupied 920 square kilometers of Indian Territory. Condemning Sanjay's surgical strike comment, he wondered how a political party can speak such a language just for an election.

"They are saying they will carry out surgical strike in the old city to drive away Pakistanis. How many Pakistanis are there in the old city? I am challenging them to show at least 100 Pakistanis living here," Owaisi said at an election meeting.

He also said if Pakistanis have been living in the old city then Prime Minister



Narendra Modi should first remove Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy from his cabinet as this was happening under his nose. He also wanted to know what BJP government at the Centre was doing for six-and-a-half years if Pakistanis were living in the old city. Terming this as an insult to Hyderabad, Owaisi asked people to give a befitting reply to BJP in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections scheduled on December 1. He alleged that

BJP is trying to create hatred and re-create situation of 1980s and 1990s in Hyderabad. "Hyderabad is the growth of engine of India. It is attracting investment of billions of rupees in information technology and pharmaceutical sector. Amazon and Microsoft have set up their second biggest global centres in Hyderabad. Youth belonging to all communities are getting jobs," he said.

Owaisi said people of all communities live in harmony in Hyderabad and there have been no communal problems for six and half years. "There are Muslims, Hindus, Dalits, Backward Classes and Sikhs living peacefully here. MIM works for all people irrespective of their religions and castes," he said. He pointed out that MIM leader in Telangana Assembly and his brother Akbaruddin Owaisi has demanded Rs 10 crore for Lal Darwaza temple in the old city. He said his party has again fielded non-Muslims as its candidates in GHMC polls. "BJP divides people but we unite them," he added.

KTR says shun serials, BJP seeks his take on web-series

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As the political drama in GHMC elections continues to unfold, entertainment quotient is high with parties coming up with sensational comments. While the TRS party is advising people to shun TV and movies, BJP is asking TRS working president's suggestion on web-series to watch.

K T Rama Rao in every

roadshow advised women to avoid watching serials and follow BJP leaders who are providing loads of entertaining content. He said, "Stop watching movies and serials for a week and start watching speeches of BJP leaders. They will give enough entertainment". In a rebuttal, BJP followers decided to take the TRS party leaders to task. Recently, KTR said that during the lock-

down he watched 50 Malayalam movies and some 20 web series. He said that after returning home from work in the evening, he is cut off from work and watched it with family. BJP followers have been asking the Minister to suggest some good series as KTR said, "I switch off when I go home. I watch a lot of web-series. I am watching the Americans. I enjoyed Modern Family, Queen

and lost a count of web-series that I watched". A BJP follower Dinakar asked, "KTR suggest some good web series to watch sir. Just finished Big Bang Theory. Something in Drama would be good". Reacting to the way KTR spent time during lockdown, MP Arvind Dharmapuri said, "Like Nero fiddled while Rome burned, KTR enjoyed at home while the people were dying because of Corona."