

ANALYSIS 7
FERTILISER DBT
AN ILLUSION**MONEY 8**
MOMENTUM OF ECONOMIC
REFORMS WILL CONTINUE: FM**SPORTS 11**
AT 34, MY DAYS ARE
NUMBERED: WARNER

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY NOVEMBER 24, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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SREE VISHNU TURNS
TRUCK DRIVER FOR
GAALI SAMPATH

Page 12

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Ashwin & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Navami: 12:31 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Shrabhishta: 01:05 pm

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

Rahukalam: 07:52 am - 09:15 am

Yamagandam: 10:39 am - 12:02 pm

Varjyam: 08:08 pm - 09:54 pm

Gulika: 01:25 pm - 02:49 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: NIL

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:40 am - 12:24 pm

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 32/22

Humidity: 68%

Sunrise: 06:24am

Sunset: 05:39pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated November 23, 2020 5:00 PM

Muezzin attempts
suicide, blames
YSRCP men

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Muezzin attempted suicide, unable to bear alleged harassment at the hands of some people who he claimed were supporters of the ruling YSRCP, at Tadikona in Guntur district on Monday.

According to his family, Sk Hanif took a selfie video while attempting suicide. GGH, Guntur doctors said his condition was serious.

2

Adani downsizes data park
plans to only 1 of 200 MWSNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

The proposed data centre park by integrated infrastructure conglomerate Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) at Vizag will come up in 130 acres of land belonging to the State Tourism Department at Madhurawada.

Earlier, the Adani Group had inked an MoU with the then TDP government to set up 3 such data parks at Nakapalle, Kapuluppada and Bhogapuram in Vizag. While it was not known about the extent of land at Bhogapuram that the Adani Group sought,

□ A 1GW Data Centre Hub can add an estimated 20 percent to AP's GDP, the total benefit being about Rs 1.75 lakh-crore.

□ World over the Data Centre industry is already massive spending \$160 Billion in 2016 alone and consuming 30GW of power

the business group planned data parks in an extent of 150 acres in Kapuluppada and 350 acres in Nakkapalle.

However, after the YSRCP came to power Adani Group submitted a revised proposal under which it proposed to establish an Integrated Data

Centre Park and Technology/ Business Park including a 200 MW data centre park, IT Business Park, Skill University and a recreation centre at Madhurawada.

Notably, the initial proposal by Adani Group during TDP regime was to develop

5GW data parks in Vizag region over a period of time at different places, but as per the revised proposal by the Ahmedabad-based business house, the capacity of the data park proposed has been down-sized to 200 MW that too at one single location.

The then chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu had also laid the foundation for Adani's Data Park at Kapuluppada on February 14, 2019.

The present YSRCP government will allot the land at a price of Rs 1 crore per acre to Adani Group.

2

HC seeks report on
Amaravati
expenditure

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Monday expressed its displeasure at the State Accountant General for not submitting the expenditure of Amaravati capital construction.

Asking why the expenditure report had not been filed so far, the High Court ordered the Accountant General to do so by next Monday. The High Court said that if the report of the expenditure of Amaravati capital was not submitted by then, contempt of court proceeding will be filed.

2



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy launches Project Abhaya on Monday.

Women's safety project
Abhayam now a reality

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After a delay of more than three years, the State government on Monday finally kick-started Project Abhaya, the Government of India initiative for the safety and security of women and girl passengers during travel by autos and cabs.

The project did not take off in AP for a variety of reasons

in the last three years, official sources said. Now, the state government finally decided to instal IoT devices in 1,000 autos in Visakhapatnam city on a pilot basis.

The state government gave the project a new name, Abhayam, and did not make any mention about the Central contribution.

2

'Nivar' induces cloud
cover, orange alert in AP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Most of Andhra Pradesh was cloudy and windy on Monday under the influence of a depression that is expected to develop into a cyclone 'Nivar' that has formed over the Southern Bay of Bengal. The tropical system is expected to make landfall in the afternoon of November 25.

The cyclone may cross North Tamil Nadu coast and South Coastal AP in the afternoon of November 25, according to the IMD bulletin.

The MET department has issued an orange warning to AP. The projected path as per the GFS model of IMD takes the cyclone just south of Chennai, but the European model ECMWF takes Cyclone Nivar right over Chennai with an expected landfall at around Wednesday midnight

Peripheral clouds due to the depression were seen over Andhra Pradesh and Telangana through the day.

2

SEC asks
officials
to prepare
electoral rolls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Amidst the faceoff with the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government, State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar on Monday wrote to the collectors and the Zilla Parishad CEOs across the state to prepare the electoral rolls as per year 2020.

2

Class 8 students get to return to school in AP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

With the number of students and faculty members testing positive for Covid being low even after 20 days of schools reopening, the State government has decided to allow students of Class 8 to resume their education from school.

Earlier, the State Government reopened schools for Class 9 and 10 and college students. However, the minimal positive cases have encouraged the government to open classes for Class 8 from Monday.

The AP government has planned to commence classes for students of 6, 7 and 8 on



November 23. Classes for students of 1 to 5 will start from December 14. The revised schedule will be applicable to all the government and private educational institutions in the State.

The State government has

revised the schedule as the Ministry of Home Affairs, in a recent circular, directed States to reopen schools in a phased manner.

The state government's Health Department claimed they conducted 5, 12,890 tests

for Covid-19 across educational institutions since reopening of the schools. So far, only 1,491 individuals (students + teachers) were found to be Covid-19 positive of the 5,12,890 who were tested across institutions.

This means that the positivity rate of Covid-19 among students and teachers in Andhra Pradesh is 0.3 per cent.

The tests were conducted in 39,111 schools. The samples of 1,29,276 teachers were tested and only 1,023 returned positive for Covid-19. On the other hand, samples taken from 2,08,796 school students were tested.

2

Pg 3 AP gets set to negate NIVAR wrath

Ensuring safe travel of Women & Children...

ABHAYAM

App

Sri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy
Hon'ble Chief Minister
Government of Andhra Pradesh

Yet another initiative of Jagananna Government to ensure Safety & Protection of Women...

1 "Andhra Pradesh Disha Act 2021" A revolutionary act, unprecedented in the country. The Act provides speedy completion of investigation of cases related to rape/ molestation / outraging of modesty of girls & women, within 14 days of occurrence of the offence... 18 Disha Police Stations established across the State to ensure safety & security of women and children... Appointment of 18 public prosecutors... Women Police personnel at Village Secretariats... Mahila Police Mitras... Police to arrive at the scene of offence within 10 minutes of activating the Disha App and ensure all possible help...

2 Completely changing the perception that Ola / Uber cab type of services are better than our local transport system in terms of safety... "ABHAYAM" mechanism is in place to ensure that our auto / taxi systems are safer and our drivers can deliver services even better than Ola/Uber cabs in transporting women and children to their respective destinations safely...

3 Instilling confidence and a sense of responsibility in auto drivers on one hand and ensuring safe travel for women & children, on the other...

4 ABHAYAM App & device developed to help children and women travel without fear in autos and cabs and thereby give them a feel of security in case they sense any danger during their travel...! Project to be implemented at an estimated cost of Rs. 138.49 crores..!

5 IoT (Internet of things) devices installed in 1,000 autos in Visakhapatnam city yesterday... ABHAYAM services will be expanded to Tirupati and all other cities in the State shortly..!

ABHAYAM App linked vehicle tracking devices will be installed in 5,000 vehicles by 1st February, 2021, 50,000 vehicles by 1st July, 2021 and 1 lakh vehicles by November, 2021..!

6 Passengers can track the movement of the auto / cab they travel by scanning QR code in the vehicle with ABHAYAM App downloaded in their smart phones... Those who do not have smart phones can press the Panic Button of the ABHAYAM device installed to autos/cabs, when they sense danger.. so that the Command Control Centre can take immediate steps for their safety & protection..!

Download ABHAYAM App from
Google Play Store in Android phones
or from App Store in iPhones..

Sri. Perni Venkataramaiah (NANI),
Hon'ble Minister for Transport & Information & Public Relations Department.

Agriculture & Allied Services - 1907 | Tele Medicine Services - 14410 | Complaints against Corruption - 14400 | Disha - 181 | Complaints against illegal manufacture, sale and transport of liquor & sand - 14500

Issued by: Commissioner, Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh

Modi has ensured democracy has reached every inch of India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reposes immense confidence in the primary level of democracy. He trusts the fact that democracy will be healthier and fruits of development reach the last layer of society if decentralisation reaches village level. In fact, local body elections are of paramount importance for any political party to give meaning to its development programmes while consolidating its strength at the grassroots-level.

At the same time, these elections are instrumental in parties proving their stand that they are answerable. The Balwant Rai Committee submitted a comprehensive report in 1957, in which it made crystal clear that it's necessary to make the people a crucial part of policy decisions and of governance if all the socioeconomic schemes

were to reach the beneficiaries. The Committee also indicated that local bodies would be properly empowered if required funds are given, along with allocation of power. But when Congress was at the helm of affairs, the process of decentralisation of power was completely destroyed.

It became a regular practice for the Congress governments to procrastinate elections for 10 to 15, according to their whims and fancies. Though Constitutional amendments 73 and 74 provide a platform to grant sanctity to organise elections to local bodies under PV Narasimha Rao, yet those on the echelons of the party were not inclined towards decentralisation of power due to many reasons.

Modi reiterated vociferously on several occasions that decentralisation of power is the

Local body elections are of paramount importance for any political party to give meaning to its development programmes while consolidating its strength at the grassroots-level while being instrumental for to to their stand that it is answerable.

key to good governance. Ever since he came to power, the share of funds distributed to local bodies has been increasing exponentially. Modi brought out an effective change by abolishing the Planning Commission.

To ease doing business, he formulated a strategy to function in combination with the states. After abolishment of the License Permit Raj, states were comforted with key roles in economic progress. Whatever the scheme that the Union Government envisages, Modi

ensured that states implement it successfully. Only State Government officials are visible to the people at the field level. In case local bodies elections take place within the stipulated time with due participation of the people, local bodies get a larger share of funds. The 15th Finance Commission granted Rs 90,000 crore to the local bodies, of which Rs 60,750 crore favour the rural local bodies and the remaining Rs 29,250 crore to the urban local bodies.



With an increase in the number of people reaching cities, the need of the hour is to improve the infrastructural facilities. The goal of enriching urban development will be attained only when mayors get empowered. States are also expected to tread on the same path.

In Kashmir, despite some

political parties rejecting the elections and in the face of violence, 74 percent of voters cast their vote. Now, elections for district development committees are about to take place. Despite the pandemic, basing on the prevailing conditions in the states, the dates of elections are being fixed.

Unfortunately, decentralisation of power has become a dream for the people of Andhra Pradesh. When Chandrababu Naidu was the Chief Minister in the undivided AP, the local body elections were held only once, as they were in the YSR regime.

Only at the instance of the High Court did Kiran Kumar Reddy was forced to conduct the elections in 2013. Even after bifurcation, power at the

primary level did not reach the people of AP in the last six years.

It's intriguing why Jaganmohan Reddy is obstructing the elections at a time when the poll panel is inclined to conduct them. Decentralisation of power will surely benefit the people, especially when the poll panel and the State Government are in absolute agreement.

Unfortunately, this is the reason elections in AP are not visible on the horizon. The unhealthy differences between the two are denying the people of their right gifted by the Constitution. Personal grudges and nefarious caste equations are proving to be detrimental to the very existence of democracy.

In Telangana, the sight of the Chief Minister emerging from the cage of his farmhouse

and conducting the GHMC elections is a strange one indeed.

The victory of BJP in recent elections of Dubbaka sent shockwaves and now tremors in the TRS are evident. This is very much evident by the fact that the ruling party suddenly announced the elections without even giving ample time to file nominations.

The same Chief Minister who did not care to meet and console the people when the calamities like floods surrounded them right now shows all the signs of anxiety to announce Rs 10,000 to each affected household.

All his promises listed in the TRS manifesto like free power and water stand as testimony to the fear drawn from the victory of the BJP in Dubbaka.

People of Telangana are not ready to believe KCR once again.

More young adults in AP, TS hit the labour market post lockdown

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

The Covid induced situation had radically altered the dynamics of employment opportunities, education and income levels across every strata of the society, especially of those belonging to marginalised sections.

An analysis based on a survey done on a group of young adults in both the Telugu states, all from lower-income groups, revealed post-lockdown, most people went back to work and new young workers entered the labour market, possibly as a result of the reduced education opportunities, particularly in rural areas where e-learning is less accessible.

It may be worth mentioning here that a Telangana girl studying at LSR College in Delhi committed suicide as her father could not afford to fund her education in the post-Covid situation.

As per the study report by international research project 'Young Lives India' that was released on Monday, the increase of employment post-lockdown is relatively higher in rural areas and among the poorest households, possibly to compensate for income losses suffered.

This finding is consistent with the post-lockdown increase in agricultural employment.

Notably, while the post-lockdown proportion of 25-year-olds working went

exactly back to the pre-lockdown level which is 63 per cent, more 18-year-old respondents entered the labour market post-lockdown. While about 32 per cent were working pre-lockdown and this has increased to 51 per cent post-lockdown.

Interestingly, the increase in employment is more marked among 18-year-old men than women.

Pre-lockdown, four of 10 of the 18-year-old men compared to two of 10 women were working, which increased substantially to seven of 10 men compared to three of 10 women in the post-lockdown period.

"Overall, young people have continued to spend more time on household and caring responsibilities during the lockdown, and the burden tends to be greater for young women. Almost 67 per cent of female respondents have spent more time taking care of children, compared to 38 per cent of male respondents, and similarly for household responsibilities," Young Lives India Country Director, Dr Renu Singh told The Pioneer.

Dr Renu Singh said that additional time spent on the household and caring

responsibilities increase with age. Of the 25-year-old respondents, 75 per cent agreed they were spending more time taking care of children, compared to only 39 per cent of their 18-year-old counterparts. "Household responsibilities also demanded more time from 25-year-olds, with 59 per cent spending increased time doing work around the house, compared to 47 per cent of the 18-year-old respondents," she said.



Study highlights:

- While the majority of 18-year olds plan to continue education this academic year, the poorest and SC household children were most affected by not being able to attend virtual classes due to lack of technology and internet service at home
- More girls aged 18 years (72pc) were still engaged in education, post lockdown compared to boys (62pc)
- During the lockdown, the number of respondents working decreased by nearly 10 pc - 33 pc, with the greatest impact felt in urban areas where almost half of the workers were affected
- Nearly 32 pc of the 25-year-old respondents were self-employed pre-pandemic, which increased to 40 pc, post-lockdown
- 67 pc of young women faced both increased childcare and household duties during lockdown as against only 37 pc of young men

Study methodology:

- Young Lives report investigated the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the well-being, household wealth and income, labour and education trajectories of Young Lives participants in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, tracked since 2001 and now aged 18 and 25
- The results are based on a preliminary version of the data collected during the second call of the Young Lives phone survey
- The second call of the Young Lives phone survey took place between Aug 11 and Oct 15 and reached a total of 2,754 young people
- 1,868 Younger Cohort respondents aged 18, and 886 Older Cohort respondents aged 25 were reached
- The first call in the Young Lives phone survey took place between June 10 and July 15 and reached a total of 2,750 young people (1,863 of Younger Cohort respondents aged 18, and 887 Older Cohort respondents aged 25 years old)

Shift towards agriculture, self-employment

Vijayawada Notably, while migration for work-related reasons was fairly low about 6 per cent, the lockdown caused an increase in self-employment and a shift towards agriculture from other economic sectors. The agriculture sector absorbed a considerable proportion of the new young workers both women and men accessing the labour market post-lockdown, mainly as self-employed and

possibly in low paid and easily accessible occupations. Nearly 32 per cent of the 25-year-old respondents and 46 per cent of the 18-year-old respondents were self-employed pre-pandemic, which increased to 40 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively, post-lockdown. Similarly, the proportion of 25 year olds and 18 year olds working in agriculture increased by 11 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively, when the lockdown ceased compared to 28 per cent to 39 per cent for 25 year olds and 47 per cent to 64 per cent for 18 year olds pre-lockdown.

Adani downsizes data

Continued from Page 1

The government will alienate the entire available extent of 257.37 acres of land in survey No 409 in Madhurawada, which is presently in the possession of the Tourism Department to APIIC.

The APIIC, in turn, will allot 130 acres of land that is usable as per the Town Planning Rules and Regulations in force, after demarcation of land is done jointly by APIIC and VMRDA. The balance land will be retained by APIIC for their use.

"The revised proposal was placed before the State Investment Promotion Board meeting held on November 3 with the recommendations of the State Investment Promotion Committee in its meeting held on October 29. After detailed discussions, the Board has recommended extending certain incentives to M/s Adani Enterprises Limited," said a senior government official.

When the Adani Group had

signed the MoU with the TDP government on January 9 last year, it was termed and hailed as a step that will boost the country's technology infrastructure and vitalize the concept of green data centres.

While the present investment volume as per the revised proposal is not known, the then TDP government had claimed that Adani Group will develop the hyper-scale data centre market in the state, positioning AP as the east coast data centre hub for India and South East Asia with an investment over Rs 70,000 crores, over a period of 20 years which in turn is expected to create in excess of one lakh direct and indirect jobs across the state.

Adani Group's integrated data park was also to be integrated with a cable landing station that will take advantage of the state's long coastline to help provide the needed global connectivity and redundancy that the country needs to manage its exponential growth of data.

A few of the recommenda-

tions accepted by the Investment Board under the current dispensation are that to extend the timeline for implementing the project under the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Cloud Hub Policy 2018-20, with the condition that the project proponent must commence operations within 3 years and complete all phases of all the components of the project within 7 years, from date of handing over of the land.

The government will also extend 100 percent reimbursement of SGST on all data centre units, electrical, communication and IT equipment for CAPEX for a period of seven years from the date of handing over of land.

The government will also facilitate Adani Enterprises Ltd to set up 600 MW renewable energy park at its own cost on its own land provided such a project is located within AP and is connected to the Central Transmission Utility (CTU) and procure the power for its data centre park in Madhurawada.

UAE eases limits on ownership

PNS ■ DUBAI

The UAE has relaxed and removed a range of limits on foreign ownership of companies, state-run media reported Monday, in the country's latest bid to boost its global status and attract foreign investors.

The overhaul signals yet another change for the federation of seven desert sheikhdoms as it grapples with the economic fallout of Covid.

Earlier this month, the UAE announced a series of reforms to its Islamic legal code, allowing unmarried couples to cohabitate, improving protections for women and loosening restrictions on alcohol consumption.

The dramatic changes come as the UAE has spent billions of dollars preparing to host some 25 million visitors for the World Expo, which was pushed to 2021 due to Covid.

SEC asks officials to prepare electoral rolls

Continued from Page 1

While the last Assembly polls were conducted as per the 2019 polls, it's learnt that Ramesh Kumar wants the district administrations to prepare the 2020 polls as a preparatory exercise to hold Panchayat polls in February as decided by the poll panel.

It would be interesting to see how the officials respond to the SEC's communication.

Ramesh Kumar is also said to have written another letter to Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney on Monday attaching the High Court order copy in the ongoing case on conducting of Panchayat polls.

It is also learnt that Ramesh Kumar, in his letter to the Chief Secretary, had also said that the state government was bound to cooperate with the SEC as a Constitutional obligation.

'Nivar' induces cloud cover, orange alert in AP

Continued from Page 1

Post landfall of the system, isolated places in Rayalaseema region may receive heavy to extremely heavy rainfall. North coastal Andhra Pradesh, however, may receive

scattered rainfall. The depression lay over southwest and adjoining southeast Bay of Bengal about 600 km south-southeast of Puducherry and 630 km south-southeast of Chennai.

Class 8 students get to return to school...

Continued from Page 1

Of which, only 458 were found positive for the infection.

Healthcare workers visited 5,515 colleges across Andhra Pradesh and collected samples from 1,40,762 college students and 34,056 college lecturers.

Out of these, only 8 college students and 2 college lecturers were found to be positive for Coronavirus.

"The reason why you see

such low positivity rates in educational institutions is that we have tested as many as 93,33,703 people, detected 8,57,395 people, and have successfully treated 8,33,980 people. Therefore, the infection levels in the state, in general, is not as high as it could be in a few other states, and the same is reflected in the numbers that you see," Health and Family Welfare Commissioner Katamneni Bhaskar said in a release.

Muezzin attempts suicide, accuses YSRCP activists of 'harassment'

Continued from Page 1

Reacting to the incident, TDP Andhra Pradesh president K Atchannaaidu alleged that the YSRCP activist attacked Hanif when he tried to stop them from digging up a graveyard.

Condemning the attack on the muezzin, Atchannaaidu said that in his selfie video, Hanif alleged that YSRCP leaders not only abused him in very crude language, but also attacked him physically when he tried to stop them from dig-

ging up the graveyard. In his selfie video, Hanif also alleged that YSRCP leaders had been harassing him and his family and unable to tolerate it any longer, he was committing suicide by consuming pesticides.

Following the incident, TDP Guntur east in-charge and party national spokesperson Mohammed Naseer Ahmad and former MLA Tenali Sravan Kumar, with other party leaders reached the GGH and enquired about Hanif's health condition.

Women's safety project Abhayam now a reality

Continued from Page 1

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy completed the formalities from his camp office here.

The Centre had in June 2017 released Rs 58.64 crore for the Project Abhayam, under which Internet of Things (IoT) devices were to be installed in autos and cabs for real-time tracking and monitoring and data communication for ensuring effective security and safety of women and girls.

The project was launched across the country in the aftermath of the Nirbhaya incident. The total project cost was estimated at Rs 138.49 crore,

of which the Centres share was 60 per cent (Rs 83.09 crore), to cover one lakh autos across the state. The state government is yet to release any money for the project.

"You may call it an App or an IoT project. We will instal this device in every auto and taxi to ensure girls and women do not face any danger during their travels," Jagan said.

This would give every girl and woman passenger courage and also create confidence in auto and taxi drivers, Jagan added. IoT devices would be installed in 5,000 vehicles by February 1, 50,000 by July 1 and one lakh by November 2021.

HC seeks report on Amaravati ...

Continued from Page 1

The court further questioned where the CRDA Act should be repealed in the GN Rao, Boston and High Power Committee reports.

Meanwhile, U Muralidhar, counsel for the Amaravati farmers, told the court that the State Government has violated the agreements that they had signed with the previous dispensation.

Hearing was adjourned till Tuesday.



VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
	GOLD ₹ 51,380 (10 gm) ₹ 40
	SILVER ₹ 66,700 (1kg)
CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹155
Without Skin	₹177
Broiler at Farm	₹107
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	445
HYDERABAD	445
VISAKHAPATNAM	435
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.45

AP gears up for cyclonic storm

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In the wake of severe cyclone storm NIVAR which is moving towards North West and may cross North Tamilnadu coast and South Andhra Pradesh on November 25, the Commissioner Health and Family Welfare AP, Katamaneni Bhaskar has given instruction to the District Medical and Health Officers to entrust a responsible officer for each and every action along with the listing of required resources for proper accomplishment of the action.

The commissioner in a statement on Monday said that an action plan is to be prepared district wise during the pre and post cyclone period. He said that all medical teams consisting of one Medical Officer, one Staff Nurse, and one MPHA(M) shall be available at the identified relief centres round the clock. Sufficient quantity of necessary drugs shall be kept ready with the teams. Use of disinfectants shall be



NDRF deputs 30 teams for rescue ops

PNS ■ DELHI

The NDRF has earmarked 30 teams to launch rescue and relief operations in view of the cyclone 'Nivar' that is expected to hit the coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry between Tuesday and Thursday. A senior NDRF officer said while 12 teams have been pre-deployed, 18 are on standby in these states and the Union Territory of Puducherry. These teams will further be deployed in coordination with local authorities for relief and

rescue works, including assistance in evacuation of locals from affected areas. A NDRF team has about 35 to 45 personnel, depending on the task at hand, and they are equipped with tree and pole cutters, basic medicines and other tools to help affected people. The National Crisis Management Committee, headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba also directed various stakeholders, including state governments concerned, to continue to work with an aim of zero loss of life and early restoration of normalcy.

ensured during the period. The ANMs and ASHAs shall distribute chlorine tablets

for pot chlorination in all affected areas. Any requirement of Epidemic drugs

may be indented immediately. Working Generator / Inverter shall be made available in all health institutions including PHCs in the cyclone affected areas and keep electrician handy to take care of uninterrupted power with fuel stock available. At least two ambulances shall be available at all PHCs in affected areas to take care of people with physical and mental trauma. Identify vendors for supply of safe drinking water and milk in affected mandals.

The IEC activities on measures to be taken specifically for pregnant women, children under 5 years and old aged in affected areas while pregnant women with due date within one week should be shifted to the nearby health facilities.

Vaccines shall be shifted with cold chain management as per the requirement and health camps with one ANM and male supervisor /MPHA(M) with ASHAs can be planned in medium risk areas, according to the commissioner.

VMC tightens screws against laggard tenants

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation estate officer Dr Sridhar on Monday said that tenants of premises belonging to the civic body have been told to either clear their rental dues or the shops would be sealed, as per instructions given by the VMC commissioner V Prasanna Venkatesh. He said that despite the lease term of 25 years ending, tenants of six shops in Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation Stadium complex did not hand over the premises to the VMC authorities.

The estate department of the VMC along with the staff on Monday sealed those shops. Later the VMC authorities sealed 18 shops in Sri Krishnadevaraya complex in Eluru road as the tenants were not paying rents for a long time.

Despite repeated reminders being sent to the tenants to clear rental dues, the tenants of these 18 shops did not adhere, the estate officer said.

CPI promoting Naidu's agenda, says Anil Yadav

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Irrigation minister P Anil Kumar Yadav on Monday alleged that Communist Party India (CPI) leaders are working for TDP's agenda and such a big gathering coming to Polavaram shows their real intentions.

Addressing the media here, the Minister said that the Communist leaders coming in large numbers only shows that they wanted to create a scene and has no intention to seek clarifications.

Earlier CPI used to fight for public issues, but they lost their credibility over time by joining hands with TDP. He dared CPI leader K Ramakrishna to answer why they didn't agitate regarding Polavaram during the TDP regime or questioned Naidu when they failed to complete the project and sanction R&R package in his five-year term. He criticised CPI leaders' visit to Polavaram, saying that



ten people can go to oversee Polavaram works but there is no need to go with 200 persons, while over 3,000 people are working at the site.

"All this is to create chaos at the construction site and the government doesn't tolerate such cheap politics," he added.

The Minister said the project would be ready by 2021, dam works would start in February, and assured that there would be no deviations. He also stated that an invitation will be sent to all party leaders for the inauguration and those having any objections are free to measure

the dam height with tape.

He said TDP leaders are making false accusations with regard to the Polavaram project and Communist leaders are playing to the tunes of TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu.

Yadav challenged the CPI leaders to talk about the December 2017 Union Cabinet meeting that was attended by former TDP ministers. The Minister said that the Communist leaders have remained silent as they only go by the directions of Chandrababu Naidu and don't want to corner him.

The Minister stated that neither TDP nor CPI leaders have the right to talk about R&R package as they had neglected it and agreed to compromise Polavaram for commissions. The Finance Minister is in talks with the Centre regarding the project and the State will definitely complete Polavaram by 2021, he said.

YSRCP sought 'one chance' to damage state: TDP MLC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP MLC G Deepak Reddy on Monday demanded the ruling YSRCP leaders to explain to the people whether they had sought a 'One Chance' from voters to usher in all-round demolition and destruction of Andhra Pradesh, with utter disregard for the future of the State.

The TDP MLC alleged that two years before the 2019 polls, YSRCP supremo YS Jaganmohan Reddy, with the help of a private election consultancy firm, "did social engineering" to divide AP along caste, religion and regional lines while the then Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was busy completing various development projects for the unjustly divided AP State.

"Eventually, voters gave 'One Chance' to the YSRCP to rule the State and gave 151 out of 175 MLA seats to the party but after coming to power, Jagan and his Ministers have started misusing their power for their selfish goals and they did not bother to fulfil over 400 promises made during his state-wide Padayatra," Deepak Reddy claimed.

Co-ops backbone of rural India: Guv



Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan, participated at the Convocation of Vaikunth Mehta National Institute for Cooperative Management (VAMNICOM), Pune, Maharashtra through video link from Raj Bhavan on Monday. Governor Harichandan also presented medals to top three rank holders in the PG Diploma in Management – Agri-business Management programme of VAMNICOM.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan participated at the convocation of Vaikunth Mehta National Institute for Cooperative Management (VAMNICOM), Pune, Maharashtra through a video link from Raj Bhavan on Monday.

The Governor said the Cooperative societies play a crucial role in strengthening rural economy and in ensuring socio-economic development of the country in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

Harichandan said cooperative movement, which is the world's largest cooperative movement, acts as an enabler to unify local human resources and channelize energies for the growth of rural India and with more than eight lakh cooperatives, they have a significant presence in all the areas of socio-economic activities.

The Governor said dairy cooperatives have ushered in milk revolution in the country making AMUL a household name and institutions like IFFCO, KRIBHCO, and AMUL have become big success stories

in the cooperative sector besides a large number urban cooperative banks, primary agriculture cooperative societies, housing, fishery etc. at State-level which are contributing to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people in the rural areas.

The Governor also said that the Institute has been providing active support and guidance to 14 state-level Institutes of Cooperative Management (ICMs) and five Regional Institutes of Co-operative Management (RICMs) through Faculty Development Programmes and training on

Agricultural Banking.

The role of VAMNICOM assumes greater significance in the context of sweeping reforms brought about through the new Farm Act 2020, in the agricultural sector, said the Governor.

Harichandan presented medals to top three rank holders in the PG Diploma in Management – Agri-business Management programme.

Dr KK Tripathy, Director, VAMNICOM, Dr D Ravi, Joint Programme Director, Mukesh Kumar Meena, Secretary to Governor and officers of Raj Bhavan were present.

Six staff on Pushkaralu duty infected with Covid

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Until now, six of the total government staff who are on Tungabhadra Pushkaralu duty have tested positive for Covid 19. While one positive case was reported on November 21, five more cases were reported on Monday.

The 12-day Tungabhadra Pushkara celebrations commenced from the mid-day of November 20 and will conclude on December 1.

The duty staff at Mailiganur ghat of Kowthalam mandal, Gurujala of Nandavaram mandal, Panchalinga ghat of

Kurnool rural and Sankal Bagh ghat of Kurnool town, were on Monday detected with the lethal infection.

District Collector G Veerapandian reviewed with all ghat in-charges the Covid-19 tests conducted. On Monday, ghat in-charges reported 1,498 tests were conducted among the duty staff and 0.33 percent returned positive.

Monday, being the fourth day of the festival, happened to be auspicious Kartheeka Somavaram, and devotees in large scale visited the ghats right from early in the morning to take holy baths and to

545 FRESH CASES, 10 DEATHS IN AP

The 'Sunday effect' had its bearing on the Covid-19 chart in Andhra Pradesh as only 545 fresh cases were reported from 47,130 sample tests in 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday. This is by far the lowest number of daily cases reported in the state after a gap of close to five months. While an average 70,000 samples were tested on weekdays, the number is far lesser on Sundays, which results in lower addition of new coronavirus cases. The gross Covid-19 positives stood at 8,62,758.

perform rituals.

Devotees from not only Andhra Pradesh but also of neighbouring states Karnataka and Telangana visited Pushkar ghats and performed Poojas and rituals.

Monday's Pushkara celebrations started with "Rudra Homa Poojas" in all the 23 ghats in the District. The District Collector visited Sunkesula pushkar ghat near barrage and observed the flow

of water in the river particularly keeping in view the recede of water in Tungabhadra river reported yesterday in Rambotla ghat, Nagareswara Swamy temple ghat.

During the visit, the District Collector had interacted with the devotees regarding their awareness on Covid protocol besides visiting 24x7 Command Control room organized by the Police department, Medical camp, Drinking water facility camp, Priests camp and assessed the services and expressed satisfaction on maintaining the ghats by the duty staff.

President to worship at Lord Balaji's shrine today

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

President Ram Nath Kovind would offer worship at the ancient hill shrine of Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy at Tirumala near here on November 24.

Kovind, an ardent devotee of the Lord, would be arriving here on a five-hour spiritual visit on Tuesday forenoon, a government official said.

After arriving at the Renigunta airport near here, the President would offer worship at the shrine of Goddess Sree Padmavathi in Tiruchanur, the official said.

Then, Kovind would proceed to the hills to pay his obeisance to Lord Venkateswara in the afternoon of the same day, the official said. Keeping in mind the Covid-19 situation, top officials and others expected to be involved in the President's programme had their tests for coronavirus today, the official told PTI.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan would, a few hours in advance, arrive here and accord a warm welcome to the President at the airport.

1.5 km long retaining wall to stop landslides in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivas on Monday said that a 1,560-meter long retaining wall will be constructed from Kanakadurga Varadhi to RTC Bus station at an estimated cost of Rs 104 crore that would help stop landslides from recurring.

The Minister was speaking at a review meeting on free house sites, TIDCO houses, regularisation of houses, Gunadala ROB and other issues organised at the Collector's Camp Office on Monday.

Addressing the meeting, he said that apart from taking up these works, officials shall take measures to ensure houses to 2,600 eligible beneficiaries. "As many as 3,562 houses spread over 39.73 acre of government land in and around Vijayawada shall also be regularised on a war footing and the VMC, Forest, Railways, R&B, Irrigation and Revenue urban officials should take all measures to speed up the work," Srinivas said.

He also reviewed work on distribution of house sites to about 67,447 beneficiaries in Vijayawada city and directed the officials concerned to

speed up Gunadala ROB works and take measures on TIDCO houses.

Brahmin Corporation chairman and YSRCP MLA Malladi Vishnu said that concerted efforts were needed to resolve Gunadala ROB land procurement imbroglio and the works should commence at the earliest.

Collector A. Md Imtiaz said that 18 layouts were being developed for the distribution of land to the poor at



Penamaluru, G Konduru, Kankipadu, Vijayawada Rural, Ibrahimpatnam, Gannavaram mandals.

The Collector briefed the Minister and others about the various measures being taken by the authorities on Gunadala ROB, retaining wall, encroachment regularization, land to the poor and other matters on the occasion.

Man held for uploading wife's nude pics

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Guntur police on Monday arrested a man on charges of exploiting his wife for money by uploading pictures of her in a compromising position and also forcing her to have an "affair" with his "friend" in lieu of money.

Guntur urban SP RN Ammi Reddy said that the sordid case came to light after the victim lodged a complaint at the Disha Police Station, accusing her husband B Vamsikant Reddy, a resident of Giddalur in Prakasam district of secretly filming her and uploading the video onto porn websites. The SP said that Vamsikant



married the victim, a resident of Guntur, in 2017. He quit his job with a private company soon after marriage and she was forced to work to keep the home fires burning.

Vamsikant planned to earn easy money by uploading obscene videos of his wife. He

Guntur urban SP RN Ammi Reddy said that the sordid case came to light after the victim lodged a complaint at the Disha Police Station

filmed her without her knowledge and started to upload the clips on social media apps in lieu of money. The accused also offered live streaming of his intimate

moments with his wife without her knowledge to several others. Vamsikant also offered his wife to his friend Santosh for money and forced his wife to agree. Taking advantage, Santosh started harassing her over the phone.

The complainant said that even his parents supported Vamsikant. Unable to bear it any longer, she lodged a complaint with the Disha women's police Guntur.

After thorough investigation, the police arrested Vamsikant and one B Siva Kumar who used to watch the videos by paying money online. SP Ammi Reddy said that efforts are on to nab Santosh.

211 bikes seized for racing illegally

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The thrill for speed among the youngsters in Vizag is putting not only their lives in danger but other motorists too. To check bike racing and harsh driving, a special drive by Vizag police across the city from last week has resulted in the seizure of 211 bikes, including high-end bikes.

Youngsters hit the beach road on weekends for racing. As many as 150 high-end speed bikes were seized. Many vehicles were found to be moving without number plates or improper plates and documents.

DCP (Law and Order) Aishwarya Rastogi said that speed racing and rash driving



not only endangers the life of the rider but also of other fellow citizens moving on the

roads. The majority of the motorists, who indulged in the illegal racings were in the

age group of 18-25 years and they have been using WhatsApp groups for organizing illegal bike racings in the city.

Some youngsters, the police observed, indulged in the illegal bike racings especially on the Beach Road and few other stretches at high speeds and breaking several road safety norms, apart from causing a threat to pedestrians and other vehicles on the road.

The police said that they will call the families of the youngsters to give an undertaking that they would not allow their children to indulge in bike racing. If the same person is caught again, he will be arrested, the police added.

‘Nasty attempt’ to muzzle media: IPI on Kerala call

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The International Press Institute on Monday condemned the Kerala government's ordinance making a controversial amendment to the state Police Act, saying it was a "nasty and diabolical" attempt to muzzle the media in the state.

The Vienna-based International Press Institute's India chapter said the Kerala ordinance introducing a new section in the Kerala Police Act providing for three years imprisonment for publishing "any matter which is threatening, abusive, humiliating or defamatory" across all media is perhaps the most serious assault on freedom of expression in decades.

The IPI India's strong criticism came on a day the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic government in Kerala put on hold the implementation of the controversial amendment



to the state Police Act citing criticism from various quarters.

In a statement issued by N Ravi, Chairman, Indian National Committee, International Press Institute, the IPI demanded that Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan should immediately rescind this ordinance which it said was an "unconstitutional and illegal attempt to curtail freedoms guaranteed under the Indian Constitution".

was beaten back by nationwide media and public protests," the IPI India said.

The context and the circumstances make it clear that the ordinance is a "blatant attempt" to silence critics of the government rather than protect any vulnerable group, at a time when the state government's policies and actions are being scrutinised by the media and the people, which is a democratic right, the IPI India said.

"The ordinance is a nasty and diabolical attempt to muzzle the media in Kerala," it said.

Noting that the criminal defamation law in Section 499 of the Indian Penal Code is "bad enough", the IPI India said the Supreme Court of India has upheld its constitutional validity on the reasoning that with the ten exceptions to defamation listed in the section, it strikes a fair balance between the right to free speech and the protection of reputations.

HC says amendment in PC Act not to apply on 2G case, rejects A Raja's plea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Monday dismissed a plea by former telecom minister A Raja and others contending that the CBI's appeal against their acquittal in the 2G spectrum scam case has become infructuous with the amendment in the anti-corruption law.

The high court said an amendment in the Act does not apply to the offences already taken place.

Justice Brijesh Sethi held that the 2018 amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act relating to Section 13(1)(d) would not come to the rescue of the acquitted accused in this appeal.

Justice Sethi is going to demit the office on November 30 and

due to paucity of time, he released the 2G case appeals from his board stating that the pleas will be listed before another bench on December 1.

Raja had told the high court that the CBI's appeal against the acquittals in the 2G case has become infructuous with the coming of the new anti-corruption law.

His counsel had told the court that the graft charges levelled against him and others in the case have been omitted in the new Prevention of Corruption Act of 2018 and therefore, prosecution in the instant matter cannot go on.

Apart from Raja, his then private secretary R K Chandolia, former telecom secretary Siddharth Behura and Bollywood film producer Karim Morani had also raised the issue in separate applications filed by them.

The CBI had contended that the applications were not sustainable as this specific issue had been raised in the replies filed in response to the agency's appeal.



was repealed in 2018 when the law was amended by Parliament.

Section 13(1)(d) of the Act spoke about criminal misconduct by a public servant if he obtained for himself or for any other person any valuable thing or pecuniary advantage by corrupt or illegal means; or by abusing his position as a public servant, or while holding office as a public servant, obtained for any person any valuable thing or pecuniary advantage without any public interest.

The CBI and the Enforcement

Directorate have challenged the acquittal of all the individuals and companies in the 2G scam corruption and money laundering cases by the trial court.

The CBI had also filed an appeal challenging the acquittal of Essar Group promoters Ravi Kant Ruia and Anshuman Ruia and six others in a separate case arising out of the 2G scam probe.

A special court on December 21, 2017 had acquitted Raja, DMK MP Kanimozhi and others in CBI and ED cases related to the scam. It had acquitted 17 others, including DMK supremo M Karunanidhi's wife Dayalu Ammal, Vinod Goenka, Asif Balwa, film producer Karim Morani, P Amirtham and Sharad Kumar, director of Kalaingar TV in the ED case.

On the same day, the trial court had also acquitted Behura, Chandolia, Unitech Ltd MD Sanjay Chandra and three top executives of Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group (RADAG) -- Gautam Doshi, Surendra Pipara and Hari Nair - in the CBI's 2G case.

CITY LIGHTS PIL against felling 315 trees for redevelopment of S Delhi colony

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought response of the Centre and AAP government on a PIL challenging an order by the forest department permitting felling and transplantation of around 315 trees for redevelopment of a south Delhi colony. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan issued notice to the Environment Ministry, Delhi government, Deputy Conservator of Forests (south) and the National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC) seeking their stand on the plea which has contended that felling of the trees would cause irreparable damage to the environment. The petitioner, Abhishek Dutt -- a municipal councillor of South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) -- has sought setting aside of the September 14 decision of the Deputy Conservator of Forests (south) allowing felling and transplantation of 315 trees for redevelopment of Ayur Vigyan Nagar at August Kranti Marg here. In his plea, filed through advocate Varun K Chopra, it has been contended that the September 14 decision has been taken "without any application of mind" and no reasons were given for approving the project.



Punjab: Railways runs two goods trains

Nearly two months after the rail blockade by Punjab farmers against the Centre's farm laws, the railway authorities on Monday operated two goods trains under its Ferozepur division. The trains were run after the inspection of all tracks falling under the Ferozepur division, officials said. The Ferozepur division caters to needs of Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and a part of Himachal Pradesh. "Two goods trains, one empty and other loaded, were run at 2 pm on Monday," said Divisional Railway Manager (Ferozepur Division) Rajesh Aggarwal. A freight train carrying gypsum from Jammu via Kathua to Lucknow was operated, said Aggarwal, adding that an empty freight train was started from Jalandhar for Delhi.



Sushant death-drug probe: NCB denies man illegally detained

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on Monday denied before the Bombay High Court that Dipesh Sawant, late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's domestic staff, had been illegally detained in a drugs case that it is probing. Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh, who appeared for the NCB, told a bench of Justices SS Shinde and MS Karnik that Sawant had been arrested on September 5 following due procedure and that there was nothing illegal about his arrest. ASG Singh was responding to a petition filed by Sawant in October this year claiming he had been arrested illegally by the NCB, and had sought a compensation of Rs 10 lakh. On Monday, Sawant's counsel, Amir Koradia, told the bench that contrary to NCB's claim, Sawant was arrested from his office in the city on September 4. "I should have, therefore, been produced before the magistrate on September 5 but this was done only on September 6," he said. ASG Singh, however, told the court that the above was not true. "The NCB has an arrest memo signed by him (Sawant) that says he was arrested and brought to the NCB office on September 5.



Drug smuggling suspect dies at Jammu police station

A 45-year-old man, who was recently arrested for his alleged involvement in cross-border narcotic smuggling, died due to some 'health problems' at a police station here on Monday, an official said. Kuldeep Kumar, a resident of Akhnour, was lodged in the lockup at R S Pura police station and complained of chest pain before losing his consciousness. He was rushed to the Government Medical College (GMC) hospital, where he was declared 'brought dead', according to the officer. Kumar was arrested a few days back after his name surfaced during investigation into a Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act case related to cross-border narcotic smuggling, the police officer said. The post-mortem of the deceased is underway to ascertain the cause of his death and the body would be handed over to his family after completion of all legal formalities, the official added.



Court defers hearing on cognisance of sup charge sheet in UAPA case

PNS ■ DELHI

A court here on Monday deferred the hearing on the issue of taking cognisance of the supplementary charge sheet filed against former JNU student Umar Khalid and JNU student Sharjeel Imam in a case of the north east Delhi riots in wake of a recent order of the Delhi High Court staying trial in the matter.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat reserved the order for Tuesday, saying the court's order has to be correct in terms of the High Court's directions.

At the outset, the judge asked the counsels for the accused if the court can take cognisance of the supplementary charge sheet and pass orders for providing its copies to them since the trial has been stayed in the matter.

In the supplementary charge sheet filed on Sunday, Imam and

Some of the advocates for the accused said that the grievance of the prosecutor was with the supply of physical copies of the bulky main charge sheet

Khalid were booked under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and other sections of the Indian Penal Code, Arms Act and Prevention of Damage to Public Properties Act in the matter.

The High Court had on

November 11 stayed the trial of the conspiracy case after a plea was filed by the police challenging the order of the city court directing them to supply physical copies of the charge sheet to all the accused.

It, however, had said the trial court is at liberty to decide any application in the case and put up the matter for further hearing on December 15.

During the hearing, some of the advocates for the accused said that the grievance of the prosecutor was with the supply of physical copies of the bulky main charge sheet and so soft copies of the supplementary charge sheet can be supplied now.

Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad, appearing for the police, said the prosecution was willing to provide soft copies of the supplementary charge sheet to the accused but the orders have to come from the court

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the Uttar Pradesh government moving in the direction of bringing a law against "love jihad", noted Urdu poet Munawwar Rana took a dig at the BJP regime in the state on Monday, saying the new law should first be used against the leaders of the saffron party and their family members who have married outside the community.

In a tweet in Hindi, Rana said, "We can extend support to a law being enacted against love jihad only on the condition that its beginning should be made from the two big love jihadis sitting in the central government so that two Muslim girls can then marry them and action should also be taken against all BJP leaders and their family members who



have married outside their religion."

In another tweet, he said, "Although love jihad is just a jumla used to spread hatred in the society, Muslim girls suffer the most from this because boys get married elsewhere."

Web series row: MP police books 2 Netflix officials

PNS ■ BHOPAL

An FIR was registered in Madhya Pradesh on Monday against two executives of OTT platform Netflix for allegedly hurting religious sentiments through its web series "A Suitable Boy" which showed kissing scenes purportedly on the campus of a temple, an official said.

The FIR has named Monika Shergill, Vice President, Content (Netflix) and Ambika Khurana, Director, Public Policies (Netflix), Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra said.

They are booked by Rewa police on a complaint filed by Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) national secretary Gaurav Tiwari who demanded apology from Netflix and makers of the series, and removal of 'objectionable scenes', which he stated were also "encouraging love jihad".

SEC issues 'faulty' postal ballot for Kashmiri migrants, cries BJP

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir BJP on Monday criticised the state election commission (SEC) for issuing a "faulty and discriminatory" postal ballot scheme notification for displaced Kashmiri migrants for the ensuing district development council (DDC) polls.

The party alleged that it was a "deliberate attempt" at the bureaucracy level to keep the community out of the DDC polls in the Kashmir Valley.

"We have come to the conclusion that the displaced Kashmiri pandit community has been kept out of the DDC polls in Kashmir. They are being deliberately disenfranchised due to wrongful, faulty and discriminatory notification of the postal ballot scheme by the state election commission," vice president of J-K BJP and former MLC G L Raina told reporters here.

On November 10, officials had said the State Election



The BJP leaders said the post-ballot scheme notification issued for DDC polls is the same as was issued during the 1996 elections.

Commission has put in place a mechanism for the successful implementation of the postal ballot scheme in the ensuing DDC elections to ensure the maximum participation of Kashmiri migrants.

They had said the concerned Kashmiri migrants living in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of the country would

have to approach the assistant returning officer (migrants) for getting themselves registered and other related things for the hassle-free exercise of their franchise.

However, the BJP leaders said the post-ballot scheme notification issued for DDC polls is the same as was issued during the 1996 elections.

"It seems that the 1996 scheme has been cut and pasted as notice for the present election ignoring all subsequent developments on this front," Raini said.

"It is a cumbersome process with dozens of formalities for KP voters to go from one office to another to check their antecedents," he added.

Raina said the act under which the notification for the postal ballot scheme for DDC polls was issued has been scrapped a year ago.

He said the community leadership is planning to approach the court against the notification.

AIMIM's key Bengal leader, functionaries join ruling TMC

PNS ■ KOLKATA

AIMIM's West Bengal unit leader Anwar Pasha along with some of his colleagues joined the Trinamool Congress on Monday, claiming that the Asaduddin Owaisi-led party was only acting as a polariser of votes to help the BJP.

Alleging that a section of people is trying to take the country towards destruction using religion, Pasha said that those who are eyeing Bengal at present, whether "wearing saffron or green", should know that there is no place for such division in this state.

"AIMIM has played a hand in the polarisation of votes in Bihar and thus helped the BJP in forming the government

there, but this will not happen in Bengal," he said.

Pasha, who was welcomed to the TMC fold by ministers Bratya Basu and Moloy Ghatak, said that 30 per cent of West Bengal's population are Muslims, asserting that the political developments in Bihar cannot be emulated in this state.

Urging the Muslims in the state to stand by Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee, he said AIMIM chief Owaisi should not come to Bengal.

Owaisi had said on Sunday that the party is deliberating with the West Bengal unit over contesting the assembly elections, likely in April-May, and will take a decision after getting feedback from them.



More you talk about sexuality, more normalised it gets: Bani

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Video jockey and actor Bani J believes showcasing more stories about the sexuality of people onscreen can play an important role in normalising the discussion around one's orientation, a subject that is still taboo in Indian society.

The actor, who plays Umang Singh, a bisexual gym trainer in Amazon Prime Video Indian original "Four More Shots Please!", said the role was a refreshing change as it was written with sensitivity.

"Talking about sexuality, the more you see and talk about it, the more normalised it gets. In India till date being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender or other labels, people get scared and have nothing to say about it.

"When we hate something, it comes from lack of under-

standing, which comes from lack of awareness. So more stories like these are told or discussed and that too by people who do not get mocked easily," Bani told PTI in an interview.

The actor, who started her career by competing in the reality show MTV Roadies season four and emerged a runner-up, believes one of the reasons Umang was widely accepted was because the character was portrayed in a way where one didn't want to mock her for trying to be herself.

"All this has to do with the way the character was written. Usually gay characters are made fun or shown in a caricaturist way."

Created by Rangita Prithvi Nandy and produced by Prithvi Nandy Communications, the show explores the lives of four women in unabashed and



unapologetic way. It also stars Kirti Kulhari, Sayani Gupta and Maanvi Gargoo.

"Four More Shots Please!" is nominated at the International Emmy Awards in the best comedy category. The results will be announced on Monday night.

The actor who plays a bisexual gym trainer in Amazon Prime Video Indian original "Four More Shots Please!", said the role was a refreshing change

When she first heard about the web series receiving a nomination, Bani said she was pleasantly surprised and shocked.

"It didn't sink in for a while. We got nominated and that for me was the end of the story. I

am going to feel more when the results are announced," she said.

"I don't know why everybody thinks that life is going to change after an Emmy nomination, is it like suddenly people will take us more seriously or will we be offered more work?" she asked.

In the show, Gupta plays Damini, a journalist who is trying to deal with professional challenges and her tumultuous love life; Kulhari essays the role of a single mother, who is a successful lawyer, and Gargoo is a single child from a wealthy family.

Bani, 32, said the aim of the show is to address and explore a lot of issues through these four different women.

"In reality, we all are experiencing things that women go through in India. Our culture

is trying to be forward yet it is so backward as we are traditional and want to be modern at the same time.

"There is a lot of clash that happens and how society judges you when you try and do your own things. People appreciated these things and that is something that is the cornerstone of our show," she said. The third season of "Four More Shots Please!" is underway, the actor added.

"I am very excited about it. All I can say is, it will be the biggest and the best. We are starting shoot soon."

The season one was directed by Anu Menon and second part had Nupur Asthana of "Mujhse Fraandship Karoge" fame, helming it. Actor-director Tannishtha Chatterjee will direct all episodes of the new season.

One of oldest ex-rail guards turns 100, to get double pension

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Keshav Narhar Bapat, one of the oldest living retired railway guards, has turned 100. After a stint in the Army, Bapat, a resident of Bhusawal in Maharashtra, joined the Great Indian Peninsular Railway (GIPR), now called as the Central Railway, in 1951 and retired around 42 years back. He turned 100 years' old on November 21 and the Central Railway has now decided to double his pension amount from this month as a "goodwill gesture", CR's Chief Public Relations Officer Shivaji Sutar said on Monday. CR officials felicitated Bapat with bouquets, sweets and a greeting letter from Bhusawal Divisional Railway Manager Vikas Kumar Gupta on Saturday. According to CR officials, Bapat joined the GIPR in 1951, which in the same year got converted into the Central Railway.

Fadnavis downplays his teaming up with Ajit Pawar to form govt

PNS ■ AURANGABAD

Exactly a year after Maharashtra politics was left stunned with the coming together of Devendra Fadnavis as chief minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar as his deputy to form a short-lived 80-hour government in the state, the senior BJP leader on Monday said the "incident need not be remembered". Fadnavis, talking to reporters in Aurangabad, went on to add that if the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government falls, the oath ceremony of the dispensation that would replace it would not take place at dawn as was the case a year ago. Last year, amid hectic parleys between the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress to form a non-BJP government in the state after the October polls threw up a hung Assembly, Fadnavis and Pawar were



sworn in at dawn in a ceremony at Raj Bhavan. "If the present government in the state collapses, the oath ceremony will not take place at dawn. But such incidents need not be remembered," the former CM said. Speaking on other issues, Fadnavis said projects like the water grid and city water pipeline aimed at developing Marathwada were in coma

under the MVA regime. The MVA government is working for specific regions and constituencies, and proposals announced by ministers are set aside by the chief minister or deputy chief minister, Fadnavis alleged. Replying to a query on the MLC polls, Fadnavis said the BJP would fare well despite the Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena coming together.

MP to Fadnavis: Wrest back PoK before talking of Karachi

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Monday said Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) should be wrested back before one can talk of Karachi being part of India. Raut was responding to remarks by BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, who said his party believes Karachi will be a part of India one day. The remarks by Fadnavis, former Maharashtra chief minister, came days after a Shiv Sena worker asked owners of Karachi Sweets outlet in Mumbai to rename it and justified the demand by calling Pakistan a country of terrorists. Raut had then said the demand for changing the name is not the official stance of Shiv Sena. Raut told reporters on

Monday that the Shiv Sena will welcome Karachi becoming a part of India, adding India should wrest back PoK first. Asked about the Sena worker's demand to rename Karachi Sweets shop, Fadnavis said, "We are the people who believe in akhand bharat (integrated India) and we believe Karachi too will be part of India one day. To a query on the remarks by Fadnavis, Raut said his party will welcome if Karachi becomes part of India. "But first bring PoK in India, then we will go to Karachi," the Sena MP added. Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik said his party will welcome if the BJP wants the merger of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to form a single country.

INDIA CORNER

CBI searches former Minister Roshan Baig's residence

The Central Bureau of Investigation officials on Monday conducted searches at the residence of former Karnataka minister R Roshan Baig here, a day after arresting him in the multi-crore IMA ponzi scam. The sleuths from the CBI office here searched two locations including the residence of expelled Congress leader Baig in Pulakeshi Nagar, the agency sources said. "The searches at two places started at 7.30 am and concluded by 4 pm," said a CBI source without divulging information on the outcome of the searches. The premier investigation agency arrested Baig on Sunday after day-long interrogation in the Rs 4,000 crore multi-crore I-Monetary Advisory (IMA) ponzi scam, in which over a lakh investors have been duped. Baig, who was disqualified as a Congress MLA after he revolted against the party last year, was summoned to the CBI office on Sunday morning and "based on material evidence" he was arrested.



HC grants time to CBI for reply on Sengar's appeal against jail term

The Delhi High Court Monday granted time to the CBI to file status report on disqualified Uttar Pradesh MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar's appeal challenging his conviction and 10-year imprisonment in the custodial death case of the Unnao rape victim's father. Justice Anu Malhotra directed the agency to submit its reply within two weeks to the plea and listed the matter for further hearing on January 12. The high court on November 6 issued notice to the CBI on Sengar's appeal against his conviction and jail term and had also asked the agency to respond to his application seeking suspension of the sentence till pendency of the appeal. During the hearing, CBI's counsel sought more time to file the status report saying that the investigating officer of this case is also probing the UP's Hathras rape case due to which he could not file the reply. Advocate Kanhaiya Singh, representing Sengar, submitted that he has a strong case for suspension of sentence and let the CBI file its reply then he would advance his arguments.



'Seat-sharing talks after TN poll date is fixed'

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

Seat-sharing talks for the 2021 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections would be held after announcing the poll date, state BJP president L Murugan said Monday. Replying to a question on reports of the BJP demanding 50 seats from the ruling AIADMK, Murugan said a statement on the continuation of the alliance was just made two days ago. The number of seats to be contested would be decided upon after discussions with all the alliance partners, he said. Murugan, along with Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan, attended the ground-breaking ceremony for the new BJP office here at a cost of Rs 1.5 crore. The two leaders were on their way to attend 'Vel Yatra' in Palani this evening. With regard to the yatra, Murugan said it would culminate in Tiruchendur on December 5 instead of



December 7. BJP national president J P Nadda is expected to participate in the event. When referred to the remarks by TNCC president K S Alagiri that Congress would also join if the yatra was taken with an idol of Lord Muruga, he said Murugan and 'vel' cannot be separated; without Muruga there is no vel and without vel there is no Muruga. However, he hastened to add that the vel is to finish 'asuras' (demons) and also the anti-Hindu and anti-nationals."

Delhi HC: Treat as representation PIL for paid menstrual leave

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Monday asked the Centre and the AAP government to treat as a representation a PIL seeking grant of paid leave to women employees during menstruation. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Prateek Jalan asked the central and Delhi governments to take a decision on the representation in accordance with the law, rules, regulations and policy applicable to such matters as soon as possible and practicable. The bench disposed of the Delhi Labour Union plea that women be provided special casual or paid leave as menstruation is intrinsically related to human dignity and by not providing separate toilet facilities or breaks to maintain hygiene it also sought facilities for periodic rests, separate and clean toilets and provision of sanitary napkins to women employees during their menstruation period.

MIM Bihar MLA insists 'Bharat' be replaced with 'Hindustan'

PNS ■ PATNA

A controversy erupted on the floor of the Bihar Assembly on Monday when a legislator from AIMIM insisted that the draft for the oath in Urdu should have "Bharat", as it is in the Constitution, instead of the seemingly eclectic "Hindustan". The demand was made by Akhtarul Iman, state president of Asaduddin Owaisi AIMIM no sooner than he rose to take oath in Urdu. It left the pro-tem Speaker Jitan Ram Manjhi visibly bewildered who pointed out that as per convention those who take oath in Urdu said "Hindustan". The chair, however, permitted him to use the word Bharat. Iman whose party champions the cause of minorities while wearing its patriotism on its sleeves, was stormed by journalists who wanted to know why he had an objection to "Hindustan" which is used by people of the country in common parlance. The MLA replied "I had raised no objections. I had simply



The demand was made by Akhtarul Iman, state president of Asaduddin Owaisi AIMIM no sooner than he rose to take oath in Urdu

made a point that whenever we read the Preamble of the Constitution, in whichever language, it mentions the word Bharat. In the light of this fact I felt that since we are taking oath in the name of the Constitution, it would be proper if we use the same term for the name of our country". He asserted that he had "no problems with the word Hindustan", having grown up reciting Iqbal's famous poem "Saare jahaan se achcha, Hindustan hamaara" and appreciated "personal choice" exercised by leaders like Congress MLA Shakil Ahmed

Khan who preferred to take oath in Sanskrit. He also dismissed suggestions that his stand would "hurt Urdu-speaking population" who have been opposed to Sanskritisation holding it to be an assertion of Hindu majoritarianism. However, the ruling NDA reacted with predictable distaste to the development, which helped All India Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen (AIMIM) hog some more limelight after having caused a splash in the assembly elections in which it won five seats and is said to have affected the outcome in a number of others.

Schools reopen, attendance at 30Percentage in rural Pune

PNS ■ PUNE

Schools and colleges for classes IX to XII reopened in the rural areas of Pune district on Monday for the first time since the coronavirus outbreak started in March, with officials claiming student attendance was around 30 per cent. Educational institutions in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad civic areas continue to be shut till December 13 and November 30 respectively. Zilla Parishad Education Officer Ganpat More said there were over 1,200 schools and colleges in the district's rural areas and some 30-35 were expected to open on Monday. "I toured some schools and found the attendance to be in the range of 30 per cent. I spoke to parents who were apprehensive about the safety of their children due to the



outbreak. All these schools are adhering to COVID-19 norms. Teachers and other staff are being tested for the infection as well," he said. More said till Saturday, over 4,700 teachers had been tested for novel coronavirus, and only 13 reports returned positive, though these too are asymptomatic.

"On arrival, all students were thermally screened, their oxygen levels were checked, and classrooms were deep sanitized. We also took care of social distancing in the seating arrangements," said Sopan Kanchan, secretary, Mahatma Gandhi Sarvodaya Sangh Trust, which runs a school in Urali Kanchan.

More trouble for suspended IAS officer

PNS ■ KOCHI

A special court for PMLA cases here on Monday granted permission to the Customs to arrest suspended IAS officer M Sivasankar, who is currently in judicial custody, in connection with the Kerala gold smuggling case. The court for Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) allowed the prayer by the Customs, which claimed it has got direct incriminating material against Sivasankar over his 'involvement' in the sensational smuggling of gold using diplomatic channel. Sivasankar, former principal secretary to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, is presently lodged in a jail here after being arrested by the Enforcement Directorate probing the money trail in the gold smuggling case. "The Customs, during the course of investigation has now been able to get direct incriminating material against



Sivasankar of his involvement and being concerned in smuggling of gold illegally which is an offence under the Customs Act, 1962. "It has, therefore, become necessary to subject him to custodial interrogation after arresting him. This is highly necessary for the smooth progress of the investigation," The Customs (Preventive) Commissionerate said in its

petition. The Customs said it has arrested around 15 people, including prime accused Swapna Suresh, Sarith PS and Sandeep Nair, in connection with the seizure of 30 kg smuggled gold illicitly imported as diplomatic baggage of UAE consulate in Thiruvananthapuram on July 5. The agency said it has now come to light that Sivasankar, who has been

arrayed as fifth accused in the case registered by the ED, is also involved in the issue. "However, the Customs is yet to determine the actual involvement. So he is now a suspected accused", the Customs said in the petition. The move by the Customs came days after Sivasankar moved the Kerala High Court seeking bail in the ED case after the Special Court for PMLA cases here rejected his application for regular bail on November 17. Declining bail, special court Judge Kausar Edappagath had noted the investigation was at a crucial stage and the ED may require further time to collect all the materials, particularly related to the alleged nexus of the petitioner with the crime. The National Investigation Agency (NIA), the ED and the Customs are conducting separate investigations into the racket that was busted with the seizure of gold on July 5.

Comedian Bharti Singh, husband get bail

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A Mumbai court on Monday granted bail to comedian Bharti Singh and her husband Harsh Limbachiya, who were arrested after seizure of drugs from their house in suburban Mumbai. The magistrate's court granted bail to the couple on a bond of Rs 15,000 each. Bharti Singh, who has appeared in a number of comedy and reality shows on TV, was arrested on Saturday night by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), while her husband was taken into custody on Sunday morning following seizure of ganja (cannabis) from their house in suburban Andheri. They were produced on Sunday before the magistrate's court which remanded them in judicial custody till December 4.



out an inquiry against Ranaut and her sister following a complaint lodged against them. "Kangana and Rangoli

Punjab, Haryana CMs liable for pollution: Atishi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP MLA and chairperson of Environment Committee of Delhi Assembly Atishi on Monday met with newly-appointed panel for Air Quality Management and urged it to hold chief ministers of Punjab and Haryana liable for causing pollution in the national capital. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Atishi said two main issues were raised with the commission. "We have asked them to direct Haryana and Punjab governments to implement as soon as possible the solution by the Pusa institute and the Delhi



government in dealing with the stubble burning issue. Earlier it used to be said that there is no solution to the issue of stubble

burning but now a solution has come so it should be implemented," she said. According to scientists at the

Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa, the "Pusa biodecomposer" solution can turn crop residue into manure in 15 to 20 days and therefore, can prevent stubble burning. Secondly, Atishi said she told the commission that just giving direction is not enough but it is the responsibility of Haryana and Punjab to stop stubble burning and if they don't do it, strict action must be taken against them. "The commission can file FIR and imprison anyone for up to 5 years for causing pollution in Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region) so we have asked it to hold the CMs of Haryana and Punjab liable and

accountable and take strict action against them," she added. Atishi said the commission has given assurance that it will look into the matter. "It has also told us that it will be holding a meeting with Pusa institute. We will be closely watching what steps the commission adopts now and we hope that when Centre has made such a powerful commission then it will take strict and fast action in the matter," she added. Delhi's air quality deteriorated on Monday morning but remained in the 'poor' category, while 14 of its 38 monitoring stations recorded 'very poor' air quality, government agencies said.

Kangana moves HC to quash Mumbai Police's FIR against her

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Actress Kangana Ranaut and her sister Rangoli Chandel filed a petition in the Bombay High Court on Monday, seeking to quash an FIR registered against them by Mumbai Police for allegedly "trying to create hatred and communal tension" through their posts on social media. The FIR, under sedition charges, was registered pursuant to orders passed by the Bandra magistrate's court directing the police to carry

have filed a petition in the Bombay High Court for quashing of the FIR and the magistrate's order," their advocate Rizwan Siddiquee told PTI. He said the petition has also sought the court to stay the summons issued against the duo asking them to appear before the police for questioning, and also a direction to the police to not take any coercive steps against them. The Mumbai Police last week summoned Ranaut and her sister for the third time to record their statements on November 23 and 24.

Good enough?

The AstraZeneca vaccine has been clinically tested to have an average efficacy of 70 per cent. We still need containment drills



With India clearly in the midst of a third wave — some might even call it a tsunami of new Coronavirus cases — we should not be surprised. Even a cursory glance of what happened during the 1918-1919 Spanish influenza pandemic should have warned us to be prepared for winter, because even a century ago, there was a massive increase in cases in winter when the cold compromises lungs thanks to congestion and any influenza virus can be devastating. With the Delhi and Gujarat governments in a state of panic, it is almost certain that cases will begin to increase across the country whether

the authorities admit to them or not. But there is some positive news with British pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca, which has jointly developed a vaccine with University of Oxford to combat the Coronavirus, coming out with its trial results. That is because the Serum Institute of India (SII) has been a partner to this research as well and has promised that it will produce hundreds of millions of doses of this vaccine for Indians. Yet, the results have only indicated an average of 70 per cent efficacy with two full doses taken a month apart and up to 90 per cent when an initial half dose is combined with a full dose taken after one month. Promisingly, the vaccine doesn't need super-cold storage like the ones developed by Pfizer and Moderna, requiring only refrigeration. It also appears that as many as five other promising vaccine candidates might make it to the markets by early 2021.

However, as we have maintained, the development of a vaccine is not equal to its deployment. Also, if as the trials have indicated, with at least one-and-a-half doses required for maximum efficacy, India will need a whopping two billion doses. Even if costs are kept in check, this is looking at a time frame that might take well over three-four years to inoculate a substantial number of Indians in order to gain a decent amount of protection. At the same time, because efficacy is not the same as effectiveness, even with 90 per cent efficacy, the Coronavirus will continue to pop up, tens of thousands will continue to get infected and many more will die before the Wuhan pandemic truly settles down. Till then, preparedness and preventable behaviour are the only containment devices against an unexpected surge and given India's population density, we better reconcile ourselves to the fact that our crests will be a constant for some time. Maharashtra, which has been the worst-affected State in the country, fighting the longest battle and is now threatened with a new front, has finally released its new screening SOPs that make a RT-PCR test report mandatory for visitors who are travelling to the State from hotspots. All entry points to the State will have testing and screening centres for those not carrying such a report. This is the first time that international travel protocols are being followed domestically and perhaps would be adopted by other States, too, to keep the numbers down. It is a shame indeed that the Supreme Court has had to pull up State Governments on laxity and seek a status report on preparedness. The court also had to get into the nitty gritty of ensuring dignified treatment of the dead and vetting hospital conditions to treat the sick. A fatigue has undoubtedly set in, socially, psychologically and physically. Doctors are the worst affected, some of whom need to be relieved with younger colleagues now being drafted in to ease frontline pressure. Anticipation is the best defence now. The pandemic has forced Governments to invest in public health like never before but now investments in vaccine manufacturing and deployment will be the challenge. These are positive developments but let us not pretend that the news of a vaccine is a silver bullet that will magically cure the world.

Putin's *nyet* to Biden

Russia yet to acknowledge US President-elect given his past stance on sanctions. Can arms control break the ice?



When all world leaders are already confabulating with President-elect Joe Biden, Russian President Vladimir Putin is not ready to acknowledge the US' chosen leader just yet. In fact, given his history with US President Donald Trump, his latest diplomatic stance portends what the latter might be up to. One that's serious enough for Putin to acknowledge. Although the electoral certification process technically is still on, Biden has emerged the clear winner from the State-by-State vote tallies. And the Electoral College is expected to formally confirm the results on December 14. Trump may exhaust all legal options and challenge

counts but the margins are by now too large to change the outcome in his favour. But he sure is making the transition difficult, determined to make Biden's job difficult and most importantly, fairly decided about weighing his rival down with his flamboyance and show him as a weak leader, who doesn't deserve to be in a chair that demands his kind of robustness. Putin's words on State TV would seem like they were scripted by Trump himself as he said he would work with "anyone who has the confidence of the American people. But that confidence can only be given to a candidate whose victory has been recognised by the opposing party, or after the results are confirmed in a legitimate, legal way." The contrast is sharper as in 2016, Putin had wasted no time in congratulating Trump for winning the election. Of course, Clinton had conceded the day after the vote and the Russian involvement in influencing the election in Trump's favour is not quite a secret. So beyond the personal equation, Putin's continued deference to Trump as a world leader seemed less than diplomatic, considering the impact it could have on US-Russia relations and global geopolitics. Putin, of course, claimed that his latest stance wouldn't impact mutual relations much as they were "already ruined." The Trump Administration has already withdrawn from the Open Skies Treaty and the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Thanks to the US, Russia is already under international sanctions for actions, including its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 (one where Biden had a key role to play), interference in the US election in 2016 and reported involvement in a nerve agent attack in the UK in 2018. So unless Putin is humouring Trump in the run-up to 2024, which the latter is seemingly keen to contest, and investing for the future, little else makes sense. Besides, Trump's "America first" policy and withdrawal from global arenas of conflict had helped Russia somewhat regain its heft and self-worth in Europe in the power vacuum thus caused, all the way up to Turkey. With Biden's renewed commitment to world bodies, particularly NATO, Russia's clout could be considerably diminished. In fact, it could be blindsided again.

The Kremlin has historically not been comfortable with the Democrats and finds Biden an impediment, given his tough stance on Putin. As Vice-President, Biden had stridently pushed for sanctions against Russia in response to the 2014 Ukrainian crisis. With no signs of conflict resolution on that count, Putin now expects tougher counter-measures against him. Besides, given Biden's stance that morality must play a role in US foreign policy, Russia fears sharper US condemnation of its rights issues and what the US considers "subversive" activities in the neighbourhood. This brand of US exceptionalism is antithetical to Russia's newly extended sphere of influence. All through his campaign, Biden did mention Russia's meddling in US elections as also its alleged endorsement of Taliban attacks on US troops in Afghanistan. So rightfully, Putin does expect a hitback and is probably raising his stakes to deflect the US. Of course, Biden and his team are pragmatic and a balanced lot and would not want to precipitate a crisis, working on areas of mutual interest. The renewal of arms control could be a starting point. Biden has already said that he wants extension of existing or new treaties on reducing US-Russian nuclear arms. That works with the Russians, too.



J.S. RAJPUT

Policies are formulated on the strong foundation of the outcomes of incisive analysis of past experiences coupled with futuristic vision that could respond to emerging issues, concerns and aspirations. Gandhiji consistently articulated the India of his dreams and his concerns about the impediments ahead. These are evident in the seven social sins he published in the *Young India* of October 22, 1925. These are: politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity and worship without sacrifice.

No policy, the one on education included, can ignore the contemporary severity of these sins. It could also be witnessed in the seven tensions identified in the report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the 21st century — also known as the Delors Commission Report. These are the tensions between global and local, universal and individual, tradition and modernity, long-term and short term considerations, the need for competition and concern for opportunity, extraordinary expansion of knowledge and the human being's capacity to assimilate, and finally, the conflict between the spiritual and the material. One could, in the present context, reformulate them but it would be perilous to neglect any of these. The "sins" are taking stronger roots while the "tensions" are disturbing human habitation and systems that are already under severe strains and pressures as consequences of declining moral, ethical and humanistic considerations.

An incisive scrutiny of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) would indicate the extent to which both the sins and tensions need to be responded to, as is essential to prepare human beings imbued with character, commitment and concern. It acknowledges the guiding light it derived from the "rich heritage of ancient and eternal Indian knowledge and thought." The pursuit of knowledge, wisdom and truth is considered the highest goal of human life. The NEP mentions, "The aim of education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realisation and liberation of the Soul. World class

Educating a global citizen

Character-building just cannot be envisioned in isolation unless linked to culture. The NEP respects Gandhi's vision of young Indians



institutions in India, such as Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramshila and Vallabhi, set the highest standards of multi-disciplinary teaching and research and hosted scholars and students from across backgrounds and countries." The ancient Indian system of education valued the pursuit of knowledge with the sole objective of utilising it for the welfare of humanity: "Let all be happy, let all be healthy; let all see good around and let none suffer pain of any kind." Could there be a better comprehension of the essential unity of human beings as one family? And in a family, differences and diversities are accepted and respected. This is what the NEP has imbibed in word and spirit. It recalls how the products of ancient Indian education system strived tirelessly to make seminal contributions in diverse fields of knowledge, including mathematics, astronomy, metallurgy, surgery, health, architecture, engineering, ship building, navigation, yoga, fine arts and so much more. Every Indian student — inheritor of this great legacy — must be made familiar with it and accept the responsibility to enhance it further through excellence in his chosen area of activity and expertise. Each one of them is an inheritor of the legacy of luminaries like Charak, Susruta, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Brahmagupta, Nagarjuna, Gautama, Maitreyi, Gargi and Thiruvalluvar.

Once the NEP 2020 is implemented appropriately, no Indian shall remain "delinked from India." Every learner would be exposed to modern knowledge that would be given to him/her in institutions following the most modern pedagogy, and with due emphasis on critical thinking, creativity and innovations. It would aim at developing a student's full human potential. Higher education, the NEP-2020 acknowledges, must aim to develop good, thoughtful, well rounded and creative individuals. Obviously, the school education would take note of these aspects in the most sensitive years. Recommendations on multi-disciplinary universities, robust autonomy, revamping of curriculum and pedagogy, reforms in governance of higher education Institutions (HEIs), creation of National Research Foundation (NRF) and National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) would be positive additions to the quality and contemporary relevance of the future model of Indian education.

India could finally turn into an international education hub and certainly attract attention of the corresponding international institutions. The proposed changes in structure, flexibility, autonomy, pedagogy, multidimensionality, assessment procedures, including transfer of credit systems, would remove several agonising technicalities. The availability of internationally relevant curricula in the history, heritage and culture of India, as also modern subject areas, could attract a sizeable number of foreign students, helping us achieve the goal of "internationalisation at home." Some well-thought out suggestions like opening of foreign campuses by established Indian institutions and permitting top international universities to operate in India would effectively put Indian education firmly on the international podium, with dignity, credibility and expectations. Shared courses with reputed international institutions could pave the way for a much-needed morale boosting and encourage our young to compete with and excel among

foreign students. One has to be cautious about certain aspects though. Global credibility and recognition would require certain minimum levels of infrastructure and facilities which, sadly enough, are still missing in a large number of education institutions across the board. The NEP 2020 assures availability of all of these: "Every classroom shall have access to the latest educational technology that enables better learning experiences." There can be no compromise on the professionally acceptable teacher-taught ratio. This raises several related requirements. Quality just cannot be raised by engaging guest teachers, teachers on lecture-based payments, para teachers and keeping more than a million posts of school teachers vacant for decades together! In HEIs, the quality of products, research and innovations would be greatly impeded if there are 40-60 per cent vacant academic positions. The NEP 2020 boldly acknowledges this concern and articulates: "The teacher must be at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system. The new education policy must help re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, because they truly shape our next generation of citizens. It must do everything to empower teachers and help them do their job as effectively as possible." Expressing serious concern on the quality of teacher education, the recommendation is to replace by 2030 all of the present one-year school teacher preparation programmes by four-year integrated teacher education programmes. It may be worthwhile to recall that the four-year integrated teacher preparation programmes began in the four institutions of the NCERT in 1964-64, and the products

were indeed far ahead of others in their professional performance in schools and teacher education institutions. Unfortunately, the module was not replicated.

In higher education, the policy acknowledges the "criticality, quality and engagement" of the faculty. It also accepts that "faculty motivation" remains far lower than the desired level. Several steps have been listed to attract "the best, motivated, and capable faculty in the HEIs." The right-teacher-student ratio, access to education technology, freedom to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches, incentives like appropriate rewards, promotions, recognition and movement into institutional leadership are included in the list.

In his book of 1932, *Remakers of Mankind*, Carl Washburne writes that when asked, "What is your goal in education when India obtains self-rule?," Gandhiji answered, "Character-building. I would try to develop courage, strength, virtue, the ability to forget oneself in working towards great aims. This is more important than literacy; academic learning is only a means to this great end." Character formation was the strength of the traditional Indian system of knowledge quest that included creation, generation, utilisation and transfer of knowledge to generations ahead. With all the experiences gained globally in varying contexts and approaches, it is now accepted globally that education in every country must be rooted to culture and committed to progress. Character-building just cannot be envisioned in isolation unless linked to culture. No culture would flourish in isolation and our youth can become global citizens only when they are made well aware and conversant with their own culture before being introduced to others. India painfully suffered as the transplanted system deliberately kept young "educated" Indians away from getting familiar with the nuances of their own culture; they were systematically indoctrinated in the "superiority of the Western culture." This was very comprehensively articulated by Gandhiji in the *Young India* of September 1, 1921, "It is my firm opinion that no culture has a treasure so rich as ours. We have not known it, we have been made even to depreciate its value. We have almost ceased to live it." Let us hope that the proposed educational reforms would prepare young people with credentials, and they would be looking after the masses. Education must lead to human dignity for one and all.

(The author works in education and social cohesion)

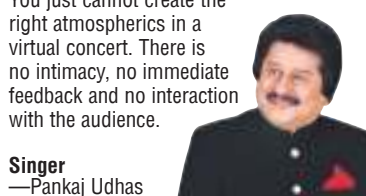
SOUND BITE

Virat Kohli will be missed. But like I say, in adversity comes opportunity. There are a lot of young guys on the side and it's an opportunity for them.



Head coach, Team India
—Ravi Shastri

You just cannot create the right atmospherics in a virtual concert. There is no intimacy, no immediate feedback and no interaction with the audience.



Singer
—Pankaj Udhass

I hope we'll leave in history an example of how to deal with a global health threat and an economic crisis by applying the principle of universal brotherhood.



Mexican President
—Andres Obrador

I've got to learn next year to get off my devices. You scroll through social media for your news and it's just bad anyway, which just brings you anxiety and puts you in depression.



Singer
—Shaggy

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Will Cong ever act?

Sir — The Congress Party has suffered a debacle in the just-concluded Bihar elections due to its political blunders and poor organisation. It has also suffered defeat in the by-elections in different States.

Because of the worrisome state the party is in all over the country, senior leaders like Kapil Sibal and P Chidambaram have lashed out against the present leadership of the Congress. They have echoed the words of those members of the grand old party who wrote a dissent letter in August. The Congress Party has become weak because of the trust deficit, loss of public appeal, identity politics and political polarisation. There is a crisis of leadership due to the lack of vision and idealism. Brainstorming by senior leaders and dissenters in a democratic spirit of accommodation will help overhaul the party. A graceful and dignified change of leadership can also help open a new and meaningful chapter in its history.

This, in turn, will help build a strong Opposition, which is essential for the growth of a healthy and vital democracy in

No room for divisive politics in TN

The announcement about the continuity of the AIADMK-BJP alliance in Tamil Nadu has finally laid all speculation to rest. The reception given to Union Home Minister Amit Shah by the party's top leadership has confirmed that the AIADMK Government is tied to the NDA Government's apron strings. This is partly attributed to the fear of Central agencies being unleashed upon its leaders. Interestingly, the number of AIADMK cadres out to greet Shah was more than the BJP's men. Significantly, the "Go back Amit Shah" hashtag that was trending showed the strong anti-BJP sentiment that is prevailing in the State as it is inhospitable terrain for divisive politics, especially on religious grounds.

With the sealing of the AIADMK-BJP pact for the Assembly election, the prospect of any significant political realignment or formation of a third front, making it a triangular contest has now receded. At the same time, the moves by late Jayalalithaa's companion, Sasikala, who will be out of jail by January 27, superstar Rajinikanth and MK Alagiri will be watched with interest.

In the present political situation, the ideological incompatibility between a Dravidian party and a Hindutva-oriented party could get starker. This would be to the disadvantage of both the parties as the election nears. Obviously the State unit of the BJP has made the restrictions on idol immersion during the Vinayaka



Chaturthi an issue. It has invoked the traditional Tamil deity Lord Murugan and undertaken the Vetrivel Yatra (why bring Muruga Peruman from the shrine to the street?) despite the denial of permission because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As an ally, the AIADMK supported the BJP on the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act and the three farm Acts. True, the BJP holds sway over much of the country but it has only a negligible presence in Tamil Nadu. In its eagerness to gain a toehold and build a base in the State by piggybacking on the AIADMK, the BJP could bargain for seats disproportionate to its strength. Overall, the DMK looks the firm favourite to occupy Fort St George.

G. David Milton
Maruthanacode

Help others in need

Sir — We are being buffeted by yet another wave of the pandemic. As feared by health experts, the cold, the pollution

and the cavalier attitude of the milling masses roaming around in overcrowded markets without masks during the festive season have led to this surge. Many States are again thinking of going into a lock-

down. This will be nothing short of a disaster for our country as the economy, which has been ailing for quite some time now, cannot take yet another hit.

Amid all this, we cannot ignore the plight of the poor who have been forced out of even daily wage and minimum wage jobs. Also, street vendors have been struggling. With the unlocking of the country, their lives were just about getting back on track again as people had begun spending.

Now, if there is another lockdown, the wheels of the economy will stop moving again and the poor will be left to starve and fend for themselves in a nation that does not have unemployment benefits or social security. Till we get a Universal Basic Income in India, we as citizens of the country, should find it in our hearts to help the underprivileged. We need to stop being so self-centred and reach out and help those in distress.

Ashmit Aaron
Noida

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Shape the future at cyber speed

Being prepared to weather any storm is possible with the right digital strategy and continuous, concerted effort



ALOK OHRIE

The need for businesses to digitally transform themselves is something that has been discussed for years. However, as we saw in the 2018 Digital Transformation Index that serves as a benchmark for computerisation technology adoption among organisations, many enterprises' digital transformation programmes did not keep up with the advancements in computing power and the influx of emerging technologies. Coupled with the imperative to adapt to today's unprecedented business disruption, the need to digitally transform has never been more urgent and challenging.

It is encouraging to see that many enterprises are rising to the occasion. In the 2020 Digital Transformation Index, it was found that 95 per cent of respondents in India have successfully accelerated at least some of their transformation programmes this year. This shows immense progress in computerisation. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. As it is, continuous digital transformation is not easy, with 97 per cent of Indian businesses facing entrenched barriers to cyber networked business processes as they navigate their future.

By committing to continual transformation — even amid uncertainty such as the kind the world is facing right now — businesses can help to shape their ideal future. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated that organisations can be nimble and transform quickly. A third have already extended their business domain; however, what companies do next will be telling. Ongoing transformation is vital, and there is plenty of room for advancement.

As of now, just 12 per cent of Indian firms surveyed are defined as "Digital Leaders", meaning these are companies with digital transformation ingrained in the DNA of their business, end-to-end. And even though they are leaders in cyber networked business processes, they recognise that change requires continuous effort — with more "Digital Leaders" accelerating their transformation programmes this year compared to "Digital Laggards", meaning those that don't even have a computerisation plan or their investments in such technology are few and far between. Here is some inspiration from more mature digital businesses as they consider how to implement an ongoing advancement plan for their firm:

Data privacy and cybersecurity: These are constant and evolving concerns that should not be overlooked. Mature digital businesses recognise more often than others that data privacy and cybersecurity warrant proper consideration. In fact, 47 per cent of Indian businesses are of the opinion that data privacy and cybersecurity are the major barriers in their digital transformation journey.

Budget and resources: Financial constraints — both budget pressures and lack of economic growth — have not slowed down transformation for the more mature digital businesses. They position Information Technology investments as strategic drivers for innovation instead of thinking of them as a cost. However, a whopping 32 per cent of Indian respondents said that lack of budget and resources is a barrier to digital progress in their organisation.

Data is the lifeblood of a company: As we move towards a Zettabyte era, the ability to extract insights from data will become a major stumbling block if it is left unresolved. There is hope that the recent disruption will ignite a new wave of data-first, data-anywhere businesses. We found that 94 per cent of Indian organisations agree that extracting valuable insights from data will be more important for their business than ever before as one of the great benefits of this is the ability to track metrics and analyse them. Using these insights allows firms to optimise their strategies and processes for better results. In businesses, two things matter more than most — costs and revenue. It's possible to make massive changes to both by integrating data-based insights into the company culture. However, working towards this change sooner rather than later is imperative.

Overall, businesses should be applauded for adapting so quickly to the extreme and sudden onset of disruption from recent events. Some companies were poised to respond better than others, based on where they were on their digital journey. However, being prepared to weather any storm is possible with the right digital strategy and continuous, concerted effort.

In this hyper-connected data decade, every business needs to be a cyber business to survive and thrive. With digital disruptors snapping at the heels of many sectors, success will come to the organisations that ensure their workforce is skilled in the best practices of the digital age. Moreover, this change must be woven into the DNA of the firm and championed by its leadership to have a maximum impact. With a strong ally by your side, businesses of varying sizes, industries and digital maturities can find ways to adapt to new routines and push the frontiers of what's possible.


(The writer is president and MD, Dell Technologies, India)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WITH THE AMENDMENT TO THE POLICE ACT, THE KERALA GOVERNMENT IS TRYING TO SILENCE THE VOICE OF THOSE WHO CRITICISE IT.

—LEADER OF OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY

RAMESH CHENNITHALA




MANY HAVE VOICED CONCERN OVER THE ACT'S AMENDMENT. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO IMPLEMENT IT.

—KERALA CHIEF MINISTER

PINARAYI VIJAYAN

Fertiliser DBT an illusion

Despite tall claims made by the UPA and the NDA dispensations since 2012, a gradual transition to direct cash or benefit transfer of subsidy to the farmers has not been done



UTTAM GUPTA


The additional provision of ₹65,000 crore towards fertiliser subsidy (over and above the ₹71,000 crore allocated in the Budget for 2020-21), that was announced by the Finance Minister under "Stimulus- III" on November 12, will help in clearing all pending dues to the industry. This has led the latter to believe that this is a precursor to a gradual transition to direct cash or benefit transfer (DBT) of subsidy to the farmers. This is illusory, as despite tall claims made by the UPA and the NDA dispensations since 2012, this has not been done. The dominant stumbling blocks are a threat to the viability of high cost units in the public sector, including revival projects viz Sindri, Gorakhpur, Barauni and so on. Plus there is the risk of inviting the farmers' wrath if subsidy does not reach them in time. Bureaucratic red tape is a third major factor. Till these are addressed, DBT to farmers won't see the light of the day.

In the Budget for 2012-13, the then UPA Government had announced tracking the movement of fertilisers from retailers to farmers, and linking part of the subsidy payment to manufacturers for sale to farmers by retailers. In the mid-year economic analysis of 2012-13, the Finance Ministry came out with a blueprint on modalities for implementing the Budget announcement. Pilot projects in 10 districts spread over nine States were to be launched, which were to be followed by DBT in these districts from April 1, 2013. Concurrently, the Government planned to track fertilisers movement in the whole country. A pan-India launch was contemplated from April 2014.

Even as the Department of Fertilisers developed the technology platform called e-Fertiliser Monitoring System (e-FMS) to execute the blueprint, the DBT remained on paper. Meanwhile, the NDA Government under Narendra Modi recognised that there was rampant misuse of subsidy. According to the *Economic Survey 2015-16*, as much as 24 per cent of the subsidy was spent on inefficient producers, 41 per cent was diverted to non-agricultural uses, including smuggling to neighbouring countries, and 24 per cent was consumed by larger, presumably richer farmers. That left a tiny 11 per cent for small and marginal farmers, who alone, according to Modi, should have been the sole beneficiaries of the subsidy. The survey advocated DBT using the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) platform. In the Budget for 2016-17, the then Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, made an announcement to this effect followed by the launch of pilot projects for linking subsidy payments to producers with the sale of fertilisers to farmers by retailers in 18 districts spread over 12 States. In March 2018, the scheme was launched across the country.

Under it, the Government has made disbursement of 100 per cent of the subsidy to producers conditional upon actual sales to farmers and these getting registered on point-of-sale (PoS) machines at the dealer's shop (prior to this, they were getting 95 per cent of subsidy on receipt of material at a district's railhead point or approved godown and the balance five per cent on confirmation of sales to farmers by States). But this is not DBT as subsidy continues to be routed through manufacturers. Now, just because the Government has cleared all subsidy dues to manufacturers, it gives no clue that this will happen soon. In fact, there are major roadblocks on the way — some explicit and others not so. To understand these, let us look at how the extant sys-

THE SUBSIDY MAY BE COMPUTED ON A PER HECTARE BASIS AND GIVEN ANNUALLY AS MOOTED BY THE COMMISSION FOR AGRICULTURE COSTS AND PRICES. IN ITS RABI REPORT FOR THE 2021-22 MARKETING YEAR, IT HAS PROPOSED A SUBSIDY OF ₹5,000 PER YEAR TO BE GIVEN IN TWO TRANCHES OF ₹2,500 EACH IN THE KHARIF AND RABI SEASONS. THIS SHOULD BE GIVEN ONLY TO THE SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS OR THOSE WITH LAND HOLDINGS OF LESS THAN TWO HECTARES



tem works. The Centre controls the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) of urea at a low level, unrelated to the cost of production and distribution, which is higher. It reimburses the manufacturers for the shortfall as subsidy on a "unit-specific" basis under the New Pricing Scheme (NPS). The current MRP of urea is ridiculously low at ₹5,360 per tonne even as the cost can vary from about ₹15,000 per tonne to ₹25,000 per tonne. Even as all units (31) sell urea at the same price, each one of them gets paid on the basis of its own production cost. Thus, an efficient unit producing at, say ₹15,000 per tonne, gets a subsidy of ₹9,640 per tonne whereas another producing at ₹25,000 per tonne, gets a subsidy of ₹19,640 per tonne.

In the case of P and K fertilisers, the Government gives "uniform" subsidy on per nutrient basis to all manufacturers under the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme. For arriving at the MRP, they are expected to deduct the subsidy amount from the cost. For instance, if a unit produces DAP (dia-ammonium phosphate) at a cost of say ₹34,000 per tonne and subsidy is ₹10,000 per tonne, then it will have to fix the MRP at ₹24,000 per tonne.

Now, if instead of routing through the manufacturers, the subsidy is to be given directly to farmers, the transition in case of P and K fertilisers may not face much of a hurdle. The subsidy of ₹10,000 per tonne or ₹500 per bag (50 kg) of DAP can be credited to a farmers' account even as the manufacturer will sell at the market-based price, say ₹34,000 per tonne or ₹1,700 per bag, this being the cost of the most efficient producer (this could also be an average of all units depending on how market dynamics evolve). However, the farmer will have to spend ₹500 per bag

extra at the time of purchase, though he will get back this amount from the Government as subsidy later.

In the urea segment, however, the transition will be tough for manufacturers as well as farmers. For producers, since each one of them will have to sell at the market-based price, all those whose production cost is higher than that of the most efficient producer or the industry average, will either have to perform or wind up. As for the farmer, he will have to spend, at the time of purchase, at least thrice (based on the market price of ₹15,000 per tonne or ₹750 per bag) of what he is spending now.

The Government has fears on both counts. On the production front, there are several public sector plants, which fall in the high cost zone and hence risk being chopped under the DBT. Even the revival projects, like Sindri, Gorakhpur and Barauni, on completion (2021) will have a production cost of over ₹30,000 per tonne. Hence it won't be viable under the new regime. As for farmers, it risks inviting their wrath if subsidy money does not reach them in time, which is inevitable if the budgetary allocation is inadequate.

There are other roadblocks which are not so explicit. Under the present system of urea being available at a throwaway price of ₹5,360 per tonne, a mere one-fourth of the cost, dubious operators make a quick buck by diverting it to chemical industries or smuggling it to neighbouring countries. This won't be possible without the tacit consent of those in the hot seat. Further, urea imports are canalised through State agencies like the Minerals and Metals Trading Corporation (MMTC), State Trading Corporation (STC) and there is a lot to gain for deci-

sion-makers. Clearly, there are vested interests in continuing with the *status quo*.


Unless the above roadblocks are cleared, the transition to DBT will be next to impossible. But this is doable provided Modi sheds his plan of linking development of eastern India with the revival of Sindri, Gorakhpur, Barauni (alternatively, their production cost needs to be cut drastically); pledges to fully fund subsidy requirement (if it can be done for 2020-21, why not every year then); ruthlessly applies his dictum of "*naa khaonga, naa khane doonga* (neither will I take bribe nor will I let anyone else take it)"; and does away with bureaucratic red tape by removing all controls, including on urea import. The subsidy may be computed on a per hectare basis and given annually as mooted by the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP). In its Rabi report for the 2021-22 marketing year, it has proposed a subsidy of ₹5,000 per year to be given in two tranches of ₹2,500 each in the Kharif and Rabi seasons. This should be given only to the small and marginal farmers, i.e. those with land holdings of less than two hectares. Further, a cultivator must not be denied subsidy merely because s/he does not own the land tilled by her/him.

The Government should garner data on all 140 million farm households and put it on a web portal. This is an absolute must to ensure that no one is left out. At present, there is a void as even under PM Kisan, just about 80 million farmers are receiving the eligible amount of ₹6,000. Under a business as usual scenario, leaving out 60 million from subsidy payments could be catastrophic.

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

BJP yet to consolidate Hindu votes down South

Success has been eluding the saffron party so far as its penetration has been restricted to Karnataka. It has failed in TN, Puducherry and Kerala



KALYANI SHANKAR

After the big win in the Bihar Assembly elections this month, the BJP is now focussing on the South, where Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry are going to the polls early next year. Elections are scheduled for West Bengal and Assam, too. Will the BJP achieve its goal of gaining a foothold in the South? Success has been eluding the saffron party so far, as its penetration has been restricted to Karnataka. It has failed in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala because of historic, religious, social and ideological reasons.

In Tamil Nadu, the BJP firmed up its poll alliance with the ruling AIADMK during the weekend. Eyebrows were raised at this early pact when the State's Deputy Chief

Minister and party coordinator O Panneerselvam announced it at a function attended by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Though the late AIADMK chief J Jayalalithaa had a good equation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she did not go for a tie-up with the BJP in the 2016 polls. After her demise, in 2019, the UPA made it in 37 of the 40 seats won. The BJP went with the AIADMK.

The BJP now wants to make a mark in the South, riding piggyback on the AIADMK. The Congress is in alliance with the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) while smaller parties like actor Vijayakanth's Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK), S Ramadoss' Paattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Thirumavalavan's Viduthala Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) and others choose the DMK or AIADMK coalition according to the situation.

The BJP has strengthened its Tamil Nadu unit by appointing Murugan, a lawyer, as its chief and has also activated its workers. There has been a recruitment spree in the State since 2014. It has brought to its fold celebrities, bureaucrats and politicians from other parties. Recently, the

actor-turned-politician and Congress spokesperson Khushbu's joining of the party was a significant event. So the big question is why was the BJP unable to make inroads in Tamil Nadu till now?

First of all, the saffron party had no tall leaders to match the iconic Dravidian leaders like M Karunanidhi, J Jayalalithaa and MG Ramachandran. It is likely to be Modi versus DMK chief MK Stalin now. Second, the BJP is perceived to be a North Indian Brahminical party and the word Brahmin is anathema to Dravidian parties. Third, Tamil Nadu saw a huge anti-Hindi agitation in the 60s. The Dravidian parties are against any imposition of Hindi and the Modi Government is in favour of it. Fourth, influenced by the anti-Brahmin movement of the 50s and the 60s, many caste-based parties like the Vanniyars (dominant in north-west parts of Tamil Nadu, Thevars (dominant in southern part of the State in the Madurai belt) and Gounders (in the Kongu belt in the west), have sprung up in the last three decades, resulting in the splintering of votes. Fifth, the BJP's stand on conversions to Christianity and its hostility to Islam

and other religions has no takers in the South. The BJP's polarising tactics won't work in the South. Sixth, new parties have sprung up with two untested superstars — Kamal Haasan and Rajinikanth — on the horizon.

The DMK has been making poll preparations for some months now and MK Stalin has already announced an alliance with the Congress. In the 2019 Lok Sabha, the Congress-DMK combination swept the polls. The State has been alternating between the DMK and the AIADMK and now it is the turn of the DMK. It was only in 2016 that the AIADMK got a second term.

The neighbouring Puducherry often reflects Tamil Nadu's politics. In any case, it is a small Union Territory and has just one seat in the Lok Sabha. Currently, the Congress is ruling in the State.

Kerala is a different story. The Left-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) alternate in power. It is the UDF's turn now. The BJP has not been able to penetrate much in the State despite the ground-work done by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Further, the Kerala electorate consists of a sizeable number of Christians and Muslims and they remain non-BJP voters.

In 2019, the LDF posted a landslide victory, winning 19 of the 20 seats while the UDF won just one seat and the BJP got zero seats. The RSS tried to mobilise support on the contentious Sabarimala issue but the counter-mobilisation presented an effective alternative control.

With more literate voters, Kerala alternates between the Communists or anti-Communists. The BJP is seeing slow growth in the State because of it. While the minority communities in the State have successfully ensured the protection of their respective cultures, the Hindu community has relentlessly ceded its own cultural space. The BJP is taking advantage of it, but it is taking time to translate into votes.

Also, the BJP is facing factionalism in Kerala. The RSS has cautioned the central leadership that the friction in the State unit could impact the performance in the polls.


Kerala won kudos in containing the COVID-19 pandemic. A few months ago it looked as if the LDF

could return to power but that came to a screeching halt in July after the Chief Minister's Office was found to be allegedly involved in a gold smuggling scam. Several protests broke out across Kerala after the smuggling of 30 kg gold worth ₹14.82 crore through diplomatic channels came to light on July 5. The case is currently being probed by the ED, the National Investigation Agency and the Customs Department. Another nail in the coffin was the recent promulgation of The Kerala Police (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020. Vide this Ordinance, a new Section 118A was introduced in the Kerala Police Act, 2011. This was widely viewed as a brazen assault on freedom of speech.


Though the Chief Minister insisted that "no action would be taken against the media or critics who stay within the limits of the Constitution" and in the end decided not to implement the amended Act, the damage has been done to the Government's reputation and credibility in a fiercely independent State.

Now, it remains to be seen whether the BJP can consolidate its Hindu votes in the South.

(The writer is a senior journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



THE TIME TO THINK IS NOW

Plans for mass immunisation against COVID-19 are developing fast. The last year has exacerbated anti-vaccination emotions, and they will not disappear when lockdowns end. Restoring confidence in immunisation may require the much more fundamental rethink that many hoped this pandemic might produce: A reappraisal of who and what is valued, and how we should be living and relating to each other.

(The Guardian editorial)

Momentum of economic reforms will continue: FM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday assured the industry that momentum of economic reforms will continue to make India a hotspot of global investment.

India has turned the crisis created by pandemic into an opportunity to push the economic reforms, which remained pending for decades, she said while addressing the National MNC's Conference 2020 organised by the industry chamber CII.

"Even at the time (of) COVID pandemic, the Prime Minister has not lost an opportunity to take deep reforms, to undertake those kinds of reforms which have not seen



the light of the day over the decades.

"The momentum for reform shall continue. Several more active reform-related steps are being taken up," Nirmala

Sitharaman said.

The financial sector is being professionalised and the government will continue with disinvestment agenda, Sitharaman added.

Proposal to allow corporate houses to set up banks a 'bombshell'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The RBI working group's proposal to allow corporate houses to set up banks is a "bombshell" and at this juncture, it is more important to stick to the tried and tested limits on involvement of business houses in the banking sector, according to an article jointly written by former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan and ex-Deputy Governor Viral Acharya.

They also said that the proposal is "best left on the shelf".

"The history of... connected lending is invariably disastrous - how can the bank make good loans when it is owned by the borrower? Even an independent committed regulator, with all the information in the world, finds it difficult to be in every nook and corner of the financial system to stop poor lending," the article said.



Biological E and GVK BIO announce R&D partnership

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

GVK BIO, a leading global Contract Research and Development Organisation, and BE Pharmaceuticals Inc, a rapidly growing pharmaceutical company that develops, manufactures and markets complex and critical injectable products, announced a strate-

gic collaboration in drug product development.

As part of the partnership, GVK BIO will develop certain set of injectable products for BE Inc. Development work will include Pre-Formulation studies, Formulation Development, Analytical Method Development and Technology Transfer to a BE facility.

Pulse Plus Pharmacy becomes the first e-pharmacy start-up to turn profitable

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

India - Business Wire India Pulse Plus Pvt Ltd, part of the Pasumai Pharmacy Group based in Coimbatore has organically scaled its digital medicine delivery platform to 10,000+ fulfilled orders in a month, post-pandemic. Launched just in June 2019, their Android app enjoys the highest rating among other medicine delivery platforms and has been the fastest-growing bootstrapped start-up to achieve this feat. The company partners with over 17 shipment partners to deliver the medicines nationwide to over 16,000 pin codes & generates the digital orders through its web platform & app.



Pulse has been profitable with the digital venture at the gross/net levels from its initial days of operation due to the hybrid omnichannel approach employed by the company. Leveraging the existing retail footprint to process the digital orders has helped them opti-

Markets march higher on Corona vaccine progress

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks made a winning start to the week on Monday as positive results from another COVID-19 vaccine candidate bolstered investor confidence globally.

A recovering rupee and unabated foreign fund inflows added to the momentum, traders said.

After touching a record intra-day high of 44,271.15, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 194.90 points or 0.44 per cent higher at 44,077.15.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 67.40 points or 0.52 per cent to close at 12,926.45.

ONGC was the top performer on the Sensex chart, surging 6.84 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance Industries, HCL Tech and TCS.

Index heavyweight Reliance Industries climbed 2.72 per cent, accounting for most of the Sensex's gains, after the Competition Commission on Friday evening said it has approved the conglomerate's proposed acquisition of Future Group's retail assets.

On the other hand, HDFC, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, SBI and M&M were among the main laggards, slumping up to 3.55 per cent.

Global equities were on the upswing after Oxford



Index heavyweight Reliance Industries climbed 2.72 per cent, accounting for most of the Sensex's gains, after the Competition Commission on Friday evening said it has approved the conglomerate's proposed acquisition of Future Group's retail assets

University and AstraZeneca announced that their COVID-19 vaccine candidate was found to be around 90 per cent effective in preventing the disease.

This is the third major vaccine trial to have reported encouraging results, after Moderna and Pfizer came out with positive Phase 3 data.

"While global cues remained favourable, a sharp rebound in IT, pharma, metals and Reliance Industries led domestic equities to register further gains. However, profit booking was witnessed in select heavyweight financials after recom-

mendation of IWG (Internal Working Group) of RBI did not favour them much, which led financials to end in red today.

"Additionally, as expected strong buying in mid-cap and small-cap stocks remained visible in the backdrop of improving earnings outlook scenario. Nifty is poised to cross psychological 13,000 mark shortly. We believe improved prospects of strong corporate earnings should continue to attract foreign participation in Indian equities, which bodes well for markets," said Binod Modi, Head at Reliance Securities.

Rupee settles 5 paise higher at 74.11 against \$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 5 paise to settle at 74.11 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday tracking positive domestic equities and weak American currency.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit traded in a narrow range as rising COVID-19 cases offset positive sentiments surrounding the progress on the vaccine front.

The rupee opened at 74.12 against the US dollar and touched a high of 74.04 and a low of 74.22 in day trade.

On Friday, the local unit had settled at 74.16 against the greenback.

"Rupee traded in a range after opening strong on back of weak dollar index. The tight range of 74.00-74.45 remains, on back of awaited stimulus deals from the US. Crude prices scaling high give some support to USD-INR as it keeps holding 74.00," said Jateen Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst (Commodity & Currency) at LKP Securities.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.23 per cent to 92.17.

MONEY MATTERS

Suzuki India expands BSVI product portfolio with V-Strom 650XT launch

Suzuki Motorcycle India on Monday expanded its BSVI product portfolio with the launch of V-Strom 650XT ABS (anti-lock braking system) with BSVI engine, priced at Rs 8.84 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). Displayed for the first time at the Auto Expo in Greater Noida earlier this year, the roll out of the V-Strom 650XT ABS has become the first BS6 compliant big bike from the company's portfolio, SMPL said in a release. "V-Strom has made its own following in India. The ultimate adventure tourer has proved its mettle in the highway touring capabilities while exploring different terrains. This is our first BS6 compliant big bike and we are confident that this cleaner and greener motorcycle will continue to win people's hearts with its performance and maneuverability as it hit the Indian roads," said Koichiro Hirao, MD, Suzuki.



CIL to set up 3 GW solar power projects of Rs 5,650 crore



State-owned Coal India on Monday said it plans to set up 14 rooftop and ground-mounted solar power projects of 3,000 MW capacity by 2023-24 which will entail an investment of Rs 5,650 crore. CIL is mandated by the coal ministry to become a net zero carbon company. Solar power initiative is a part of CIL's diversification plans, the PSU said in a filing to BSE. The likely investment would be around Rs 5,650 crore, it said. While Rs 3,650 crore is planned to be invested through CIL's capex, till 2023-24, the rest would be met through joint venture models that the company intends to pursue for this initiative. Synergising their efforts, CIL and NLC India Ltd have floated a joint venture entity 'Coal Lignite Urja Vikas Private Ltd' to develop 1,000 MW solar power projects. CIL has also tied up a JV with NTPC and an MoU with Solar Energy Corporation of India for solar projects of 1,000 MW each, the progress of which is being worked out individually.

WEF to host online Davos Agenda meet in January

The World Economic Forum will host a five-day online summit in January 2021, during which heads of state and government will deliver special addresses and engage in dialogue with business leaders at the start of a "crucial year to rebuild trust". Named 'Davos Agenda', the online meeting would take place around the same time -- from January 25-29 -- during which the WEF has been holding its Annual Meeting every year in the Swiss ski resort town. While the WEF's Davos 2020 summit was the last major global event that took place before almost the entire world got locked down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the next annual meeting has been shifted to May 2021 and is scheduled to be held in Lucerne-Burgenstock, Switzerland.



Reliance Industries, Future Group stocks rally on strong demand



Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) closed nearly 3 per cent higher on Monday after the Competition Commission approved the company's proposed acquisition of retail, wholesale, logistics and warehousing businesses of Future Group. Future Group stocks were also in heavy demand, rising up to 10 per cent. RIL shares rose 2.72 per cent to close at Rs 1,950.80 on the BSE. During the day, it gained 3.72 per cent to Rs 1,970. On the NSE, it jumped 2.93 per cent to close at Rs 1,955.20. The company's market valuation rose by Rs 34,892.12 crore to Rs 13,19,138.30 crore on the BSE. In terms of volume, 5.99 lakh shares were traded on the BSE, while over 2 crore shares were traded on the NSE during the day. Besides, Future Retail zoomed 9.95 per cent to Rs 79 -- its upper circuit limit, Future Lifestyle Fashions gained 9.99 per cent to Rs 90.30 and Future Enterprises Ltd shares rose 4.92 per cent to its highest trading permissible limit for the day at Rs 10.45 on the BSE.

S&P 'sceptical' of allowing corporate ownership in banks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Monday expressed scepticism over allowing corporate ownership in banks given India's weak corporate governance amid large corporate defaults over the past few years.

It also said that the RBI will face challenges in supervising non-financial sector entities at a time when the health of financial sector is weak.

Last week, a RBI panel had proposed that large corporates may be permitted to pro-



mote banks, as well as raising the cap on promoters' stake in private sector banks to 26 per cent, from 15 per cent at present. "We are, however, sceptical of allowing corporate ownership in banks given India's weak corporate governance amid large corporate

defaults over the past few years," S&P said. The RBI will face challenges in supervising nonfinancial sector entities and supervisory resources could be further strained at a time when the health of India's financial sector is weak, it added.

The RBI has recommended that corporates should be allowed to control banks after amendments to the Banking Act, 1949 to prevent connected lending between the banks and other financial and non-financial group entities.

India, Sweden to discuss ways to strengthen collaboration

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Sweden will on Friday discuss ways to deepen bilateral ties covering various sectors, including innovation, India Unlimited, the joint body of Embassy of India in Sweden and Sweden-India Business Council, said on Monday.

The discussion will be part of 'India Sweden Innovation Day 2020' themed at "The New Normal" -- an event that will be jointly organised by India Unlimited in association with Embassy of India in Sweden, Sweden India Business Council and Confederation of Indian

Industry (CII) on November 27, 2020.

The one-day virtual event will focus on the role of public-private partnerships in the new normal, re-engineering the India Sweden growth again, India Unlimited said in a statement.

"The event also aims to deepen the collaboration between the governments of Sweden and India in the field of innovation through a strategic innovation partnership and is based on a mutual commitment to drive prosperity and address global challenges such as sustainable development, health-tech etc," it said.

IT spending to grow 6% in 2021 to \$ 81.9 bn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT spending in India is projected to rise 6 per cent to USD 81.9 billion in 2021 compared to this year on the back of growth across segments like enterprise software and IT services, research firm Gartner said on Monday.

IT spending in 2020 is expected to total USD 79.3 billion, down 8.4 per cent from 2019.

"The COVID-19 pandemic stalled many digital transformation projects for Indian enterprises, mainly because of the market uncertainties and reduced cash flows," Gartner research vice president Arup Roy said.

He added that organizations that were digitally sound in a pre-pandemic world could contain the impact on their businesses.

"The pandemic situation was a wake-up call for many organizations to relook and revive their IT strategies and increase their spending on IT in 2021,"



he said.

In 2020, the devices and data centre systems segments experienced the steepest declines, and spending is estimated to have dropped 26 per cent and 1.2 per cent, respectively.

Spending on enterprise software, IT services and communication services is estimated to have continued to grow at 7 per cent, 3.7 per cent, and 4.9 per cent, respectively, in 2020 over the previous year.

In 2021, Gartner said IT spending growth will return as CIOs (Chief Information Officers) start positioning IT as not just a growth enabler, but a 'survival necessary' strategy.

While all segments will experience an increase in spending, the enterprise software segment will achieve the highest growth of 13.6 per cent, followed by data center systems at 8.3 per cent, it added.

"The 'Digital India' mission will turn a new leaf in 2021 as enterprises across all sectors start spending more on IT. The pandemic provided an opportunity for Indian CIOs to test long-pending projects such as remote working, which delivered on-promise for many enterprises and helped them stay afloat in the most testing times," Roy said.

The success of these digital innovations has brought back the focus on investments in IT, he added.

Roy said the pandemic situation forced organizations to switch to work-from-home.

"Those organisations that were heavily reliant on office based, desk-tied work had to switch to remote work set up -- enabled either through using desktops or laptops facilitated at home. Now, it also means that one has to also port your infrastructure and applications so that it facilitates web-based access and/or hosted applications that can be accessed using internet on

the web/application/mobile platforms," he added.

It is not just restricted to one's work specific applications but also transcends to collaboration platforms because the whole element of in-person interactivity now needs to be enabled on the virtual platform using digital collaboration solutions, he said.

"Of course, not to forget the security, governance and policy administration that needs to be tweaked to facilitate and safe and secure delivery from remote set up," Roy further added.

In 2021, the focus of IT spending will be in becoming a true digital business. CIOs in India will direct their IT spending budgets towards accelerating digitisation efforts. Spending is expected to increase on technologies including advanced analytical solutions, access management, encryption software, desktop as a service, cloud, and hyper automation enabling systems.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's edible oil imports are estimated to remain range-bound at 12.5-13.5 million tonne in 2020-21 oil year due to sluggish hotel consumption in the wake of COVID-19 and a possible rise in domestic production, according to trade body SEA.

The country's edible oil imports declined 13 per cent to 13.52 million tonne in the 2019-20 oil year (November-October), it said.

"We are pegging imports to remain range-bound between 12.5 to 13.5 million tonnes in 2020-21," Mumbai-based Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) President Atul Chaturvedi said in a statement.

Edible oil imports may be restricted because of hopes of higher domestic oilseed production and expectation of 1-1.5 million tonne higher edible oil output.

Poor demand due to lower out of home consumption in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic will have a bearing on imports this year.

"India is a price-sensitive market and high prices may affect consumption negatively," he said.

SEA mentioned that



oilseeds farmers, particularly mustard growers, are planting in more areas - responding positively to the high price signal. "We should not be surprised if Oilseed production goes up big time."

The cumulative effect of all these factors would ensure that Indian edible oil imports may remain restricted, it added.

In the 2019-20 oil year, SEA said, crude edible oil comprised 97 per cent of the total imports, as domestic refining capacity utilisation improves significantly.

As refined oils were kept under restricted import category, its shipments were restricted to only 4.21 lakh tonne in 2019-20 as compared to 27.31 lakh tonne in the previous year.

Sensex ends 195 pts higher; Nifty tops 12,900

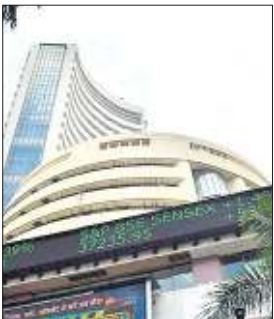
PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex jumped 195 points on Monday, tracking gains in index-heavyweights Reliance Industries, Infosys and TCS amid largely positive cues from global markets and sustained foreign fund inflows.

After touching a record intra-day high of 44,271.15, the 30-share BSE index ended 194.90 points or 0.44 per cent higher at 44,077.15.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty rose 67.40 points or 0.52 per cent to close at 12,926.45.

ONGC was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging around 7 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Reliance Industries, HCL Tech and TCS.



Serials today have sure moved on from just melodrama, which has only helped in the growth of its audience. Visual effects on the small screen have attracted a wider audience, thanks to the innumerable possibilities of things that can be shown in the reel world. Actors from the most watched fantasy shows on Hindi and Telugu television talk to *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about this transition, why people are loving this, and more

ARRIVAL OF VFX IN THE TELLY WORLD



THE TECHNIQUE OF USING VFXS ISN'T A CAKEWALK, FOR AN AUTHENTIC CREATION WHERE THE STRATUM OF AUDIENCES DON'T FIND IT ILLOGICAL, IT BECOMES AN ART IN ITSELF.

fin! "Fantasy serials with over-the-top VFX is the genre of moment. To create such moments it's equally liberating and difficult and to change the basic rules of nature, i.e. serpents exists, magic is real, fantasy characters can come to earth, etc. It shows how VFX is shaping a reality of its own! Now again, it's equally important that while reshaping, it should make sense to show consistency and above all so that the viewers can relate which I think the team behind Naagin is doing a fantastic job at. My character is very sim-

plistic in the soap opera yet it feels amazing to be a part of an unreal world on television. The reason Naagin is so popular is because it shows serpents in visible motion having a human greed for *nagmani*, ambition and family ties in a way that audience can empathise with," Aakash Talwar shares about his serial that airs on Colours everyday.

Does a change in the trend of genres in soap operas are indicative of a change in audience perspective? Do give a thought.



Aakash Talwar

Fantasy serials with over-the-top VFX is the genre of moment. To create such moments it's equally liberating and difficult and to change the basic rules of nature, i.e. serpents exists, magic is real, fantasy characters can come to earth, etc. It shows how VFX is shaping a reality of its own!

Who knew a time would come when A-listers will be seen offering prayers to Lord Shiva in an old temple and the amulet turns into a five-headed snake that reveals some astonishing facts about her lineage as the main plot-line of a daily soap! There are many such serials like *Nagabhairavi*, *Naagin*, *Yehh Jaadu Hai Ginn Ka*, *Pyaar Ki Ek Kahani*, *Sasural Simar Ka*, etc. The monopoly of both Hindi and Telugu television has taken a newshape altogether with a completely distinct concept and advancement of VFXs. Viewers are always longing for fresh content and are done with the same old stuff. This led to the trend of plotlines based on supernatural thrillers replacing the staunch traditionalist.

Serials have come a long way, today there is attractive content and a unique theme and it's purely for entertainment basis. The technique of using VFXs isn't a cakewalk, for an authentic creation where the stratum of audiences don't find it illogical, it becomes an art in itself. The most amateur viewers can also easily distin-

guish between what's real and what's not. For instance, the mythological show *Nagabhairavi* is using its VFX that's a notch higher only to outdo its competitors, be it from the same language or across diverse soap operas being telecasted in different languages. Pawan Sai from the same show shares with us how a fantasy serial comes with so many expectations — "The supposed role for a serial like *Nagabhairavi*, which is currently making all the noise in the Telugu television market, revolves around magic and prophecies. The kind of budget that has been invested in making this first class mystical serial is equal to the finances of a small screen movie. We aren't leaving philosophy behind, we are exploring that as well, but with the help of metaphors and VFX of course. Use of VFX is letting you escape the reality of the world and pushing you into the realms of innumerable possibilities in the reel world. I suggest for the logical strata of audiences to keep their brains aside for a while and relish this only for entertainment purposes. If this is successful in Telugu television today, it won't be difficult

anymore for script writers to sell such stories across as there are worries surrounding costs and selling the intricacy to a casual audience. To my television colleagues in the Telugu entertainment fraternity, we are no less than a cinematic experience and cheers to a new beginning in the telly world with advancements of VFX." Have you ever suspected that the stories told by television serials will run for the TRP race only because of immortal beings, an interesting facet that we are witnessing. With serials like *Naagin* having back to back seasons, it's quite evident today that watchers do find a pique interest in supernatural beings who are running the kingdom from a parallel, godly dimension. Basically, the concept of finite fictional series has just got mass approval with the success of Ekta Kapoor's fifth season of *Naagin* successfully running on air! Aakash Talwar, one of the characters who is a part of the beaming star cast of *Naagin 5*, highlights how there are plethora of stories and a lot of unrealistic fantasies to offer for them as talent attraction, that it lays down a rich ground for VFX artists to nail the cof-

A musical TREAT

Poppy. With Anna Kendrick regaling the audience in the English version of the film, Neeti blows us all away with three songs in the Hindi version of it: *Koi Geet Gao*, *Iss Pal Ko Jio* and *Trolls Toh Karenge Fun*. Excerpts:

What fascinated you to say yes to the film?

Singing for animated films, for characters which are trying to tell a story and spread positivity fascinates me the most, especially when it's musical character. That was the main reason why I said yes to the project.

How was your dubbing experience? Was it challenging to translate songs and dialogues to another language?

Of course, yes! It was definitely challenging. When you are trying to translate something from English to Hindi or any other language for that matter, you don't want to lose out on the poetry or the real essence of it. That's why we wanted to make sure that it sounds amazing and the meaning stays the same. We did our best to not lose the meaning of the lyrics in translation. Translation is more than just the words, it's about context, tone and aim. It's the process

The Hindi version of the film *Trolls World Tour* features singer Neeti Mohan lending her voice to the lead character. She shares that translation is more than just words, it's about maintaining their intent, style, tone and context. By PNS

of adapting a particular text from one language to another, while maintaining its intent, style, tone and context. A good translation will evoke the same emotions in the target language as it does in the source language. We have to make sure that our tone is suiting the character, the energy level is jumpy, so we have to match that as well. And if the character is in a romantic state, then we have to match that kind of vibe too. These are some of the challenges we usually face. However, I feel the challenges were fun because I love to deliver the vocals as per the visual requirements.

You sang three songs for the film, each quite dif-

ferent from each other. How did you strike a balance between them and the genres?

Yes, I sang three different songs, one of which was the title track, all the them quite different from each other. But I have always loved singing in various genres. This wasn't the first time that I did it. I have done it before, so it comes naturally to me. I believe that if you feel the lyrics and the melody, you can easily mould in any genre.

You said that your character Poppy sends across the message that every girl is a queen and a 'go-getter.' Could you give us a deep insight into the character?

Yes, Poppy sends across the message that every girl is a queen. Poppy is a free-spirited soul who is a 'go-getter'. The character inspires its audience to a great extent, which is why getting the chance to be 'Poppy Mohan' was one of the best things of all time if you ask me. With music being such an integral part of the narrative, a film like this ranks among my most-favorite. I feel that poppy is someone who wants to change the world and is very positive about it. She is an icon of music. She wants to tell every child and every girl that you can make it happen. She conveys a message that you are not alone. I feel like I am myself so much similar to Poppy.

How do you think music tours will see a change now that the pandemic and social distancing norms are here to stay...

Yes, pandemic has changed the face of live concerts, weddings and parties or any gather-



'Torbaaz holds a special place in my heart'

By the looks of it, Rahul Dev will be essaying the character of a Talibani leader, the main antagonist in the upcoming movie *Torbaaz* opposite Sanjay Dutt! Rahul shares a special bond with friend Sanjay Dutt as they go back to the time of late Mukul Anand's *Dus*, which was supposed to be Rahul's debut film. Rahul is known to have played some menacing and memorable characters on screen. Fans are definitely looking forward to watching him in yet another classic. "Working with baba is always special. Can't believe we met on set two decades ago. I wish him the very best of health and happiness always, he's a real fighter. The film has some great visuals! My director Girish Mullick has done really well and was well supported by our producer Rahul Mitta from Waves. The film holds a special place in my heart for many reasons which I will be revealing later on. It was a memorable experience on the sets of *Torbaaz* and I am sure the audience will love this labor of love from us," tells Rahul. Now we do know what magic can be created with these two power houses on screen, don't we! Hence I, can't wait to watch it on OTT!

RAHUL DEV SAYS, WORKING WITH BABA IS ALWAYS SPECIAL. CAN'T BELIEVE WE MET ON SET TWO DECADES AGO. I WISH HIM THE VERY BEST OF HEALTH AND HAPPINESS ALWAYS, HE'S A REAL FIGHTER.

Mrunal Thakur:

Few filmmakers envision women characters with equal footing

Actress Mrunal Thakur feels that very few filmmakers give equal footing to women characters in their movies. According to her, Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra is one of those filmmakers who treats female characters in their films well. "There are very few filmmakers who envision a story that gives its women characters an equal footing. In the best of Rakeysh's works, one can see how beautifully he layers his women. Be it Soni Ali Khatri's Sonia in *Rang De Basanti* or the female characters in *Delhi 6* or *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, his women are memorable," said Mrunal. She will be seen in Mehra's next film *Toofan* alongside Farhan Akhtar. "In *Toofan* my character is an anchor to the narrative despite not being the driving force of the plot. It was a beautiful experience working with Farhan and Rakeysh. They subconsciously help you push yourself to explore things you haven't tried. The little nuances they bring to their work teaches you so much," she said. "I have learnt so much from *Toofan*, most importantly (the fact) that women in new-age narratives aren't ornamental. They have a solid ground to stand on and the male actors like Farhan facilitate that," said Mrunal. About Mehra, she felt he is a filmmaker who tells "stories of interest and his characters are well fleshed out and nuanced, who stay in your heart even after the film is long over."



Anushka to complete back-to-back shoots in next two weeks

Actor Anushka Sharma, now pregnant with her first child, remains active as ever. The actor shot for an ad film in Mumbai. The first pictures show her glowing in a cream midi dress. She shared a picture of herself from the shoot and simply wrote 'hey'. In the picture, the actor is seated on a comfortable sofa. Another picture of hers walking has also found its way to the internet, her baby bump clearly visible. Earlier, she had shared a picture of herself, getting her makeup done. Also on Sunday, pictures of her getting out of her vanity van in a teal dress but with a face mask firmly in place was all over the internet. The recent pictures showed her looking radiant with post pregnancy glow. If anything, she looked really fit. Anushka will complete back-to-back shoots in the next two weeks before going in for the break for her delivery, scheduled for January next year. Subsequently, she will get back to work by May 2021.

Rajkummar Rao's success makes Hansal Mehta feel like a 'happy parent'

National Award-winning filmmaker Hansal Mehta is all praise for actor Rajkummar Rao, with whom he has often collaborated. Mehta says the success of the actor makes him feel like a happy parent. Rajkummar made his acting debut in 2010 *Love Sex Aur Dhokha*. But it was through Mehta's film *Shahid* in 2013 that he gained recognition. The actor again collaborated with the filmmaker with projects such as *City Lights*, *Aligarh*, *Bose: Dead/Alive*, *Omerta* and the recent digitally released film *Chhalaang*. Talking about Rajkummar's evolution as an actor, Mehta told *IANS*: "The beauty is Rajkummar has never lost his humility and generosity that he always had as an actor. He has remained that same person. What has changed is that Rajkummar has become really popular." The quinquagenarian reminisced about how he and the actor would walk freely on the street and shoot "guerrilla style" on the roads in the past. "Now that is not possible. I think the success has brought with it some limitations. But his success makes me happy. I feel like a happy parent," Mehta added.



Sanjana Sanghi is Aditya Roy Kapur's leading lady



Sanjana Sanghi has been finalised as the leading lady opposite Aditya Roy Kapur in *Om The Battle Within*. Sanjana had made her debut opposite Sushant Singh Rajput in *Dil Bechara*, which turned out to be the actor's last film after his death on June 14. Directed by Kapil Verma, *Om The Battle Within* is produced by Zee Studios, Ahmed Khan and Shaira Khan. The film will be shot in India and abroad, with shooting expected to end by March next year. Ahmed Khan says, "In her debut film, Sanjana handled her role with great maturity and in OM, the character what she plays is of a young girl who handles great responsibilities and she is perfectly suited for it." Talking about her new film, Sanjana said, "Getting to delve into the action genre so early on, is something I view as an absolute honour and have immense gratitude for to my producers, Ahmed Khan, Zee Studios and my director Kapil for the potential they have seen in me being able to pull off such a unique part in our film. After exploring many scripts and possibilities for a while, Om felt just right since it was the spectrum jump I was looking for in terms of throwing myself into an entirely uncharted territory of a big commercial actioner being executed in a never-seen-before way that is going to present me with new and exciting challenges." She added, "My character Kavya is a girl I know each of us young girls in India aspire to be. She is confident, extremely hard working and sharp, empathetic, brave and a crucial tenet of our film. She's nothing like we've ever seen before on celluloid. I'm so excited to bring her to life, and I know I'm going to learn so much from her I'm doing tons of action in the film, and various kinds of training and prep for the same is ongoing. It's testing and pushing me both physically and mentally, but is so thrilling! Getting to work with Adi is the best part of it all, he's working so hard for the film and is going to shine."

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

ACROSS

- Altering
- To cook something in an oven
- Last
- Failed to remember
- Injured by a bullet
- Stink
- An award for a successful university student
- One of the planets
- Lift up
- Tree limbs

DOWN

- Sit on this
- The writer of a book
- Birthday present
- Follows eighth
- Favoured, liked better
- Squashed
- Look very carefully for something
- Mistake
- Straps controlling a horse
- Part of the face

SOLUTION

S	I	M	P	L	E	S	T	J
P	U	N	H	A				
A	R	M	Y	D	R	E	A	M
C	M	P	S	A	E			
E	G	Y	P	T	S	T	A	M
S	H	U	C	H	M	E	T	R
I	M	S	O	M	E			
P	R	O	F	I	L	I	M	B
A	T	I	A					
W	C	I	R	C	L	A	R	

At 34, my days are numbered: Warner

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia's big-hitting opener David Warner on Monday said his "days are numbered" in international cricket and continuing an approach of keeping his aggression in check, he would rather ignore than engage if Indian players attempt to sledge him during the upcoming series.

Warner, in a virtual press conference on Monday, touched upon his evolution as a batsman in the past couple of years.

"I've just recently turned 34, so my days are numbered, when you're in the 30s. There's obviously a risk element but there's obviously a cricket smarts element to it as well," the explosive opener said ahead of the limited-overs series against India starting with the first ODI on November 27.

Warner, who has had his share of aggressive on-field showdowns, said he would prefer to look the other way if Indians try to get chatty with him.

"I'll always draw from that mate. To try and get engaged, that's the way they like to play as well," he said.

"We're learning over time, trying not to engage in that. Probably try and reversing the



effect by trying and ignoring it, trying to take it on board and using it against them by using your bat," he added.

"It's probably something I've learnt over time. And you don't know the effect it can have on your teammates as well. You've got to be a bit more humble in that respect."

Warner said at 34, he has become a calculated risk-taker and is focussed on maintaining a strong strike rate.

"For myself, it's about getting off to a good start and taking calculated risks in that middle-overs period if we're talking about 50-over games," he said.

"For me, it's about making sure that I am batting as much as I can and at a good strike-rate as well. I think last year was probably the most disciplined I've batted in Test match cricket as well.

"I really took pride in the last 12-24 months, to apply that discipline and you keep learning as you get older...You've got to be on top of your game to be able to adapt to that.

Talking about the Indian team, which will not feature in-form opener Rohit Sharma at least in the ODIs and T20Is, Warner said it would be a big hole to fill but Virat Kohli's men do have the wherewithal to manage.

"...Obviously he is a big piece of their team, that they are going to be missing, but they have got great in-form guys KL Rahul, Shikhar Dhawan and Mayank (Agarwal), these guys

'Don't think Burns did anything wrong last summer'

IANIS ■ MELBOURNE

David Warner on Monday stated that Joe Burns hasn't done "anything wrong last summer" but the left-handed batsman insisted he'll embrace uncapped prodigy Will Pucovski if selected for the much-anticipated first Test against India to be played at the Adelaide Oval from December 17.

Burns — who is Warner's incumbent partner — and Pucovski have been named in the 17-member squad for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Pucovski, who is among

the five uncapped players, has made a strong case for selection in the playing XI with back-to-back double centuries for Victoria in the Sheffield Shield. Right-handed Queensland batsman Burns, however, has had a highest of just 29 in his five innings this season.

"If they go the way of Will, he has batting fantastic and been in and out of the Test squad. He is in the right frame of mind at the moment. It probably is an opportunity for him to come into the team. But as we know it's harder to get out of this team than get in," Warner was

quoted as saying by *cricket.com.au*.

"At the moment I didn't think Joe did anything wrong last summer. We had some great partnerships and averaged over 60. And that's what you want from your opening partnership. And at the end of the day I have to be happy with it and embrace (whoever they pick)," he added.

Warner and Burns have combined six century opening stands and average more than 50 for the first wicket till now — a record bettered only by Warner's combination with Chris Rogers.

"Yeah definitely. What do you want to see? 100 of 10 overs or something? In the one-day stuff, I'll still come out and play the way I normally do. There's probably going to be no change to that," he said.

"Here in Australia, it's a bit different, in 50-over cricket, you can still play the normal way you do and I think I showed that last year, the way I played against Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

"I played pretty much the same way as I did during the backend of that IPL. I won't be changing my game and will go out and tackle it the way I always do," added Warner, who has 5,303 ODI runs.

Virat bhai said that tough situation will make me stronger: Siraj

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Away from family while grieving the recent loss of his father, Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj says skipper Virat Kohli's advice to "be strong" has helped him stay afloat as he gears up for a gruelling series against Australia.

Kohli is no stranger to overcoming personal tragedy while carrying on with professional duties. In 2007, Kohli, then a teenager, lost his father in the middle of a Ranji Trophy match but he came back next day to score 97 for Delhi, showing his mental fortitude.

Siraj's father Mohammed Ghouse, 53, died due to a lung ailment in Hyderabad last week and despite BCCI offering him the option to return home, the fast bowler decided to stay put on national duty.

"Virat bhai said 'Miyaan tension maat le (don't be tense) and be strong. Your dad wanted you to play for India. So, do that and don't stress,' the 26-year-old Siraj told *bcci.Tv*.

"The skipper told me, 'If you can be strong in this situation, it will only help you'. So those were positive words from the Indian captain and it felt nice."

Siraj's father drove auto rickshaw during his formative years as a cricketer and has been the single biggest influence on the Hyderabad man. "It's a huge loss for me as



he was the biggest support system of my life. He wanted me to shine for my country and my mindset now is to fulfil his dreams," he said.

Siraj thanked his teammates, who have rallied around him.

"I am indebted to my teammates as they stood by me in these tough times and every thing was well taken care of," he said.

Siraj said even his mother advised him not to abandon the assignment, which starts with the limited-overs leg from November 27.

"Mom said that 'everyone has to go one day. Today, it's your dad, tomorrow it will be me. Just do what your dad wished for you. Play well for India'."

"May be, he is not physically present but I can feel that he is always there with me," Siraj said.

Stoinis playing five times better than a year ago: Ponting

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Batting legend Ricky Ponting believes all-round Marcus Stoinis is playing "five times better" than what he was a year ago and could take up "multiple roles" for Australian cricket, including the job of a finisher.

Stoinis scored 352 runs and snapped 13 wickets to play a big role in Delhi Capitals, coached by Ponting, reaching the final of the recent IPL in the UAE. He is in Australia's ODI and T20I squads for the series against India starting on Friday.

Ponting said it was Alex Carey who had told him about Stoinis' incredible turnaround during the IPL.

"From the moment he turned up at the IPL, having come straight from England ... he was pretty keen to show me improvements that he'd made. And his first few net sessions, I could just tell then," Ponting told *cricket.Com.Au*.

"Having spent a fair bit of time with him over the past couple of years, what I saw from him at the IPL suggests to me that he's a five times better player than he was 12 months ago."

The 31-year-old Stoinis was dropped from Australia's T20 squad after a disappointing 50-over World Cup last year. But, he made a suc-

cessful comeback, riding on his incredible performance for the Melbourne Stars in the Big Bash League where he scored 705 runs in a single season and also smashed tournament's highest individual score of 147 not out.

Ponting said Stoinis has proven himself as a finisher but believes he should open the innings.

"I think the future for him either at Delhi or whoever he plays for in T20 cricket will be at the top of the order. I think he can do (the finishing role). I think he's proven that he can do multiple different roles now," said Ponting.

"And I think the more responsibility he gets in the white-ball team, the better he'll be as well. We'll see what happens over the next few weeks (against India), but if he gets a decent chance at it, I think he'll impress everyone."

"With the way he's thinking about the game, with a bit of experience and the consistent exposure he's had with the Aussie guys, I don't think it really matters where he plays."

Ponting also said Stoinis looks "a lot more positive and aggressive against spin bowling now" compared to the past.

Mitchell Marsh hopeful of comeback in warm-up game

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Recovering from an ankle injury, Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh says he is "hopeful" of playing next month's warm-up game against India 'A' as he eagerly waits for a clear picture to emerge this Friday.

The 29-year-old Marsh suffered an ankle injury in the opening match of the Indian Premier League in September and has been out of action since then.

He was included in the Australia 'A' squad which will play two three-day tour games against India 'A' on December 6-8 and December 11-13 respectively.

"I'm hopeful, I'll probably find out this week whether I'm

ruled in or out," Marsh was quoted as saying by *The West Australia*.

"I'll probably know on Friday, I've got a few things to tick off rehab-wise and then go from there."

Marsh said he won't be able to bowl and might play as a batsman.

"I started running last week and I've got a few kilos to shed before I start playing. It's been a pretty slow process but speaking to a few AFL players about it, it gets pretty good quickly at the end so hopefully that's the case in the next couple of weeks."

"At this stage it will just be batting, I wouldn't imagine I would be bowling until midway through the Big Bash at this point in time."

Surya should've made cut in Indian team: Lara

PTI ■ MUMBAI

West Indies great Brian Lara feels that a batsman of Suryakumar Yadav's calibre should have been in the Indian white-ball squad for the tour of Australia.

The Mumbai Indians batsman's non-inclusion, despite being seventh in the IPL run-getters' list with 480 runs at a strike-rate of 145 plus, has become a major talking point.

"I see no reason why, looking at the (Indian) squad, he can't be a part of it," Lara said on *Star Sports* show *Cricknet Connected*.

Lara said he is impressed not just by the runs but also the manner in which Yadav has scored them.

"Yeah, definitely. He is a class player. I don't just look at players that score runs, I look at their technique, capabilities under pressure, positions that they are batting and for me."

"Suryakumar Yadav has done such a wonderful job for Mumbai."

The only explanation that has come for the 30-year-old's exclusion is the lack of space in the line-up. Lara said he fits the bill for the No 3 slot.

"He comes to bat on the back of Rohit Sharma, and Quinton de Kock and every time, they are under pressure, he comes in at No 3," he said.

"Just remember, other than the openers, the No 3 batsman in any cricket team is normally your best player, your most reliable player and for me, he (Surya) has been that for Mumbai Indians," he stated.



To combat Covid-19 threat, SA cricketers training in two groups

JOHANNESBURG: Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada revealed on Monday that the South African cricket team are training in two groups to minimise the risk of further Covid-19 infections ahead of their series against England.

Two members of the South African squad have tested positive for Covid since the squad assembled last week and two other players had to go into isolation because of their close contact with one of the infected players.

"It's been quite bizarre," Rabada told an online press conference from the team hotel in Cape Town.

"We have to train in groups — a group of non-

contacts and a group of close contacts.

"It doesn't mean anyone is positive but we have to take that extra precaution."

Rabada did not reveal how many players were in each group but planned intra-squad matches on Saturday and Monday were cancelled, presumably to reduce the risk of infections.

He said more Covid tests would be conducted with the players "soon".

Despite the unusual training arrangements, Rabada said "training is going smoothly" ahead of the first T20I against England at Newlands on Friday.

"The team is doing well at sticking to strict rules."

Rabada is undergoing his second "bio-bubble" experience in a short period of time after starring for the Delhi Capitals, and becoming the leading wicket-taker, in the recent IPL.

Rabada said living in the bubble was tough but added a note of realism.

"It's like luxury prisons that you are in but at the end of the day you have to remind yourself that you are fortunate," he said.

"People have lost their jobs and people are struggling."

"I try to remind myself that we must be grateful for the opportunity to earn some money and do what we love."

Haven't set any personal goals: Gill

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Flamboyant youngster Shubman Gill is looking forward to the challenge of taking on mighty Australia but has not set any personal goals for the upcoming assignments where a good outing could help him cement his place in the Indian team.

Gill has so far played only two ODIs for India and is part of the limited overs as well as the Test squad for the Down Under tour.

"I am really looking forward to Australia because this is my first trip. As a kid growing up, I always watched the matches between India and Australia. I am really excited," Gill said in a video posted by his IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders on Twitter.

The 21-year-old batsman headed to Australia after an



impressive outing in the Indian Premier League season with KKR where he accumulated 440 runs in 14 matches.

"The fact that a lot of my friends are travelling with the team, so it will be fun and exciting. But, obviously, when the practice session starts then it's a whole different situation."

"I have not really set any personal goals, but I am really looking forward to the tour," he added.

AFF ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool were not derailed by an injury crisis as Jurgen Klopp's men produced a dominant display to beat Leicester 3-0 and move level on points with Premier League leaders Tottenham.

Klopp was missing seven first-team regulars through injury and top scorer Mohamed Salah due to a positive coronavirus test, but Liverpool still swept aside a Leicester team who had started the weekend on top of the table.

Jonny Evans's own goal was just reward for the Reds' bright start before Diogo Jota set a record-breaking start to life at Anfield.

The Portuguese international became the first Liverpool player to score in his first four home league games when he headed home Andy Robertson's inch-perfect cross.

Kasper Schmeichel in the Leicester goal kept the score down as he made a series of second-half saves, notably from Sadio Mane and Jota, while Evans had a lucky

Mark of champions Under-strength Liverpool still too strong for Foxes



escape as the post prevented him from scoring a second own goal.

Roberto Firmino thought he had been denied just his third league goal in 24 games when the Brazilian's shot came back off the post and his follow-up was cleared by Marc Albrighton with just 10 minutes of the ball not over the line.

But Firmino rounded off a brilliant team performance by rising highest to meet James Milner's corner.

Another muscle injury suffered by Naby Keita was the only negative for Klopp on a night when his side showed they will not give up their title easily despite losing centre-backs Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez for the rest of the season.

Inspirational Ibra Zlatan scores twice in Milan's 3-1 win

AFF ■ NAPLES

Zlatan Ibrahimovic scored twice to bring his tally to 10 league goals this season before limping off with a muscular strain as AC Milan stayed top in Serie A on Sunday with a 3-1 win at ten-man Napoli.

Milan move back two points ahead of Sassuolo — 2-0 winners earlier at Hellas Verona — with Roma third after Henrikh Mkhitaryan scored twice in a dominant 3-0 win over Parma.

Ibrahimovic continued his fine form, heading in a Theo Hernandez cross after 20 minutes, sending in the second with his knee nine minutes after the break.

But the 39-year-old pulled up clutching his left hamstring and was substituted after 79

minutes.

The Swede has scored in all six games he has played this season, having missed two after contracting coronavirus.

Coach Stefano Pioli missed the trip south with Covid-19, but his side got their first league win in Naples since October 2010, the season they last won the Scudetto, with Ibrahimovic also on the score-sheet that time.

Napoli played the final half an hour a man down after Tiemoure Bakayoko was sent off for two yellow cards, just after Dries Mertens had pulled a goal back for the hosts.

Norwegian Jens Petter Hauge completed the scoring five minutes into injury time with the 21-year-old getting his first Serie A goal.



Medvedev tops Thiem for ATP Finals title

AFF ■ LONDON

Daniil Medvedev came from behind to beat US Open champion Dominic Thiem in a gripping encounter and win the biggest title of his career at the ATP Finals in London on Sunday.

The Russian fourth seed was second best for large periods at the empty O2 Arena but found a way back into the contest and prevailed 4-6, 7-6 (2), 6-4.

Medvedev, who beat five-time champion Novak Djokovic and world number two Rafael Nadal earlier in the week, is the first man to beat all three of the world's top-ranked players at the season finale.

The giant Russian, 24, has now won 10 consecutive matches following his title earlier this month at the Paris Masters and his victory will taste sweet a year after a win-



less debut in London.

But it is a painful defeat for Thiem, who also lost in the final of the elite eight-man event last year, to Stefanos Tsitsipas.

"What a match," said Medvedev. "One of my best victories, two hours and 42 min-

utes, three sets against an amazing player."

"Dominic, congratulations already for what you achieved in your career. Your name is already in the history of tennis books."

"It is amazing. You won a Grand Slam this year. You are playing unbelievable. I hope we are going to have many more matches to come on the big occasions like this."

"Of course, I am disappointed, but at the same time I am also proud of the performance of all the week," said Thiem. "Daniil really deserved it. It was an amazing match."

Medvedev is the first Russian to win the ATP Finals since 2009, when Nikolay Davydenko triumphed at the first edition of the season finale held in London. Next year, the tournament moves to Turin in Italy.



Now, lyricist Shreemani ties the knot

Noted Telugu lyricist Shreemani is the latest member from the Telugu Film Industry to enter the wedlock. The lyricist tied the knot with his longtime girlfriend Fara and announced the same on his social media on Monday. It was raining weddings in Tollywood during the lockdown with popular figures like Rana Daggubati, Nikhil Siddharth and Nithiin tying the knot with their girl friends. In the month of October, Kajal Aggarwal also got married to her boyfriend Gautam Kitchlu. Shreemani has waited

for a decade to get the acceptance of his love from the parents. Shreemani took to his microblogging page to thank the god and said, "We were waiting for this moment for the past ten years. Finally dream came true Thank to the God and our parents For understanding our hearts." Shreemani is popular for penning the lyrics for super hit audio albums including *Geetha Govindam* — *Vachindamma Vachindamma*, *F2: Fun and Frustration* — *Entho Fun*, *Attarintiki Daaredi*, *Entho Fun*, *Julayi-Chakkani Bike Undhi*, etc.

SREE VISHNU TURNS TRUCK DRIVER FOR GAALI SAMPATH

The filming of Sree Vishnu and Rajendra Prasad-starrer *Gaali Sampath* has kicked off in Araku mid last week. To be shot in Araku till the end of next month, the film will see the *Mental Madhilo* actor in the role of a truck driver. While the recently released motion poster dropped enough hints about the role, a little digging told us that film's writer and joint producer S Krishna designed an interesting characterisation for Vishnu — something which he hasn't attempted so far. "His part will be seen as a well-educated man but sure of not landing a good job, he starts a driving school, while simultaneously driving a truck. His father (role played by Rajendra Prasad) will be seen as a deaf and mute guy. It is their story that makes the film," reveals a source close to the production house.

Speaking at the *muhrat* recently, Anil Ravipudi said that his friend Sai has come up with an extraordinary story, prompting him to write its screenplay and extend his creative services as well. "It will make people laugh and

at the same time take them on an emotional journey. Rajendra Prasad has essayed many memorable roles in his storied career and this will be another feather in his cap. Vishnu too has an extraordinary role. The beautiful journey between him and his father dots the story," said Ravipudi, who is presenting the film. An Achu Rajamani musical, *Gaali Sampath*, directed by Annish Krishna, marks the Telugu debut of Mathura girl Lovely Singh. She is making her Tamil debut with Vishal-starrer *Thupparivaalan* 2.

The actor, who will be seen as a thief in Raja Raja Chora, has now turned a truck driver for *Gaali Sampath*. The role, however, will not define the film. Rather, it's his bond with father, finds

NAGARAJ GOUD



Manchu Vishnu's Dhee sequel titled D&D



Actor Vishnu Manchu will next be seen in *Dhee* sequel and this news have been doing the rounds for sometime. The latest we hear is that the film got its title. Manchu Vishnu and Sreenu Vaitla's combination is back after 13 years and we can't wait to see them weave magic on screen. The sequel of the film has been titled *D & D*, with the tagline *Double Dose*. The title *D & D* was announced officially today on the occasion of Vishnu's birthday.

The title's design had hand-cuffs, which is being much talked about on social media. The tagline *Double Dose* does show that the makers assure double the dose of action and comedy than the first film in *Dhee* franchise. Actor Vishnu Manchu himself will be producing the film on 24 Frames Factory, while Avaram Bhakta Manchu presents it. Sreenu Vaitla's favorite writer Gopi Mohan who was part of the director's several blockbusters including *Dhee* is working as script writer along with another popular writer Kishore Gopu. Mahati Swara Sagar scores music while Mohana Krishna handles the cinematography. India's number one action choreographer Peter Hein is being roped in, as the film will be high on action, just like the first. MR Varma is the editor and Chinna will supervise the art department.

Details of the actress who will be paired opposite Manchu Vishnu and others are to be revealed soon.



Unreal Engine comes to Telugu cinema

The audience has always welcomed and encouraged new genres, actors and ideas. Capitalising on this, K R Media Entertainments and Vedic Entertainments' Madhuri Rao and Santosh Gubba are jointly prouding their Production No 1, with actor Karthik Rachapudi as the lead, and Kigor as the director. For the first time in Telugu cinema, a new technology called Unreal Engine is to be used in the film. The film will have music by Acchu Rajamani too. Full details of the film, which will start shooting soon, is to be announced by the team shortly!

Chay plays the lungi look

Actor Naga Chaitanya celebrated his birthday yesterday. On his birthday, wife Samantha Akkineni took to Twitter to share a new poster from his upcoming film *Love Story*. Sharing the new poster of *Love Story*, Samantha wrote, "Always living life on your own terms Naga Chaitanya. Wishing you only happiness always and forever." In the poster, Naga Chaitanya is seen walking wearing a lungi and a baniyan.

Directed by Sekhar Kammula, the film marks the maiden collaboration of Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi. However, Sekhar Kammula and Sai Pallavi join the hands for the second time after *Fidaa*. Rajiv Kanakala, Eeswari Rao, Devayana will be seen in key roles in the film.

Extending his birthday wishes to Chaitanya, Sekhar Kammula tweeted, "Some associations are meant to be cherished Thank you .. Happy Birthday Chaitanya ... (sic)." Earlier during the media interaction, Sekhar Kammula had said, "Naga Chaitanya has been trying to master Telangana dialect for his part. He completely surrendered himself with great interest to pull off his part. Sai Pallavi could spring a surprise for the movie lovers. I believe the lead pair — Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi' performances will stand out."

Meanwhile, Naga Chaitanya is teaming up with filmmaker Vikram Kumar for a Telugu project titled *Thank You*. The project was officially announced in the month of August on the occasion of Nagarjuna's birthday.

