



# the pioneer

VIJAYAWADA, SATURDAY OCTOBER 24, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

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TO PLAY  
A COP. AGAIN!

Page 12

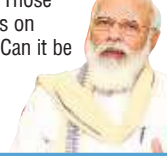
## RAILWAYS RECEIVES 2.4 CR APPLICATIONS FOR 1.4L POSTS

The Railways said that around 2.4 crore candidates have applied for 1.4 lakh vacancies in Indian Railways for various categories of staff to be hired by the Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs). A statement issued by the Ministry of Railways said, "It may be noted that RRBs had issued three centralised employment notifications for NTPC categories, isolated and ministerial categories and Level-1 categories for a total of about 1.4 lakh vacancies for various categories of staff." "Against these employment notifications, more than 2.4 crore candidates have applied," it said, adding that the national transporter has made requisite preparations for smooth conduct of computer based tests (CBTs) which is scheduled from December 15 onwards.



## WANT JUNGLE RAJ OR SUSHASAN? MODI ASKS AUDIENCE AT BHAGALPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday asked the voters in Bihar whether they wanted 'jungle raj' (lawlessness) or 'sushasan' (good governance) in the state. Addressing his third and final rally of the day at Bhagalpur in Bihar, he continued his attack on the opposition Rashtriya Janata Dal. "Bihar deserves investment. Who will ensure this? Those who turned Bihar into 'jungle raj' or those who are delivering good governance in Bihar and are dedicated to the state's development? Bihar deserves better law and order. Who will ensure that? Those who patronised goons or those who showered batons on them? Bihar also deserves better education system. Can it be ensured by those who are not even aware of value of education or by those who are working 24/7 to bring IITs and AIIMS to the state?"



## CIVIL PRELIMS RESULTS DECLARED

Result of Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2020 held on October 4 has been announced. List of candidates who have qualified to apply for Civil Services (Main) Examination, 2020 has been uploaded on UPSC website. This time, over 10,000 candidates from across the country have qualified to appear for the Civil Mains examinations. Qualifying candidates will have to now fill the Detailed Application Form-I (DAF-I) for the Civil Services Main examination. The DAF will be available on the website of the Union Public Service Commission from October 28 to November 11, till 6 pm. The CSE Main will be held on January 8, 2021. The e-admit card along with the time table of the said exam will be uploaded on the commission's Website for the eligible candidates around 3-4 weeks before the commencement of the exam, as per the official notice.



## INDIA, CHINA GET RICHER AS VIRUS HITS US WEALTH: CREDIT SUISSE

The pandemic that's led to more than 1 million deaths globally has also led to a decline in individual wealth, yet household wealth largely held up and even increased in China and India. Only China and India saw gains in household wealth in the first half of the year, growing by 4.4% and 1.6%, respectively. Latin America suffered the most, with a 13% plunge, as currency devaluations aggravated losses in gross domestic product. According to the Credit Suisse Group AG's 2020 Global Wealth Report



# Centre limits onion stocks with traders to check prices

To stabilise prices, retailers allowed to stock only two tonnes till December-end

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To boost domestic supply and provide relief to consumers from rising onion prices, the Centre on Friday imposed stock limits on both retailers and wholesalers with immediate effect till December 31. Now, retailers can stock onion only up to 2 tonne, whereas wholesale traders are allowed to keep up to 25 tonne. This will check hoarding and black marketing, it said.

Onion prices have shot up sharply to over Rs 75 per kg in the past few weeks in the wake of damage to the standing kharif crop in producing areas due to heavy rainfall as well as hoarding.

Addressing media, Consumer Affairs Secretary Leena Nandan said, "This is a decisive step. We have imposed stock limits on onion traders with an immediate effect till December 31 after concerns that traders were releasing their stored stocks slowly, creating artificial price rise situation."

She said the government had to invoke the recently passed Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020, which provides regulation of



## AP Rythu Bazaars to sell onions at Rs 40 per kg

**VIJAYAWADA:** Asking district Collectors and SPs to ensure that onions are sold at Rs 40 per kg, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Friday directed officials to take stern action against anyone creating artificial scarcity of essential commodities in the name of floods and heavy rains. This was disclosed by Minister for Agriculture Kurasala Kanna Babu to media at the CM's camp office here on Friday. The Collectors and SPs were asked to ensure that all shops

display the price list prominently. As per the instructions of the Chief Minister, onions were purchased through Nafed and are being sold at the rythu bazaars at Rs 40 per kg. Kannababu said that the Chief Minister was regularly reviewing the flood situation and all steps were being taken to provide relief to the flood-affected people. Every affected family was being provided with food, medicines and essential commodities.

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agri-commodities "only" in the times of extraordinary price rise situation.

"Under this law, normally, we would not be regulating

agri-food stuff like cereals and onion. But, in times of extraordinary price rise, we can regulate if the retail price breaches the trigger levels specified in

the law," she said.

In case of onion, the average all-India retail price of onion of Rs 55.60 per kg that prevailed on October 21 breached the trigger level as per the formula specified under the EC Amendment Act, she said.

The all-India average retail price of Rs 55.60 per kg was higher by 22.12 per cent compared with last year's rates of Rs 45.33 per kg and by 114.96 per cent as against average rate that prevailed in past five years. So, the retail price had actually more than doubled and, therefore, decided to impose the stock limits on the commodity, she added.

Later, Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted that the Modi government has taken third step to curb hoarding and check prices. Stock limits have been imposed on retailers and wholesale traders of onion.

The government said action under the Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act, 1980, would be taken to prevent any hoarding, black marketing of onions by unscrupulous elements.

2

# SEC to meet parties, discuss conducting local body polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar will hold a meeting with all political parties on October 28 to discuss the local body elections.

The opinion of the parties will be sought regarding the conduct of the postponed elections. A circular has been issued regarding the meeting to be held at the State Election Commission office in Vijayawada.

The SEC would later discuss the issue with the government after consultation with political parties. It may be recalled that Ramesh Kumar had postponed the local body elections which were scheduled in the last week of March as the Coronavirus cases started spreading across the state.

## Covid won't allow polls in Nov, says Minister

**VIJAYAWADA:** Industries Minister Mekapati Gautham Reddy on Friday said that there was no way local body elections could be held in November in the wake of the Covid situation. The minister said that though it appears that there is some relief with fewer number of Covid cases being reported in the state during the past few days, the possibility



of a recurrence was very real. Gautam Reddy spoke to the media after attending a meeting of state level bankers in Tadepalli. He said that Covid cases could increase in November. "Elections in states like Bihar are mandatory while we have some flexibility for local body elections," said the minister.

The YS Jaganmohan Reddy government took this matter seriously and brought a special ordinance curtailing the tenure of the SEC and removed Ramesh Kumar from office. He appealed to the High Court, which ruled in his

favour, forcing the State government to approach the Supreme Court challenging the High Court judgment.

The Supreme Court too refused to stay the High Court orders and Ramesh Kumar was reinstated as SEC.

# Infection rate dips, Covid tally crosses 8 lakh mark

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh's Covid-19 tally crossed the eight lakh mark on Friday but the infection's declining trend was clearly evident as the last lakh cases came in a longer span of 23 days.

A record 80,238 samples were tested in 24 hours ending 9 am on Friday, turning out 3,765 fresh cases of the pandemic and taking the cumulative to 8,00,684.

Also, 4,281 patients got cured while 20 more succumbed, the latest bulletin said.

The state now has 31,721 active cases after 7,62,419

recoveries and 6,544 deaths, it said.

Andhra Pradesh is only the second state to log over eight lakh Covid-19 cases after Maharashtra which has recorded more than 16 lakh infections.

The total infection count of Andhra Pradesh crossed the seven-lakh mark on October 1, taking 14 days to rise from six lakh. It had breached five lakh cases on September 17 after reaching the first one lakh on July 27.

The state so far tested 74.28 lakh samples for the infection, at the rate of 1,39,101 per million, with an overall positivity rate of 10.78 per cent.



## TS jumps on 'free vaccine' bandwagon

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

Call it injection of politics into public healthcare, politicisation of pandemic, getting around the Model Code of Conduct, or, better yet, making aam aadmi a bakra; ruling parties in states, taking a cue from poll-bound Bihar, where the BJP-led dispensation has announced free Covid-19 vaccination to every person in the state, are jumping on the bandwagon of 'Free Covid vaccination'.

Within hours of Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement regarding free vaccine in Bihar, Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu (which has elections next year) and of BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh announced free Covid-19 vaccination. The state that is the latest to make an announcement in this regard is Telangana.

2

# Centre borrows Rs 6,000 cr, transfers GST compensation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has borrowed and transferred Rs 6,000 crore as the first tranche of GST compensation shortfall to 16 states and two union territories, the finance ministry said on Friday.

Last week, the Centre gave in to the demands of opposition-ruled states to borrow and fund the GST compensation shortfall.

"Today, the Central government borrowed and transferred Rs 6,000 crore as first tranche to 16 states namely Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Tripura,



Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and two union territories: UT of Delhi and UT of Jammu and Kashmir," Finance Ministry said in a statement.

It said that the Centre would borrow from the market to pay the GST compensation shortfall of Rs 1.1 lakh-crore to states, and then act as an inter-

mediary to arrange back-to-back loans to state governments.

The Ministry said the Government of India has evolved a special borrowing window to address the shortfall in the GST collection during the year 2020-21.

2

## Vijaya Dasami optional holiday on Monday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP State Government has announced that the optional holiday for Vijaya Dasami has been changed to October 26 (Monday).

Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney issued orders to this effect on Friday.

Earlier, the State government had issued orders declaring Vijaya Dasami would be celebrated on October 25 (Sunday). However, the Andhra Pradesh Secretariat Women Employees Welfare Association, Velagapudi requested the Government to change the holiday to October 26.

# Jagan: Banking on bankers to boost agri sector

Andhra Pradesh is well on course to disburse Rs 75,237 crore loan target for the 2020-21 Kharif season

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Pointing out that the agricultural sector is the backbone of the financial sector since nearly 62 per cent of the state depends on it, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Friday said that the state government duly recognises this fact and has taken several steps to strengthening it.

Addressing the 122nd State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC) meeting at his camp office, the Chief Minister said that the government has been successfully implementing PM Kisan-YSR Rythu Bharosa schemes by providing Rs



13,500 to farmers in three spells (Rs 7,500 in Kharif, Rs 4,000 in Rabi and Rs 2,000 during harvest time in January).

The Chief Minister stated the loan target for 2020-21 Kharif season was at Rs 75,237 crore, and so far Rs 62,650

crore has been disbursed, which is 83.27 per cent of the target. He asked bankers to check whether all the farmers who were enrolled on the e-cropping platform are receiving loans.

The Chief Minister said that

it was mandatory for the farmers to have an e-cropping certificate to avail of crop insurance and zero-interest loans in order to avoid being cheated.

Bankers were told to pay special attention in granting loans to farmers and check for

e-cropping certificates while issuing crop loans.

The Chief Minister said that the government introduced a market intervention fund and procured crops by paying a Minimum Support Price with Rs 3,200 crore. He said that this year, the market intervention fund is going to be about Rs 3500 crore. Besides this, over 10,600 RBKs have been established at the village level to deliver hassle-free services to the farmers by door delivering quality seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides within 48 hours of placing the order.

2

# First-of-its-kind flash flood warning system

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A first-of-its-kind system for South Asian countries that will provide alerts for flash floods 6-24 hours in advance was launched at the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here on Friday.

The World Meteorological Department (WMO) has entrusted India with the responsibility of the Regional Centre of South Asia Flash Flood Guidance System for coordination, development and its implementation.

India also shares cyclone warning alerts with neighbouring countries.

The system will enable the member countries -- India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan -- issue impact-based forecasting of floods which are very sudden and of short duration at watershed and also city level, IMD director general Mrutunjay Mohapatra said at the online launch.

Representatives of the member countries attended the event.

Flash floods are highly localised events of short duration with a very high peak and usually have less than six hours between the occurrence of the rainfall and peak flood.

2



World shares gain after last Trump-Biden debate

8



Ex cricketer Kapil Dev suffers heart attack

5



Paving the way for grassroots democracy

2

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

**Month & Paksham:**  
Ashwin & Shukla Paksha

**Panchangam**  
Tithi: Ashlami: 06:58 am  
Nakshatram: Shrawara: 02:38 am  
(Next Day)

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

**Rahukalam:** 09:07 am - 10:33 am

**Yamagandam:** 01:26 pm - 02:52 pm

**Varjyam:** NIL

**Gulika:** 06:15 am - 07:41 am

**Good Time:** (to start any important work)

**Amritakalam:** 03:43 pm - 05:24 pm

**Abhijit Muhurtham:** 11:37 am - 12:23 pm

**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER**

**Forecast:** Partly cloudy

**Temp:** 33/24

**Humidity:** 95%

**Sunrise:** 06:11 am

**Sunset:** 05:48 pm

**Current Weather Conditions**  
Updated October 23, 2020 5:00 PM



Conventionally, the political executive is expected to make policies and leave execution to bureaucracy.

This separation worked well as long as the primary role of the bureaucracy was to collect revenue, maintain order and administer justice. During the 1950s, community development programmes were initiated and a major role was given to locally elected representatives - samiti presidents. This experiment can be called India's first wave of grassroots democracy.

However, as community development lost its importance during the 1960s, the role and influence of the samitis dwindled and in the 1970s, bureaucracy started to directly implement burgeoning development programmes.

The increasing role of the bureaucracy in development programmes led to increasing tension with the elected representatives. The standoff was resolved by creating different types of structures at the district-level (e.g. planning

# Paving the way for grassroots democracy

**Ostrom recommends devolving control and monitoring to several citizen groups (also called 'communities of interest') having interest in the provision of a specialised type of government service**

in the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Similar trends were visible in other parts of the world, too. Around the time when urban and rural bodies were given a Constitutional position in India, the Republic of South Africa (1996) drafted its own Constitution establishing a unitary state with three autonomous but interdependent spheres of government at the national, provincial and local levels.

A noteworthy feature was

the creation of a separate list of exclusive subjects for local bodies (e.g. water, sewerage, solid waste management, roads and electricity distribution).

At present there is a new trend in the world to permit people to manage their own affairs directly, and one example is the emergence of citizen assemblies in the USA, Britain, France, Canada and Netherlands. This swing towards a direct role for citizens can be imagined as the



DR. SAMEER SHARMA

beginning of the third wave of grassroots democracy.

Presently, control and monitoring in India is done vertically through the bureaucratic hierarchy. This leads to, in the words of Vincent Ostrom, Professor of Political Science at Indiana University, "remote, power-driven form of public administration" and citizens

do not take interest in public administration because their preferences and demands hardly count.

The way out is horizontal supervision by citizens. In other words, citizens would directly control and monitor the services that most matter to them.

Ostrom recommends devolving control and monitoring to several citizen groups (also called 'communities of interest') having interest in the provision of a specialised type of government service. As services are provided at multiple levels, these communities of interest could be set up at the locality level, citywide or non-geographically organised, depending on the government service.

The first step is to identify what services should be controlled by the citizens at different levels — village, block

and the district.

For this, a preliminary assessment of each type of government service has to be done, including the way control is exercised. Next, new service delivery arrangements would follow from this assessment where citizens would exercise control over the government functionaries as well as monitor its provision, with the help of digital technology.

To apply digital technology, each service would be broken down into inputs, activities and outputs.

Let's take the example of sanitation. The input would be attendance of workers and availability of materials. The activities would be workers sweeping streets and collecting garbage from households. The outputs would be clean streets and collection of garbage. All these could be monitored by street cameras

and images shared with households interested in clean streets and garbage disposal.

Effective control would take place by linking wage performance to a digital poll among citizens concerned to assess the performance of various activities and outputs.

Thus, the way forward to bring about 'real' grassroots democracy is to mutate to a model where citizens monitor and control services that matter to them. The public would directly guide the work of government agencies as they have a stake in the results. Once citizen preferences and demands count, there would be greater scrutiny, leading to efficiency and integrity of services.

(Author has a PhD from the USA and a D Litt from Kanchi University. The article is based on his research and practice and views are personal)

## AP Rythu Bazaars to...

Continued from Page 1

All the ministers, officials and YSRP MLAs were touring the affected areas for the past 20 days and providing relief to the affected people, he said.

"The CM is monitoring the situation on a daily basis while there is no sense in what Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh were talking from their hideout in Hyderabad for the past eight months," the Minister said.

"Lokesh's irresponsible comments are ludicrous. He should know the difference between floods and heavy rains before he talks," Kannababu said.

Amaravati was not notified in the name of anybody. The Dalits and the poor have every right to seek lands in the region and nobody has the right to stop them. He said the government would not remain quiet if anybody tries to boss over the weaker sections.

He said Jagan had declared in the Eluru BC Garjana rally that BC corporations would be established in the state. Soon after the BC Corporations were announced, Naidu made his own announcements, he said.

## India's active Covid caseload below 7 lakh after 2 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant milestone India's active Covid-19 caseload has fallen below 7 lakh for the first time after two months, while the total recoveries have crossed 69 lakhs, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday.

The recovered cases are nearly 10 times more than the active cases, it said.

The active caseload of the country has fallen below 7 lakh for the first time after two months (63 days), the ministry said. The active caseload was below the 7-lakh mark (6,97,330) last on August 22.

There are 6,95,509 active cases of coronavirus infections in the country as on date, which comprise merely 8.96 per cent of the total caseload, according to ministry data updated at 8 am.

With a high number of Covid-19 patients recovering every day along with a steadily falling and sustained low mortality rate, India's trend of registering decreasing active cases continues, it underlined.

The total recovered cases have surged to 69,48,497 and exceed active cases by



62,52,988 as on date. The data stated that a total of 73,979 patients have recovered and were discharged in a span of 24 hours, whereas 54,366 new infections were reported during the same period.

The national Covid-19 recovery rate has further progressed to 89.53 per cent.

Increased countrywide medical infrastructure, implementation of the Centre's Standard Treatment Protocol by states and union territories (UTs), and total dedication and commitment of doctors, paramedics and frontline workers have led to a persistent increase

in the number of total recoveries with commensurate dip in the fatality rate, the ministry said.

It said that as on date the case fatality rate stands at 1.51 per cent.

These have together resulted in a consistent slide in the active cases, the ministry underscored. Twenty-four states and UTs have less than 20,000 active cases of Covid-19.

The ministry said 81 per cent of the new recovered cases are observed to be concentrated in 10 states and UTs which are Maharashtra,

Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Maharashtra has contributed more than 16,000 to the single-day recoveries followed by Karnataka with more than 13,000 recoveries, it said.

Of the total 54,366 new cases of Covid-19 recorded in a span of 24 hours, 78 per cent are from Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, West Bengal, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha.

Maharashtra and Kerala contribute the maximum to new cases with more than 7,000 cases followed by Karnataka with more than 5,000 cases.

Also, 690 case fatalities have been reported in a span of 24 hours. Of these, nearly 81 per cent are concentrated in 10 states and UTs — Maharashtra, Karnataka, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, the ministry said.

Maharashtra has reported the highest number of single-day deaths at 198.

## Auto-rickshaw unions protest AP adopting Motor Vehicles Act

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Resenting the AP Government adopting the amendments in the Motor Vehicle Act 1988 that allows imposition of heavy fines for violating traffic rules, the auto-rickshaw drivers unions in Vizag staged a protest on Friday.

AP Government recently adopted the Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 thereby increasing penalties for various traffic rule violations.

The penalties range from Rs 1,000 to Rs 10,000.

The government authorised officials of the rank of motor vehicle inspectors and above of the transport department and police officials above the rank of sub-inspectors and above to penalise violators and collect compounding fees. The government order explained the aim is to ensure better enforcement of the Motor Vehicles Act



1988

RKSV Kumar of CITU and Manmadha Rao of AITUC said that in the name of road discipline, AP government has increased the fines for traffic violations. The Covid-19 has hit the transport sector hard and hefty fines for the traffic violations will lead to a burden on the people who have been depending on the road trans-

port sector, he said.

"We are demanding the government to cancel the GO MS 21 (adopting the amended Motor Vehicle Act-1988) to save the auto-rickshaw drivers and others. An auto driver who earns around Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 per day cannot pay a challan of Rs 1,000 to Rs 5,000 for traffic violations," the association members contended.

## Tata bags order for 6,413 Ace vehicles

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tata Motors on Friday said it has secured an order from the Andhra Pradesh Civil Supplies Corporation for supply of 6,413 Tata Ace Gold vehicles.

The custom-built vehicles are meant to be used by the Corporation for the proposed door-to-door delivery of essential commodities to beneficiaries of the Public Distribution System.

The state government plans for door delivery of PDS items across AP from December.

Tata said it won the bid through the Union Commerce Ministry's Government e-

Marketplace.

Tata Motors Vice-President (Product Line) Vinay Pathak said in a release that they would be delivering customised, fully-built Ace Gold mini trucks, meeting the BS6 standards, to the state government soon.

Though the company did not disclose the price, the state government said Tata quoted a price of Rs 5,72,539 per vehicle, reducing it from Rs 6.60 lakh through a reverse bidding process.

In a press release, the government, however, said it was purchasing 9,260 vehicles from Tata at Rs 550.78 crore.

## First-of-its-kind flash flood...

Continued from Page 1

There is a general lack of flash flood warning capabilities and capacities among countries across the world.

Recognising that flash floods have a particularly disastrous impact on lives and properties of the affected populations, the 15th WMO Congress had approved the implementation of a Flash Flood Guidance System project with global coverage.

The system has been developed by the WMO Commission for Hydrology, jointly with the WMO Commission for Basic Systems and in collaboration with the US National Weather Service, the US Hydrologic Research

Centre (HRC).

The IMD has highly advanced capabilities with respect to computing power, numerical weather prediction, vast observational network (ground, air and space based), and an internationally acclaimed weather forecasting system.

It has tested the performance of the system during recent monsoon seasons in the pre-operational mode and the flash flood bulletins were issued to national hydrological and meteorological services in the region for its validation, said B P Yadav, a senior scientist at the IMD.

The system has in-depth science, dynamics and diagnostics to provide guidance for the possible occurrences of

flash floods at local level.

"The guidance for flash floods in the form of Threats (6 hours in advance) and Risks (24 hours in advance) will be provided by Regional Centre to National Meteorological & Hydrological Services, National and State Disaster Management Authorities and all other stakeholders for taking necessary mitigation measures to reduce the loss of life and property in the South Asian region countries, Mohapatra said.

M Rajeevan, secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, stressed the need for enhancing the observational network for rainfall and soil moisture to improve the performance of the system.

## Jagan: Banking on bankers to boost agri sector

Continued from Page 1



With regard to the health sector, the government will be setting up village clinics across the State taking basic medical services into interior villages.

Similarly, the government will be establishing 16 new teaching hospitals across the State, ensuring each parliamentary constituency has one

teaching hospital.

In the next three years, the state government targeted to spend Rs 13,000 crore to strengthen the medical infrastructure and health services in the State, he said.

The government will be launching Jagananna Thodu scheme in November to bene-

fit small traders and support them by providing loans. So far, the state government brought in Cheyuta, Asara schemes, and successfully implemented them to benefit 25 lakh women.

In addition to this, the government stood by the MSMEs by offering financial assistance and providing industrial incentives.

The officials said that the loans target has increased by 9.78 percent for 2020-21 at Rs 2,51,600 crore when compared to previous year.

Of the total loan targets, the government aims to lend Rs 1,28,660 crore to the agriculture sector that is an increase of 11.9 percent over the previous year and to lend Rs 39,600 crore to micro, small and medi-

um enterprises (MSMEs) which is 10 percent more than last year.

For the priority sector, the state government intends to spend Rs 1,87,550 crore, which is 10.88 percent higher than last year, and Rs 64,050 crore to the non-priority sector, which is an increase of 6.75 percent over last year. The officials said that the government has decided to provide Rs 2,29,200 crore of loans during 2019-20 of which Rs 2,27,882 crore has been issued by achieving 99.42 percent of the total target.

Speaking at the conference, G Rajkiran Rai, SLBC President and MD of Union bank of India hailed the State government initiatives, ensuring financial progress among small scale traders and craftsmen.

## TS jumps on 'free vaccine' bandwagon

Continued from Page 1

Speaking to The Pioneer, Health Minister Eatala Rajender said: "The government is giving free and quality health care already in the form of a variety of vaccines and treatments for people. This government is proactive and people oriented. We will give the vaccine (when it comes) for free, to all and first priority will be given to poor".

As per the statement by BJP, the Center will provide vaccines to states at a nominal rate. It is for the state governments to decide if they want to give it free or otherwise as health is a state subject. The National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration (part

of the Centre's Covid task force) too had made it clear, in its very first meeting, that states should not chart their separate pathways for procurement.

Amidst all this, only the opposition parties, whether at Centre or states, are crying foul, with the ruling parties unabashedly seeking to make the most of the pandemic, regardless of ethics and the Model Code of Conduct. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had a dig, saying people should refer state-wise poll schedule to know when they would get the vaccine, while Omar Abdullah sought to know how Bihar could get free vaccines while the rest of the country had to pay for it.

## Centre limits onion stocks with ...

Continued from Page 1

Highlighting other measures taken to cool down the spiralling trend in onion prices, the secretary said the government has decided to augment domestic supplies through imports for which state-owned MMTC would soon float a tender for red onions to meet the demand supply gap.

Recently, the government relaxed fumigation and phytosanitary norms for import of onion and activated Indian consulates to facilitate trade, she said.

The secretary said the government had taken a pre-emptive step by announcing a ban on onion export on September 14 itself so as to ensure availability to domestic consumers at reasonable rates, before the expected arrival of kharif onion from next month.

"Thus, the retail price rise was moderated to some extent but recent reports of heavy

rainfall in the onion-growing districts of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have created concerns about damage to kharif crop," she said.

She also said the developments on the weather front have contributed to the sharp increase in onion prices.

However, to tide over the present situation, the government has stepped up offloading of onion from its buffer stock of 1 lakh tonne created in 2019-20, which is being carried out swiftly but in a calibrated manner from the second half of September, she said.

The secretary further said onion from the government's buffer stock is being sold in major mandis as well as retail suppliers such as Safal, Kendriya Bhandar, NCCF and NAFED outlets in major cities and also via states.

Currently, Assam and Kerala governments are being supplied from the retail disposal mechanism.



## Civil Prelims results declared

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The results of Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination 2020 held on October 4 have been announced. The list of candidates who have qualified to apply for Civil Services (Main) Examination 2020 has been uploaded on UPSC website.

This time, over 10,000 candidates from across the country have qualified to appear for the Civil Mains examinations. The qualifying candidates will now have to fill the Detailed Application Form-I (DAF-I) for the Civil Services Main examination. The DAF will be available on the website of the UPSC from October 28 to November 11, till 6 pm. The CSE Main will be held on January 8, 2021. The e-admit card, along with the time table of the exam, will be uploaded on the commission's website.

# Govt to make power sector robust

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The government was according top priority for effective implementation of nine hours free power supply during the day time to the agriculture sector, which would give a boost to rural economy as the farming community would be strengthened, said Minister for Energy, Forest and Environment Balineni Srinivasa Reddy.

The minister said that the government is committed to create a robust power sector in the State by strengthening the power utilities and it is determined to make the State a destination for cost-effective power.

The minister further stated that the free power scheme had brought light in the lives of farmers in the State. The State government had also laid special focus on nine-hour power



Minister for Energy, Forest and Environment Balineni Srinivasa Reddy addresses a press conference in Vijayawada (file photo)

supply and sanctioned Rs 1,700 crore to upgrade infrastructure of agriculture feeders. The AP Transco had taken up electricity substations and other infrastructure development works for better implementation of the scheme. Stating that farmers' welfare is



**The government was spending Rs 8,353.58 crore to supply free power to 18.5 lakh agriculture connections and was providing Rs 717.39 crore to aqua farmers to supply power at subsidy rates. The government also released 65,565 new agriculture connections**

the highest priority for the government, the minister said



On the seventh day of Dasara Navaratri festivities on Friday, Goddess Kanakadurga is adorned as Sri Mahalakshmi. She is the Goddess of wealth, prosperity, wisdom and fortune

## Counselling for EAMCET begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Council for Higher Education (APSCHE) on Friday commenced the AP EAMCET-2020 counselling. The counselling will screen and shortlist the candidates for admission to BE, B Tech and Pharmacy courses in colleges across the State. As part of the counselling and seat allotment process, the exam authority will consider AP EAMCET score as well as marks secured by candidates in their Intermediate Board Exam. Qualified candidates can get their documents verified online and also check detailed instructions via exam portal apamcet.nic.in.

The complete schedule for the AP EAMCET certification verification process is available on the official website of AP EAMCET. Candidates can also check the APEAMCET coun-



Students attend Eamcet counselling in Vijayawada (file photo)

selling certificate verification schedule.

According to the schedule available, the certificate verification process will be conducted on October 23 for the students from rank 1 to 20,000; from rank 20,001 to 50,000 will be conducted on October 24; from rank 50,001 to 80,000 will be held on October 25; from rank 80,001 to 1, 10,000 will be

held on October 26 and from rank 1, 10,001 till the last rank will be held on October 27. Candidates appearing for the certificate verification process must also note that the verification process will be conducted at the nearest Help Line Centre (HLC) and after verification, students have to proceed with the option entry process.

## Man, daughter washed away in Chittoor stream

PNS ■ CHITTOOR

A man and his daughter died after they were washed away in a stream while returning from a wedding in Chittoor district on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday. Pratap (45) and his daughter Sai Vineeta (15) had hitched a return ride in a fellow wedding guest's car on Thursday night. As they approached a stream near Kalikirikonda, which was in spate due to heavy rains, they did not stop and went ahead.

"From 8 pm on Thursday to 2 am on Friday, there was torrential downpour, resulting in the stream gushing with water, which swept away the car," a police officer said. Incidentally, the deceased

from Vaddivarlapalli village was only some 6-7 km away from home when the accident occurred in the dead of the night amid pounding rain.

Though Penumuru police and local villagers launched a hunt for Prakash and Vineeta, they could not retrieve them, considering the difficult conditions.

Pratap's wife Shyamala, the driver of the car and the guest managed to escape the fatal water currents.

The accident occurred in the stream near Kondayagariapalli village and the rescuers later found a white car with a broken windshield. Police registered a case under CrPC Section 171. According to police, Prakash was a farmer.

## Annavaram temple presents silk robes to Goddess Kanakadurga

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the seventh day of Dasara Navaratri festivities, Goddess Kanakadurga was adorned as Sri Mahalakshmi. She is the Goddess of wealth, prosperity, wisdom and fortune. Goddess Mahalakshmi is believed to protect Her devotees from all kinds of money related sorrows.

She appears in eight forms and is well known as Atalakshmi. Mahalakshmi Devi is especially worshipped on Fridays and Diwali festival day with red color flowers.

Mahalakshmi played a vital role in Mahishura mardhanam. She is greatly praised and her significance is given in detail in Sri Suktam and Lakshmi Tantra. Satiyalakshmi, Bhogalakshmi,



Chinna Jeeyar Swami being greeted on the premises of Durga temple on Friday

Rajyalakshmi, Yogalakshmi, Vidyalakshmi, Soubhagalakshmi, Amruthalakshmi and Kamyalakshmi are the main avatars of Devi besides the famous Atalakshmi avatar. Addressing the media here on

Friday, Durga Temple Trust Board chairman P Somi Naidu and Executive Officer MV Suresh Babu said that silk robes for Goddess Kanakadurga were presented by Annavaram temple on the seventh day of the Dasara navaratri celebrations.

## TDP LEADER VISITS FLOOD-HIT VILLAGES

# Lokesh demands Rs 25,000 per acre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP National General Secretary Nara Lokesh made a whirlwind visit to the flood-hit villages and inspected damaged crops in Tadipatri, Guntakal, Singanamala and Rappthadu areas in Anantapur district on Friday.

He enquired from the farmers the extent of losses they suffered in heavy rains and flood waters that have submerged their crops. When he asked about their opinion about the proposed installation of meters on agricultural pump sets, farmers vociferously expressed their disapproval.

He strongly objected to the



TDP leader N Lokesh interacts with farmers during his visit to flood-hit villages (file photo)

fixing of meters for the sake of getting permission from the Central government for bringing more loans to the State. The future of farmers and agriculture was being pushed into danger, he opined. Unfortunately, the

YSRCP regime was giving counter statements when the TDP raised problems of flood-hit farmers, he alleged. Ministers, MLAs and officials were not making field visits and not responding to the actual crop damages.

He stepped into the knee-deep waters in fields and checked the extent of crop damages, along with local farmers. He visited the submerged groundnut and food grain crops at Karakonda in Gutti mandal. He demanded Rs 25,000 compensation per acre for groundnut farmers.

He slammed the government for putting estimated crop damages in Anantapur district at Rs

38 crore while the actual extent of damage would come to Rs 2,000 crore in the present floods. Heavy rains ravaged crops in over 12.2 lakh acres. Groundnut farmers suffered the most losses as they invested Rs 20,000 per acre. Farmers were saying that officials have not visited their crops for enumerating the damage even many days after the floods began.

He said as per an RTI enquiry, it was revealed that only Rs 25 lakh compensation was paid by the Jaganmohan Reddy's regime. Ministers were not making field visits to damaged crops but they were attacking the TDP leaders for reaching out to farmers.

## YSRCP MP flays TDP chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP Nandigama Suresh lambasted TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu for belittling the agitation of Dalits and weaker sections in Amaravati, who wanted the land in the region and also sought equal development of all regions of the State.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, the MP said there were parallel agitations in Amaravati region on Thursday, one by the weaker sections and the other by the so-called farmers of the region, who wanted Amaravati to be the sole capital and sponsored by the TDP. He alleged that it was evident that those who were

**YSRCP MP Nandigama Suresh alleged that Naidu took away 53,000 acres of land from the poor farmers in the name of building a capital but handed over the lands to his henchmen on a platter**

agitating for the capital to be set up in Amaravati were all benamis of Naidu, who were beneficiaries of land scam during his regime. What one

should realise is that none of the TDP leaders were present to back the agitation of Naidu's benami farmers, he pointed out. People have realised the genuineness of the agitation launched by Dalits and weaker sections and the ongoing stir of the benamis of Naidu. On Friday, the goons of the TDP tried to disrupt the agitation of weaker sections by threatening them, the MP alleged.

He ridiculed Naidu for calling the stir of benamis as an agitation for faith in Amaravati. He alleged that Naidu took away 53,000 acres of land from the poor farmers in the name of building a capital but handed over the lands to his henchmen on a platter.

## 3 boys meet watery grave

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Tragedy struck a remote village in Anakapalle mandal of Visakhapatnam rural district when three boys drowned in a water body on Friday afternoon. While two boys managed to swim to the shore.

The deceased were identified as N Sarat Chandra (13), Podugu Girish (12) and Neelakayala Balaji (11) of Akkireddypalem village in Anakapalle mandal.

The rural police said Sarat Chandra, Girish, Balaji, Hemanth and Bhaskar went to swim in a small water body created by an abandoned quarry. After playing some time on the banks, they jumped into the water for swimming but could not; therefore, Bhaskar and Hemant ran to the village and raised an alarm. But by the time the family members arrived at the spot, the three children drowned. Girish, Hemanth and Bhaskar are brothers, of them, Girish died.

Police said quarry was given permission in Marupudi Survey No 357 and the work was abandoned due to the lockdown.

The rain water filled a large portion of earth that was dug by the quarry workers. The villagers blamed the revenue officials for insisting the quarry lease holder fill the craters that became the death trap for the children.

## Two labourers electrocuted

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Two farm labourers were electrocuted and two others sustained serious injuries at Sriakakulam village in Gantasala mandal of Krishna district in the wee hours of Friday.

The injured were shifted to the Challapalli Government Hospital for treatment. The deceased were identified as G Sitaramanjaneyulu (30) and Ch Anil Kumar (30), residents of Apparapeta suburb of Pamidamukkala mandal in

the district. The accident occurred when the high tension wires fell on the workers, who were working in the farm.

Farmers in an effort to protect the rice crop from pests with fertilizers and chemicals as the recent heavy rains have submerged the paddy crop has hired labourers from surrounding villages to spray insecticide.

At this point, the workers sustained burn injuries when the hanging high tension electric wires hit them.

## Raid on layout for illegal excavation

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Regional Vigilance Squad of the Mines and Geology Department led by its assistant director R Prathap Reddy raided a layout located between Nagarapalem and Rajapulova areas in Bhogapuram mandal of Vizianagaram district and imposed a penalty of Rs 1.6 crore on the management of the layout on the charges of illegal excavation and laying of gravel and ordinary soil in the layout illegally. Based on the specific informa-

tion, the vigilance squad raided the Utkarsha Estates Layout site near Nagarapalem in Vizianagaram district. The layout has been developed with roads while the roads and layout site was filled with gravel and the park area was filled with ordinary soil. The gravel and ordinary soil laid in the layout are compacted.

When the vigilance squad asked the management of the layout to produce documentary evidence of the gravel and ordinary soil that was filled in the lay-

out, the site engineer showed the layout side plan but failed to produce the required documents related to the procurement of gravel and the soil. Officials said that they had observed that the management of the layout illegally procured the gravel and the soil and used it for the development of the layout.

Prathap Reddy said that if the management of the layout failed to pay the fine, they will ask the local body authorities to cancel the plan and a few other clearances of the project.

## 4 held for selling ganja

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Jubilee Hills Police on Friday arrested four persons for selling ganja and seized 10 kg of the banned contraband from their possession. The accused were identified as Chetan Kumar Upadhyay, Abrar Bin Hussain, Udarla Ramesh and Sanyam Shiva Reddy.

Based on a tip off that banned narcotic drugs are being sold in Yadagiri Nagar, Jubilee hills police

raided a room and nabbed the four persons who were in possession of banned narcotic substance. "At the time of the raid, the accused were packing ganja into small plastic cover for selling," said A Ramesh, Detective Inspector of Police, Jubilee hills. Investigation revealed that they were being supplied with ganja by Kalyan, who is absconding, at Rs 20,000 per kg. The accused were sent to judicial custody.

## Lord Malayappa Swamy enchants devotees

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

On the eighth day of Navaratri Brahmotsvams, Sri Malayappa Swamy, along with His consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi, blessed devotees on Sarvabhoopala Vahanam on Friday.

As part of the Central and State governments Covid-19 guidelines, the vahanam seva was conducted in 'ekantham' and the utsava idols were seated atop the richly decorated Sarvabhoopala Vahanam at the Kalyana Mandapam inside Lord Venkateswara temple.

Sarvabhoopala means that Lord was the Supreme Commander of the entire cosmos. The message spelled out of this vahanam indicates that Lord Venkateswara con-



On the eighth day of Navaratri Brahmotsvams, Sri Malayappa Swamy, along with His consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi, rides on Sarvabhoopala Vahanam in Tirumala on Friday

trolled the entire universe as the controller of all on His

instructions Indra (east), Agni (south-east), Yama (god

of death on the south), Niruti (north - east), and Varuna on

(west), Vayu (south-west) and Kubera (god of wealth on north) and Parameswara (on north-west) execute their job chart.

Later in the evening, Sri Venkateswara took a ride on Aswa Vahanam, the last of the Brahmotsava Vahanams. Tirumala pontiffs Pedda Jeeyar Swamy and Chinna Jeeyar Swamy, TTD Executive Officer KS Jawahar Reddy, Deputy Speaker Kona Raghupathi, MP Vemireddy Prabhakar Reddy, Additional EO AV Dharma Reddy, Board members Dr Nischitha, Chippagiri Prasad, Govind Hari, DP Ananth, Prasanthi Reddy, CVSO Gopinath Jatti, chief engineer Sri Ramesh Reddy, Peishkar Jaganmohan Charyulu and others were present.

## Pay out to farmers for crop loss on Oct 27, says Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector MD Imtiaz announced that 10,003 farmers will be given Rs 7.60 crore as compensation for crop damage on October 27. Addressing the media here on Friday, the Collector said that due to heavy rains during July, August and September in the district, 8,200 farmers and 1,803 horticulture farmers incurred losses and the government would pay Rs 7.60 crore as compensation on October 27.

He further stated that during the torrential rains in October, 20,000 farmers in the district suffered losses to the tune of Rs 15 crore. After finalising the



Krishna District Collector Md Imtiaz speaks at a review meeting on rains and floods in Vijayawada on Friday

estimate of crop loss, compensation to those farmers will be transferred directly into their accounts by November 20.

During the floods, the district authorities were alert and no untoward incident was reported in the district. In 45 relief camps, 6,167 people were relo-

cated and provided food and accommodation. In all, 16,658 victims were provided with 25 kg rice, oil, onions, pulses and potatoes. The family members of T Sivashankar Rao and K Naveen, who were electrocuted, were given Rs 4 lakh each, said the Collector.



# Dubbak by-poll acid test for BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Dubbak by-election is going to be an acid test for the BJP and its new leadership in the state to prove that the party's victory in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections is not a fluke. The BJP has been claiming itself to be a viable alternative to the TRS in the state in the 2023 elections. But the party is saddled with the responsibility of proving that it has popular support.

How Bandi Sanjay, who has been given the reins of the state party, faces the first ever elections after he became head of the party in the state? Can the BJP upset the appellation of the TRS in its stronghold of Dubbak? The BJP, which has plans to wrest power from the TRS in 2023 polls, is going to face a major hurdle through Dubbak by-election.

Other political outfits in the state give no priority to the BJP winning four LS seats in the 2019 elections describing the BJP victory as a mere fluke. To rebut the criticism of the TRS and the Congress, the BJP should prove that its victory is



**The BJP, which has plans to wrest power from the TRS in 2023 Assembly elections, is going to face a major hurdle through Dubbak by-election**

take strongly among the people how the KCR government is belittling Hindu festivals. The party local cadres are taking the issue strongly into the people through social media. The objective of the BJP Leaders is very clear to unite the Hindu vote bank in the state against minority and other vote banks.

Raghunandan, who unsuccessfully contested from the seat earlier, wants to grab the opportunity to post victory in the seat. The BJP wants to grab the limelight in the state by winning the Dubbak seat, which is described as the stronghold of the TRS. On the other hand, the TRS is banking on the sympathy wave in favour of Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy. However, the BJP begs to differ and quotes the exam-

ple of Narayanakhet by elections, where sympathy factor did not work. It also argues that in fact people would have sympathy towards Raghunandan who unsuccessfully contested twice from the seat. The BJP says that the sympathy wave is a thing of the past. The people became more aware. The issues of government's failure to deal with the Corona virus issues, denial of pension to the people of Dubbak till the last minute and distribution of pensions among the people in a huff, denial of fair compensation to the lands acquired from the people of the issue and a strong contender like Raghunandan for the BJP victory. The Narendra Modi factor would help BJP win votes.

## Central team told to submit report on rain damage soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy on Friday said he asked the Central team, currently visiting Telangana to assess the damage by heavy rains and floods, to submit its report as early as possible. "The team told me that the state government was yet to give full details on the damage," Reddy said. The Centre would be able to release funds after receiving a detailed report from the state, he said.

The Centre and state should together help the people, he told reporters. Reddy suggested that the state government take up immediate relief work with the state disaster relief fund. The inter-Ministerial team, led by Joint Secretary Praveen Vasishtha, met Reddy here and interacted with him. The five-member team began its two-day visit to the state on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Central team continued its visit to various rain-hit areas of the city. On Thursday, the



Central team assessing the damage wrought by heavy rains and floods in Hyderabad on Friday

team visited the affected parts of the state, especially the city, as the state government pegged losses to crops and roads at over Rs 8,500 crore. The team met state Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and it was given a power-point presentation and briefed on the damage that took place since last week when 70 people died. The officials of different government departments interacted with the Central team and gave an overview of the loss

incurred. They informed the team that there was excess rainfall during the last 10 days, resulting in flooding. Though there were rains in the entire state, excessive damage occurred in and around Hyderabad and neighbouring districts. Breaches to three major tanks, coupled with flooding in Musi river, inundated low-lying areas. The losses to crops and roads were estimated at Rs 8,633 crore and Rs 222 crore respectively.



## Guv: Bathukamma is pride of Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Tamilisai Soundarajan on Friday distributed sarees to all the women of Raj Bhavan parivar as part of the Bathukamma celebrations at the Raj Bhavan. The Governor has been personally sponsoring and distributing sarees to all the women of the Raj Bhavan parivar since last year Bathukamma celebrations.

Speaking on the occasion at the Durbur Hall at Raj Bhavan, the Governor termed Bathukamma festival as a unique celebration of life by women of Telangana. The Bathukamma festival is pride of Telangana. "The Bathukamma festival offers a rich tribute to the Mother Nature and has socio-cultur-

al and emotional connect with the women of Telangana," she said.

Elaborating on the importance of the traditional food items that women distribute during the nine-day long festivities, Tamilisai emphasised that they do have lot of nutritional value to improve the immunity and health of the women. "Our ancestors inculcated this habit of offering nutritious food items to women by attaching devotional value to such food items," she added. The Governor also pointed out that the traditional seasonal flowers used to prepare the Bathukamma idols also possess medicinal value and they purify the water bodies where the Bathukamma flower idols are immersed.

## TAKING STOCK



Nizamabad MP Arvind Dharmapuri inspecting damaged paddy in farms of Pipri village, Armoor on Friday

## Over 600 spl buses for festive season

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation is running festive special buses between various destinations in order to facilitate the passengers. There are over 600 buses — originating from various bus stands in Hyderabad — during Dusshera.

A total of 103 buses from Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station, 194 from Jubilee Bus Stand, 81 buses from LB Nagar and 95

buses from Dilshuknagar and 219 from Uppal are being operated every two hours, starting 8 am to 12 midnight. These special services will be available only till October 24.

"We have been making sure that all the buses are sanitised properly. In fact, we have been sanitising each bus twice, before it leaves the depot and after it arrives there, to make sure every surface is clean. No passenger is allowed in the bus without a mask," said an official.

## Centre releases Rs 202 crore for NH works

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Central Government on Friday released long pending funds of Rs 202.3 crore for the development of National Highways in Telangana. Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari has approved the amount for repairs and maintenance of 868-km of eight National Highways that pass through the State. In a statement, Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy thanked Union Minister Nitin Gadkari for granting the amount and said that the decision was taken immediately after meeting the Union Minister on Friday.

Kishan Reddy said that the amount will be useful for the State to undertake repairs to the highways that were damaged in the recent floods. He said that the amount granted by the Center is 85 per cent more than the proposals sent by the State government. He said that the amount should be used to repair the roads in such a way that traffic will move smoothly without any potholes in future. The Minister reiterated maximum support to the flood-hit Telangana state from the Central government for undertaking rescue, repair and rehabilitation activity.

## Harish terms BJP as 'Bharatiya Joota Party'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Finance Minister T Harish Rao on Friday took potshots at BJP and termed the saffron party as 'Bharatiya Joota Party'. While participating in the election campaign in Rajakkapeta village, Harish Rao said that the credit of giving drinking water to all households in the state goes to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy.

"KCR is giving 24x7 free power to farmers and giving Rs 5 lakh Rythu Bhima insurance to the farmers. Casting vote to Congress is nothing but dropping it in drainage," he said. Bandi Sanjay Kumar didn't respond to his challenge on pensions, however, the BJP leaders are speaking on jobs, Harish Rao said and added that TRS gave 1.24 lakh jobs after the formation of Telangana state. He questioned the BJP leaders to reveal how many jobs they gave after coming to power. He said that the TRS government will



develop Dubbaka constituency in all aspects. The BJP should reveal whether the Central government is confined to Bihar or to the entire nation as it assured that it will distribute Corona vaccine free of cost as poll promise."

He said that nothing will happen with BJP and Congress. Harish Rao urged the voters to cast their vote to Solipeta Sujatha and ensure a huge majority to her. He said that the TRS government is sincere in implementing the assurances given in elections. He said that the state stood as a role model in implementing welfare schemes and development schemes.

## Cong: Ensure transparency in distribution of financial aid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee Treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy on Friday demanded the government to be transparent in distributing the financial aid to the people who are affected by the floods in Hyderabad in the past two weeks. In a statement, he said that so far there was no clarity on the number of affected people and number of families who have been provided with financial relief so far.

He reminded that the government has announced financial aid of Rs 10,000 to each affected family. He demanded that the government should put the details of the affected who have received the financial aid so far in public domain. Narayana Reddy said that though the government announced a relief package of

**So far there is no clarity on the number of affected people and number of families who have been provided with financial relief, said Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee Treasurer Gudur Narayana**

Rs 550 crore, he was doubtful about the proper distribution of it. According to media reports as many as 1,500 colonies were affected by the floods in the city.

He alleged that the TRS leaders have been using the distribution of relief to the affected for photo ops. He also alleged that made-up photos of providing the financial relief are appearing in the media. While the number of affected people was in lakhs, the number of beneficiaries,

who got the financial aid so far, was in hundreds. TRS leaders are trying to show that all the affected were provided with relief. Upon inquiry many affected people have told him that they have not received the financial help so far.

He criticised that many times in the past, whenever the people faced natural calamities, the relief has not reached all the affected ones and the distribution of relief material and funds has been used for the publicity of the ruling party.

## KCR neglecting cotton ryots: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N Uttam Kumar Reddy strongly condemned Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy for neglecting the problems being faced by maize, paddy and cotton farmers despite massive protests going on across the Telangana State.

He was speaking to media persons after inaugurating a camp office in Dubbak for the duration of the by-election campaign. Former ministers G. Vinod and Damodar Reddy, ex-MLAs Maheshwar Reddy and Mahender Reddy, TPCC General Secretary Prem Lal and other senior leaders were also present on the occasion.

Uttam said that the fate of lakhs of farmers depends on the outcome of Dubbak elec-



**Uttam said that the fate of lakhs of farmers depends on the outcome of Dubbak elections**

tions. "CM has been pursuing anti-farmers policies since 2014. The TRS government not only neglected the welfare of farmers, but created new problems in every season for the farm sector," he alleged citing the example of how the Chief Minister advised farmers to grow specific crops like maize and superfine varieties of

paddy and now the government is not procuring those crops.

The TPCC chief said that the lakhs of farmers, who cultivated maize on the advice of the Chief Minister, are now demanding Minimum Support Prices of Rs 1,850. However, with less than 15 days left for completion of harvesting, not

a single procurement centre has been opened. He pointed out that farmers in Jagtial, Nizamabad, Sircilla, Kamareddy and other districts have been holding massive protests demanding procurement of maize at Rs 1,850 as MSP. Similarly, Uttam said that the Chief Minister had advised farmers to grow superfine varieties of paddy, instead of regular varieties.

## Defeat TRS for its 'anti-minorities policies': Congress urges voters

PNS ■ DUBBAK

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Minorities Department Chairman Shaik Abdullah Sohail on Friday appealed to the voters of Dubbak Assembly constituency to defeat TRS party for its policies 'targeting the minorities of Telangana State'.

Speaking to media persons after participating in the door-to-door election campaign launched in Dubbak constituency, Sohail said that the TRS government would be remembered in history for

"causing the maximum damage to minorities, especially the Muslim community, by wearing a fake mask of secularism". "Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Reddy has cheated the Muslims on the promise of giving 12 per cent reservation in jobs and education," he said and also alleged that the CM ruined the Wakf properties and weakened all the institutions associated with the welfare of minorities by starving them of funds and manpower".

The Congress leader said that CM would be remembered

as a 'destroyer of places of worship' and a 'liar who repeated the same crime after apologising for the first offence. He said more than a dozen places of worship, including mosques and temples, have been demolished by the TRS regime without any fear of people or God. KCR has displayed equal disrespect for all religions and gave prominence only to his superstitious beliefs, he said, added that he doesn't deserve to continue on the post of the Chief Minister which demands true secularism and protection of all places of worship.

## Farmers in trouble as rains destroy crops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The rains that lashed the state during the past one week have caused extensive damage to the standing crops and damaged crops in at least 14.06 lakh acres, including cotton crop in 7.50 lakh acres, according to the preliminary report submitted by the Agriculture Department.

In the first three days, the rains caused damage to the crops in an extent of 8 lakh acres. Subsequently, the damage to crops increased to 14 lakh acres. An official of the Agriculture Department, who wished to remain anonymous, said that the final report on the crop loss due to the rains is yet to be compiled.



The agriculture authorities have not been revealing the details of the crop loss.

According to information received from sources, paddy crop has been damaged in 5.10 lakh acres and cotton in 7.50 lakh acres. The damage

caused to crops exceeded 14 lakh acres with the inclusion of the damage to other crops. According to a conservative estimate, rains affected at least 7.60 lakh farmers.

Farmers have invested at least Rs 25,000 per acre to raise

**Farmers have invested at least Rs 25k per acre to raise paddy and cotton crops, while the maximum investment per acre by farmer did not exceed Rs 35,000**

paddy and cotton crops, while the maximum investment per acre by farmer did not exceed Rs 35,000. The farmers are not

in a position to recover the investments made. They appeal to the government for payment of compensation under the prevailing situation. The farmers have no prospect of getting compensation under crop insurance scheme as the state government opted out of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana this year. Earlier, the State Government demanded the Centre to implement crop insurance scheme taking a farmer as a unit, but the scheme is yet to see light at the end of the tunnel. When Pocharam Srinivasa Reddy was Agriculture Minister, an exercise was done to implement crop insurance scheme in the state.



# PM slams Opposition for seeking restoration of Article 370 in J-K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In his first poll rally in Bihar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday invoked the alleged reign of crime and loot during the 15-year rule of the RJD and also targeted the Opposition for "daring" to seek votes in the state while seeking restoration of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Modi sought vote for another term of the NDA government under Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, saying he had been working with the JD(U) president only for the last three-four years and that the state had seen much speedier development in this period.

Kumar had returned to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in 2017 after fighting against it in the last assembly



polls in 2015.

Referring to the supreme sacrifice made by soldiers, including by those from Bihar, in Galwan Valley while fighting Chinese troops, he hit out at the opposition.

"They are saying they will restore Article 370 if they come

to power. Look at their audacity, they are still daring to seek votes from the people of Bihar. Isn't this insult of the sentiments of Bihar which sends its sons and daughters to borders to protect the country?" he said.

He accused the opposition of siding with forces

**Modi sought vote for another term of the NDA govt under Nitish Kumar, saying he had been working with the JD(U) chief only for the last three-four years and that the state had seen much speedier development in this period**

which are conspiring to weaken India by promising to restore Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir if it comes to power.

Referring to the Galwan clash, Modi said the sons of Bihar laid down their lives for the tricolour but did not let 'Mother' India's head bow.

The soldiers of Bihar were also martyred in the Pulwama attack, he noted.

Asserting that the Kumar-

led government had worked for the state's development, he said its continuation is necessary to fulfill the hopes with which people had voted for the NDA at the Centre in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

The Congress-led UPA government at the Centre between 2004 and 2014 put "roadblocks" in the state's development as Kumar was a member of the NDA for most of the time, Modi said.

## Special immunisation programme for Covid vaccine

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The coronavirus vaccine, once available, will be distributed under a special COVID-19 immunisation programme with the Centre procuring the doses directly and making it available for priority groups, official sources said.

According to them, the Centre will procure the vaccine directly to make it available to the priority groups free-of-charge through the existing network of states and districts.

States have been asked not to chart separate pathways of procurement, they said.

The Centre, with the help of state and union territory governments, has started the process of identifying around 30 crore priority beneficiaries who would be given vaccine dose in the initial phase.

This special COVID-19 immunisation programme would run in parallel with the Universal Immunisation Programme, but will use its processes, technology and network of the existing vaccine distribution framework, sources said. The government has demarcated four categories of people for vaccination in the initial phase -- around one crore healthcare professionals including doctors, MBBS students, nurses and ASHA workers, etc.; around two crore frontline workers including municipal corporation workers, personnel of the police and



**The Centre, with the help of state and union territory governments, has started the process of identifying around 30 crore priority beneficiaries who would be given vaccine dose in the initial phase**

armed forces; about 26 crore people aged above 50; and a special group of those below 50 years of age with co-morbidities and requiring specialised care. "States have been asked to enlist by mid-November the priority population groups.... Each person in the immunisation list will be linked with their Aadhaar cards so as to track them," a source said.

The existing digital platform and processes used for the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) are being enhanced to track COVID-19 vaccine administration and movement -- from procurement to storage to distribution

to individual beneficiaries -- as and when the vaccine becomes available, Health Ministry officials have said.

Also, online training modules are being developed for vaccinators. The digital platform that is being enhanced is Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN), which provides real-time information on vaccine stocks and storage temperatures across all cold chain points in the country under UIP.

Under UIP, children, adolescents and pregnant women are currently vaccinated against vaccine-preventable diseases free-of-cost by the state.

## INDIA CORNER

### Former Maharashtra BJP leader Eknath Khadse joins NCP

Former Maharashtra BJP leader Eknath Khadse on Friday joined the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) in the presence of the party's chief Sharad Pawar. Sulking since his unceremonious exit from the Devendra Fadnis-led ministry in 2016 over land grab allegations, Khadse (68) on Wednesday quit the BJP. The same day, state NCP chief Jayant Patil announced he would be joining the Pawar-led party. NCP is part of the ruling alliance in the state along with Shiv Sena and Congress, whose Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government assumed office 11 months ago. Khadse, former Maharashtra Revenue Minister and also an ex-Leader of Opposition in state Assembly, was inducted into the NCP at the party's head office here. The leader, who flew in here on Thursday from his native Jalgaon district in north Maharashtra, was in political wilderness during the last four years, though he quit the BJP only two days ago. Khadse's formal entry into NCP, scheduled at 2 pm, was delayed by over an hour as Pawar was in a meeting with party minister Jitendra Awhad.



### Depression to bring heavy rains over northeastern states: IMD

Depression over the Bay of Bengal will bring heavy rains on Friday to the northeastern states of Tripura, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Assam and Meghalaya, the Cyclone Warning Division of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The IMD said the depression is very likely to cross West Bengal and adjoining Bangladesh coasts between Sagar Islands (West Bengal) and Khepupara (Bangladesh) over the Sundarbans on Friday. "Due to this, light to moderate rainfall at most places, with heavy to very heavy falls (115.6-204.4 mm/day) are likely at a few places, and extremely heavy falls at isolated places are very likely over Tripura, heavy to very heavy falls at a few places Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, south Assam and Meghalaya are likely," the IMD said. Depression is a cyclonic circulation and is packed with squally winds and heavy rains. The depression is expected to abate and become a well-marked low pressure area by October 24. Low pressure area is the first stage of any cyclone and a well-marked low pressure area is the second stage.



### 3 Additional Judges of Gauhati HC to be Permanent Judges

The Supreme Court Collegium has approved the proposal for appointment of three Additional Judges of Gauhati High Court as Permanent Judges. The collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India S A Bobde, recommended the proposal for appointment of Justice Manish Choudhury, Additional Judge of Gauhati High Court as Permanent Judge. It also approved the proposal for appointment of Justices Sanjay Kumar Medhi and Nani Tagia as Permanent Judges of Gauhati High Court. Justice Medhi completed his schooling from the Don Bosco School, Guwahati and was enrolled as a LLB student in Campus Law Centre in the University of Delhi from 1991 to 1994. He was elevated as an Additional Judge of the Gauhati High Court on November 19, 2018. Justice Tagia was designated as Senior Advocate by the Gauhati High Court on August 4, 2014 and elevated as Additional Judge of the Gauhati High Court on November 19, 2018. Justice Choudhury was designated as Senior Advocate by the Gauhati High Court in April 2017 and elevated as Additional Judge of the Gauhati High Court on January 18, 2019.



### Cook sexually harasses, kills trans woman running restaurant

A cook in a restaurant run by a trans woman (59) was arrested on Friday for allegedly killing his employer and dumping the body in a drum here, police said. The cook Rajesh (23) alleged sexually harassed the trans woman Sangeetha (59) who warned him of going to the police if he continued to indulge in such harassment, they said. This made the cook angry and he killed the trans woman by slitting the throat and dumping the body, the police said. The body of Sangeetha with injuries was found in the drum on Wednesday following complaints of a foul smell, they said. Investigations led to the arrest of Rajesh on Thursday. He had also stolen Rs 20,000 from Sangeetha's house after the crime, the police said. Sangeetha had opened 'Trans Kitchen', a restaurant, in the city a month ago and Rajesh was employed as the cook.



## Arnab can use 'Nation wants to know' as part of speech: HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court said Republic TV's editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami can use the tagline 'NATION WANTS TO KNOW' as part of his speech or presentation. The high court

noted in its order that Bennett Coleman and Co. Ltd, which has filed a suit against Goswami or ARG Outlier Media Pvt Ltd, which owns Republic TV, has submitted that the journalist is free to use the same

as part of his speech/presentation of any news channel. "Regarding the tagline NATION WANTS TO KNOW, no interim order is passed at this stage in favour of the plaintiff (Bennett Coleman).

## 'Free vaccine can't be legally faulted'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three former chief election commissioners on Friday said the BJP's move to promise free coronavirus vaccine to people in its manifesto for the Bihar assembly polls cannot be legally faulted.

But, the move does raise ethical question as the model code of conduct is all about ethics, said S Y Quraishi, who served as the poll panel chief between 2010 and 2012.

O P Rawat, who retired as the chief election commissioner in December 2018, reminded that the Supreme Court had made it clear that a party promising something

in its manifesto should also mention the budgetary provisions it would put in place to fulfil the promise.

One can put anything in the manifesto, but the Supreme Court has ruled that parties have to explain the budgetary provision required to fulfil the promise, Rawat said.

Another former chief election commissioner, who did not wish to go on record, said the timing of manifesto release is also important.

"The EC has so far not been able to implement the suggestion that manifestos are released well in advance and not on the eve of the poll," he pointed out.

## Ex cricketer Kapil Dev suffers heart attack

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's first World Cup-winning cricket captain Kapil Dev suffered a heart attack and underwent an angioplasty here on Friday but is expected to be discharged in the next couple of days, said the hospital where he is currently admitted.

The 61-year-old complained of chest pain on Thursday following which he was taken to Fortis Escorts Heart Institute emergency department.

"Kapil Dev suffered a heart attack. He was evaluated and an emergency coronary angioplasty was performed in the middle of night," the hospital said in an updated health bulletin after only mentioning chest pain in its initial statement.

"Currently, he is admitted in



ICU and under close supervision of Dr Atul Mathur and his team. Kapil Dev is stable now and he is expected to get discharged in a couple of days."

Angioplasty is a procedure to open blocked arteries and restore normal blood flow to the heart.

Indian Cricketers Association (ICA) President

**"Kapil Dev suffered a heart attack. He was evaluated and an emergency coronary angioplasty was performed in the middle of night," the hospital said in health bulletin**

Ashok Malhotra, a friend of Kapil, earlier told PTI that the iconic cricketer is doing fine.

"He is feeling okay now. I just spoke to his wife (Romi). He was feeling uneasy yesterday. He is undergoing check-ups at a hospital as we speak,"

Malhotra, also a former Test player, said.

The 1983 World Cup-winning legendary all-rounder was wished a speedy recovery by many on social media, including India's current captain Virat Kohli and Sachin Tendulkar among others.

"Praying for your speedy recovery. Get well soon paaji," Kohli said.

"Take care @therealkapildev! Praying for your quick recovery. Get well soon Paaji," wished Tendulkar

Also wishing him good health were India batsman Shikhar Dhawan and badminton player Saina Nehwal.

Kapil's former teammate Madan Lal said he has conveyed some of the concern of his well-wishers to the Chandigarh-born legend's family.

## Lalu coming out on bailon Nov 9, says Tejashwi

PNS ■ HISUA (BIHAR)

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav Friday asserted his father and party supremo Lalu Prasad will come out of jail on November 9 after securing bail in a fodder scam case, and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will have his farewell the next day.

The votes for the state assembly polls will be counted on November 10. Prasad is in judicial custody in Jharkhand capital Ranchi after his conviction in fodder scam cases. He was recently granted bail by the Jharkhand High



Court in the case related to Chaibasa treasury but could not come out of jail as his bail plea in another case of fraudulent withdrawals from Dumka treasury is being heard. "Lalu ji is getting

released on November 9. He has got one bail and will secure another on November 9, which also happens to be my birthday. The next day, Nitishji will have his farewell, Tejashwi told a poll rally here, exuding confidence about winning the elections. The state is voting in three phases on October 28, November 3 and November 7, and the results will be announced on November 10.

In his address, he accused the Nitish Kumar government of failing to root out corruption, bring industries, provide employment and check migration for livelihood.

## Colleges to reopen in K'taka from Nov 17

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The Karnataka government on Friday decided to reopen engineering, diploma and degree colleges that were shut since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from November 17, with students free to opt for online or offline classes or a mix of both. "In a meeting that took place under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister, it was decided to start degree colleges from November 17. Engineering, diploma and degree colleges will all start," Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan said.

## 'India needs to fix domestic issues'

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Underlining that India has been more of a "rule taker" than a "rule maker" at the UN, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Friday said the country needs to fix its domestic issues, including that of the economy, and have "moral authority" if it wants to be a rules contributor to the world.

The former Union minister said he has always argued that India's international credibility is often a reflection of its domestic postures and the success at home is the best guarantee that "we will

be respected and effective abroad".

"Now we have unfortunately been going through a few very bad years domestically in terms of crumbling social cohesion, the eruption and uncontrollable spread of the coronavirus pandemic, the border troubles with China, the economic collapse after demonetisation, unemployment figures worst recorded in the history in these years, everything is wrong," he said at a session of the 7th national forum of the Public Affairs Forum of India.

## Covid positivity rate on downward trend

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has crossed the 10 crore-mark in conducting tests for detection of COVID-19 with 14,42,722 tests being done in a span of 24 hours, even as the cumulative positivity rate continues to decline, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday.

High level of comprehensive testing on a sustained basis has also resulted in bringing down the national positivity rate, it said.

"This indicates that the rate of spread of the infection is being effectively contained. The cumulative positivity rate continues to decline as the total tests cross 10 crore," the ministry underlined.

The national COVID-19 positivity rate is 7.75 per cent as on date, it said.

## Coronavirus plays dampener this Dussehra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing lack of time for preparations and pending permissions amid COVID-19 pandemic, major Ramlleela committees in the city have shelved burning of Ravana effigies, while others plan to employ light and sound effects to recreate 'Ravana Dahan' this Dussehra.

The Ramlleela Ground at Red Fort, the hub of Dussehra festivities attracting commoners as well as dignitaries, including the prime ministers and presidents every year, will be deserted this time.

"We had applied for booking the venue at Ramlleela Maidan about three months back, but the permission has not yet been granted by the Archaeological Survey of India. It is impossible to celebrate Dussehra with burning of Ravana effigy on October 25 this year as there was no time



for preparation due to COVID-19," Ravi Jain of Shri Dharmik Ramliela Committee said.

Some organisers, however, are trying their best to celebrate the day by cutting down on the scale of festivities as per the standard operating procedures for holding big gatherings amid the pandemic.

In east Delhi, the Dussehra festival held at CBD ground

near Karkardooma attracts thousands, but this year the size of the crowd cannot be more than 200 as per the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) directions, organisers of the Shri Balaji Ramliela Committee said.

"We are prepared with small-sized effigies to be burnt on Dussehra. Arrangements have also been made to maintain

**The Ramlleela Ground at Red Fort, the hub of Dussehra festivities attracting commoners as well as dignitaries including the prime ministers and president every year, will be deserted this time**

social distancing. However, police permission is awaited after which the size of the gathering will be fixed," Satish Agarwal, patron of the Committee, said.

The DDMA had on October 11 issued guidelines for holding gatherings ahead of the festival, limiting the number to a maximum of 200 people and restrictions on setting up food stalls, swings, squatting among others at the venues.

In view of the threat of COVID-19 infection, difficulties in keeping the crowd size

under 200 and enforcing social distancing, many Dussehra festival organisers here will also resort to using footage of previous years as well as audio-visual and light effects to recreate effigy burning and stream it online.

"We will use previous footage with light and sound effects this year as it will be very difficult to control the crowd and ensure social distancing in view of COVID-19," Ashok Goel of Sri Keshav Ramlleela Committee in Model Town said.



## Vaccine politics

Perhaps the BJP forgot that as a party in governance, it is answerable to all citizens, not just those of poll-bound States



Political adventurism shouldn't trespass reason. And governance is about contextual maturity. Besides, certain issues are just not meant to be politicised, especially something as serious as the Coronavirus vaccine, a hope that's sustaining the entire nation which could still end up being the worst-hit in the world. That, too, at a time when an effective vaccine is like the proverbial El Dorado, as trials are still going on and there is no proof yet that it would work on a mass scale. Even assuming it does, every citizen, graded according to priority and co-morbidities, has a right to be administered a shot. And any smart Government would try to sound altruistic enough about protecting all citizens, if not mean it, only to reap political gains. Agreed politics is all about making tall claims that are rarely achieved. Still, for all the eloquence, there ought to be some sense of prudence and judgment. Most importantly, no party can advocate anything that is morally questionable. In this sense, the ruling BJP has overreached itself a bit much, promising the voters in Bihar free vaccines, without realising that it is implicitly saying that official benefits will now flow selectively among those who vote for it as a quid pro quo. That sounds as bad as a public threat. Worse, its promise is not just another instance of poll populism — it's an attempt to manipulate the anxieties caused by the most lethal pandemic to have ravaged the world in more than a century. And when somebody like Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman makes the announcement, it shows that the Government is desperate about the poll arithmetic of the party it represents than pursuing holistic policies, that it is cavalier about the demands of science and health protocols and is unconcerned about lives, leave alone being compassionate. However, this isn't the first time the party has made such questionable promises. There was talk that Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted to launch a home-grown COVID vaccine by August 15 to mark the nation's 72 years of Independence. Apparently, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) was under pressure to fast-track clinical trials but widespread criticism about compromising efficacy for the sake of political expediency and pressure from scientists ensured that a life and death question was not made a mockery of. Yet the BJP's claim of free vaccine doses has already trivialised a grave issue into a point-scoring exercise. A similar announcement followed in Tamil Nadu, where the elections are due next year. AIADMK leader and Chief Minister E Palaniswami promised the shots on the basis of his proximity to the BJP. In other words, tradeoffs of this nature will be made to buy the allegiance of federal parties. One wonders what the BJP's stand would be in Bengal, where it is seeking to dislodge the Trinamool Congress? But the BJP's fatal flaw has certainly galvanised the Opposition. Delhi Chief Minister and leader of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Arvind Kejriwal was quick to point out the plight of the people in non-BJP ruled States while National Conference leader Omar Abdullah called the announcement a "blatant populism" that "shamefully exploits COVID fears." He even wondered if the BJP would be paying for these vaccines from the party treasury. So when the Union Minister of State for Health, Ashwini Chaube, tried to clear the air, it was too little too late. According to him, the Centre had prepared an elaborate plan on distributing the vaccine and identifying those who would be given "preference." He even added that every State would be given free Coronavirus vaccines. But Amit Malviya of the BJP's IT cell further complicated matters when he said that like all programmes, the Centre would provide vaccines to States at a nominal rate. And health being a State subject, the Bihar BJP unit had decided to give it free if elected and that other State Governments, too, can decide to do the same. This is not unexpected, as it has become normal for the ruling dispensation to change its stand on what subjects under the State List can be manipulated by the Centre. Except that the Opposition is not buying this narrative with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) urging the Election Commission to restrain the BJP from "signing a poll deal using the vaccine."

The larger concern is that the political parties will still get away making wild claims during the Bihar elections, the results of which will be announced in November. And no trial results will be available before December, leave aside the prospect of a rollout by the beginning of next year. Would the voter bet on something that has still not seen the light of day? The Government should instead focus on the vaccine administration process and set up a seamless cold chain infrastructure, both of which are humongous challenges. Vaccine preservation is a tricky business as wide swathes of vials could go bad if safety norms are not adhered to and the temperature controls are not monitored strictly. The COVID vaccine has to be stored at temperatures lower than other known vaccines. The Serum Institute has already raised questions on the Government's ability to keep aside ₹80,000 crore for the rollout. Is the Government equipped to handle this without roping in the private sector? If so, how much will the private sector be ready to subsidise costs? Besides, how will those at risk be mapped, considering that most Indians have a heavy disease burden and co-morbidities? Vaccine distribution and administration will be no less of a logistical challenge than the general elections and will require the Centre and States to work together. So before it promises the moon, the BJP should realise that gravity is rude and it alone would land with a thud if it doesn't pursue collaborative politics on COVID for its own good.

## Filthy air?

US President Donald Trump has a point about Indian air quality and it is no laughing matter



People living in north India, particularly Delhi, under truly choking conditions would not really disagree with US President Donald Trump's statement about India's air being filthy. They should hope that this ultimate repudiation of our ambient quality and pollution in a US presidential debate might force the Central and State Governments to finally do something about it. Like it or not, Delhi's air knocks years off the lives of its citizens and if farmers want the sympathy of the urban populace and the media over the new Acts, they will not get it till they stop burning stubble that leaves a haze and blocks sunlight every morning. The persistently poor air quality in India is now officially a global joke and our politicians' reluctance to deal with the issue holistically because they do not want to irritate their agricultural votebank is an even bigger one. Hundreds of crores have been raised as green cess in Delhi; why is this money not being used to subsidise agricultural machinery for farmers in North India so that they can get rid of crop waste in an eco-friendly manner? The lives of our children are being ruined by chronic pulmonary conditions such as asthma and politicians are trying to blame everything under the sun but the most obvious cause. They can't even attack the automotive industry anymore as it has moved to very low emission BS-6 vehicles now. There could soon be medical evidence to prove a direct connection between high levels of pollution and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Say what you will about Donald Trump, he does speak about a lot of things without filtering them through political doublespeak. He was proven right about China and he is absolutely right about Indian air quality.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has the political capital to do something about this and he must because inaction on this front will taint his legacy. The right to clean air should be a given and like it or not, this impacts the poor and underprivileged whom Modi and even Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal claim to stand for the most. The chattering classes with access to air purifiers can afford to live with it. So whether Trump remains in office or the US gets a 46th President, the time for Indian politicians to act is now.

## Recall Frontier Gandhi

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a rare example of community transition, who showed how easy it was to shed the cult of violence and walk the path of peace



JS RAJPUT

India completed the year-long celebrations of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2. One had the privilege of participating in several learned deliberations on the relevance of Gandhian ideas in the present context. In most of these, it was rather a unanimous conclusion that Gandhi's principles, values and his life could give a healing touch to suffering humanity in a world characterised by wars, violence, distrust, hatred, fundamentalism, terrorism, arms race, hunger, poverty, ill-health and much more. Peace, non-violence and religious harmony remain elusive commodities. And Gandhi successfully demonstrated a non-violent path to human dignity, harmony and liberty. He could influence leading personalities within and beyond India, who plunged headlong into creating a peaceful world by following his values and successfully achieving attitudinal transformation within their communities and nation.

The life of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, also known as Bacha Khan and Frontier Gandhi, presents one of the most scintillating examples of achieving a rare community transition from violence as a cult to the path of peace and love as the value of total commitment. His name may appear just as unfamiliar to most young Indians as his role as a stalwart in the Indian freedom struggle, and after Independence, as a fighter for his people in Pakistan, that he waged till his last breath on January 20, 1988. He finds little resonance even in India for various reasons.

In July 1942, Jawaharlal Nehru issued a statement on the happenings in the Frontier Province — now in Pakistan — clearly indicating how scarce the news from there was, and that too, was "often tainted and contained many wrong allegations." Nehru had personally experienced difficulty, during his own visits to the Frontier Province, in sending out proper news through normal agencies or otherwise. He further observed that restrictions on such news being sent out were stricter in the Frontier Province than elsewhere in India. He then revealed a painful truth: "The result is that the people in the rest of India know little of what is happening in this highly important part of the



country." In this very statement, Nehru wrote about Frontier Gandhi. He said: "Few people know about the work that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan has been carrying on during the last six months. He does not believe in ostentation but he has gone to villages seeing his people, organising them and encouraging them in every way. Thus, he has covered the entire province."

Apart from numerous impediments from various quarters, Khan also had to face false propaganda of vested interests. Born in 1890, he was greatly touched by the devastating misery of his own people which, he concluded, was due to the lack of education and consequent ignorance. He started schools and the British did not like it. He was 19 when he was first imprisoned and then it was a life in and out of jails of the Britishers, and then the Government of Pakistan. His historic movement, Khudai Khidmatgar, was launched to overcome poverty and banish the British from India. He was, till the end of the freedom struggle, for a united India.

Khan was inspired by Gandhi's message of non-violence and he knew how difficult it would be to convince his "freedom-loving" Pathans to execute the idea. He had the courage and conviction to accept the challenge and he achieved this miracle. The type of attitudinal transformation achieved by this charismatic

personality could only be termed unparalleled. He gave a new interpretation of force, courage and valour to his people and the community. This, he could do through his creative leadership, deep and thoughtful interpretation of Islam as a religion of peace. He was a man with a universal message of brotherhood and camaraderie. He knew how vibrant the cultural heritage of his people and the region was, and how this cradle of learning and culture sank "into a state where there was no room left for such good work such as education and learning."

While India was celebrating the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, an erudite scholar of post-Independence history, RNP Singh, was searching literature and sources in libraries and institutions to put up an authentic account of the great Gandhian, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. And how India ignored his contributions which had the potential to bring forth peace not only to the erstwhile North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Afghanistan and Baluchistan but to the entire Middle East region, and even beyond.

Singh has established, based on his study, how great was the measure of wrong done to this frontline freedom fighter and an exceptional devotee of Gandhi. In his seminal work, *Durand line: Did India Fail Frontier Gandhi*, Singh very

succinctly summarises: "He was among the very few leaders of undivided India who, by dint of their sincere effort and selfless service to their people, rose to eminence and earned a niche for themselves in the top political hierarchy of the country. Yet in spite of having earned a place among the galaxy of eminent leaders, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan never advanced his claims to recognition in the Indian context." One could say without hesitation that India failed Bacha Khan, his Pakhtoon people and the NWFP. There is no other way out of this but to follow the path shown by Gandhi and Bacha Khan.

During the freedom struggle, Gandhi tried his best to persuade the Muslim League and Mohammad Ali Jinnah to give up the two-nation theory. He failed in his persuasion and India suffered the ghastly tragedy of the Partition. And we still need persistent efforts to strengthen our efforts to cement the age-old mutual harmony between the two major communities.

Inspired by the increasing influence of Gandhi, whose persona and ideas had begun to influence the remote North-Western part of the empire and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, young Bacha Khan opened schools for both boys and girls. He organised young people under the banner of servants of God — *Khudai Khidmatgar* —

who, contrary to the prevalent tradition, decided to follow the Gandhian path to achieve freedom for India and its people. To these highly motivated and committed people, his message was, "The fundamental principles of all religions are the same though the details differ because each faith takes the colour and flavour of the soil from which it springs... I cannot contemplate a time when there will be one religion for the whole world." And this came from a devout Muslim who never missed a *namaaz* and who also had "the spirit of brotherhood" innate in himself more than many so-called orthodox Muslims.

Religious fundamentalists and protagonists of the two-nation theory, expectedly, disliked him and his approach and inflicted numerous cruelties on him and his followers once they came to power. The persona of this Frontier Gandhi, sufferings that he endured even after Independence, must be revealed to young Indians, who are working for religious amity as the core value that could lead India to its destination of honour and acceptability in a strife-torn world.

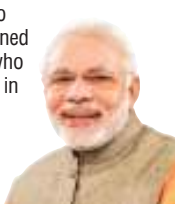
What happened to Bacha Khan or what was done to him is summed up by Mohammed Arif Khan in the foreword to the treatise by Singh: "As an Indian, I feel that what we did to Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Pashtuns in 1957 was very unfair. The Pashtuns had voted in 1946 for a united India but the decision of the Indian leadership reduced them to being subservient to the breakers of Indian unity. The result was that Khan and his followers were treated as traitors and he spent more time in jails of Pakistan after 1947 than in British jails before 1947." All this happened in spite of the fact that the top Indian leadership of the freedom struggle was fully aware of the significance of Bacha Khan's contribution and his unflinching commitment to a united India. Sadly enough, India was divided. Even Gandhi, who had declared that Partition could take place only over his dead body, accepted it. All that the great Bacha Khan could say to the Indian leadership that had accepted the Partition of this great country was: "You have thrown us to wolves." He and his people were left at the mercy of those who never liked him for his liberal stance on Indian culture, history and his progressive ideas about religious harmony and social cohesion.

(The writer works in education and social cohesion)

## SOUND BITE

Bihar deserves investment. Who will ensure this? Those who turned Bihar into 'jungle raj' or those who are delivering good governance in Bihar and are dedicated to the State's development?

Prime Minister  
—Narendra Modi



When I was 21, I felt like the Asian Games was a different platform. There was a lot of pressure because everybody had their eyes on you and the game.

Cueist  
—Pankaj Advani



I don't believe a full lockdown is the right course. To all those enduring these restrictions in all parts of the country, I want to repeat my thanks for your bravery and your patience.

UK Prime Minister  
—Boris Johnson



By the end of January, enough vaccines will be available for all of our seniors as well as our healthcare workers and first responders.

US HHS Secretary  
—Alex Azar



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BJP's new low

Sir — The BJP has sunk to a new low by promising free Coronavirus vaccine shots for the people of Bihar. This only proves that the party is fearful of being defeated and hence is selling the fear of the pandemic to the people. The fact of the matter is that the Coronavirus vaccine is not the private property of the BJP and it cannot decide which States can have free access to it. Its leaders need to realise that they are also in power at the Centre and the entire country's well-being is their concern and not limited to the States that are or might be under their rule. If they want to give away free vaccines, then they will have to do so in all the States and not only in Bihar. After the dismal performance of the Janata Dal (United)-BJP coalition in handling the pandemic, the returnee migrants' issues and not to forget the floods, the NDA is offering free vaccines to woo the electorate. It should instead focus on improving the conditions in core sectors like education, employment and healthcare.

Noor Ahmad  
Hyderabad

### Death penalty is not a deterrent

The Karnataka High Court rightly said that an "attack on anybody's daughter is an attack on our daughter." The observation came in the context of upholding the trial court's order of sentencing seven accused to life imprisonment for the gang-rape of a law student on the Jnana Bharathi campus in Bengaluru in 2012. The court noted that the difference between the 2012 Nirbhaya case and the gang-rape of the law student was that in the former, the girl died but in the latter, the survivor discontinued her studies and traumatised, returned to her homeland in Nepal.

The High Court has recommended amending provisions of the Indian Penal Code to include capital punishment for gang-rape in addition to the existing provisions of life imprisonment with fine. The death penalty already exists for rape-cum-murder cases, as in the Nirbhaya case, but is not applicable for cases of gang-rape in which there has been no death. However, studies don't prove that the death penalty is a deterrent. It could also lead to perpetrators making sure that their



victims are left dead or in no state to make a complaint or recognise them. Also, in a larger number of cases, the accused is known to the victim and the looming fear of the former being handed out a death penalty could stop one's family from reporting the crime. Hence, we need to strengthen the process of rehabilitation.

KV Seetharamaiah  
Hassan

### Noxious haze

Sir — Once again, US President Donald Trump has made a critical reference to India during a presidential debate. Earlier, he had questioned India's Coronavirus data amid criticism of his handling of the pandemic. And recently he called India's air "filthy" while claiming that the US has the "lowest

carbon emission." Contrary to Trump's claim, the US stands second in the world in terms of carbon emission. It leaves a bigger carbon footprint than the majority of the world's population. However, in terms of his comment on India's poor air quality, the truth is that he was just stating a known fact. New Delhi has indeed been blanketed in a noxious haze. Smoke

from stubble burning in its neighbouring States, vehicle fumes and industrial emissions have been turning the Capital's air toxic every winter. It was the world's most polluted capital city for the second straight year in 2019, according to Swiss-based group, IQ AirVisual. Additionally, according to the State of Global Air 2020 study, that was released on October 21,

air pollution caused the death of 4,76,000 new-borns in 2019 and nearly two-thirds of the deaths came from harmful fumes emanating from cooking fuels. The study also highlighted that more than 1,16,000 Indian infants died due to air pollution in 2019. So, while Trump's comment might sting, the Indian Government should take the poor air quality of India, especially Delhi, seriously. The blame game between the Centre and the States needs to stop and adequate steps should be taken.

Bhagwan Thadani  
Mumbai

### Low-key festivities

Sir — The festive season has started but at no cost should we let our guard down during the ongoing pandemic. We will have to celebrate with caution. Use of face masks, adhering to social distancing and avoiding crowded areas should be everyone's priority. This year, let us pray from our humble abodes.

Rishav Vats  
Mumbai

Send your feedback to:  
letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

## An exaggerated clampdown

The youth in the streets of Lagos may not realise that their rebellion could endanger a corrupt system, but those who benefit from it certainly do



GWYNNE DYER

The young Nigerians who were protesting at Lekki Toll Plaza in Lagos recently were not the African touring company of *Les Misérables*. Lekki is one of the poshest suburbs of Lagos, full of gated communities and most of the protesters were literate, media-savvy youths who reeked of urban cool. The army killed them anyway. Or maybe it killed them precisely because of who they were. IZZY@theeventh, who does not explicitly say he was there, tweeted: "They removed the cameras two hours before, turned off the street light and the LED billboard and deployed soldiers to open fire at the crowd singing the national anthem...they brought tanks!! Over 78 people are dead. The Nigerian Army then began to put the dead bodies in their trucks."

The numbers may be exaggerated: One eyewitness told the *BBC* he had counted about 20 bodies and at least 50 injured after the soldiers opened fire. Official sources have denied that anybody was killed, or that the army was even there. But *Channels Television* has videos showing men in Nigerian Army uniform walking calmly up to the barricade and firing into an angry but non-violent crowd. The massacre comes after two weeks of protests, mostly in southern Nigeria, that were initially targeted on the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

Almost all Nigerian police forces are corrupt and brutal, but SARS specialised in robbing, torturing and sometimes murdering prosperous and trendy young people. If you were young, had hair of a different colour or tattoos, and were in a flashy car, you stood a statistically significant chance of having an unpleasant encounter with SARS. The protests began two weeks ago after pictures allegedly showing a man being beaten to death by SARS circulated on social media. Muhammadu Buhari, a military dictator 35 years ago and now back at 77 as Nigeria's elected President, recognised the danger and acted fast. Within two days he abolished SARS, promising it to replace it with a kinder, gentler force — but the protesters had heard that story before, and besides they had already moved on to broader targets.

Nigeria is a powder keg at the best of times, and with lengthy lockdowns this is not the best of times. Protests exploded across southern Nigeria, and not all were non-violent. On October 19 a mob burned a police station in Yaba, another upscale suburb of Lagos, and 120 km to the east in Benin City armed crowds freed more than a thousand prisoners from two jails. The State claims that the protests have been infiltrated by criminals and in some places that is clearly true, but that's not why the ruling political class is panicking. That's not why they shot down well-educated, trendy but law-abiding young people in Lekki. It's because those in power fear a youth revolt that could not only transform the country, but split it in half.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation (200 million people), is really two countries. The southern, mostly Christian half, with all the oil and ports and most of the industry, is around 95 per cent literate. Only one of the 19 northern, mostly Muslim States is over 50 per cent literate, and half the young women in the northern region have no formal education whatever. Naturally, relative prosperity shows the same disparity. Only 27 per cent of the southerners live below the poverty line and 72 per cent of the northerners do. Yet it is young southerners who are on the brink of revolt, because it is the political domination of the north that keeps the ruling kleptocracy in power.

It starts with the army, whose officer corps has been dominated by Muslim northerners since colonial times. That is why Muslim military dictators and elected presidents from the north have ruled Nigeria for 38 of the 60 years since independence, but even Christian presidential candidates from the south are in hock to northern interests. The traditional rulers and religious authorities of the north control the big banks of voters that can be sold to the highest bidder, and it is in their interest to keep those voters ignorant and obedient. The southern kleptocrats, who buy the votes, have an equally strong interest in the system as it lets them go on stealing: One-third of Nigeria's oil revenues over the past 50 years have ended up in foreign bank accounts.

The young men and women in the streets of Lagos may not realise that their rebellion could endanger an entire corrupt system, but those who benefit from it certainly do. Which is why their response has been so extreme. What happens next matters a lot, because 25 years from now Nigeria will have overtaken the US in population and become the third-biggest country in the world. It would be nice if by then it was a stable, well-educated democracy where prosperity extended beyond the south.

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

I THINK I HAVE GREAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL PEOPLE. I AM THE LEAST RACIST PERSON IN THIS ROOM.  
—US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP



HE (TRUMP) POURS FUEL ON EVERY SINGLE RACIST FIRE. THIS GUY HAS A DOG WHISTLE ABOUT AS BIG AS A FOG HORN.  
—FORMER US VICE-PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

# Dangerous delay

In a country where a majority of patients are diagnosed in the later stages of the disease, the Coronavirus outbreak is further hampering diagnosis and treatment of cancer



VEDANT KABRA

Forty five-year-old Ayesha (name changed), a resident of a small town in west Uttar Pradesh (UP), first spotted a tiny painless lump in her breast in April this year. However, the Coronavirus-induced lockdown and the fear of catching the infection in a healthcare setting prevented her from seeing a doctor. Even when the lockdown was eased, her family was too scared to travel to Delhi to seek medical consultation. By the time she reached an oncologist four months later, her aggressive cancer had already hit Stage III, diminishing the chances of her survival.

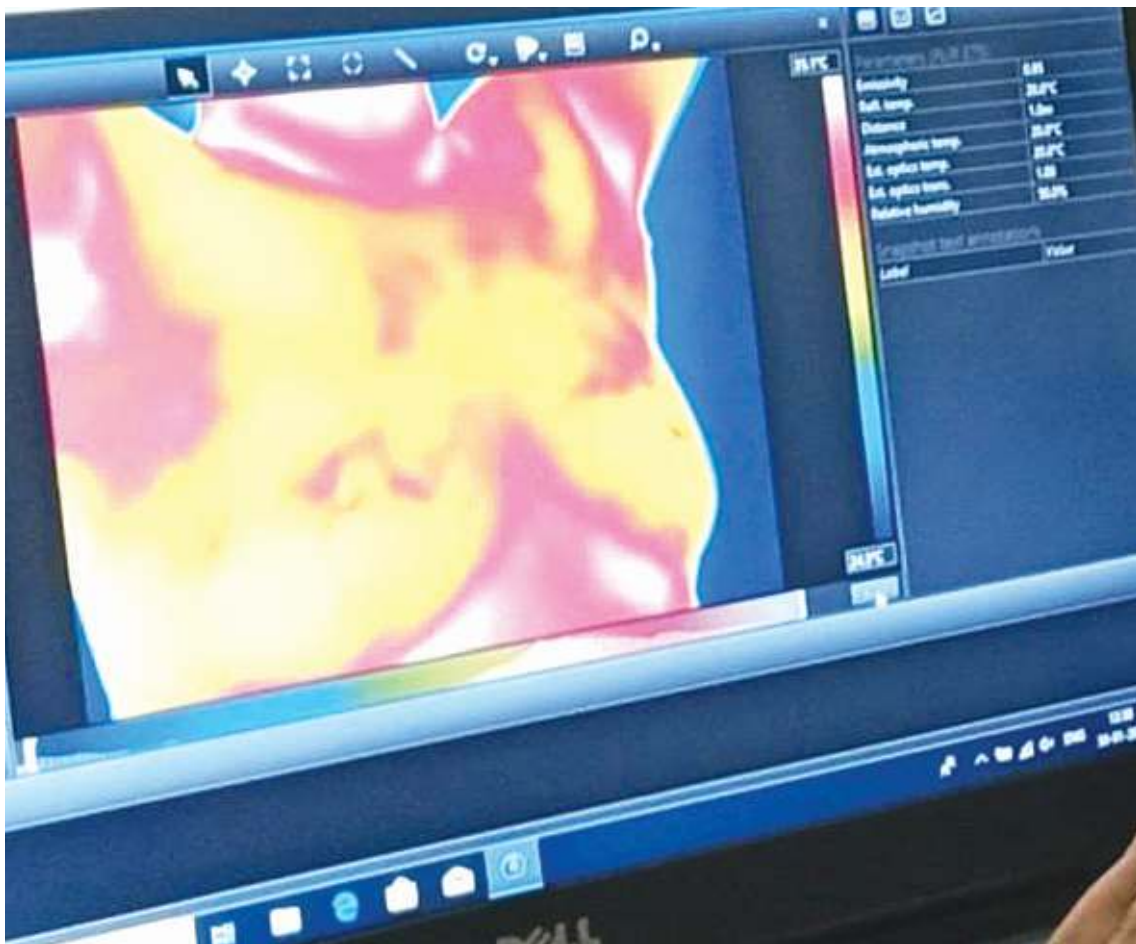
Unfortunately, Ayesha is not a lone case of a seriously-ill patient being deprived of timely treatment due to the ongoing contagion. While we will never be able to collate data of how many such patients suffered delayed diagnosis and treatment this year, it is evident that the number is significant. Patient attendance in oncology clinics fell significantly in the initial months of the pandemic. The number of new cases diagnosed continued to remain relatively low even several months after the total lockdown had been eased. Breast Cancer Now, a British charity organisation, estimated that due to the contagion almost a million British women had missed a screening appointment. This might have led to thousands of cancers going undetected. For a country like India, where a majority of breast cancer detections still happen in the later stages of the disease, the Coronavirus outbreak has further hampered diagnosis and treatment, and is likely to negatively impact survival rates from the disease.

**Rising disease burden in India:** Breast cancer is the most common form of the disease among Indian women and accounts for an estimated 28 per cent of all cancers. In fact, a woman is diagnosed with it every four minutes while another dies of this disease every 13 minutes in the country. In 2018, it is estimated to have claimed as many as 87,000 lives in India. The incidence of the disease has increased dramatically over the last 25 years due to multiple factors, including increasing urbanisation, adoption of unhealthy lifestyles (smoking, drinking, junk food consumption and so on), increased use of plastic utensils and microwave ovens, rise in obesity, drop in physical activity levels, delayed age of child-bearing and reduced breast-feeding.

India also has a high mortality rate because a majority of the patients are still diagnosed in the late stages of the disease and a significant proportion of them are not able to get appropriate treatment. Another worrying trend is an increasing incidence of the disease in younger women. Shockingly, nearly half of the patients in urban India are less than 50 years of age. Poor awareness about symptoms, lack of a universal and comprehensive screening programme, social taboos and embarrassment to discuss the issue are the main reasons behind delayed diagnosis as well as the resultant high mortality. Unfortunately, the prevailing situation due to a worldwide pandemic has impeded diagnosis and treatment of a number of non-Coronavirus diseases, including all types of cancers. Already a neglected subject, women's health has further been relegated to the back-burner as families delay medical consultation and avoid visiting healthcare facilities or undergoing regular disease screening.

**Pandemic or not, do not put health issues on the back-burner:** The Coronavirus is a long-term problem, which is likely to stay with us in the near future. While containing the pandemic and ensuring treatment of all infected people must be a high

“INDIA ALSO HAS A HIGH MORTALITY RATE BECAUSE A MAJORITY OF THE PATIENTS ARE STILL DIAGNOSED IN THE LATE STAGES OF THE DISEASE AND A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THEM ARE NOT ABLE TO GET APPROPRIATE TREATMENT. ANOTHER WORRYING TREND IS AN INCREASING INCIDENCE OF THE DISEASE IN YOUNGER WOMEN. SHOCKINGLY, NEARLY HALF OF THE PATIENTS IN URBAN INDIA ARE LESS THAN 50 YEARS OF AGE. POOR AWARENESS ABOUT SYMPTOMS, LACK OF A UNIVERSAL AND COMPREHENSIVE SCREENING PROGRAMME, SOCIAL TABOOS AND EMBARRASSMENT TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE ARE THE MAIN REASONS BEHIND DELAYED DIAGNOSIS”



priority, adequate policy measures need to be taken to ensure that other serious diseases are not neglected in the process. Governments as well as healthcare providers, both have a role to play in achieving this. It is important to educate people about the importance of not neglecting their health conditions and prevent interruptions in treatment modalities, too. It is equally important to ensure continuation of unimpeded non-Coronavirus services in hospitals while also instilling confidence among people about the safety of hospitals and clinics, especially outpatient departments (OPDs).

However, the silver lining in the dark cloud is that thanks to advanced diagnostic and treatment modalities, survival rates of breast cancer patients have increased significantly globally. While survival depends on a number of factors such as the type of cancer, stage at the time of diagnosis, the quality of treatment, in the US it is estimated that up to 90 per cent of women survive five years after diagnosis and 84 per cent manage to survive 10 years.

However, in India, the survival rates remain abysmally low for reasons mentioned above. Increased awareness and health literacy, regular screening after 40 years of age, adoption of a healthy and active lifestyle sans smoking or excessive drinking, timely and appropriate treatment can help improve survival rates in India too.

**New-age technologies can help navigate the Coronavirus pandemic:** The adoption of new-age technologically-advanced methods further helps improve the quality of life of patients. Now, surgical treatment does not mean removal of the whole breast in all patients. It is possible to offer a breast conservation surgery

in nearly 60-70 per cent of the patients either upfront or after chemotherapy.

Similarly, complete removal of armpit nodes, a procedure done routinely in all patients until a couple of decades ago, has given way to sentinel lymph node biopsy in which only a few nodes need to be tested for the presence of the tumour.

If these sentinel nodes are not involved in the disease, one does not need to remove the remaining nodes, thus bringing down the rate of shoulder dysfunction as well as lymphedema (swelling of the arm) significantly. Similar to surgery, personalised systemic therapy (chemo, hormone, immune and targeted therapy) has enabled us to avoid more toxic treatment in patients with a good biology tumour. Two patients with the same size of tumour can have very different outcomes. New-age prognostic tests help predict the risk of cancer relapse in the early stage of breast cancer with a high degree of accuracy, stratifying patients into low and high-risk categories, based on their tumour biology. Those patients who fall in the low-risk category have very limited risk of relapse and may be able to avoid chemotherapy.

Cancer patients face a higher risk of catching the Coronavirus infection as well as suffering from its complications because of their immuno-suppressive state as a result of the disease itself and due to chemotherapy. These prognostic tests that can help them avoid chemotherapy, if used judiciously, can kill two birds with one stone — patients can avoid chemotherapy, which is immunosuppressive, and avoid visits to the hospital to undergo chemotherapy.

Radiation therapy has also undergone a complete metamorphosis over the decades and modern machines enable us

to deliver more precise radiation (thus sparing adjacent organs like the lungs and the heart from a high dose of radiation) and in a shorter interval of time (as less as two weeks as compared to the usual five weeks in a select group of patients).

In more good news, researchers in Canada have developed a new, inexpensive technology that could save lives and money by routinely screening women for breast cancer without exposure to radiation. The system, developed by researchers at the University of Waterloo, uses harmless microwaves and Artificial Intelligence software to detect even small, early-stage tumours within minutes.

By comparing the tissue composition of one breast with the other, the system is sensitive enough to detect anomalies less than one centimetre in diameter. A negative result could quickly rule out cancer, while a positive result would trigger referral for more expensive tests using mammography or magnetic resonance imaging. In addition to reducing patient wait times and enabling earlier diagnosis, the device would eliminate radiation exposure, improve patient comfort and work on particularly dense breasts, a problem with mammograms. However, this technology will take a while to come to India as it is still at the nascent stage.

In the end, people have to realise that while the Coronavirus is a serious pandemic, they must not neglect their overall health, compromise on regular check-ups and doctor consultations or delay cancer treatment. However, all hospital visits must be undertaken with complete precautionary measures that are the new normal now.

(The writer is head, Department of Surgical Oncology, Manipal Hospitals, Dwarka)

## Closure of budget private schools looms large

With apathy, low Government allocation and high-handedness, school education is becoming nobody's baby



SHIVAJI SARKAR

India's unaided private school education is collapsing as thousands of institutions have closed down and many others are struggling to survive. This may cost the nation over ₹1.75 lakh crore a year, as the Coronavirus-induced lockdown has harmed the education sector immensely. Though the mention of private education conjures up images of swanky private schools with world-class facilities and sky-high fee structure, these are also in crisis today.

However, it is the online, low-budget schools that have been the worst-hit by the pandemic. These schools penetrate rural areas, small towns or low-income localities of metros, according to the State of the Sector Report on Private Schools by the Central Square Foundation (CSF). As

per the recently released Household Social Consumption on Education in India Report, the aggregate household expenditure on private schools is approximately ₹1.75 lakh crore, almost equal to the e-commerce sector. Also, about 50 per cent of the total school enrolments are in private schools.

Though almost all schools, Government or private, are under stress due to the lockdown, the worst sufferers are the virtual informal schools. With or without Government recognition, they serve the hinterland of the country. They have improved school enrolment, especially in rural areas, where the number of students attending private schools has increased from four per cent in 1993 to 26.6 per cent in 2017-18.

The CSF says that the struggle for the survival of private education in the country is intense. Even under normal circumstances, it is not easy for private schools to attract students and during the Coronavirus era, the situation has worsened further as parents refuse to pay fees. Plus, the digital footprint has made online education unaffordable.

So most such schools have either closed down or are facing closure as they are neither able to pay their teachers nor can they afford infrastructure costs. Some had planned expansion in early March and taken loans. Many have gone into severe debt and even after closure, are in distress. Most of these are entrepreneurial ventures by innovative individuals. In Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh, a shopkeeper's son started a school that followed the concept of "pay ₹1 a day." However, since the students are not coming to school, entrepreneurs like him have little option but to close down operations.

The impact on society is severe as these virtual schools employ mostly jobless youth at low salaries. The payment is on a daily or hourly basis. But each school sustains at least 100 people on an average. The youth prefer to opt for such jobs for sustenance as well as for the prestige they enjoy in their neighbourhood due to it. In villages or semi-urban areas, such schools have become the first choice for parents, as they are perceived to be better than Government schools due to the overall care that a child is



given as the teachers (trained or not) are from the neighbourhood. This is making education more mass-based as the official system has many limitations and despite some recent efforts, suffers from delivery problems. Recruitment of teachers itself is flawed as the disclosures from VYA-PAM in Madhya Pradesh and by the UP Government have shown. The Yogi Adityanath Government also found that the district officials interfered in "Basic Shiksha" schools and issued orders for severing these from the district administration. Plus, online education has largely come a

cropper in all such institutions.

The pandemic gave rise to the need for having a digital infrastructure and due to their low budgets, the unaided private schools claim that they are neither able to match up with elite schools nor with the State-run schools, for which the content is aired through television and radio channels and other Government-run platforms. To make matters worse, parents do not consider online teaching to be proper education. They do not pay the schools because their wards are not going there. Apart from that, they find online teaching expensive due to the high internet costs. Another problem they face is that each child needs a smart phone or computer, which they cannot afford.

Apart from this, many children do not find online teaching interesting as there are many glitches and teachers, too, find themselves struggling due to the lack of eye contact. Plus, students mostly switch off the video mode because of the poor network across the country and to reduce unaffordable data use.

The students and their parents find brick and mortar schools more

affordable and fruitful because apart from learning from books and the teachers, the children learn language skills, etiquette, discipline, interaction with peer groups, use of a library and social behaviour. So parents, despite their low incomes, do not mind paying for education at brick and mortar schools.

As per a Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation report, Indians pay 12 times the money for pre-primary education at a private school. The number decreases to about three times at the higher secondary level. A majority, 70.8 per cent students, pay less than ₹1,000 monthly fee, while 45.5 per cent pay less than ₹500. The monthly median fee in an elementary unaided school is ₹958 in urban areas and ₹500 in rural India. Schools complain that at least one-third of the parents default in paying this minimal amount also. The closure of budget private schools can adversely impact "education for all" and multiply unemployment. With apathy, low Government allocation and high-handedness, school education is becoming nobody's baby.

(The writer is a senior journalist)



### FOREIGN EYE



#### CONCERNS OVER AN AGEING WORLD

Globally, the life of the elderly has changed from a simple, mainly localised concern to a systemic, comprehensive and long-term factor related to the sustainable development of the economy and society. With a rapidly ageing society, the challenges that need to be overcome range from the rising shortage of labour to increasingly unsustainable pension funds and inadequate medical and nursing resources. (China Daily editorial)



MONEY MATTERS

Airtel Africa Q2 profit slips 9% to USD 88 mn

Bharti Airtel Africa operations, Airtel Africa, on Friday posted 8.8 per cent decline in profit at USD 88 million (around Rs 647 crore) for September quarter 2020-21. The company had recorded a profit after tax of USD 96 million for the same period a year ago. Revenue during the quarter under review grew 14.3 per cent to USD 965 million from USD 844 million in the year-ago period, the company said in a statement. "Importantly, the fundamentals of our business remain strong and revenue growth further benefited from the execution of our strategy with a specific focus on expanding distribution in the rural areas, investing in our network and increasing 4G coverage, as well as benefiting from the fact we provide an essential service to consumers," Airtel Africa CEO Raghunath Mandava said. The company's revenue on constant currency terms grew 19.6 per cent during the period under review.



ESIC scheme adds 9.3 lakh new members in August

Around 9.30 lakh new members joined ESIC-run social security scheme in August, against 7.55 lakh in the previous month, official data showed on Friday, giving a perspective on formal sector employment in the country. The latest data is part of a report released by the NSO on Friday. Gross new enrolments with the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) were registered at 8.21 lakh in June, 4.84 lakh in May and 2.61 lakh in April, showing an increase in enrolments after easing of lockdown. The government had imposed a nationwide lockdown on March 25 to contain the spread of coronavirus infections. Restrictions were eased from June. In March, as many as 8.21 lakh new members had joined the scheme run by ESIC, against 11.83 lakh subscribers in February, according to the payroll data released in May. The NSO report showed gross enrolments of new subscribers with ESIC were 1.51 crore in 2019-20, against 1.49 crore in the previous fiscal.



IDBI Bank reports Rs 324 cr profit for Q2; NPA ratio down

IDBI Bank on Friday reported a net profit of Rs 324 crore for the second quarter of the current fiscal year against a loss of Rs 3,459 crore for the same period of the previous fiscal. Compared sequentially, the bank registered a 125 per cent jump against the first quarter net profit of Rs 144 crore, IDBI Bank said in release. Total income of the bank fell by 7.5 per cent to Rs 5,761.06 crore during July-September 2020-21 compared to Rs 6,231.02 crore in the same period of 2019-20, the private sector lender said. The bank's net interest income grew by 4 per cent to Rs 1,695 crore during the reported quarter, while the net interest margin improved by 37 basis points to 2.70 per cent from 2.33 per cent. The lender promoted by LIC said it also improved on its bad assets ratio by reducing gross non-performing assets (NPAs) to 25.08 per cent of gross loans as on September 30, 2020, against 29.43 per cent a year ago.



India gets Chairmanship of ILO Governing body after a gap of 35 yrs

After a gap of 35 years, India assumed the Chairmanship of Governing Body of International Labour Organisation (ILO), with Labour Secretary Apurva Chandra being elected to the post. "After 35 years, India assumed the Chairmanship of the Governing Body of the ILO. Labour Secretary Apurva Chandra has been elected as the Chairperson of the Governing Body of the ILO for the period October 2020-June 2021," a labour ministry statement said on Friday. According to the statement, India assumed the Chairmanship of GB after 35 years, marking a new chapter in the 100 years of productive relationship between India and ILO. The Chairperson of the Governing Body of ILO is a position of international repute. The Governing Body (GB) is the apex executive body of the ILO, which decides policies, programmes, agenda, budget, and elects the Director-General. At present, the ILO has 187 members. Chandra will be presiding over the upcoming the Governing Body's meeting, to be held in November 2020.



Tesla testing 'full self-driving' vehicles

PNS ■ DETROIT

Earlier this week, Tesla sent out its "full self-driving" software to a small group of owners who will test it on public roads. But buried on its website is a disclaimer that the USD 8,000 system doesn't make the vehicles autonomous and drivers still have to supervise it. The conflicting messages have experts in the field accusing Tesla of deceptive, irresponsible marketing that could make the roads more dangerous as the system is rolled out to as many as 1 million electric vehicle drivers by the end of the year. "This is actively misleading people about the capabilities of the system, based on the information I've seen about it," said Steven Shladover, a research engineer at the University of California, Berkeley, who has studied autonomous driving for 40 years. "It is a very limited function-



**The conflicting messages have experts in the field accusing Tesla of deceptive, irresponsible marketing that could make the roads more dangerous as the system is rolled out to as many as 1mn vehicle drivers by the end of the year**

ality that still requires constant driver supervision." On a conference call Wednesday, Musk told industry analysts that the company is starting full self-driving slowly and cautiously

World shares gain after last Trump-Biden debate

PNS ■ TOKYO

World shares and U.S. futures advanced Friday after President Donald Trump and his challenger former Vice President Joe Biden faced off in their second and final debate before the November 3 election. Stocks rose Friday in Paris, London and Tokyo but declined in Shanghai. The debate over, investors will again be focused on hopes for another round of aid for the U.S. economy. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said progress was being made on talks to deliver more stimulus but it remains unclear if the Democrats and Republicans will manage to set aside their differences to provide help for businesses and millions of people who have lost their jobs during the



coronavirus pandemic. In their debate late Thursday, Trump and his Democratic challenger Biden managed a more substantive exchange than during their first raucous clash several weeks ago. There were no major market-moving surprises. "The final U.S. presidential

debate was less chaotic than the first but offered little new information to inform the result for markets," Stephen Innes of Axi said in a commentary. "Meanwhile, discussion relevant to the post-election economic outlook was limited, particularly from President Trump." Germany's DAX

**Stocks rose in Paris, London and Tokyo but declined in Shanghai. The debate over, investors will again be focused on hopes for another round of aid**

gained 0.9% to 12,654.60 while the CAC 40 in Paris jumped 1.1%, to 4,904.25. Britain's FTSE 100 gained 1% to 5,843.13 after Japan and the UK signed a trade agreement to replace the pact with the EU which will no longer apply after Britain's exit from the bloc.

K'taka most preferred by investors: BSY

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Friday said the state continue to be the most preferred destination for investors and has attracted the highest FDI inflow of Rs 10,255 crore in the country in the April-June quarter, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "Karnataka continues to be the most preferred destination for investors and has

attracted the highest FDI inflow in the country in Apr-Jun 2020 quarter. The state received investments worth Rs.10,255 crore (\$1,350m) in these three months amidst pandemic," he tweeted. In a series of tweets, the Chief Minister said India's first sector-specific investment Rs 3,540 crore Consumer Electronics and Durable Goods cluster will come up in Hubballi.

Delhi govt okays 100 models of vehicles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has approved more than 100 models of vehicles, including 45 makes of e-rickshaw and 12 of four-wheelers, for subsidy under the new electric vehicles policy. Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said on Friday. "Vehicles priced up to Rs 15 lakh will be eligible for the purchase incentive (subsidy), besides exemption of road tax and registration fee. Electric vehicles having a price over Rs 15 lakh will not get subsidy but will be eligible for road tax and registration fee exemptions," he told a press conference. The minister launched a website having details of approved models, dealers, subsidy disbursement process as well as the network of 70 charging stations across the city. The 100 approved models of electric vehicles include 45 of e-rickshaws, 14 of two-wheelers and 12 of four-wheelers. He also said 36 manufacturers have been registered with a network of 98 dealers across the city.



Kerala CM launches 26 tourism projects

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has launched 26 new tourism projects across the state in a bid to boost the crisis-hit tourism sector. Vijayan on Thursday said the tourism sector in the state has suffered an estimated loss of around Rs 25,000 crore due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said the epidemic arrived at a time when the tourism sector in the state was thriving after overcoming several crises. "Once our state, the country and the world survive COVID-19, Kerala will once again become a tourist paradise," Vijayan said while inaugurating the projects in 14 districts through video conference. He said the state govern-



**"Once our state, the country and the world survive COVID-19, Kerala will once again become a tourist paradise," Vijayan said .**

ment is implementing adequate projects to boost the tourism sector. "The tourism sector was estimated to have lost Rs 25,000 crore due to the COVID-19 crisis, which had also resulted in huge job losses," he said.

grounds, landscaping and seating for children. The chief minister also inaugurated Malamel Para Tourism Project at Kollam Beach and Thanni Beach. The Green Tourism Coplex, modelled on the Louvre Museum in Paris, at Pala in Kottayam, Aruvikkuzhi Tourism Development Project in Idukki District; Elappara amenity centre, pathway to the finishing point of the Punnamada Nehru Trophy boat race and two two boat jetties, the tourism project as part of the Bhoothat hankettu dam in Ernakulam district, the botanical garden and renovation of the tourist centre at Peechi dam in Thrissur are the few projects which were launched.

Buffer stock onion to states/UTs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to cool down retail onion prices that are ruling over Rs 75 per kg in some places, the Centre has stepped up efforts and asked states and union territories to take the kitchen staple from the central buffer stock for retail intervention. As per data maintained by the Consumer Affairs Ministry, retail onion prices in Mumbai were ruling at Rs 86/kg, Chennai at Rs 83/kg, Kolkata at Rs 70/kg and Delhi

at Rs 55/kg on October 22. "We have stepped up efforts to check the price rise. We have requested state governments and union territories to take onion from our buffer stock for retail intervention," Consumer Affairs Secretary Leena Nandan told PTI. Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Haryana, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have shown interest and taking a total of 8,000 tonnes of onion from the buffer, she said, adding that the ministry is awaiting response from

other states. The centre is offering onion from the buffer stock stored at Nashik, Maharashtra, at the procured rate of Rs 26-28 per kg to states who wish to lift the stock on their own. For others who want it to be delivered, the offered price would be Rs 30 per kg, she added. Besides this, the secretary said that cooperative Nafed, which is procuring and maintaining the onion buffer stock on behalf of the government, is offloading the stock in wholesale mandis across the country.

LIC hikes stake in IRB Infra

PNS ■ MUMBAI

LIC has raised its stake in IRB Infrastructure Developers, which operates the iconic Mumbai-Pune Expressway, to 5.27 per cent in the September quarter, the highway construction firm said on Friday. IRB Infra is the largest highway developer in the private sector with an asset base of Rs 45,000 crore and two

Sensex ends 127 pts higher

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex ended 127 points higher on Friday, primarily led by gains in auto, metal and power sector stocks amid positive cues from global markets. After rising 252.63 points during the day, the 30-share Sensex settled 127.01 points or 0.31 per cent higher at 40,685.50, and the broader NSE Nifty rose 33.90 points or 0.28 per cent to end 11,930.35. On the Sensex, Maruti Suzuki was the top gainer, rallying around 4 per cent, followed by M&M, Tata Steel, PowerGrid, Bajaj Auto and NTPC.

Rupee ends 7 paise lower against \$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee depreciated 7 paise to close at 73.61 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday even as the domestic equity market was trading with significant gains. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened weak at 73.62 against the US dollar and remained stressed for majority of the session before closing at 73.61, a loss of 7 paise over its previous close. During the session, the local unit witnessed an intraday high of 73.46 and a low of 73.67 against the US dollar. It had settled at 73.54 against the greenback in the previous session on Thursday. According to forex dealers, positive sentiment in the domestic equity market and weakness in US dollar overseas restricted the rupee's fall.



Rahul Gupta, Head of Research- Currency, Emkay Global Financial Services said, "As we get close to the US election day, uncertainty over the outcome will keep USD-INR spot afloat. On the domestic equity market front, BSE benchmark Sensex was trading 151.26 points higher at 40,709.75 and the broader NSE Nifty rose 45.25 points to 11,941.70.

Daimler rebounds after lockdowns

PNS ■ FRANKFURT

Daimler AG, maker of Mercedes-Benz luxury cars and Freightliner trucks, saw third-quarter profit rebound as the company clamped down on costs and as auto sales recovered after the coronavirus lockdowns of earlier in the year. Highly profitable vehicles such as the GLE, GLE and GLS sport-utility vehicles boosted earnings, as did the economic recovery in China, said CFO Harald Wilhelm. The existing version of the S-Class luxury sedan also did well even though it is being replaced by a new model, Wilhelm said. The company now expects full-year operating earnings to equal those from 2019, before the virus. Previously it said it expected to make a profit below last year's.

NBFCs: Include us as beneficiaries

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have written to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to include them as beneficiaries for availing funds under on tap targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO) scheme. To ensure comfortable liquidity conditions in the system, the RBI on October 9 announced to conduct on tap TLTRO worth Rs 1 lakh crore. The central bank had said the liquidity availed by banks under the scheme has to be deployed in corporate bonds, commercial papers and non-convertible debentures issued by the entities in specific sectors. Banks can also use the funds to extend credit to these specific sectors. The central bank made sectors such as



agriculture agri-infrastructure, secured retail, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and drugs, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, eligible for deployment of funds availed under on tap TLTRO. In a letter written to RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC), a representative body of (NBFCs), said while sections including agriculture, MSME and retail are covered, NBFCs have not been included as a sector which could avail funds under the on tap TLTRO scheme.

Forex reserves touch life time high

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The country's foreign exchange reserves touched a life time high of USD 555.12 billion after it surged by USD 3.615 billion in the week ended October 16, according to RBI data. During the latest reporting week, the rise in total reserves was due to a sharp rise in Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves. FCA jumped by USD 3.539 billion to USD 512.322 billion, the data showed. Expressed in dollar terms, FCAs include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. The country's reserve position with the IMF declined by USD 11 mn.



SP Balasubhramaniyam highlighted the unparalleled power of music in me that germinated me to a path of discovery. The one thing that really touched me was that sir was right there present for my rehearsals despite finishing his dub and that left an indelible mark in my heart. Having said to me that 'This is the mark of a true musician by learning the whole song', it inspired and uplifted me to no end! May God bless his soul.

— MM MANASI

## 'TELUGU FANS MADE ME WHAT I AM TODAY'

**SHIKHA DUGGAL**

If Mumbai is to be considered the city of dreams, so is Hyderabad. It has been abode to several outsiders who today feel immensely at home penning their success stories here. M.M.Manasi, the known playback singer who won a SIMA award for *Rangamma Mangamma* from Tollywood periodic drama starring Ram Charan's *Rangasthalam* has dismissed her fears of not being a Telugu and yet becoming one of the favourite singers here! Chennai born trained vocalist belonging to the arena of Tamilians says Hyderabad welcomes everyone with open arms. Yes, she was an outsider here but no more because this city made her who she's today and her future lies

here. Hyderabad can be characterised having the mere focus on societal development providing all kinds of solution to a newly arrived outsider by minimising the local challenges. It empowered the singer to instil her future over here in all the optimistic ways possible. "From having to visit Hyderabad for vacations in childhood to finding a safe haven here, things changed a lot. This city is pure joy! Now my heart lies here, it seems like I have taken birth again. My telugu fans play a significant role in this due to the abundant love they have showered on me. They never compartmentalised my craft and applauded me for that every different song I sung for them," shares Manasi. Being thankful to friends and colleagues, Manasi managed to learn Telugu which was challenging and sometimes just downright difficult. Recollecting it as one of her fondest memories over here, her friends helped her figure out the best way to learn Telugu! She's a multi-lingual now and with so much to offer she keeps reviving her

drive to learn new things in Hyderabad.

Chennai v/s Hyderabad — one is her birthplace and the other nurtured her professional dreams yet she chooses Hyderabad personally all because of a moderate climate. Chennai is quite humid, she says. A full on shopaholic, she compulsively shops from all the flea markets, exhibitions and street vendors across Hyderabad as that's the one thing in Hyderabad which cheers her the most. She's not some superficial young woman who's looking for expensive shoes or handbags but somebody who has a shopping spree in herself whenever she gets to know that the city's flea markets are around the corner! She strongly believes that the people of Hyderabad see a spark of talent in her, they could witness her best loved qualities. It shows their quality of thinking according to her. She has always received good inputs from her colleagues and this helps her grow. Owing all her success to this city today she's happy about the fact it's full of pure lovers of music who

appreciates all kinds of chords touched or sung. The untimely death of legendary singer S.P. Balasubhramaniyam came as a shock to her as well, she reminisces her journey of having the opportunity to sing with him and receiving flattering comments that made her life — "I consider myself to be lucky, that's it. He highlighted the unparalleled power of music in me that germinated me to a path of discovery. The one thing that really touched me was that sir was right there present for my rehearsals despite finishing his dub and that left an indelible mark in my heart. Having said to me that 'This is the mark of a true musician by learning the whole song', it inspired and uplifted me to no end! May God bless his soul."

Concluding the exclusive interview on the note that Hyderabad is a city that converts vibes into culture, dead matter into lively symbols of pride and biological reproduction into social creativity — Tollywood singer M.M. Manasi has found her awakening moment here. "It's a city where men and women are seeking highest degrees of what they want to be and involving into a fast-paced life while thriving successfully. I look for best morality over here, it's forcing growth and I am here to entertain!"

## The rising trend: One stitch at a time

It's not just the kids and artsy youngsters loving the sewing machine, homemakers are enjoying adding their creative touch to home décor amidst all the time they now have at hand, men learning to fix their shirts, buttons and grandmothers making cute little clothes for their grandchildren, the demand for sewing machines is on the rise in India. What is heartening to see, is that the craft is being recognised as being gender agnostic and many men are now exploring and honing their creative skills on the sewing machine in their leisure time.

Parveen Sahni, Senior VP, Usha International, talks about growth of sewing machines industry in India, sewing as a therapy and more. The sewing machine industry has seen a renaissance of sorts in the last two decades with consumers rediscovering the advantages of sewing, in tandem with the evolutions of the sewing

machine itself — from the manual black machines of the yore today we have a slew of high tech automated sewing machines. This entire transformation in perception and the new age machines has set off a revival of sewing as an art and hobby and Do-It-Yourself (DIY). Likewise, Usha too has also evolved to traverse the entire spectrum of the market, anticipating consumer needs aligned with the changing consumer demographics.

Praveen explains, "While the sewing machine industry in India is substantial, currently the unorganised sector contributes about 60-70% of the business. However, this is changing very significantly in favour of quality brands in the organized sector, given that consumers are realizing the need for quality products and hassle-free after sales service support, as well as value additions like skill training and teaching tutorials — basically the whole value proposition that is offered by trusted and established brands."

With people busy navigating uncharted waters as the pandemic unfolded, working remotely in the absence of professional and social contact, self-isolation due to fear of infection, all began to play chaos in our lives. Anxiety, stress and the strain of dealing with new realities began to take a toll on mental health. In a scenario like this, creative hobbies and passions have played a huge role in helping aid mental wellbeing. Sewing is one such hobby that is as much fun alone as it is with

people. It keeps you busy and as you lose yourself in the moment — unleashing your creativity, doing what you are loving — it helps the brain relax and release the feel good hormones helping lift your mood instantly. Sewing gives you a sense of purpose, a sense of accomplishment, a sense of happiness and joy that goes a long way in evoking positivity. Many people have taken to public platforms to express how sewing helped them fight off anxiety and stress.

The lockdown has led to the surge in DIY hobbies especially for making their own masks and PPE kits. He says, "Even before the pandemic driven lockdown, adoption of automated sewing machines and

industrial garment machines was seeing an upswing in India — for both apparel and non-apparel manufacturing — contributing to the growth of the sewing machine market. As for the demand from the home consumer — it is fueled by the growing numbers embracing sewing as a hobby irrespective of age group. Part of this is led by parents who want to inculcate sewing skills amongst kids to give them a creative outlet and reduce time spent on TV/mobile screens." He goes on to add that many are picking up sewing as a creative outlet to deal with the stress — from masks to accessories, clothes, and home décor, as well as to follow the trend of upcycling and recycling.

Favorable government policies for the textile industry as well as government initiatives to support sections of society become self-reliant in India further helped spur the demand for sewing machines. "Migrants who had to flee the cities in the wake of the pandemic and lost their means of earning, are being supported by their state governments to set up tailoring units to help them earn a livelihood and start their lives afresh. Usha is partnering with many state governments to support such initiatives in skilling people to make them self-reliant," he says. The senior VP says they witnessed a 20-25 per cent growth in demand of their


products during the lockdown.

What is the future outlook for sewing machines in India? He explains, "The future outlook for sewing machines is definitely positive. In fact there is a lot to cheer for us players in the organised sector as there has been a shift from the unorganised sector to the organised one with customers looking at the overall value offering. We are expecting the sewing machine market to double in the next five years. Consumers are focusing on craft and creativity, where Usha is playing a big role — in offering a huge range of sewing machines in order to cater to diverse needs of consumers keen on learning and honing their craft."

**The lockdown has led to the surge in DIY hobbies especially for making their own masks and PPE kits. Many people have taken to public platforms to express how sewing helped them fight off anxiety and stress.**

From kids who love to engage in craft activities and small DIY projects, to the young generation who love to enhance the look and value of their garments by embellishing them to make a personalised style statement, everyone has taken to seeing these days. The lockdown has only aided this newfound love for the art of sewing. K RAMYA SREE talks to experts in the field to understand the rising trend.





### Manoj Bajpayee would take 4 hours to get his look right for Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari

It would take actor Manoj Bajpayee over four hours to get ready for his numerous avatars in the upcoming film, *Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari*. The film, co-starring Diljit Dosanjh and Fatima Sana Shaikh, has

Bajpayee playing a detective who habitually slips into multiple disguises. In the trailer, the actor is seen in the guise of a beggar, an old dab-bawala, a turbaned Sikh, and a Maharashtrian woman in a nauvari saree, prosthetic work in place.

On Friday Bajpayee posted an Instagram video, created on time-lapse and showing the actor undergoing hours

of dress-up procedure for his many looks in the film.

"Here's a sneak peek into the mystery surrounding the national man of mystery! #SurajPeMangalBhari releasing this Diwali," he wrote as the caption.

*Suraj Pe Mangal Bhari* tells the story of a wedding detective agency that runs background checks on prospective grooms.


### Vijay Varma decodes his initial struggle in B'wood

Actor Vijay Varma, who rose to fame as Moeen in *Gully Boy*, has spoken about why it took him so long to find success in Bollywood, though he has been a part of the Hindi film industry since 2012.

Vijay made his acting debut in 2012 with *Chittagong*. He was then seen in films like *Rangrez*, *Monsoon Shootout*, *Raag Desh* and *Manto*. It was only in 2019 that recognition came his way, after he featured in the Ranveer Singh-starrer *Gully Boy*.

He describes the success of *Gully Boy* as an overall triumph of the venture.

"I just feel it's the success of a venture. *Gully Boy* became a splendid success and also



him all these years.


"Basically I was part of projects that didn't meet the thunderous success of *Gully Boy*, so that was the only difference. Also, I was evolving as an actor constantly. I was aging in life and at the same time evolving artistically," he said.

Vijay currently has the web series *Mirzapur* season two coming up. Talking about being a part of the popular show, he said, "It feels amazing, absolutely smashing. I cannot express how fascinated and euphoric I am right now, knowing that the fandom of the show is of another level and that expectation is high. The trailer was well received."

point," Vijay told IANS.

The actor says he still doesn't know what was lacking in

### PREITY ZINTA: Missing those carefree days when pandemics were in history books



Actress Preity Zinta misses the days when pandemic was a word in textbooks and safety was taken for granted.

Preity's new Instagram image has her kissing husband Gene Goodenough. "Missing those carefree days when Pandemics were in history books and we took our life, safety and health for granted and roamed around as free birds. Bring back those days," she wrote as caption.

Recently, Preity joked about becoming an expert at taking Covid-19 tests. The actress is currently in the UAE to support her cricket team Kings XI Punjab in the ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL), and she posted an Instagram video of her getting tested for coronavirus.

### Ryan Reynolds on casting his vote for first time in the US



Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds confessed on social media that he has cast his vote in the US for the first time. However, it was the footwear fetish his wife, actress Blake Lively, revealed in the image that made the post viral.

The actor shared the update on Instagram page. "This is my first time voting in America. I'd like to thank my wife Blake for making my first time so gentle and loving. It was super scary at first, then exciting and now I'm a little tired. But proud. #VoteEarly," Reynolds wrote alongside a picture of him and Lively with their election ballots.

In the image, the *Deadpool* star keeps things casual in a button down with sleeves rolled up and trousers. Lively wears a plaid coat with a turtleneck.

"It was Ryan's first time. He was understandably scared. It all happened so fast. Like, really fast. He

wept. I pretended to weep. Then he called all his friends," Lively wrote sharing the same pictures, but with one difference.

In her image, she had drawn heels on her bare feet.

"Can you tell I was so happy to get outta a onesie and vote. Sure it was an absentee drop off ballot with a mask covering my look. But dammit I exercised my right to vote. And to not wear shoes that ruined my outfit," she wrote.

Reynolds also shared the photo, on which his wife had doodled brown boots on.


"...I don't see the issue," the *Deadpool* star quipped.

In another image shared on Instagram, Lively drew on a pair of brown boots and tagged Louis Vuitton.


Reynolds, who reportedly became an American citizen in 2018, shares three children with Lively. They are Inez, four; James, two; Betty, one.

#### FUN

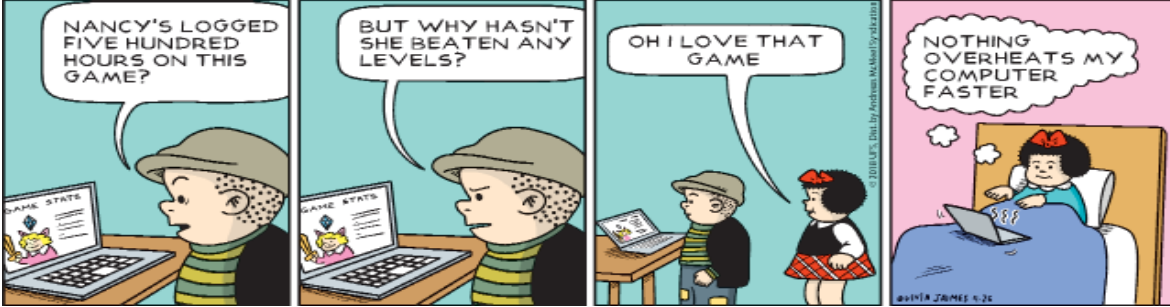
##### ARCHIE




##### GARFIELD




##### NANCY




##### GINGER MEGGS




##### CALVIN AND HOBBS



##### REALITY CHECK



##### SPEED BUMP



##### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		
5					6
7			8		
9				10	
11					
12	13		14		15
16					
17				18	
19					

###### ACROSS

- In a battle
- A baking ingredient
- A clothing size
- One or the other
- A heavy metal
- A small sharp carpet nail
- Lump of gold
- A smell
- A body organ
- A minder of sheep

###### DOWN

- White frozen dew
- Grow vegetables here
- Have a conversation
- A health professional
- A feeling of fondness or liking
- An inscribed flat stone beside a grave
- Speak unclearly
- Fabric
- Protect from danger
- Hold tightly

###### SOLUTION

H	O	R	O	G	E
N	A	I	L	W	A
S	H	E	D	E	D
E	L	N	T	A	
Y	O	L	K	S	
M	I	A	L	M	
O	M	I	T		
A	L	P	H	A	
N	E	P	H	E	
N	E	A	G	A	
D	N	A	P	O	L



Dev on top has been incredible. He has got a similar imposing way of batting as Hayden...The way he conducts himself, you can say 'he is the future of Indian cricket'

We just slipped in the last minutes. A win like this will give confidence to each and every member of the team. We can win the remaining games and keep ourselves alive

The challenge is pretty clear win three in a row and see where we are in the run rate. We have no option. It's about continue to prepare and believe that we are good enough

I am the one who's lucky to get the wickets, but everyone has been contributing to the side. All the bowlers, batsmen and even fielders have contributed in our good performances

## KKR aim to stay in hunt

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Table-toppers Delhi Capitals would expect more from their batsmen after an underwhelming performance in the loss to Kings XI Punjab when they take on a low-on-confidence Kolkata Knight Riders here on Saturday.

For Delhi, opener Shikhar Dhawan has been in brilliant form but even his record-setting hundred was not enough to save the side from a defeat against Kings XI Punjab for lack of contribution from other batters.

Young Prithvi Shaw needs to bat with more responsibility at the top since Dhawan may not be able to rescue the side all the time. Shaw's last four innings have included two ducks.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer too has not been hitting the ball as fluently as he was before suffering a side strain. Rishabh Pant, who made a comeback from injury against Punjab, too has not yet set the stage on fire.

Iyer and Pant, along with Marcus Stoinis, form the backbone of Capitals' middle order. They are vital cogs in DC's wheels and need to do more than just making good starts.

Pacer Anrich Nortje, who has been instrumental in Capitals' superb run thus far along with his South African compatriot

Kagiso Rabada, had a nigggle and missed the last match against Punjab.

If he comes back, it will add sting to DC's attack and in that case Australian pacer Daniel Sams will have to make way for him.

KKR are heading into the contest after an embarrassing batting performance against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Blown away by Mohammed Siraj's furious spell, KKR managed just 84 runs on the board.

It certainly was a confidence-crushing defeat and KKR need to regroup quickly.

Sitting at fourth place in the table with 10 points, they would be desperate to increase their tally to stay alive in the play-offs race.

Even the change in captaincy has not instilled much confidence in the side.

The performance of pacer Lockie Ferguson has been the only bright spot for them amid the disappointment of Andre Russell's poor run.

Russell missed out on the last match due to an injury and it will be interesting to see if the team management reposes faith in him, if he is fit.

KKR needs a collective effort from now on with skipper Morgan, Dinesh Karthik, Shubhman Gill, Nitish Rana all required to contribute.

# DOMINATION

Mumbai hunt Super Kings by 10 wickets to reach on top



Mumbai Indians pacer Trent Boult celebrates with teammates after taking wicket of CSK batsman

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Trent Boult and Jasprit Bumrah's devastating pace-bowling spell in tandem before Ishan Kishan's batting heroics helped Mumbai Indians post a comprehensive 10-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings in a completely lop-sided IPL match here on Friday.

With the embarrassing loss, CSK are all but out of reckoning for the play-offs with just six points from 11 games, while MI jumped to the top spot with 14 points from 10 matches.

Bowling in tandem, Boult

(4/18) and Bumrah (2/25) reduced CSK to 21 for 5 inside powerplay with three and two wickets respectively and CSK never recovered from there, limping to 114 for 9, largely thanks to Sam Curran's 52.

Chasing 115 for a win, Kishan (68 not out), opening in place of regular skipper Rohit Sharma who missed out due to a hamstring injury, and Quinton de Kock (46 not out) knocked off the required runs in just 12.2 overs.

The duo toyed with the CSK bowling attack on a dreadful day for the MS Dhoni-led side to carry their bats through the

innings.

The left-handed Kishan, who has not had a substantial score after his knock of 99 against Royal Challengers Bangalore, was at his attacking best as he smashed six fours and five sixes during his 37-ball innings.

The South African de Kock played second fiddle during his 37-ball innings which had five fours and two sixes.

Earlier, Boult and Burmah produced a devastating pace-bowling spell in tandem to restrict CSK to 114 for 9.

Put in to bat, CSK were five wickets down inside powerplay

overs with Boult and Bumrah taking three and two wickets respectively.

CSK could reach to 114 for 9 thanks largely to Sam Curran's enterprising half-century. The young Englishman mixed caution with aggression to top-score with 52 (47 balls, 4 fours, 2 sixes) in an otherwise pathetic display by CSK batsmen.

Boult eventually picked up four wickets for 18 runs, 13 of those coming in the final over. Bumrah (2/25) and leg-spinner Rahul Chahar (2/22) picked up two wickets each while Nathan Coulter-Nile ended with 1 for 25.

Incidentally, Curran's 43-run partnership for the ninth wicket with Imran Tahir (13 not out) was the highest partnership of the CSK innings which showed the rest of the batsmen in poor light.

CSK had a horror start and slipped to 3 for 3 after two overs and lost two more wickets before the powerplay ended.

It all started with Ruturaj Gaikwad, back into the side, being trapped LBW in the opening over bowled by Boult for a duck.

Ambati Rayudu fell to a short ball from Bumrah, gloving an easy catch to de Kock. N Jagadeesan followed him to the pavilion off the next ball, poking at one to be caught by Suryakumar Yadav.

Faf du Plessis, the only CSK to batsman to shine this season so far, edged one to give de Kock his second catch of the night.

Skipper Dhoni's (16) poor run continued as he fell to leggie Rahul Chahar while going for a big one off a tossed-up delivery after having smacked a six of the previous ball.

Ravindra Jadeja (7) hit a boundary before pulling one straight to Krunal Pandya at mid-wicket to give Boult his third wicket and leave CSK in tatters at 21 for 5.

PTI ■ DUBAI

Their campaign back on track with a hat-trick of wins, Kings XI Punjab will take on another resurgent team — Sunrisers Hyderabad — here on Saturday in a must-win IPL game for the two well-matched sides.

Both KXIP and SRH are on the same pedestal, having garnered eight points apiece after 10 games, but the Hyderabad outfit is a rung ahead in the eight-team standings, on the fifth spot by virtue of a better net run rate.

And both the teams need to win their remaining four games to guarantee their place in the play-offs

It has been a terrific turnaround especially for KXIP after a slow start to the tournament.



## Survival of the fittest

KXIP, Sunrisers meet in must win game to keep play-offs hopes alive

After the initial hiccups, KXIP got its campaign back on track with three consecutive wins — over mighty Delhi Capitals, Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bangalore and the KL Rahul-led side would be hoping to carry the winning momentum forward to break into top four.

While KXIP's batting is in the safe hands of skipper Rahul, Mayank Agarwal, Chris Gayle and Nicholas Pooran, the shaky form of Glenn Maxwell remains a concern.

It has been an erratic season for KXIP so far despite having the tournament's top

two run-getters in openers Rahul (540) and Mayank Agarwal (398) in its ranks.

But the successful return of Gayle has been a welcome relief for KXIP as it reduced the burden on the shoulders of its star openers, especially allowing Rahul to play more freely.

Jimmy Neesham's inclusion has given some depth to KXIP's batting as well bowling unit led by the experienced Mohammed Shami.

SRH too find itself in similar position and needs to win its remaining four matches to seal a play-off berth.

The side managed to keep itself in the play-off hunt with a confidence-boosting eight-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals on Thursday after three consecutive

defeats.

And the David Warner-led side can't slip a bit from hereon if it wishes to stay alive in the tournament.

The positive for SRH is that despite Warner and Jonny Bairstow departing early in the 155-run chase against RR in their last match, young Manish Pandey (83) and Vijay Shankar (52) rose to the occasion and shared an unbeaten 140-run partnership to secure a comfortable win.

Jason Holder's inclusion has added firepower to SRH's bowling attack as the West Indian picked up three wickets for 33 runs against RR.

But it's high time that SRH's young guns — Priyam Garg, Abdul Samad and T Natarajan — own up some responsibility.

MATCHES	15
KINGS XI PUNJAB	04
SUNRISERS HYDERABAD	11
Stats: Faisal Features	

## Clarity about role key to Morris' success

DUBAI: For all-rounder Chris Morris, cricket without pressure is boring and he feels the clarity over his role in the Royal Challengers Bangalore set-up has helped him perform consistently so far in the IPL.

Morris has always been a sought-after cricketer in the IPL and after four seasons with the Delhi Capitals, he is currently with the RCB providing the balance that Virat Kohli's team was seeking desperately.

After missing the first four games of the season due to a side strain, the South African made an instant impact and he has already picked up nine wickets in five matches at a very impressive economy rate of five runs per over.

Along with Navdeep Saini, he has plugged the hole that RCB had in the death bowling department. To add to it, he has also been mak-

ing the new ball talk.

So, what has worked for him this season?

"The break (due to Covid-19) was really nice both for the body and mental freshness. Good to be playing again and it is just lot of clarity and how the execution needs to be," said the 33-year-old in an online media interaction on Friday.

"We do a lot homework. By the time we get to the game, we know what is required. Our plans have been clear and if something falls we have a plan B ready, if that doesn't work we got a plan C and if that also fails, hopefully my over is done (laughs)."

Asked about bowling in the beginning as well as at the death, Morris said: "To be honest, I feel I am in a blessed position. Cricket without pressure is boring. You always want to get tested as a cricketer."

PTI

## DUGOUT



Chennai Super Kings skipper MS Dhoni chats with Mumbai Indian's all-rounder Hardik Pandya during team's warm-up session ahead of the start of IPL game

@ChennaiIPL



MI's Rahul Chahar chats with his cousin and CSK pacer Deepak Chahar before the start of IPL game

@mipaltan



Mumbai Indian's Director of Cricket Operations Zaheer Khan poses for photo

@mipaltan



Virat Kohli: This pic takes me back to school days. 4 guys from the same class, and AB is the kid who's finished homework and is prepared and the other 3 know they are in trouble

### POINTS TABLE

		P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1	MI	10	7	3	+1.448	14
2	DC	10	7	3	+0.774	14
3	RCB	10	7	3	+0.182	14
4	KKR	10	5	5	-0.828	10
5	SRH	10	4	6	+0.092	8
6	KXIP	10	4	6	-0.177	8
7	RR	11	4	7	-0.620	8
8	CSK	11	3	8	-0.733	6

## Azhar Ali may lose Pak Test captaincy

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan Test captain Azhar Ali may lose his job as leader of the side when the team tours New Zealand amidst speculations that either white-ball skipper Babar Azam or Mohammad Rizwan could replace him.

Azhar, who is the most capped player now in the national team with 81 appearances, is said to have lost favour with a influential member of the cricket committee while the PCB Chairman and CEO are also said to be having second thoughts about retaining him as captain.

He was named Test captain last year in October after sacking of Sarfaraz Ahmed as captain and player from all three formats.

With just 12 months in the job, Azhar saw the Pakistan team lose two-nil in Australia before securing home Test wins



## WTC should be extended: Misbah

Karachi: Pakistan's head coach Misbah-ul-Haq wants the ICC to conduct the World Test Championship exactly the way it has been planned even if it means extending the duration of the event due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Misbah's statement came amid reports that the ICC is considering splitting points for unplayed games in the championship cycle which was originally scheduled to end in June-July 2021 with the final in England.

"The Covid-19 situation has hit the World Test Championship series but I would still prefer to see the ICC complete the championship

over Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Then they travelled to England where the team lost the three-match Test series 0-1.

Wicketkeeper-batsman, Mohammad Rizwan who is right now riding on a wave of popularity and

with all teams completing their scheduled matches," Misbah said in an interview on the *Crickit Baaz* channel on YouTube.

"I think the matches can be rescheduled because every team should get a fair chance to take a shot at qualifying for the final," Misbah said.

The former Pakistan captain felt that the league can be extended to accommodate matches hit by the pandemic.

Pakistan's one Test against Bangladesh in April has not been played due to the pandemic. Other countries have also had several of their scheduled series disrupted due to the pandemic.

PTI

recently led the KPK team to the National T20 Championship title is said to be favourite to replace Azhar.

PCB CEO Wasim Khan told a television channel that a meeting could be held on November 11 to decide on Azhar's future and find a new chief selector as head coach, Misbah ul Haq has relinquished the post.

## English cricketers take 15% pay cut

AFF ■ LONDON

England's centrally contracted men's cricketers have agreed to take a 15 percent pay cut as part of cost-cutting measures due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The England and Wales Cricket Board says the English game has already lost more than £100 million (£130 million) — a figure that could rise to £200 million next year.

Bowlers Stuart Broad and Chris Woakes have said recently that players are willing to take a pay cut, which the ECB revealed on Friday would come from retainers, match fees and win bonuses.

The annual contracts, which started on October 1, were understood to have been worth £650,000 for Test stars and £275,000 for white-ball performers in 2019/20.

"We need to recognize that our players, led by captains Joe Root and Eoin Morgan, have conducted themselves with great maturity and responsibility throughout this challenging time," team director Ashley Giles said.

AFF ■ LONDON

Gareth Bale said it felt good to be "loved and appreciated" after helping Tottenham to a 3-0 win over Austrian club LASK in the Europa League on Thursday.

The Welsh international started his first match since his return from Real Madrid and played for an hour before Jose Mourinho gave him a break.

"It is amazing to be back," Bale told *BT Sport* on Thursday.

"It is a big reason why I play well and why I came back. You want to be loved and appreciated. I will give everything for this shirt."

However, he admitted it will take time to find his feet. "I am a bit stiff. It is like a mini pre-season for me and I am trying to get minutes into the



legs," he said.

Despite Bale starting, it was on-loan Carlos Vinicius who made an impressive debut in the Group J opener.

Vinicius started in place of the resting Harry Kane and he made goals in either half for Lucas Moura and Son Heung-min, while he would have also netted himself had Andres Andrade not scored an own goal. Bale made that goal where Andrade put through his own net.

Leicester made the perfect start in Group G with a comfortable 3-0 win over Zorya Luhansk of Ukraine. James Maddison, Harvey Barnes and Kelechi Iheanacho were on the scoresheet.

In Glasgow, Celtic struggled against Serie A leaders AC

Milan who were 2-0 up at half-time thanks to goals from Rade Krunic and Brahim Diaz.

Mohamed Elyounoussi reduced the arrears after the break, but Jens Petter Hauge broke clear to secure Milan's Group H 3-1 win in stoppage time. Milan were so comfortable that they could afford to take off Zlatan Ibrahimovic just after the hour.

### GUNNERS COMEBACK

Earlier, Arsenal came from behind to down Rapid Vienna 2-1 and Rangers beat Standard Liege 2-0.

After a goalless first half Arsenal went behind when keeper Bernd Leno fluffed a clearance on a night he will want to forget but the Gunners then turned the game around in four second-half minutes.

David Luiz put them level with a deft glancing header off Nicolas Pepe's free-kick, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang then tapping home the third Group B points.

The other Group B game was being played out in

Dublin where Dundalk, only Ireland's third ever representative in the group stage, were beaten 2-1 by Norwegians Molde.

In Belgium, Steven Gerrard's Rangers took on Standard Liege fresh from their Old Firm derby win over Celtic.

James Tavernier scored from the spot after Noe Dusenne handled in the area to put them into a 19th minute lead.

Then three minutes into stoppage time Kemar Roof produced a wonder goal from the halfway line, the ball flying over the head of bewildered keeper Arnaud Bodart.

Benfica had claimed the first goal of the night and they went on to beat Lech Poznan in Poland 4-2 in the other Group D game.

Elsewhere, Bayer Leverkusen ran riot 6-2 against French side Nice and Spanish side Granada, in their first ever European campaign, beat PSV Eindhoven 2-1.





After months of speculation, it is now confirmed that Pawan Kalyan will be spearheading *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* Telugu remake, with Saagar K Chandra set to direct. It will roll early next year in Pollachi, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

# PAWAN TO PLAY A COP. AGAIN!

**T**he buzz surrounding *Ayyappanum Koshiyum* Telugu remake never ceases it seems. Although Pawan Kalyan's name has been attached to the project for the past two months, many felt that it was pure gossip as he has films queued up with Krish, Harish Shankar and Surender Reddy to honour after he completes *Vakeel Saab*. But surprisingly, according to an industry insider, he has green-lit the remake.

The insider points out, "Pawan has watched the original version at his home three months ago and was highly impressed with the story and the cop role Ayyappanum played by Biju Menon. Luckily, the rights

were with Sithara Entertainments, the sister concern of Haarika & Hassine Creations, production house of which is family to his best friend Trivikram. Initially, Sithara planned the remake with Ravi Teja stepping into the shoes of Ayyappanum but after Pawan's interest, they dropped the plan altogether and the wheels were set in motion with Pawan as the face."

The insider adds, "Saagar K Chandra, who was spoken to direct the film when Ravi Teja was initially considered for the lead role, has been retained. The stakeholders of the project had a word with him earlier this week and he would be meeting Pawan in a day or two, briefing his vision for the project. He had already tailored the film



to suit Telugu nativity and with Pawan on board, he might tweak the lead role a bit to suit the actor's image and body language. Also, he would make the film a little shorter to that of the origi-

nal." The source notes the biggest challenge the makers face right now is whether Rana will reprise Koshiyum (Prithviraj) or not. "Rana has given his nod to the project when Ravi was attached to act but with Pawan on board, equations will change. However, the makers are hopeful of the lanky actor's participation. He had returned to Hyderabad on Thursday night after his honeymoon and Sithara chief Naga Vamsi will be speaking to him shortly," the source states.

Furthermore, the source informs that makers are planning to wrap up the film in 35-50 days, with the majority of the filming set to take place at Pollachi, Tamil Nadu. "The chances of this film going to

floors early next year are more. Release-wise too, it will be Pawan's next after *Vakeel Saab*," the source concludes.

Directed by the late Sachy, *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*, one of Malayalam cinema's biggest hits this year, was about a relentless ego clash between a proud yet not all-out evil, well-connected and financially well-off Koshiyum and a com-

mitted and occasionally hot-headed SI from less privileged circumstances, Ayyappanum, transforming into an intense psychological game over its running time. It is also being remade



## It's lovely to shoot in the Himalayas: Nag

**A**s we've reported earlier this month, the filming of superstar Nagarajuna-starrer *Wild Dog* has moved to Kullu Manali. Posting a video message from Rohtang Pass, (which is 51 kilometres away from Manali), Nag on Friday said that he is happy to be shooting in the Himalayas. "This is a beautiful morning at Rohtang Pass. It is located at 3,908 m above sea level and is a dangerous pass. It is shut from November to May. We've come here for *Wild Dog*. The filming is going great

in these beautiful mountains, blue-skies and waterfalls. Lovely to be here after seven months; I'm extremely happy. Shooting will be wrapped up in the next 21 days," he said in the video.

A joint production venture between Niranjan Reddy and Anvesh Reddy, *Wild Dog*, directed by Oopiri writer Ahishor Solomon, is an action-thriller, where Nag plays the role of an NIA officer, while Dia Mirza will be seen as the female lead. The likes of Saiyami Kher and Ali Reza are playing supporting roles.

## Son of India rolls; Ilaiyaraaja to compose music



**A**nnounced on Independence Day earlier this year, Son of India, headlined by Dr M Mohan Babu, was launched at his residence in Shamshabad, Hyderabad on Friday. The shoot commenced on the same day as well. The sophomore directorial venture of writer Diamond Ratnababu, it is a joint production venture between Sree Lakshmi Prasanna Pictures and 24 Frames Factory. For the muburat

shot, Vishnu's wife Viranica and children Ayra, Avram switched on the camera, while Manchu Lakshmi and her daughter Vidya Nirvana Manchu sounded the clapperboard. Vishnu directed the honorary first shot.

Speaking about the project to us earlier, Ratnababu had this to say, "Mohan Babu will be playing his age and will go make-up free for the project. He will be seen as a common man who fights against the system after he fails to get justice (over an incident). The film will

not have any political overtones. The script will surprise and keep the audience's guessing as it begins to unfold scene after scene."

The makers have roped in maestro Ilaiyaraaja to compose music for the project, while Sarvesh Murari will discharge duties as the cinematographer.

Interestingly, Mohan Babu has written the film's screenplay, while Viranica will style him, making her debut as a stylist. The film would be shot across Hyderabad, Tirupati and Visakhapatnam.

## Akasaam ... Amazon release deferred over pending NOCs

**A**s speculated, the release of Suriya-starrer *Akasaam Nee Haddhu Ra* on Amazon

Prime on October 30 has been called off. The delay has been attributed to the makers failing to get a clearance from the Indian Airforce, which has been depicted throughout the narrative. The film is a fictionalised version of the book *Simply Fly* written on the life of Air Deccan

founder Captain GR Gopinath.

In letter to his fans on Twitter on Thursday, Suriya, spelling out the reasons behind the postponement, said that since the team had to deal with numerous procedures and permissions while shooting with real Indian Airforce aircrafts and they were involved in matters related to national security, a few NOCs are still pending for

approval. "And we understand the wait is inevitable as this adverse time is demanding more and more focus on the nation and its priorities, than anything else!" Suriya said.

He added, "Unfortunately, the wait for the film's release will now be a little longer than anticipated."

Directed by Guru fame Sudha Kongara, the film, a GV Prakash musical, also stars Aparna Balamurali, Dr M Mohan Babu, Paresh Rawal, Urvashi, Karunas, Vivek Prasanna, Krishna Kumar, and Kaali Venkat. One of the major Tamil releases to have opted for a direct-to-digital release due to the pandemic, it is produced by Suriya's 2D Entertainment and co-produced by Guneet Monga's Sikhya Entertainment.



## RADHE SHYAM to redefine love and rewrite history: Makers

**A**couple of days after revealing a brand new still and the character name of Prabhas from his on-sets film *Radhe Shyam*, the makers on Friday-on the occasion of Prabhas' birthday-released a motion poster of the romantic drama titled *Beats of Radhe Shyam*. It starts off in the middle of a mystical looking forest with nothing but a single train track in the midst of it. Soon, glimpses of famous

star-crossed lovers like Romeo-Juliet, Salim-Anarkali and Devdas-Parvati sitting in a train are showcased. After the animation sequences, the video shows Pooja Hegde and Prabhas dancing out of the train, striking a romantic pose.

Sharing the motion poster, the makers wrote, "Come, witness the magic as they redefine love and rewrite history with their eternal love story."

Presently, the period romance is pro-

gressing in Italy, where director Radha Krishna Kumar is filming scenes on the lead pair and other supporting actors. The unit is expected to return to Hyderabad towards the month-end.

A romantic drama set in Europe; *Radhe Shyam* is being shot in Telugu and Hindi simultaneously, while it will be dubbed into Tamil and Malayalam. Highly talented Tamil composer Justin Prabhakaran is the film's composer.