

OPINION 6

REGULATE NON-PERSONAL DATA

MONEY 8

BANKS SANCTION RS 1.63 LAKH CRORE TO 42 LAKH MSMES

SPORTS 12

QUEEN OSAKA

HYDERABAD, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 14, 2020; PAGES 12 & 3



the pioneer



HOLLYWOOD TECHNICIAN ROPED IN FOR PK'S NEXT?

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RAGHUVANSH, WHO QUIT LALU YADAV'S PARTY DAYS AGO, DEAD

Veteran Bihar politician and ex-RJD leader Raghuvansh Prasad Singh - his June resignation letter to Lalul Prasad Yadav emerged Friday - died Sunday morning at AIIMS in Delhi. He was 74 years old. Less than an hour later a shocked Lalul Prasad tweeted: "Dear Raghuvansh babu! What did you do?" Mr Singh tested positive for COVID-19 in June, after which he was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Patna. He was re-admitted to AIIMS in Delhi, where he was being treated for post-Covid complications. His condition deteriorated rapidly over the past two days and he was placed on a ventilator.



NO ALL-PARTY MEET BEFORE PARLIAMENT SESSION

The traditional all-party meet before a parliament session has been scrapped for the monsoon session, which begins tomorrow. The departure from convention - probably a first in two decades -- is seen as indication of the growing differences between the opposition and Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla. The Speaker has called a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee, which began at 11 am today, to discuss the agenda for the session that concludes on October 1. Among those attending the meeting are Union Minister Pralhad Joshi, BJP's Arjun Ram Meghwal, Congress's Adhir Ranjan Choudhury, AIIMM's Asaduddin Owaisi.



HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH ADMITTED TO DELHI'S AIIMS AGAIN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah was admitted to Delhi's AIIMS last night, nearly two weeks after he was discharged from the hospital. He was earlier admitted to the national capital's top hospital for post Covid-care. In an official statement, the AIIMS this morning said: "Shri Amit Shah, Honorable Home Minister was discharged from AIIMS, New Delhi, after post Covid care on August 30. As per advise given at discharge, he has now been admitted for complete medical checkup before parliament session for 1-2 days." The 55-year-old BJP leader had tested positive for coronavirus, which has affected over 46 lakh people in India so far, on August 2 when he was taken to private hospital Medanta in Gurgaon.



BJP BACKING KANGANA RANAUT IS UNFORTUNATE: SANJAY RAUT

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday said it was unfortunate that the BJP is backing Kangana Ranaut despite the actress likening Mumbai to Pak-occupied Kashmir, and added this was done with an eye on Bihar polls. In his weekly column Rokhtok in Sena mouthpiece "Saamana", Sanjay Raut also claimed there is a systematic effort to reduce the importance of Mumbai, and constantly defaming the city is part of that conspiracy. "This is a difficult period when all Marathi people in Maharashtra should unite," Sanjay Raut said. By supporting Kangana Ranaut and through its stand in the Sushant Singh Rajput case, the BJP wants to win Bihar polls with the upper caste Rajput and Kshatriya votes, he said.



Telangana land law is a structural reform

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TS, AP headed for financial crisis?

L VENKAT RAM REDDY HYDERABAD

RBI BULLETIN EXPOSES GRAVE FINANCIAL SITUATION

Telugu States seem headed for debt trap, going by details in the latest bulletin for the month of September released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The central bank's September 12 bulletin has brought to light the grave financial crisis presently being faced by the Telugu States due to overdrafts, full utilisation of Ways and Means advance, huge amounts being spent on DBT in the name of welfare schemes and other reasons. According to the bulletin, Telangana State took Rs 286 crore overdraft for 10 days in July, while Andhra Pradesh took Rs 233 crore overdraft for two days. Similarly, Telangana had availed RBI's 'ways and means' advance to raise Rs 1,278 crore for 29 days, while AP raised Rs 1,359 crore for 26



According to the bulletin, Telangana State took Rs 286 crore overdraft for 10 days in July, while Andhra Pradesh took Rs 233 crore overdraft for two days. Similarly, Telangana had availed RBI's 'ways and means' advance to raise Rs 1,278 crore for 29 days, while AP raised Rs 1,359 crore for 26

days. Telugu States are now placed alongside Nagaland and Jammu & Kashmir --considered 'least developed states' --when it comes to utilising RBI's instruments of overdraft, Ways and Means Advance and special drawing facility to raise funds. Jammu & Kashmir availed ways and means option for 29 days and Nagaland for 27 days. Both TS and AP utilised 'special drawing facility' for complete 31 days in July. TS raised Rs 1,344 crore and AP Rs 1,163 crore. States take loans under 'special drawing facility' by mortgaging their securities with RBI. After this option is exhausted, they go for Ways and Means Advance option. Financial experts determine the financial health of States based on how they utilised Ways and Means option. That almost a month in July shows that the fiscal situation in both the states is grave. No of the states considered 'developed' has availed OD or ways and means or special drawing facility like the Telugu States, indicating how TS and AP are managing to fund their slew of 'direct cash transfer' schemes, amidst criticism that the ruling TRS and YSRCP in the respective states are building their own 'vote bank' by spending public money at the

cost of state exchequer. Both TS and AP top the country in spending over Rs 60,000 crore per year through 'direct cash transfer' schemes in the name of welfare programmes. These welfare schemes are taking a toll on the financial health of both the States, going by the RBI bulletin. No other big state in the country is facing as much urgency and compulsion as the Telugu States to arrange cash for 'direct cash transfer schemes. Continued on Page 2



STAND-OFF OVER INTER-STATE BUS SERVICES

AP, Telangana to meet tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Heads of the State Road Transport Corporations of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will meet in Hyderabad on Tuesday to thrash out contentious issues that have been hindering the resumption of interstate bus services despite the lifting of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Andhra Pradesh has already expressed willingness to cut down its services while asking Telangana to increase its oper-

ations so as to bring parity. In the first phase, AP said it would operate only 72,000 route kilometers and requested Telangana also do the same so that people have access to public transportation. However, Telangana is said to be insisting on signing an interstate agreement first before resuming the services. Telangana also wrote a letter to the APSRTC saying it had no plans to either to purchase new buses or run additional services (to AP). Continued on Page 2



Modi pats Nitish Kumar for sushashan

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Yadadri temple complex should provide spiritual solace: KCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao has suggested that the Yadadri Laxmi Narasimha Swamy Temple Complex, which is being renovated and developed, should afford both spiritual solace and pleasure to devotees. The renovation works should be done without any hurry or lapses and strictly as per traditions and Agama Sastra guidelines. The infrastructure facilities should be built keeping in view several poojas, services conducted for the presiding deity, and facilities for devotees visiting the temple, he said. He wanted every aspect of the construction to epitomize beauty. The Chief Minister visited the Yadadri Temple Complex on Sunday afternoon, had darshan of Sri Laxmi Narasimha Swamy, and offered special poojas. Thereafter, he inspected the temple renovation works for about six hours. KCR suggested that the



Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao inspecting Yadadri temple structures under construction on Sunday.

Temple Ring Road should be developed like a Necklace. He wanted provisions to be made for walking and cycling tracks, greenery and illumination along the Ring Road. The

entire infrastructure should be built in such a way that visiting devotees, no matter their numbers, have comfortable stay and darshan. The Chief Minister gave

instructions to fill the Gandipet Tank adjacent to the Temple Complex with water every two months by drawing water from the Kaleswaram project. Continued on Page 2

11 deaths, 2,216 new cases in TS P-2

Thousands of students appear for 'easy' NEET

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Thousands of students from Telangana took the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) conducted on Sunday by the National Testing Agency from 2 pm to 5 pm in 112 test centres across the state. The examination had been previously postponed twice due to the pandemic. In all, 55,800 students had registered from Telangana. Several parents were seen accompanying their children to the examination centres in Hyderabad. In view of the pandemic, the authorities took measures to disinfect the centres' floors, walls, doors and even gates. Students were asked to stand at least four to five feet apart. They were given a new mask, checked for temperature, and sanitised right at the entrance. Only then students

were allowed to go inside one-by-one, and that too after the one going inside had occupied his or her seat. According to students who appeared for the examination, the question paper was 'very easy' and had almost 'zero difficulty'. Says Ch Varun, who wrote the exam in a centre at Chilkur, "The paper was very easy, especially the Biology part. I am sure I will get a good rank." Giving an overview of the analysis, D Sankara Rao, Dean of Sri Chaitanya, Kukatpally, says, "Generally NEET question paper has tricky questions. However, this time they stuck to the NCERT syllabus, and hence the paper was very easy. There were three to four questions which could have been difficult for average students. Physics and Chemistry also didn't have many numerical questions."



Bathukamma from Oct 16

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

This year's Bathukamma festival will begin on October 16, according to Vedic experts, who had to determine it at an emergency meeting on Sunday. This clears confusion in some quarters over the period of the celebrations in view of the Adhika Masam or extra month in Aswayuja Masam. Adhika Masam is an additional month that appears once in every 2-3 years in the Hindu lunar calendar. It is inserted to keep the lunar and solar calendars aligned. The celebrations this year will begin with Yengilipula Bathukamma on October 16 and conclude on October 24 with Saddula Bathukamma. October 24 happens to be Durgastami. Vedic scholars conferred via Zoom application and determined that the Bathukamma festival should be celebrated across the state from October 16, according to Telangana Vidvatsabha president Yayavaram Chandrasekhara Sidhanti.

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TODAY

ALMANAC Month & Paksham: Bhadra-pada & Krishna Paksha Panchangam Tithi : Ekadashi: 03:15 am Nakshatram: Punarvasu: 04:33 pm (Next Day) Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work) Rahukalam: 04:45 pm - 06:16 pm Yamagandam: 12:11 pm - 01:42 pm Varjyam: 12:20 am - 01:53 am Gulika: 03:13 pm - 04:45 pm Good Time: (to start any important work) Amritakalam: 02:08 pm - 03:45 pm Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:47 am - 12:36 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER Forecast: Haze Temp: 27/23 Humidity: 90% Sunrise: 06:03 am Sunset: 06:19 pm Current Weather Conditions Updated September 13, 2020 5:00 PM

POST-COVID RECOVERY Chyawanprash, meditation in Centre's new protocol

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre, on Sunday, released post-COVID management protocol for patients who recovered from acute COVID-19 illnesses. The protocol includes chyawanprash, meditation, turmeric as well as Ayurvedic immunity-boosting and wellness-oriented medicines such as ashwagandha, giloy powder, Ayush kwath, and Samshamani vati. As per a document from the Union health ministry, signs and symptoms of post-COVID illnesses include fatigue, bodyache, cough, sore throat and difficulty in breathing. The document suggests an integrated holistic approach for managing patients

who have recovered enough from COVID for care at home. It clarifies that the protocol is not meant to be used as preventive/curative therapy. The recovery period is likely to be longer for patients who have suffered from severe form of the disease and those with pre-existing illness." The Centre recommended immunity-promoting AYUSH medicines (to be prescribed only by practitioners permitted under law) such as chyawanprash, Ayush Kwath, Samshamani vati, warm milk with half teaspoon of turmeric, giloy powder with lukewarm water, ashwagandha or ashwagandha powder and amla fruit or amla powder. Continued on Page 2

Covid vaccine likely by March, will take it first: Vardhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Harsh Vardhan today said that while there has been no date fixed on the availability of a potential Covid-19 vaccine, chances are it may be ready by the first quarter of

2021. He assured the vaccine will be first made available to those who need it the most, irrespective of their paying capacity. Vardhan further stated that the government is taking full precautions in conducting the human trials of the vaccine

and the officials are drawing up a detailed strategy on how to immunize majority of the population. "Issues like vaccine security, cost, equity, cold-chain requirements, production timelines etc., are also being discussed intensely," he stated. On the

availability of the vaccine and its authorization, Vardhan informed that Centre is considering emergency authorization of COVID vaccination especially in the case of senior citizens and people working in high-risk settings. Continued on Page 2

Plasma for sale at blood-curdling prices now!

NAMRATA SRIVASTAVA ■ HYDERABAD

In the initial flush of genuine concern for corona patients battling for life, many a recovered patient offered blood plasma, since convalescent plasma therapy for COVID-19 patients looked quite promising. With a significant number of patients recovering successfully through the therapy, the demand for blood plasma donors too has been increasing by the day, more so because completely reliable vaccine or

drug is still not in sight. Although many corona patients are donating blood plasma upon recovery as a humanitarian gesture, some have started doing it to make money. Volunteers who connect plasma donors to patients share their views with The Pioneer about those donors who are trying to make a quick buck out of people's tragedy. Jagan Goud, a social activist, says: "I recently came across a case where a person who had



donated his plasma to a patient earned Rs 45,000. Since selling plasma is illegal, it's happening very secretly. People are selling plasma for prices ranging from Rs 15,000 to lakhs." Although one might assume that only donors are the culprits in such cases, Siddharth Rao, who has been trying to match patients and donors in the city, points out that the blame for starting deals i.e. 'selling of plasma' is on the patients. He says, "Back in July, when people were getting to know

about plasma therapy, several people put out posts on social media asking for plasma for their loved ones. Unfortunately, several of these posts mentioned that they were ready to pay donors, whatever be the amount. Now, donors are asking the amount they want to charge. In fact, even now, when I receive calls from patient's relatives, many of them tell me that they can 'compensate' me and the donor for the plasma." Continued on Page 2

Monday Mirchi

All in awe of 'AI' lectors.

A new name, nay just initials, is making rounds in the top administration of AP, though nobody knows where exactly he fits in when it comes to the pecking order or power structure, be it real or just public facing. All they know is that he, like James Bond, is a smooth operator oozing charm that is simply irresistible. The name is Avinash Iragavarapu, to put it a la Bond. Hangers-on at CMO know that he is not one of those powermongers who, gnashing their teeth, bark orders and expect total, self-effacing surrender, not just obedience. Avinash is a rather cool dude whose reputation as an election campaign strategist arrived before him. Never the one who blows his own trumpet, Avinash is naturally less known, even in the higher echelons of babudom. Not many know that he, apart from being an ace election strategist, is close to American President Donald Trump and has worked as the executive director of the Arizona Republican Party. He was associated with Kamal Haasan's political party Makkal Needhi Maiam for some time.

Nicknamed 'AI' (his smart initials, not the IT variant) in the corridors of power, he has been scanning political developments in the country and providing strategic inputs for helping YSRCP adopt advance as well as counter strategies. Avinash has been privy to most important meetings held by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, including highly confidential intelligence briefings. Given his unassuming personality and rare trait to keep an extremely low profile, it is not a co-incidence that the media has missed his otherwise commanding presence during closed-door confabulations. Scribes with bull-dog tenacity can and do ferret out such concealed power centers. What if they are, or choose to be, fully insulated from media and public glare?

Chicken or egg?

Which came first, the chicken or egg? Nobody can say anything on that. Same is the administrative dilemma about the district collectors against whom State Election Commissioner N Ramesh Kumar has raised objections, asking the state government to transfer them. For, the government now does not want to transfer them and would prefer to hold the local bodies' elections while retaining them as heads of respective districts. At the same time, Ramesh, who was prematurely dislodged from his position and got it back only after moving heaven and earth, is bent upon having those officers transferred, come what may. People have seen his obstinacy while going great lengths to have his way. Not unexpectedly, he appears disinclined to his give nod for conducting the local bodies' elections unless the babus on his move list are given their transfer orders. So, who will blink first? This is a million-dollar question now. For those who came late, the intelligence wing of the state government has already submitted a report on all collectors and their activities in the backdrop of some adverse media report on couple of col-

Partha is new Ratha Saradhi of poll body

Although Chief Minister K Chandrababoo Naidu is known for making calculated and personally calibrated moves when it comes to crucial appointments, for a change may be, this time Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivasa Reddy played a key role in making retired IAS officer Partha Sarathi the State Election Commissioner. A surprise decision, it was welcomed by sons of the soil. Although Telangana State was formed six years back, babus hailing from the state have nursed a grudge that all significant positions are held by officers from northern states, noticeably those belonging to higher castes.

Several BC and SC officers from Telangana have made noises about this, without knowing the reach of their voices. Few officers even represented previous chief secretaries on this. All these days they were sore that nothing is happening. Luckily, Partha did not join that group which saved the day for him. Now, some of them have the audacity of hope to whisper among themselves that Partha can jolly well be the Ratha Saradhi of Telangana Rashtra Samiti in the upcoming polls to GHMC and GWMC as well as Khammam and Siddipet municipalities. It is a different matter that Partha caught Pocharam's eye as both hail from Nizamabad District. And, luckily for the pink party, he belongs to a BC community. Now, other officers who retired recently are also hoping that good days are ahead for Telangana biddala.

Tons of theory, an ounce of practice

In AP, Covid-19 cases are scaling new heights, with the state now occupying the second place in the country on the caseload front, next only to Maharashtra. To overcome this crisis-like situation, the Health Department has embarked on a massive 'capacity-building' exercise. None other than Health Commissioner Katamaneni Bhasker is holding regular video conferences between 8 am and 11 am, giving his suggestions, call it wholesale, wholesome or whatever.

Next comes advice-laden directive from the district collectors who independently hold video conferences with doctors between 1 pm and 3 pm. After the doctors on the learning curve have a quick tea break, Special Chief Secretary Jawahar Reddy will take over, hearing problems and suggesting remedies between 3 pm and 5 pm. After all these VC's, Chief Secretary Neelam Sawhney will review the situation in yet another video conference, most probably between 7 pm and 9 pm. To cap it all, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy interacts with the doctors once a week to improve the situation. After watching all this, one senior officer, gritting his pearly whites, muttered: "What happens to patients if everyone is in video conferences?"

Beware of red mercury fraud, warn cops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Social media has become a hub for fake news these days. So many rumours and speculations are also transmitted on chatting apps like WhatsApp. The latest rumor that's taking a tour on the internet is the red mercury, which is mostly found on old electronics such as CRT televisions and FM radios.

Some fraudsters are offering Rs 1 crore for red mercury found in old radio and TV sets. According to the propaganda by these unscrupulous elements on social media, gift running into several lakhs of rupees or crores are being announced on social media if anyone fetches the red valve which is found in TVs and radios dating back to 25 to 30 years.

People were seen discussing about in Karimnagar, Peddapalli, Mancherial, Asifabad, Adilabad, Warangal and Siddipet districts about the red mercury. Ever since the social media campaign gained ground, the enquiries being made with TV mechanics'



shops has increased. People are expressing their readiness to buy old TV sets at any cost.

Therefore, the TV mechanics are also on the look out for the old TV sets. According to the social media propaganda, the red mercury has capacity to identify metals. The unscrupulous elements say that it would be able to identify the hidden treasures underground. The valve has capacity to identify underground gold and other treasures.

Several have formed a multi-level team to procure the red mercury, but they did not have any clarity on who will buy these valves. Some people were seen buying the red mercury even at the extent of borrowing money from others.

However, the police advised the people to not to give credence to such propaganda. The police described it as a kind of fraud on the lines of the rice pulling. The police advise people to not to entertain anyone coming forward to dig to unearth hidden treasures. The gangs will loot money in the name of digging the treasures, the police warned.

TS, AP headed...

Continued from Page 1

Going for OD in itself is antithetical to sound economics. Normally, any organisation, individual or governments goes for OD after their bank balance turns 'zero' or if it doesn't have adequate balance to meet their immediate financial commitments. An overdraft facility is a credit agreement made with a bank that allows an account holder to use or withdraw more money than what they have in their account up to the approved limit.

Following corona-induced financial crisis since mid-March, the RBI had relaxed norms for state governments facing short-term mismatches by extending the duration of overdraft facility available until 30 September.

The RBI extended the number of days for which a state or Union territory (UT) can avail of overdraft facility to 21 work-

ing days from the previous 14 days. Similarly, the number of days for which a State/UT can be in overdraft in a quarter has been eased to 50 working days from 36.

The central bank has also increased the Ways and Means Advances or WMA limit by 30% for all states and Union territories to enable them to tide over the crisis caused by the Covid-19 outbreak. WMA is a temporary liquidity arrangement with the central bank, which enables the Centre and states to borrow money up to 90 days from RBI to tide over their liquidity mismatches.

Typically, the government can avail the immediate cash from RBI at the existing repo rate under the WMA facility. But it has to return it within 90 days. If the WMA exceeds 90 days, if would be treated as overdraft. RBI has now extended this overdraft facility by 7 days.

Plasma for...

Continued from Page 1

Things have become so unethical that some people have even got infected with COVID-19, just so that they can sell their plasma to patients and make some money.

Akhil Ennamsetty, first donor for plasma trials in the state, however, says that the number of people selling plasma has come down significantly. "Back in the days people weren't too sure about whom to approach. But now, each person knows at least one person who was infected and got cured of COVID-19. So, there are fewer cases of selling plasma now," he says, adding that though many people had raised their voice against this a few months back, the Telangana government had not taken any steps to stop the practice.

11 deaths, 2,216 new cases in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana reported 2,216 new Covid-19 cases, pushing the infection count to 1,57,096, while 11 fatalities took the toll to 961 on Sunday, the state government said. The active cases under treatment stood at 31,607 after cumulative recoveries of 1,24,528, a bulletin providing data as of 8 PM on September 12, said. Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC)

accounted for the highest number of cases with 341, followed by Rangareddy (210), Medchal Malkajgiri (148), Nalgonda (126), Karimnagar (119), Khammam (105) and Warangal Urban (102) districts. All 33 districts reported cases in double digits. As many as 56,217 samples were tested on September 12, taking the total number of specimens examined so far to 21,34,912. The samples tested per million population was 57,504, it said.

AP, Telangana to meet...

Continued from Page 1

As such, it only insisted that AP reduce its own services to curtail the route kilometers. The main demand from Telangana is that buses be operated on route-wise, kilometer-wise parity basis.

"We are accepting (to bring in) parity but there is a demand from the public (for bus services). Hence we asked them to increase their services while offering to reduce our services to bring parity," Principal Secretary (Transport) M T Krishna Babu, who also holds additional charge as Managing Director of APSRTC, said on Sunday. He pointed out that any interstate agreement for running bus services would be on parity basis only. "We too will run the same. But if they are not ready to increase the services and also want us to cut ours, it is the people who suffer. Private operators will take advantage," the Principal Secretary pointed out.

Covid vaccine likely by...

Continued from Page 1

"This shall be done after a consensus has been reached", he said, according to an official statement. To allay fears regarding the safety aspect of the vaccines, he said, "I shall be the first to offer myself for receiving COVID vaccine, if people have a trust deficit."

He also noted that a safe and effective vaccine will help in establishing immunity to COVID-19 at much faster pace as compared to the natural infection. It is hoped that a consensus will emerge in next few months over the desired level of protective herd immunity in any community, he stated.

Elaborating on the vaccine candidates and their development in India, Vardhan added that Department of Bio Technology (DBT) as well as Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) have been pro-active in responding to the emerging situation to support advancement of vaccine candidates.

Chyawanprash, meditation...

Continued from Page 1

Chyawanprash, the protocols stated, is highly recommended (under the direction of registered Ayurveda physician) as it is believed to be effective in the post-recovery period. The follow-up protocol, as mandated by the Centre: At individual level Continue COVID-appropriate

behaviour (use of mask, hand and respiratory hygiene, physical distancing). Drink adequate amount of warm water (if not contra-indicated) Take immunity-promoting AYUSH medicines prescribed by a qualified practitioner of AYUSH "If health permits, regular household work to be done. Professional work to be resumed in a graded manner.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Moderate to strong sentiment prevailed in the global markets as the hostilities between China and Taiwan increased prompting the US to dispatch its seventh fleet in aid of Taiwan. On the other hand, following the agreement between the Foreign Ministers of India and China for a phased peace accord, tensions between these two countries eased. Consequently, New York gold has seen a slight increase and finally closed at US \$ 1,940.10 (per ounce), while silver closed at \$ 26.70 (per ounce). Platinum increased and closed at \$ 912 (per ounce) and Palladium appreciated and closed at \$ 2,199 (per ounce). Other economic parameters

Sentiment strong in global markets

remained moderate. Brent closed at US\$ 39.83 (per barrel), while Crude MCX oil was quoted at Rs.2,743 (per barrel). Gold MCX stood at Rs.51,319 (per 10 gms), while MCX Silver appreciated and closed at Rs.67,928 (per kg). Copper MCX closed at Rs.524.10 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 38854.55 and 11464.45 points. Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were: US\$: Rs.73.48, British Pound: Rs.94.01, Euro: Rs.87.05, Singapore \$:

Rs.53.71, Swiss Franc: Rs.80.84, Australian \$: Rs.53.52, Saudi Riyal: Rs.19.59, New Zealand Dollar: Rs.49.06, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.240.10, Omani Rial: Rs.190.87 and UAE Dirham: Rs.20.01, Japanese Yen: Rs.0.69, Hong Kong Dollar: Rs.9.48.

In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) appreciated by Rs.140 and closed at Rs.53,440 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold too, followed suit and was quoted in the range of Rs.48,880 - 48,980 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) too appreciated by Rs.850 and closed at Rs.67,900 (per kg).

COMMODITIES

The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities continued to remain strong. Rythu Bazars and the various commodity markets located in Begum Bazar, Kishangunj, Mukthyargunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir Alam Mandi, Dilsukhnagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally and General Bazar continued to witness brisk activity.

During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and

commodities like chillies and garlic firmed up marginally, while staple food grains and common edible oils remained unchanged. Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed gourd, snake gourd, lady's finger, cucumber, potatoes, onions, tomatoes and French beans and leafy vegetables flared up further in the range of 10% to 18%. The NECC wholesale price of egg in Hyderabad appreciated by Rs.83 and closed at Rs.501 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.560 was recorded at Pune, while Ludhiana recorded the lowest of Rs.472.

Yadadri temple complex...

Continued from Page 1

He said that the entire Temple Town, Temple Complex should have greenery in abundance and for this purpose more trees should be grown. Specialized architects should be entrusted with the job of beautifying the Gandipet Tank and its peripheral area as a tourist spot.

KCR wanted works on the construction of 365 quarters to be expeditiously completed. He suggested that cottages should be constructed in another 200 acres. He asked officials to quickly complete the construction of Kalyana Katta, Bus Stand, Pushkarini

Railing and roads. The Chief Minister instructed the R&B E-in-C to remove contractors not executing the works as per schedule.

The Chief Minister wanted RTC officials to provide free bus service to devotees from the bus stand to the Temple. He suggested that specialist goldsmiths from Pembarthy should be engaged to provide gold cover to the Temple Tower (Rajagopuram) and the main gates. The Chief Minister instructed Principal Secretary (Finance) Ramakrishna Rao over phone to release in the next three weeks Rs 75 crore for the temple works. KCR pointed out

that Yadadri was famous for Satyanarayana Swamy Vratam. Hence, provision should be made and facilities built in the temple complex to enable 4,000 people perform the Satyanarayana Swamy Vratam at one go. He wanted special constructions so that drain water from the Temple, Temple city flows out of the city. Parking lots should be developed in such way that they can accommodate 5,000 cars and 10,000 two-wheelers at a time.

Gita, R&B E-in-Cs Ganapathi Reddy, Ravinder Rao, Architect Ananda Sai, Sathapathy Dr Velu and others participated.

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

'WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA' ... ARE NEITHER DEAF NOR DUMB!

The Constitution of India's preamble begins with the words: "We, the people of India ..." and thereafter goes on to describe lofty ideals such as liberty, unity, integrity, fraternity, secularism, socialism etc. Then, the Constitution elaborately deals with the mechanism to translate these ideals in the subsequent pages.

But not much has been done to ensure that the Constitutional requirements are followed sincerely, honestly and vigorously not only by those who are made to swear by it but also the well-meaning citizens of our great country. In the past seventy years, we have been waiting for the 'true spirit' of the Constitution to win over all stakeholders.

It is, indeed, regrettable that of late vested interests, with the open support of terrorists, extremists, jihadis and anti-nationals, have declared a full-fledged war on the country, thereby making a mockery of the ideals enshrined in the Constitution. These elements are leaving no stone unturned to humiliate the government, law-

enforcing agencies, houses of people's representatives like Parliament and Assemblies and even defence and security agencies.

Our Constitution may not be a perfectly ideal law book, but truly speaking, it is nearer to be so. What the Constitution as well as all the laws made under it lack are stringent penal provisions to deal with aforementioned divisive and violent elements. The Constitution, in a bid to grant much aspired freedom to the people of this great country, which had suffered oppression and slavery for several centuries at the hands of foreign rulers, did not focus on the darker side of such a magnanimous gift. The result is now before us.

Today, an average citizen finds himself threatened by goons masquerading as political workers. The battles of political supremacy are

fought not in the houses of elected peoples' representatives, but on the streets. In the melees, they don't spare even the Judiciary. Scores of cases are filed in courts, including the high courts and the Supreme Court, just to settle scores with political opponents. And, whenever they lose, these rowdy elements do not spare even the judges of courts, including those of the apex court.

They brand them as corrupt, biased and dishonest. Such outbursts are made designedly to tarnish the image of the country within and out of India. Yet, the powers that be, instead of coming down heavily on such elements with fissionary tendencies, give them kid-glove treatment that only buoys up their resolve to indulge in more destructive activities. In such a piquant situation, an ordinary citizen is left high and dry!

And, considering the action-

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reaction principle, by any measuring rod, the reaction from the ruling class has always been minimal, if not negligible. One can understand the reasons for such a lackadaisical approach of the UPI governments. However, since 2014, when the NDA government assumed power at the Centre and in most of the States, what constraints were there which prevented the NDA government to go hammer and tongs against Kashmiri, Assamese and Mopla jihadis, false protesters against CAA and NRC, killers of sadhus and sanyasis in Palghar and elsewhere, foul-mouthed communal

pigmies who challenged the majority community on their perceived strength of 20 crore Muslims; State governments which either indulged in misusing the police force against top leaders of the ruling NDA dispensation or their supporters and vandalized shamelessly? There are umpteen examples of such incidents where the ruling combine has miserably failed to show its guts and deal with the fragmented opposition lot for indulgence in violence.

Hence, let all political parties and their political gurus take it seriously that they have committed a great blunder by taking the peo-

ple of this great country for granted. Today, the people are watching the turn of events with awe and fear, but they have not given up the hope. They are just waiting for a chance to teach such unworthy politicians a fitting lesson at an appropriate time because today they may be finding themselves helpless but they are certainly not deaf or dumb or incapable to play their inning.

Karnataka HC on Muslim law In a remarkable judgment on the second marriage of a Muslim man, the Karnataka High Court has observed that even though contracting a second marriage by a Muslim husband is lawful, it often causes "enormous cruelty" to the first wife, justifying her claim for divorce.

A division bench comprising Justice Krishna S. Dixit and Justice P. Krishna Bhat observed: "Merely because an act is lawful, it does not per se become justifiable in married life; for example, of course subject to all just exceptions, smoking

and drinking are not lawful; snoring too, is not; but still in certain circumstances they may amount to cruelty to a sensitive spouse; on the same analogy though contracting a second marriage by a Muslim may be lawful, but it more often than not, causes enormous cruelty to the first wife, justifying her claim for divorce."

Hearing the appeal from the Family Court in Yusuf Patel vs. Ramjanbi, the bench also chastised the appellant husband for having failed to protect his wife from the harassment by his parents.

TS ASSEMBLY PASSES NEW REVENUE BILLS

The Telangana State Legislative Assembly on September 11 passed the Records of Rights in Land and Pattadar Passbooks Bill, 2020 and the Abolition of Village Revenue Officers' (VROs) Bill.

The new law aims at rendering the land owners the much-awaited ease of owning, using and alienating their lands. The corruption

BAI BETS FOR THE NEEDY LAWYERS

The Bar Association of India (BAI), at its virtual meeting of the General Council held on September 12, adopted a Resolution seeking appropriate relief to the needy lawyers throughout the country who have suffered loss of practice due to the current Covid-19 pandemic.

At the meeting, Prashant Kumar, former president of LAWASIA, was elected as the President, while Dr. Anandita Pujari got second term of two years as the General Secretary. Besides, six Joint General Secretaries and twelve Vice Presidents too were elected as office bearers. Standing ovation was given to the outgoing President Dr. Lalit Bhasin.

Despite sharp rise in Covid cases, demand wanes for hand sanitisers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The sales of hand sanitisers have come down from the last week of August. It is very disappointing as the distributors are returning sanitisers to companies as the sales dropped to 30 per cent of what it was in June and July. Prior to outbreak of Coronavirus, sanitisers were only limited to hospitals and doctors.



In the wake of the Corona threat, sanitiser has become one of the most essential products. People purchased them and kept them everywhere, including their cars and even they carried small bottles to sanitise their hands frequently. In one way, it became an essential commodity.

Somehow at once the people developed dislike for the sanitiser, after which the sales dropped to 30 per cent.

There was severe shortage of sanitisers in the months of June and July. Now there are no takers for sanitisers. As such the distributors are returning the stocks to the manufacturers.

The manufacturing sector reeled under severe crisis in the wake of the Coronavirus. While small manufacturing

units suffered severe blow due to the Covid impact, some of them used the situation as a Godsent opportunity and started manufacturing sanitisers, setting aside their main production activities. Prior to the Coronavirus, only two or three prominent distributors distributed sanitisers in the market.

After the spread of Coronavirus, at least 10,000 persons became distributors of sanitisers. Whereas some firms, used the revenue gained with the sale of sanitisers to pay wages to their employees.

In June, 5 litre cans, each selling at Rs 2,000, were sold like hot cakes. Daily the distributors used to sell at least 8 to 10 such cans. Similarly, they used to sell 100 ml sanitiser bottles up to 300 a day and 200 ml bottles up to 100-200 a day.

In July, the Centre regulated sanitiser prices as such the prices dropped to Rs 1,000 a can. By August, the cans are being sold at Rs 400 a piece.

These cans have piled up in medical shops unsold. Therefore, the shops are forced to return them to the distributors or manufacturers.

This is attributed to people reducing their fear for Coronavirus, unlike the early days of the outbreak, even as the cases increase enormously these days.

People are of the view that the Coronavirus is similar to an ordinary fever. The recovery rate in Telangana has reached 77 per cent. The death rate due to the virus is abysmally low. As a result, the people are no longer panic buying sanitisers, leading to drop in the sales.

Heavy rains to continue for next 48 hours in state: IMD

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecasted heavy to very heavy rains in different parts of Telangana for the next 4 days.

IMD said Adilabad, Komarambheem, Mancherial, Peddapalle, Karimnagar, Siddipet, Jayashankar Bhupalapalle, Mulugu, Bhadradi Kothagudem, WarangalRural Warangal Urban, Mahabubabad, Jangaon, Bhuvanagiri, Khammam, Suryapet and Nalgonda will receive heavy to very heavy rains in the next 48 hours.

It also predicted thunderstorm accompanied by lightning to occur at isolated places over Telangana. IMD said light to moderate rain or thunder-showers will occur in the city for the next two days. The IMD also warned that rainwater may inundate the roads in low-lying areas. It urged people to restrict their movement.

According to the Telangana State Development Planning Society, During the last 24 hours, Highest Rainfall of 128.1



mm recorded at Kodakandla Mandal in Jangaon district in the state, while Saroornagar in the city received 51.5 mm of rainfall, highest in the city.

State cumulative rainfall from June 1 to September 13, 2020, is 863.9 mm against Normal 650.9 which is 33 per cent higher than the normal.

It also said that 180 mandals received excess rainfall of 20 to 59 per cent, while 154 mandals received more than 60 per cent of rainfall. Meanwhile, 216 mandals in the state received normal rainfall and only 39 mandals saw a rainfall deficit till September 12. State

average rainfall on September 11 is 8.4 mm against 4.5 mm.

"The east-west shear zone roughly along 15°N across peninsular India now seen at 5.8 km above mean sea level. A cyclonic circulation lies over the west-central Bay of Bengal off AP coast and extends upto 3.1 km above mean sea level. Under its influence, a low-pressure area is likely to form over West-central Bay of Bengal off Andhra Pradesh coast by tomorrow. The trough from Bihar to south Chhattisgarh across Jharkhand has become less marked," read the IMD's weather inference for Saturday.

Investment fraud busted, 9 held

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Cyber Crime Police busted an investment fraud and arrested nine call centre employees from Madhya Pradesh in connection with the case. The arrested persons were identified as Shivshankar Athiya, Abhishek Sonil, Abhilash Choudary, Rohit Jain, Bhavesh Baragi, Vinek Pateriya, Athar Hayat, Atul Pateriya and Rahul Soni, all hailing from Madhya Pradesh.

Police investigations revealed that prime suspect Shyam Sharma floated a fake firm in the name of 'money seizer' in 2017 and later changed into a call centre and named it as 'Top Global Research Pvt. Ltd' in 2018 and employed nine persons.

The employees would approach the people over phones and motivate them into investing huge money with false promises of faster returns. Later, showing fake investment process the employees would ask the cus-



tomers to invest with an initial amount of Rs 30,000 through their company for which they will be getting a profit of up to Rs 4,00,000 within 4 to 6 months.

Further they make the targeted people to open 'demat account' assuring them of helping in getting huge profits from their investments. Some people who responded to their promises opened Demat accounts and shared the user IDs and passwords for trading. The matter came to light when a complainant, Sudhakar approached police stating that some unidentified persons

made him transfer Rs 9.6 lakhs into their bank accounts in the name of investments after which they stopped responding to his calls.

The police officials collected technical evidences and visited Makronia town of Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh and arrested the nine accused and brought them to Hyderabad.

Police officials suspect that there may be other victims being targeted by the accused duo through fraud investments. Efforts are being made to nab the prime accused in the case.

600 kgs of dry ganja seized, five arrested

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Excise and Enforcement team of Medak arrested five persons and seized 600 kg of dry ganja from a goods lorry near Zaheerabad town on Sunday.

The officials found 300 packets, each containing 2 kg of ganja, packed in 25 gunny bags and covered under a load of coal. Excise and Enforcement official D Gayathri checked the goods lorry parked before Sri Sai Parivar Dhaba at Zaheerabad.



They arrested five persons who were transporting the ganja from Andhra-Odisha border to Maharashtra.

The arrested were identified as Sheik Afzal, Manchendar Digambar Pawar, Sathish Rao and Ameer Azeed Shaik, residents of various parts of Maharashtra. The fifth accused, Banoth Jaipal, is a resident of Nagulidda in Sangareddy district. A case was registered and they were taken to Zaheerabad Excise Station for further investigation.

Police arrest 1, seize gutka worth Rs 1.3L

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police on Saturday raided house at Tolichowki and seized gutka worth Rs. 1.3 lakh. The officials also arrested a dealer identified as Abdul Nadeem, 49, a resident of Shaikpet. The police raided the house of the accused in Tolichowki and seized the property. The police found that the accused was purchasing the contraband from Aiyaz of Bidar in Karnataka.

Facing financial distress, car driver hangs himself

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 40-year-old cab driver has committed suicide by hanging himself at his residence under Malkajgiri police station limits, and his family spoke about the financial distress he was in over the past few months since the lockdown had been imposed to slow down the spread of Covid.

The victim was identified as Bandi Vishnu Goud, a resident

of Hanumanpet in Moula Ali. According to the police, the victim used to work as a car driver and he in financial distress over the past few months.

Two days ago he left his wife and two children at his mother-in-law's residence in Medchal and returned to city.

On Saturday, Vishnu asked his elder brother to come to his house in the evening. Vishnu's brother along with

his friend went to the victim's house in the evening and found that the door was locked from inside.

As there was no response, the complainant broke open the door only to find Vishnu hanging to a ceiling fan.

The complainant informed the same to Malkajgiri police who shifted the body to Osmania General Hospital for autopsy. Police booked a case and are investigating.

SCR initiates advance booking for parcels

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the direction of customer friendly initiatives, railways have introduced advance booking facility of parcel space in luggage rooms SLRs (Seating-cum-Luggage Rake) available on passenger carrying trains and parcel vans attached to the regular trains and also in time tabled parcel trains.

According to South Central Railway (SCR), the advance booking of space in SLRs and parcel vans would be permitted 120 days in advance, subject to payment of 10 per cent



of the total freight by the customer at the time of booking. The balance payment of the freight has to be paid at least 72 hours before the scheduled

departure of the train for which the advance booking has been made. If the customer fails to pay the balance amount as stipulated at least 72 hours before

the scheduled departure of the train, the booking will be cancelled and advance freight will be forfeited.

"There have been requests from customers for the introduction of advance booking facility of parcel space so as to plan their logistics in a better way which will also generate additional traffic to railways," said an official. In case the customer is willing to cancel the booking, it needs to be done at least 72 hours before the scheduled departure of the train for which advance booking has been made.

IN BRIEF

Online sadhana of Sri Guru Viswa Spoorthi commences

The online sadhana programme of Sri Guru Viswa Spoorthi titled 'the process and practice of the ascension' commenced at 4:30 am on Sunday and will continue up to September 19. Director of evaluation in the JNTU-Hyderabad graced the occasion as chief guest. In his message, the Guru allayed the fears of his devotees stating that the virus is losing its power. He described fear and cowardice as the worst enemies of humans. They weaken humans mentally and physically and asked the devotees to be wary of these negative qualities. Several taking part as chief guests, suggested practicing the sadhana programme propounded by the Guru. Many family members of Guru Viswa Spoorthi took part in the programme, which comprises the combination of asanas, pranayama and meditation. The programme is aimed at the physical and mental well-being of the practitioners.

UoH ranked second best Central varsity in India

In the annual ranking of India's Top 25 Central Universities in 2020, done by Outlook, University of Hyderabad (UoH) has been ranked second. Responding to these rankings, a delighted Vice-Chancellor of University of Hyderabad Prof Appa Rao Podile said, "It's a happy occasion to see UoH being recognised in the top among the best 25 central universities in the country. We have to put in more organised efforts to reach the top not only in India but also globally. I am sure as an Institution of Eminence, UoH will reach that position soon."

DO YOU OWN A PLOT IN UNAUTHORIZED LAYOUT? LAST & FINAL OPPORTUNITY TO REGULARIZE GREAT CHANCE TO REGULARIZE ALL UNAPPROVED LAYOUTS

The Government of Telangana announces Layout Regularization Scheme (LRS) in Rural and Urban areas for regularizing unauthorized Plots & Layouts.

Sri K. Chandrashekhara Rao
Chief Minister, Government of Telangana

If not regularized under LRS scheme, the unauthorized Plot will not get the following approvals/facilities:

- No Registration
- No Building Permission
- No Water Connection
- No Electricity

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: All existing unapproved sub-division of plots, existing unapproved layouts or ventures where

- The plots have been sold through a Registered Sale Deed
- Unauthorized layouts developed, provided at least 10% of plots are sold through Registered Deed
- Plots registered on or before 26.08.2020

EASY TO APPLY: Applicant should file an online application or at mee-seva center in the prescribed format for regularization of the Plot/Layout before the competent authority by 15-10-2020 for all such Plots / Layouts, which are unapproved unauthorized and not covered under the prohibitory category.

PROHIBITORY CATEGORY: Plots falling in Government lands / ULC surplus / Endowment / Waqf Lands and falling in FTL of tanks are not eligible for regularization.

APPLICATION FEES PAYABLE:

FOR INDIVIDUAL PLOTS: RS.1,000/- ALONG WITH APPLICATION

FOR LAYOUT DEVELOPERS: RS.10,000/- IF APPLIED FOR THE ENTIRE LAYOUT

ONCE YOUR APPLICATION IS REGISTERED, THE ENTIRE REGULARIZATION CHARGES SHOULD BE PAID BY 31/01/2021

LAST DATE FOR REGULARIZATION: OCTOBER 15, 2020

Download LRS 2020 Mobile App from Google Play

Helpline Numbers: For Clarifications call between 10 AM and 6 PM

1. For Plots in HMDA: 1800 - 4258838
2. For Plots in GHMC: 040 -2111 1111
e-mail: support-lrs@telangana.gov.in

Details of the Scheme & Regularization Charges are available at: <http://lrs.telangana.gov.in/>

Sri K T Rama Rao
Hon'ble Minister for MA & UD Industries & Commerce, IT & C

Utilize this last & final opportunity - Get your plot regularized

Telangana land law is a structural reform

The Telangana Rights in Land and Pattadar Passbook Act, 2020 brings about a paradigm shift in the way land is administered. It is an acknowledgment of the fact that land revenue is no longer a major source of revenue for a majority of State Governments, and process reform coupled with use of information and communication technologies has the potential to completely transform title registration.

The new Law combines registration and mutation into one. All rights are acquired once the property is transferred. The division between the registered document and pattadar passbook has been removed. Admittedly, mutation may require some other documents (e.g. sub-division)

The new Law combines registration and mutation into one. All rights are acquired once the property is transferred. The division between the registered document and pattadar passbook has been removed. Admittedly, mutation may require some other documents (e.g. sub-division)



SAMEER SHARMA, IAS

Another noteworthy feature is the use of information technology in the most contextual-appropriate way. As in online examinations (e.g. GRE) and cinema bookings, buyers/sellers would have to book a slot to present the documents to the tahsildar/registrar for verification and registration of the property. Another noteworthy feature is that buyers/sellers would be able to book a convenient date and time to register their documents.

well as the single document for granting of loan by banks and other agencies. An added advantage is that this would also be available in e-form so that the need for paper land revenue record would gradu-

ally be cut down. What is the way forward? First, the law standardises the registration process and the next step would be to adapt the faceless assessment scheme of income tax. At the time of slot booking, the buyers/sellers could be allocated any of the tahsildars/registration officers in an area (e.g. district or municipality). Second, the Law provides for generation of digital records. It would be worthwhile to examine if these records could be made public, or at least some part of these could be placed in the public domain. Digitising land records is expected to reduce certain risks associated with paper-based systems, leading to an increase in reliability and

transparency in property transactions. However, the challenge of reducing frauds, errors and prevention of alteration of records still remains. The third point of action is to plan for integrating blockchain technology in the future. Simply put, blockchain technology in land registration systems would provide evidence as to what time a transaction happened, and guarantee the identity of the involved parties. The property owner's details would be stored in several, shared databases (also called distributed digital ledgers), leading to greater traceability of property owners, as well as making this repository of information unalterable and incorrupt-

ible. The role of the registrars and tahsildars would be to work as oracles, and vet and validate the registration after it is done (post-facto). All in all, the Telangana Land Law is a trailblazer in land administration. It is simple and addresses a key need of buyers and sellers. It uses digital technology to bring about partial disintermediation of government functionaries as well as opens up possibilities for use of state-of-art technologies, such as blockchain. Rapid rollout is possible and the chances of success are huge. The Law could well become a lighthouse for other states to emulate. (Author has a PhD from USA and a DLitt from Kanchi University. The article is based on his research and practice and views are personal)

Works on villas at Yadadri nearing completion

Construction of presidential suits and villas at the famous pilgrimage centre of Yadadri is nearing completion. It may be recalled that 14 villas and a presidential suite are being built in over 13.26 acres. All buildings, barring a village, have been executed completely. First ghat roads were laid atop a small hillock, which is just 2 km away from the temple. A presidential suite with a plinth area of about 15,000 sq ft is being built atop the hills. At the foot hills, 14 villages have been built. The plinth area of each villa is said to be of 7,500 sq ft. The villas were built as two-storied structures. The total project cost is put at Rs 104 crore. The structures are being built with donations contributed by philanthropic public. So far Rs 60 crore has been spent for construction of the presidential suite and the villas.

Telangana, Andhra present contrasting Covid picture

Telugu states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh present a contrasting picture of Covid-19 situation. While one state with continuous surge has climbed on to the second position in the country in terms of number of cases, the other has succeeded in controlling the pandemic. At least this is what the statistics suggest. Both the states claim to be handling the situation well. Andhra Pradesh attributes the high number of cases to massive testing while dismissing the criticism for fewer tests and allegations of hiding deaths and underreporting cases, Telangana claims that its strategy helped in containing the virus. As of September 12, Andhra Pradesh with over 5.57 lakh cases stood second on the list of states with most cases, next only to Maharashtra, which so



far saw 10.15 lakh cases. Andhra Pradesh has been adding 10,000 cases and reporting 70-80 deaths every day for the last few weeks. With 4,846 deaths, it also has the fourth highest death toll in the country. On the other hand Telangana's tally of Covid cases as of September 12 stood at nearly 1.55 lakh. The average daily jump in cases has stabilized around 2,400-2,600 while daily fatalities mostly remained in single digit. Though one of the first states to report Covid

Maharashtra. However, it stands at the top in tests per million ratio among nine states of its size (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh) with a figure of 84,786. The national average ratio is 39,790. Andhra Pradesh also has the second highest positivity rate at 12.32, next only to Maharashtra (20.02). The state also has one of the highest number of active cases at 95,733. The Andhra health officials, however, point out that the state has one of the best recovery rates at 81.96 per cent. The number of daily recoveries stands around 10,000. Telangana has one of the second-lowest testing numbers among nine states. Its positivity rate is 7.57 per cent. The experts point out that this is one of the highest among the states who have conducted 20-30 lakh tests.

Allot land for TS liberation martyrs' memorial: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy on Sunday urged Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to allot land to build a memorial to commemorate the Telangana liberation struggle that led to merger of erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad with the Indian Union in 1948. Recalling the history of the struggle, the Minister of State for Home said in a letter to KCR that present and future generations should know about the struggle and take inspiration. Noting that people of Telangana wish to see a special memorial centre, highlighting the history of the state's freedom fighters, set up, Reddy said he recently discussed the matter with the Union Tourism Minister, who agreed to provide funds for it. The Centre is ready to establish a grand memorial centre, which would be an inspiration to future generations, if land is



allocated in Hyderabad, he said in the letter. "Chief Minister knows very well that Telangana state didn't get freedom on August 15, 1947 though the entire nation celebrated freedom of the nation. Telangana was under the clutches of Nizam till September 17, 1948. There were many leaders like Komuram Bheem, PV Narasimha Rao, Ramananda Theertha, Marri Chenna Reddy, Vendematharam Ramachandra Rao, Narayanarao Pawar, Doddi Komuraiah, Chakali Ilamma and thousands of Telangana

Present and future generations should know about the struggle and take inspiration, said the Union Minister in a letter to Chief Minister KCR

people who lost their lives while facing the atrocities of Razakars to set Telangana free from Nizam rule. Telangana achieved freedom on September 17, 1948 due to the action of Sardar Vallabhai Patel," he said. "There is a need for people to know the history of Telangana Liberation Movement," the Union Minister said.

SIGHT TO BEHOLD



Aerial view of Srisaigam Flood Flow Canal. With the pumping of waters from Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project into the SRSP flood flow canal, there is abundant water all along 160-km flood flow canal

Gear up for MLC polls, TRS cadre told

PNS ■ JANGAON

Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Errabelli Dayakar Rao on Sunday called upon the party workers to work hard for the victory of the TRS candidate in the Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda graduate MLC constituency elections by enrolling more graduates as voters. The Minister, who participated in several election preparatory meetings in the district, said the new Revenue Act would resolve all disputes as the government was also going to conduct a comprehensive land survey of the entire State and protect the government lands. He also called upon the people to extend support to the coronavirus victims on humanitarian grounds and help the needy financially and mentally.

Peddapalli MP refutes Kishan Reddy's claims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Peddapalli MP N Venkatesh on Sunday slammed the Union Ministers and BJP leaders for allegedly misleading the people of Telangana. He alleged that Union Ministers Mansukh Laxmanbhai Mandoviya and Kishan Reddy, who reviewed the progress of works on the Ramagundam Fertilizers and Chemicals Limited (RFCL), didn't follow protocol during their visit. "As a local MP, I didn't get any invitation for the review meeting. It is ridiculous that not only Telangana BJP MPs but also Union Ministers are speaking lies. The Centre didn't provide 1.17 million tonnes of urea, however, the Telangana BJP leaders are saying that the Centre allocated 6.25 lakh metric tonnes out of 13 lakh metric tonnes urea to be given to Telangana," he



Peddapalli MP N Venkatesh addressing the media at Pragathi Bhavan

alleged, addressing the media at Telangana Bhavan along with MLC Bhanu Prasad and MP Manne Srinivas Reddy. Venkatesh questioned the Telangana BJP leaders to reveal as to how many jobs did the people of Telangana secured out of 800 additional jobs in Ramagundam factory. He said that the jobs were given to the people of other states. "I condemn Union Minister Kishan

Reddy's statements. State has 11 per cent share in Ramagundam factory. He has to tell as to why he failed to give information to me as I am a local MP. I didn't get any invitation as per protocol," he said. Venkatesh said that the people of two villages, who face pollution problems due to Ramagundam factory, staged protests on behalf of the people.

Cong slams KCR over unemployment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CLP Leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday took potshots at Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao over the death of Nagulu, who attempted suicide at Telangana Assembly on Thursday. Nagulu doused petrol and burnt himself on Thursday. Police men present at the spot, immediately rushed him to hospital. But he died while undergoing treatment. "The Chief Minister should reveal as to what change took place in the state after the formation of Telangana state. It's only KCR's family which enjoyed the fruits of formation of separate Telangana state. Nagulu's suicide pained me a lot," he said. "The Chief Minister should come to the rescue of Nagulu's family," he said.

Miscreants attack Chada Venkat Reddy's car

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Some miscreants on Sunday evening allegedly destroyed the car of CPI state secretary Chada Venkat Reddy at Maqdhoom Bhavan. Chada Venkat Reddy filed a complaint with the Narayanaguda Police after the incident. The police reached the spot and examined the car. CPI national secretary Dr K Narayana reached the spot immediately and enquired about the incident. "There is a political motive behind the incident. Two persons came on a two-wheeler and destroyed my car. This sort of act will be done by BJP or RSS or communal based political parties. CPI is the only party fighting against the Central government and BJP. There is a need to conduct a thorough inquiry into the incident," he said.



Revenue dept may recruit over 2,000 jr staff soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government is likely to recruit young blood in the Revenue Department in the light of the Assembly adopting the new Revenue Act. The new Act increased the services being rendered by the office of the Tahsildar. All land records are going to be digitised with the launching of the Dharani portal. Therefore, additional staff

members are required to take care of these activities. The VRO system is dispensed with. At least four junior assistants and junior RIs are required for each mandal. The government has plans to appoint them either on contract basis or through TSPSC notification. The officials have been contemplating to appoint at least 2,000 new staff in the department.

Reach out to needy, Guv tells NGOs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Sunday exhorted the NGOs to intensify their efforts to help the needy in these pandemic times. She said the NGOs and other service organizations like Rotary Club have been

offering valuable services in different sectors and were supplementing the governments' efforts. She was participating as the chief guest at the virtual Rotary Sabha, a cultural conclave of the Rotary District 3232, Chennai, from the Raj Bhavan here on Sunday evening. She said that

the Rotary's motto of 'Service above Self' is driving millions of Rotarians all over the globe to offer their noble services. The Governor pointed out that the Rotary's efforts in ensuring Polio eradication in the country and its services towards making avoidable blindness-free India were commendable.

CM KCR feeds monkeys at Yadadri



Chief Minister feeding monkeys during his visit to Yadadri on Sunday

PNS ■ YADADRI

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's compassionate side came to the fore when he spotted a group of monkeys during his visit to Yadadri Sri Narasimha Swamy temple on Sunday. While returning to continue with his inspection of the temple town development works after completing lunch at Haritha Guest House on the hill shrine,

the Chief Minister noticed a group of monkeys sitting near a ghat road curve, a few metres away from the guest house. He instructed his security officials to stop the vehicle and stepped out. KCR asked his security personnel to bring out the bananas that were in his vehicle and personally fed the monkeys. Surprisingly, the monkeys, about 15 in number, took turns to take a banana from the Chief Minister's hand in a disciplined manner.

'Renovate Srisaigam powerhouse completely'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TSGenco senior engineers have been suggesting complete renovation of the Srisaigam Hydrel Power Station replacing the old equipment with new one. The senior engineers point out that the power house was built two decades ago. It would require at least Rs 200-300 crore to modernise the power house. In the recent fire accident, two units of the power house were completely damaged. Equipment like generators used in the units should be imported from



Japan. In those days, the government used the Japanese technology to build the power house. As and when repairs

are needed, experts are requisitioned from Japan. Now the modern equipment is available in India. Therefore, using indigenous equipment would

reduce dependency on foreign countries. Moreover, centre is advising using only indigenous technology and wanted the equipment imported from others to be tested before use in selected laboratories. Repair works are going on at hectic speed in the power house, which has six units each having 150 mw capacity. This year, the power generation is feasible only in units one and two. The TS Genco is keen to start them by this month-end. If the fire accident did not take place in the hydrel

power unit, daily at least 900 mw of power could have been produced. Engineers suggest modernisation of the plant and make the hydrel power station ready to tap the flood water in July and August next year. When TS Genco CMD Devulapalli Prabhakar Rao was contacted on the issue, he said that a decision was yet to be taken on the issue. Currently, repair works are being attended to on a war-footing. The fire accident did not cause major damage to the power station, he said.

SHORT READS



Cong, other parties gear up for Parliament session

New Delhi: The Congress and other opposition parties will oppose four of the 11 legislations the government proposes to bring in the monsoon session of Parliament in place of ordinances issued earlier and expect Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reply to their concerns. Party leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said the Congress is in touch with other like-minded parties and has decided to strongly oppose the three agriculture-related legislations and the amendment to the Banking Regulation Act in both houses of Parliament. The monsoon session of Parliament starts on Monday amid unprecedented measures in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like-minded opposition parties have decided to evolve a joint strategy to take on the government on key issues before the country.

Bengal farmers, fishermen to get advance pension

Kolkata: The West Bengal government will pay Rs 2,000 as advance pension for two months to the farmers and fishermen in the state ahead of the Durga Puja, a senior official said on Sunday. The decision was taken to help them cope with the economic crisis during the festival season, he said. For paying the advance pension for October and November the state will bear expenses of around Rs 22 crore, he added. In the first week of October, 87,911 farmers and around 20,000 fishermen who are above the age of 60 will be getting the pension directly in their bank accounts, he said.



Amid high demand, tempo with oxygen cylinders stolen

Pune: A tempo carrying seven oxygen cylinders meant for hospitals amid the coronavirus outbreak was stolen in Pune's Chakan area, police said on Sunday. The complainant has a business of transporting such cylinders and he had parked his tempo outside his house on Thursday night from where it went missing a few hours later, Inspector Balaji Sontake of Mhalunge post said. "We have registered a theft case and efforts are on to trace the tempo and nab the accused who stole it," said the official. There is high demand for oxygen in hospitals due to the coronavirus outbreak and the district administration here has even formed dedicated teams to oversee and coordinate supply between oxygen manufacturing units and medical facilities. Adequate oxygen support, along with anti-coagulants and other medicines, is the mainstay of COVID-19 therapy and medical oxygen is listed as an Essential Public Health Commodity by the government.

Modi pats Nitish Kumar for sushasan, takes dig at Lalu

PNS ■ PATNA

Ahead of the assembly elections in Bihar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday gave Chief Minister Nitish Kumar a pat on his back for ushering in sushasan (good governance) and expressed confidence that the good work will continue under the leadership of the JD(U) chief. Modi dedicated to the nation three petroleum sector projects worth about Rs 900 crore via video conferencing. Without naming the opposition RJD or its leader Lalu Prasad, and the party's ally the Congress, Modi blamed the states backwardness on a mindset which made them sneer at economic progress



and thought lip-service was enough when it came to the betterment of the poor. Bihar has for long been plagued by a peculiar mindset. Road projects were frowned upon and people used to ask what do these have to offer those who walk on foot and do not have vehicles, Modi said in

New medical and engineering colleges, law institutes and polytechnics have come up. Nitish Kumar has a very important role to play in ensuring that the process continues, he said. The BJP has declared it will contest the assembly polls in Bihar with Kumar as the coalition's chief ministerial face. Referring to the coronavirus pandemic and the large-scale return of migrants that took place during lockdown, Bihar accounting for a large part of them, Modi said, This crisis has also presented us with opportunities. We can think of new employment generation avenues by setting in motion rapid economic activity.

Raghuvansh's death left deep political void, says PM

PNS ■ PATNA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid a moving tribute to former Union minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, saying his death has left a deep void in Bihar and national politics. Modi described Singh, who died at AIIMS, New Delhi, after prolonged illness, as a grassroots leader with deep understanding of poverty and problems of the poor. He also obliquely referred to "churning" that the departed leader faced in his last days, hinting at his disenchantment with his party the RJD and its leader Lalu Prasad. "An inner 'manthan' (churning) was going on in him dur-

ing his last days. He remained true to the ideology he believed in. In the recent past, he had been in news. "He was obviously in a state of inner turmoil since it had no longer remained possible for him to be by the side of his old associates. Finally, he gave expression to his feelings through the letters he wrote from the hospital bed, the prime minister said.

Modi made the remarks before dedicating to the nation three petroleum projects via video conferencing in Bihar. The prime minister recalled his interactions with Singh when the RJD leader was a Union minister and he the chief minister of Gujarat. "I had occasions to interact with Raghuvansh babu many times. We used to take part in TV debates long back, putting forth our respective points of view. He used to represent his party while I used to represent the BJP as an office-bearer of the organisation, said the prime minister. "I was worried about his health and often inquired about him," Modi said. The prime minister spoke with admiration about Singh's concern for Bihar.



Nepali national carrying 6.1 kg of charas arrested

PNS ■ MAHARAJGANJ

A Nepalese national was arrested from Indo-Nepal border in Maharajganj district of Uttar Pradesh after he was found in possession of 6.1 kg charas with a market value of Rs 2.17 crore, police said on Sunday. The arrest was made in Shyamkot area of border town Sonauli on Sunday morning, said Sonauli police station in-charge Ashutosh Singh. Accused Som Bahadur Nepali was on his way to Delhi from Nepal when he was arrested during a routine checking of the bus, he said. Police have decided to take help of their Nepalese counterpart to trace his links with other smugglers in Nepal and India, Singh added. He has been booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, he added.

NEET begins amid strict precautions across country

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Medical entrance exam NEET began on Sunday amid strict precautions in view of the COVID-19 pandemic at over 3,800 centres across the country with students queuing up as per their designated time slots, adhering to social distancing norms. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) began at 2 pm, but entry to centres started at 11 am. Students were allotted different slots for entry to ensure there is staggered movement and social distancing is maintained. Over 15 lakh candidates have registered for NEET, which was earlier postponed twice in view of the pandemic. Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' wished luck to the candidates appearing for the exam and assured that arrangements are in place for their safety. "I wish luck to candidates



appearing for NEET today. I am confident that students will appear for the exam with confidence and follow all guidelines. All states have made required arrangements to ensure hygiene and safety of students as per guidelines," he tweeted. Mohammad Ovais, who came from Moradabad to his exam centre in Dilshad Garden here, said his entry slot was at 11 am. "I left from Moradabad at 5 am. It is not that risky if everybody follows all precautions, the problem arises when people take it casually. There was no crowding at the centres as everybody had designated slots," he said. Vanhika Chaurasia, a resident of Rohini said, "Online exam would have been a better option than a pen and paper-based test but we have no option."

NEET: Rahul Gandhi wishes students appearing for exam

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi wished students appearing for the medical entrance exam NEET on Sunday, while expressing his sympathies with those who could not take it due to the COVID-19 pandemic and floods. He also criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying he wished the PM was concerned about the JEE-NEET aspirants. "My best wishes to the students appearing for NEET exam and my sympathies to those who couldn't take it due to the Covid pandemic and floods. "Wish Modi ji was as concerned about JEE-NEET aspirants and students

as he is about his crony capitalist friends," he said on Twitter. Gandhi and his Congress party have been demanding postponement of NEET and JEE exams, saying the situation is not conducive for holding these exams due to the pandemic. He has also said holding the exams at such a time is endangering their lives. Over 15 lakh candidates are likely to appear in NEET on Sunday which will be conducted amid strict precautions in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. The exam was originally scheduled for May 3, but was pushed to July 26, and then to September 13. A total of 15.97 lakh candidates have registered for the exam.

Army jawan detained at Srinagar airport

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

An Army personnel who was detained at the airport here along with a woman and a minor girl while on way to Delhi was let off after preliminary questioning as the women said they were travelling with him of their own free will, officials said on Sunday. The soldier, posted in Bandipora district in north Kashmir, was on Saturday detained at the Srinagar airport when he was travelling with two women, one of whom is a minor, to Delhi, they said. The minor girl is a niece of the woman, the officials added. The woman, believed to be in her early twenties, told the police that she and her minor niece were travelling with the soldier of their own free will, they said. The officials said the trio was let off after preliminary questioning. The woman and her niece have been handed over to their families, they added. An Army official said action will be taken against the soldier as per the rules as he was found in violation of the standard operating procedure. In May 2018, Army Major Leetul Gogoi was detained by police along with a local woman at a hotel here. The Major was punished with a reduction in seniority and exit from the Kashmir Valley.

Raghuvansh's loss irreparable, says Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday paid rich tributes to former Union minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, saying with his demise a strong voice of the village and farmers has been lost. The Congress also termed him as the "beloved son of Bihar" who will be remembered for being the advocate of moral values in politics, and said his demise heralds the end of a chapter in the history of revolution. "With the demise of Shri

Raghuvansh Prasad Singh ji, a strong voice of the village and farmers has been lost forever. His service and dedication for the upliftment of villages and farmers and his struggle for social justice will always be remembered. My heartfelt tributes to him," Rahul Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. Rahul has since left for the US along with his mother Sonia Gandhi for her medical check-up. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said his demise is an irreparable loss to Indian politics and he will be remembered for his contribution.

Shah condoles demise of Raghuvansh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday condoled the death of former Union minister Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and said his dedication towards the welfare of the poor and deprived classes will be remembered forever. Singh died at AIIMS in Delhi on Sunday. "I am deeply saddened by the death of senior Bihar politician Raghuvansh Babu. His entire life was devoted to the ideas of Lohia ji and Karpoori Thakur ji. "His dedication to the welfare of the poor and deprived class will always be remembered. I express my condolences to his family. Om Shanti," Shah said.

Conspiracy to malign Maharashtra, says Uddhav Thackeray

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Facing flak from detractors on both political and coronavirus fronts, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday said a conspiracy is afoot to malign Maharashtra. "Whatever political storms come, I will face... I will fight coronavirus too," Thackeray said in a televised public address. A day after COVID-19 cases in Maharashtra crossed the 10-lakh mark, Thackeray said his government has done effective



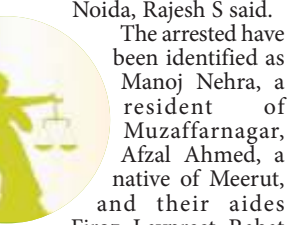
work to tackle the pandemic. Speaking in the backdrop of political criticism over demolition of actress Kangana Ranaut's bungalow in Mumbai and the way his government handled the

Sushant Singh Rajput death case, Thackeray assured people that he would fight the political crisis too. "I will have to remove the mask of Chief Minister to respond to politics. I don't speak doesn't mean I don't have answers," Thackeray said. Speaking on "Mission Begin Again" campaign during the pandemic, Thackeray said his administration effectively tackled the COVID-19 situation, cyclones and floods and will also deal with the political storm with people's support.

Six held in Noida for car thefts in Delhi NCR

PNS ■ NOIDA

Six members of a gang involved in stealing vehicles across Delhi NCR for almost a decade were arrested in Uttar Pradesh's Noida on Sunday, police said. The gang's role is suspected in more than 100 vehicle thefts in the region and the Noida police had been working on this case for a month, leading to the arrest, a senior officer said. "The police have recovered over a dozen vehicles six of which have been traced to theft cases in Delhi," Deputy Commissioner of Police,



Noida, Rajesh S said. The arrested have been identified as Manoj Nehra, a resident of Muzaffarnagar, Afzal Ahmed, a native of Meerut, and their aides Firoz, Lavpreet, Rahat and Subhash Saini, he said. "Two more persons, who bought stolen vehicles from them, have been identified as Aadil, a native of Kashmir, and Ayub from Meerut. Searches are on to nab them," the DCP said. Following a tip-off by officials from the local Sector 58 police station, the six accused were held near Sector 62.

Acceptance of multipolarity key to settled Sino-India ties: Jaishankar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The key to a more settled Sino-Indian relationship is a greater acceptance by both countries of multipolarity and mutuality, building on a larger foundation of global rebalancing, says External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. In his recently-released book "The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World", he also says that India is not the only country



however, had written this book before the military standoff in eastern Ladakh began in early May. "If there is a common approach, it is of them simultaneously strengthening capacities internally, assessing the external landscape and seeking understandings with China. In this overall exercise, India will occupy a special place by virtue of its size, location, potential, history and culture," Jaishankar writes.

focused on coming to terms with China as the entire world is doing so, each nation refashioning its terms of engagement in its own way. The external affairs minister,

Veteran RSS pracharak succumbs to Covid-19

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Veteran RSS 'pracharak' M Veerabahu, who brought devotees together and successfully led them in installing the Shivalinga inside the Jalakandeshwara temple in Vellore fort decades ago, has died of COVID-19. The 71-year-old senior functionary, who tested positive two weeks ago, succumbed to the virus on September 12 at a government hospital here and his body was cremated at a bur-

ial ground in Villivakkam, the RSS said. Veerabahu is noted for his field work in mobilising devotees and the local people, leading to the installation of the Shivalinga in the Jalakandeshwara temple inside the Vellore fort in 1981, according to RSS functionaries. Noted archaeologist S Rajavelu said the temple, an Archaeological Survey of India protected monument, became a "living temple," after the installation of the Shivalinga.

Coronavirus takes a toll on Delhi slum-dwellers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic took away her family's livelihood and now 48-year-old Veeramma fears she will lose her roof in the wake of the Supreme Court ordering the removal of 48,000 slum dwellings along railway tracks in Delhi. "My husband was born here. My son was born here. My in-laws breathed their last in this house. This is all we have," said Veeramma as she sat on crushed stones outside her home at a slum cluster alongside a railway track near Jal Vihar in Lajpat Nagar. The 48-year-old, who works as a domestic help, said her

employers haven't called her back to work yet. "My husband cannot move. My son is a daily wageer, he doesn't have much work, too. We don't have enough ration to feed the family for another week," said Veeramma looking at her two-year-old granddaughter, a third generation to be born in the slum cluster. "We don't have the money for my granddaughter's milk. Even if we beg, we won't get anything. The times were never so bad," she said. The Supreme Court had on August 31 ordered the removal of 48,000 slum dwellings along railway tracks in Delhi within three months. As per rough esti-



mates, there are around 2,40,000 people living in slums in Naraina Vihar, Azadpur, Vihar, Shakur Basti, Mayapuri, Srinivaspuri, Anand Parbat and Okhla among others. The Northern Railways had submitted a report to the apex court which said that mushrooming of slums along railway tracks is acting as hindrance towards keeping them clean. Panchavarna, 55, said her family had moved to Delhi

from Chennai. "We know the land belongs to the government, but where will we go? Who will take our responsibility?" she asked. Elumalai, 35, reminded the government's promise of "jahan jhuggi wahin makan" made before the elections. "We do not say we won't accept the court's order. This land belongs to the railways and they will take it one day, but where will we go? No one cares for us," Elumalai, whose father came to Delhi from Chennai in 1978, said. Interestingly, each household in the slum has got electricity connection, Aadhaar card, voter id, and ration card.

Army adopting 'Contact tracing', says Lt Gen Raju

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

"Contact tracing" is the new strategy being adopted by the Army in military-hit Kashmir Valley and under it, friends and relatives of local terrorist recruits or those killed in encounters are located and counselled not to take up the gun in a rush of blood, a top Army official said here. In addition to this, efforts are made to contact the families of youths identified as vulnerable to radicalisation so



that they too are counselled to guide their wards. Lt Gen B S Raju, who heads the strategic XV-Corps in Kashmir, feels that correct guidance at the right time or vulnerable stage can help prevent misguided youths from taking the wrong step. During his tenure as the head of the 'Victor Force', which comprises many Army units and looks after the four strife-torn districts of South Kashmir, such efforts paid off rich dividends.

Sanitised session

In the rush to clear pending Bills, the Govt has shrunk debate space but the Opp is working on a joint strategy to make itself count



Given the deliberative nature of democracy, the “sanitised” monsoon session of Parliament is expected to rob all the colour and fire of debate and mostly go about the tepid business of pushing necessary legislation. Yet it is an experiment in the new normal with both Houses conducting sessions at different time slots and shifts and sharing their chambers and galleries for purposes of social distancing. The Parliament will be going paperless with members given login IDs to access the relevant portals of documents, there will be audio-visual exchanges between them given the spread out nature of proceedings and they will be partitioned by fibreglass

barriers. Of course, e-participation was once considered to ensure vibrancy but turns out the Government’s video-conferencing platform can only accommodate 600 people at one time. Besides, senior parliamentarians, who literally command the floor with their speeches, will be absent as most of them have preferred to stay away for health reasons. The limitations of a truncated timeline and the shadow of the pandemic would undoubtedly help the Government wiggle past the discomfort of facing questions on its crisis management, the economic slump, GST compensation, the migrants’ exodus and the border stand-off in Ladakh. As it is, it has structured a schedule favouring itself. Apparently, it wants to avoid a larger discussion on the Ladakh incursion, preferring to keep the negotiations with China backdoor, with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh making just a statement. Although the Government had suspended Question Hour initially, it buckled to Opposition pressure and has now allowed 30 minutes of it for only unstarred questions, thereby escaping the live grilling and the verbal duels that starred questions demand. Unstarred questions seem rather anodyne as the MPs need to submit them digitally to the presiding officer, who gets the written response from Ministers. This then would become a bland handout affair as cross-questions and counter-arguments actually show up the strength of logic of both the ruling party and the Opposition and help the citizenry judge for themselves. Apart from unstarred questions, up to 10 special mentions would also be taken up to bring matters of importance to the Government’s notice. The Government, lest it be accused of pushing through its agenda in a rush and in an autocratic manner, has provisioned for short-duration discussions and calling attention notices but without the latitude and depth of time, these too would be chaperoned exercises, more in the nature of convention followed than actually letting others to hold it to account. It’s not that a live Question Hour was impossible. It anyway has a structured format, with MPs required to submit a questionnaire 15 days in advance. So there could have been a staggered roster of Ministers and their officials to answer them. Besides, even the nature and tenor of questions are regulated by several rules before they are cleared and scheduled. The Trinamool Congress had argued that considering the Parliament’s overall working hours would remain the same and no private members’ Bill would be moved, a regular Question Hour was not difficult to factor in. The Question Hour is the only time that allows the Opposition equal standing and allows it to keep a check and balance on the executive. A legislator asks questions on behalf of the constituents who elect him and any democratically-elected Government is, therefore, duty-bound to respond. Without a healthy Question Hour, there will be no accountability. And if the pandemic continues its run till 2022, as experts are suggesting, then this democratic convention could become a casualty. Of course, safety is important but can’t live televised debates be possible in a digital India?

Of course, there’s the urgency of clearing legislation. Around 40 Bills are awaiting deliberation and passage by one or both Houses. Five of these are still being processed before parliamentary committees. And some of these are of sensitive nature, including the ones on DNA technology, social security and personal data protection. Of basic rights concerns, the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (Amendment) Bill 2020, Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill 2020, Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill 2020, Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (Amendment) Bill and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill need attention. The 11 ordinances that the Government promulgated during the lockdown, related to agricultural markets, insolvency proceedings and economic policy, are likely to be used as ammunition by the Opposition. It has already moved statutory resolutions against these. Farmers are unhappy about the corporatisation model implied in farm reforms and could set off a new pan-India stir and allied politics. In fact, the Opposition, which had in the past disrupted the Question Hour repeatedly, is now committed to making use of the limited time and is avidly working on a joint floor strategy to nail the Government. Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who recast her party on the eve of the session to work up a sense of urgency, has asked senior leaders to contact UPA allies and like-minded parties to put up a united fight against the Government, both inside and outside Parliament. Will the post-pandemic session be an adhesive for the Opposition that it desperately needs? Or will the Government sail past by heaving down with its executive powers?

Apocalypse now

In the midst of the pandemic, let us not forget about a disaster called human-driven climate change



Silicon Valley, home of many of the world’s most valuable companies, including Apple, Facebook and Google, woke up to some truly apocalyptic scenes. The blue sky had been replaced by an orange haze as wildfires burnt down some of the oldest temperate forests in the world and the US state of California reeled from the worst of such disasters in its history. The fires are so intense that they have now covered the length of the state and are spreading into the north as well, making this late summer the worst blaze season ever recorded. California is not unique. Earlier this year, the south-east Australian seaboard, where three-quarters of that nation’s population resides, literally went up in flames. Thus, two of the most famous bridges in the world, the Golden Gate in San Francisco and the eponymous Sydney Harbour Bridge, were both photographed with an orange background just a few months apart, highlighting how man-made disasters are taking a toll on the planet.

Make no mistake, while wildfires are a seasonal occurrence and many happen thanks to natural events like lightning strikes, the severity this time was caused by human activity. The irony of the California fires being started after fireworks went awry at a baby “gender reveal party” should not be lost upon the parents. The fires, the destruction of wildlife and the associated dumping of carbon into the atmosphere mean that those parents have made the planet a much worse place for their children. No matter what your opinion is on Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, the fact is that the girl does have a point. We are damaging the planet and despite efforts lasting several years, we are still damaging the planet, albeit slower than before but not by enough. Global climate change is real. There is less polar ice than ever before. The Himalayan glaciers that feed a tenth of all humanity are receding fast. The seasons are changing and extreme weather events are devastating parts of the world not just in terms of human lives but through livelihood loss. Yes, resolving the global Coronavirus pandemic should be humanity’s top priority today as should be preventing the next such pandemic from occurring. But we should not forget the clear and present danger that climate change continues to be for humankind. Our efforts towards lower emissions through renewables and less conspicuous consumption have to be made stronger. Else the next house being burnt down in a wildfire or drowned in a Biblical flood could well be yours.

Regulate non-personal data

Even seemingly benign data on communities can lead to collective harm. Demographic census data can be used to target communities based on social or religious lines



AISHWARYA GIRDHAR

The Committee of Experts on Non-Personal Data Governance Framework was formed last year to advise the Government on various aspects of non-personal data. It released its draft report in July and is currently accepting public feedback. Among other things, it recommended that a new legislation be drafted and a new regulator be set up to operationalise the framework.

The committee defines non-personal data as anything that is not defined in the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, and that does not contain personally identifiable information. This would cover a wide array of information, including, for example, anonymised datasets that companies collect from their users or customers, traffic pattern and weather data, agricultural data and datasets containing information that is not directly linked to an individual. Given that datasets are an important aspect of many businesses today, any non-personal data regulation would affect most companies and entrepreneurs. They would also have significant implications for providing benefits and enabling individuals and communities to exercise their civil liberties, due to the inferences that can be drawn even from data that is anonymised.

This is especially the case because most datasets in use are “mixed,” containing a combination of personal and non-personal data. For example, datasets collected by banks could contain client and transaction details as well as aggregated information on overall demographics and transactions. It is important to note in this context that the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, which is set to regulate personal data, is currently being deliberated by a Joint Parliamentary Committee. The finalised legislation and the Data Protection Authority, which is the proposed regulator under the PDP Bill, are empowered to regulate personal data. While the committee recognises that many datasets are mixed, it nevertheless includes anonymised personal data within the ambit of the non-personal data framework.

This is problematic because anonymising personal data, as the committee recognises, is not



irreversible and the risk of re-identification of individuals is a real concern. Moreover, even seemingly benign data on communities can lead to collective harm, such as if data on average income is used to decide interest rates for those living in a certain area, or demographic census data is used to target communities based on social or religious lines.

It is also clear that algorithms can exacerbate existing biases unless there are sufficient technical and human-based safeguards. Using such analysis to make public service delivery decisions, for example, can also perpetuate discriminatory practices. Importantly, the framework suggested by the committee also allows the Government wide-ranging access to datasets. When combined with data that it already has access to, this carries significant surveillance risks which can endanger civil liberties.

Given the potential for such harms, it is essential that a key focus of any regulatory framework is on instituting safeguards, with clear accountability and redressal mechanisms. The primary goals of non-personal data regulation are to unlock the economic value of data, create a level playing field for digital businesses and protect the interests of those providing the relevant data. Unfortunately, there are a few significant issues with the framework proposed to achieve these aims.

First, crucial parts of the framework are vague. For example, one of the key concepts discussed by the committee

India. The mandatory data sharing mechanisms outlined in the draft report do not engage with proprietary rights that datasets are subject to and are likely to conflict with intellectual property laws. Such regulatory overlaps are likely to lead to conflict, litigation on the boundaries of each regulator’s mandate and higher compliance costs for companies.

Third, although the committee recognises the potential for harm and the need for safeguards in a non-personal data framework, it does not account for these in its report. For instance, when exploring the concept of collective privacy, it recognises that non-personal data can provide insights that allow for collective harm such as discrimination and states that safeguards are necessary. Unfortunately, the committee does not explore any specifics. Even though it proposes that a new regulator is set up, there is a marked lack of engagement with regulatory design best principles to ensure accountability, transparency and independence of the regulator, and effective grievance redressal. Given the overlaps in ambit, it is also not clear that a separate regulator is even required to specifically regulate non-personal data. New regulatory frameworks will also have to recognise that given the range of activities that are moving online, regulating issues in the “digital” space cannot be done in silos and will require cooperation and collaboration. Experience in India and other countries, where such collaboration occurs, indicates that there must be robust, binding processes that are built into regulatory frameworks themselves.

The committee would have done well to explore some of these aspects and other best practices in regulatory design, and more deeply consider the best ways to achieve its stated aims. For instance, instead of mandating data sharing, it could focus on leveraging the intellectual property law framework to incentivise data-sharing without contradicting existing copyright laws. More generally, the committee must specifically address the areas of overlap with other regulatory frameworks and clarify the ambit of the proposed non-personal data framework. It must carefully think through emerging concepts like collective privacy before seeking to regulate on that basis, and fundamentally reassess the need for a new regulator, specifically for non-personal data.

(The author is Fellow at Eysa Centre)

“THE MANDATORY DATA SHARING MECHANISMS OUTLINED IN THE DRAFT REPORT DO NOT ENGAGE WITH PROPRIETARY RIGHTS THAT DATASETS ARE SUBJECT TO AND ARE LIKELY TO CONFLICT WITH INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAWS”

SOUNDBITE

The LJP is not going anywhere. Despite the LJP having some differences with the JD-U, it will fight as a coalition partner under the umbrella of the NDA.

BJP leader —Devendra Fadnavis



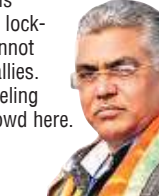
Earlier, we would do what the coach said without questioning. But this has changed. Now there is a two-way communication and players are equally involved.

Indian hockey striker —SV Sunil



Corona is over! Didi is uselessly imposing a lockdown so that BJP cannot hold meetings and rallies. Didi’s brothers are feeling unwell seeing the crowd here.

Bengal BJP chief —Dilip Ghosh



Thank you for all your love. I would love to do a tour in India sometime. Always wanted to do that. Hoping for next year or after that, I hope.

Singer —Ellie Goulding



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Travesty of justice

Sir — “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.” The words of a guard in *Hamlet* appear to be relevant to India in the context of the aftermath of actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s (SSR’s) death. The trail of events that followed the tragedy brought out and demonstrated the worst in our society and left a blot on it. SSR’s story took precedence over the Coronavirus pandemic, contraction of the economy and the India-China border face-off. It is generally believed that the actor had mental health issues and was driven by clinical depression to take the extreme step. But then his politically-connected family screamed murder and all hell broke loose. So everything other than his death is being discussed.

The CBI, ED and NCB were pressed into service to probe into the circumstances surrounding the actor’s death. Some TV anchors got their claws into the actor’s girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, declaring her guilty of abetting suicide. And since the BJP has a point to prove about the Shiv Sena Government’s mishandling of the probe, she was implicated in a drugs case on flimsy grounds that in no way was related

India must perfect art of defence purchases

At the induction ceremony of the first batch of five Rafale fighter jets held recently, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh described the French-made aircraft as a big and stern message for the entire world, “especially to those eyeing our sovereignty.” But the depleting strength of such jets remains a huge challenge for the Indian Air Force (IAF).

It is difficult to understand that if the security of the country was paramount for the Government, then why did it buy just five jets? Everyone knows that for one fighter jet to be in the air, there have to be four on the ground as a backup. That’s the global military ratio. So why bring home only five planes when the Government knew that India had a very real and challenging threat from our neighbours like China and Pakistan? Why did the Modi Government reduce the number from 126 Rafale jets asked for by the IAF and subsequently ordered by the UPA to just 36 jets? In the end, the Government had to pay the price of 126 jets to France, so what did we achieve?

Agreed, that to cover up the shortage of 42 squadrons, the Prime Minister recently approved the purchase of 21 Russian MiG-29 and 12 Sukhoi Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft as replacements, even allowing the IAF to have 29 squadrons in 2023. French Defence Minister Florence Parly said, “The India-France friendship is rock solid and is time-tested. It is based on commonality and

trust.” She said that “Make in India” had been a reality for French industries over several years, particularly for defence equipment. Truly, it took more than 10 years to get just five Rafale fighter jets, which lend India a world-class capability and the IAF an incredible sovereign tool. Even in this joyous moment, it is clear how pathetic the Indian defence modernisation and procurement process is. In 10 years, India should have had well over 126 Rafales or other sophisticated aircraft, some actually “Made in India” if Indians knew how to negotiate better. When is India going to learn how to negotiate defence deals quickly and in a better way?

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee
Faridabad



and to SSR’s death. She was more sinned against than sinning; she was hounded, humiliated and hurt to propitiate the bloodthirsty mob. Still few people openly expressed empathy for her situation. Politically, the BJP and JD(U) have tried hard to make the issue a slam dunk for them. “Justice for Sushant” is now an election slogan in Bihar.

Actor Kangana Ranaut waded in with her unpleasant accusations. She compared Mumbai to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, the Shiv Sena-led Aghadi Government to the Taliban, her office to the Ram temple and the BMC to Babur’s army and ended up having Y+ security. The actress validated

the perception that she was acting as a proxy for the BJP. In any case, the SSR case was warped by prejudice to boast any semblance of fairness. May justice prevail.

G David Milton
Marathancode

Elect Deputy Speaker

Sir — It is worrying that the constitutional post of the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha hasn’t been filled despite 15 months having passed since the first sitting of the 17th Lok Sabha. With the monsoon session of the Parliament commencing, it should be one of the top priorities of the Union Government.

Given the raging pandemic, it would be difficult to run the House if Speaker Om Birla has to keep himself away from the proceedings for some time. The Speaker is placed on the same rank as the Chief Justice of India in the Indian “Order of Precedence.” His key position ought to be safeguarded by electing a Deputy Speaker to preside over the House in his absence.

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FIRST COLUMN

Managing Covid the Indian way

The *desi* variant of regulation has many unique characteristics, namely observing the format even if the content sounds silly



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The last six months have seen exponential growth in the use of internet-enabled platforms for communication purposes. More webinars have been, perhaps, held per week than were seminars held per month, in each of the preceding years, with any month being taken as an example. This is understandable because after the initial severity of the lockdown began wearing off and the overenthusiasm of regulations without back-ups created its own long-term damages, gradually a greater sense of realism became a part of the scene. Dealing with a pandemic where — at the best — mitigation was the only strategy (and inexorable personal disaster a real possibility), there was little option but to allow life to begin limping towards the so-called “new normal.” If in the process infection multiplied and unmanageable risks erupted, it was a price which could not be avoided.

The eateries started opening up and public transport was back on the wheels. Those who could not do without air travel went back to flying. The standards were more of a lip-service, than being implemented seriously. Reports had it that two twin airports, called “sister airports” and managed by identical agencies, manpower and serviced by identical airlines, at least on September 10, offered two diametrically opposite scenes. Long queues at Jammu airport, more organised systems at the Srinagar airport. At the Jammu airport, people were reconciled to standing shoulder to shoulder. If in the process they contracted or passed on the virus, how could it be helped? The system wanted to know personal details, including the mobile number. How could one know whether this was a genuine mobile number?

The Indian variant of regulation has many unique characteristics, namely the form must be observed even if the content sounds silly. This is truly an understandable approach because the circumstances demanded that procedures be shown to be observed. Once in a while somebody talks of increasing medical literacy in the extension mode and somebody else notches up a point by talking of public healthcare systems. Once in a while, somebody even talks of some modifications in the medical education curriculum. Truly speaking, nothing much seems to have been seriously attempted. At the time of writing this column, guidelines were being issued for re-opening of higher educational institutions: “Staggering of classroom activities to be done with separate time slots to allow for adequate physical distancing and disinfection of classroom premises... and so on.” It has been directed that a distance of six feet would be observed between desks. It is mandated that academic scheduling should have an intermix of regular classroom teaching and online teaching and assessments. What has been missing is a back-up calculation to assess how many square metres of space does an average educational institution have? The smugness of powers that be is touching. It is duly leavened by people willing to sing praises to it in the hope of some compensating privileges coming their way. The guideline document is a delight to read: “Institutions conducting skill or entrepreneurship training, higher educational institutions conducting doctoral courses and postgraduate studies shall specifically ensure online and distance learning...” The document even goes on to suggest the “utilisation of any outdoor space by relocating equipment outside like in veranda, courtyard, shed and so on.” This kind of wisdom eludes comment.

The truth of the situation is, in the absence of any standards of prevention, in a verifiable sense, one cannot sense what the future would look like. The efforts seem to measure up only to a format. It is little wonder then that on September 9, India had the highest number of cases in a single day of any country on this planet. The official response was swift, pointing to “the low percentages of fatalities.” This debate should not even have begun. In reality, no real teaching has begun in many places. There is much drumming up of the “hybrid approach” but the contents of the curriculum have not even been touched.

Education as a domain is not a fallow field where anyone can walk all over with command and confidence. It is management of an expert system and the identification of genuine experts in sufficient numbers to plan, develop and execute is an important pre-requisite. The powers that be claim that the education policy had comments from over two lakh individuals. This is fabulous. Who were the core group of people — with what expertise — to screen their reactions? Nevertheless a good aspirational document has emerged. What is now required is its conversion to an operational level. A rebirth is possible provided the envisioning is clear and process issues clarified.

(The writer is an internationally-acclaimed management consultant)

I WANTED TO ALWAYS PLAY IT (THE VIRUS) DOWN.
I STILL LIKE PLAYING IT DOWN BECAUSE I DON'T
WANT TO CREATE A PANIC.
—US PRESIDENT
DONALD TRUMP

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP BOTCHED
UP HIS RHETORICAL HANDLING
OF THE CORONAVIRUS
—JOURNALIST
BEN SHAPIRO

ICT unshackling subalterns

Is the information society selling a justifiable hope for liberation and empowerment to the marginalised in post-truth India?



MOHAMMAD IRSHAD

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are providing an enormous platform to re-arrange societal contours, by abandoning the primitive, time and space-driven edifices of epistemology to develop some new sets of normative standards, for citizens in the information age. Citizenship assumes geography, which is later underlined as a nation-State. This understanding, however, becomes inept in times of a new digital citizenship under the sovereign ruling of ICT. This has paved the way for the subaltern's voice. For ages, socially-acceptable and prestigious spaces/institutions were devoid of subordinate voices. Digital social media platforms via the internet have considerably enabled them to mature a first-hand collective consciousness to authorise a distinctive, shared philosophy (through Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and so on) deeply interwoven in democratic traditions.

Digital windows have arguably helped diverse online communities to materialise their life-world experiences and advance a fresh alternative and corresponding model of living. Information society theorist Manuel Castells recognises the liberating outcomes of ICT. Subalterns are taking epistemic responsibilities in socio-technical processes of the information society, conditioned on epistemic justification to rectify injustice done to them.

ICT and empowerment: Subalterns have utilised digital platforms more suitably to reveal their experiences, ideas, concerns and aspirations and explore unsung heroes, weave stories and preserve oral traditions. These include their life experiences, cultures, traditions, beliefs, languages and ethics, despite the anxieties from the existing dominating political entities. Information technology enabled subalterns with the required information, without much obstruction, to get closer to the pursuit of truth and justice. Information/knowledge systems of a large section of the Indian population possibly would have been isolated by the mainstream content drivers to sustain dominant conceptual accounts and discourses/narratives. Meanwhile, cyberspace is offering sizeable avenues to freely communicate with local and globalised communities.

The rise of multiple online news outlets, individual content providers and senior journalists devoted to maintaining the integrity of their profession, and their incessantly digitally-widening audience, attests to the fact that subalterns and ordinary citizens receive more reliable information from them than from mainstream news outlets. In the present scenario, formal education is less required to produce creative content. On the contrary, industrial society is engrossed in ownership of talent. The information age does not need a bulky investment of academicians for information; rather it independently cultivates a new digital forum. It is also not purely social-capital caste driven. In this way, the creator of information will enhance balance in society. The embryonic subaltern epistemology adheres to different ideas and figures, which might be in stark contrast to some widely-considered knowledge structures. This will actually induce those, who remained at the helm of social and political affairs/narratives, to incorporate burgeoning criticism and demands of subordinates to enable the substantial democratisation of ICT.



WITH COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE, SUBALTERN ARE REACHING AT THE CENTRE OF DEMOCRATIC KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND CONTENT GENERATION, CHALLENGING THE DISCRIMINATORY AND HEGEMONIC PATTERNS OF THE STATE. THE APRIL 2, 2018 MOBILISATION OF DALITS AND ADIVASIS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, AGAINST THE DILUTION OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE SCS/STS (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) ACT, IS A UNIQUE TESTAMENT TO A BETTER AND PURPOSEFUL UTILISATION OF INTERNET TECHNOLOGY BY SUBALTERN IN INDIA TO ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS. LEADERS BECAME IRRELEVANT



Subaltern news outlets: Subaltern presence is notable in online news portals, though not adequately enough. Some channels like *Dalit Dastak*, *National Dastak*, *Bahujan TV*, *National India News*, *The Shudra* and *Dalit Camera*: *Through UnTouchable Eyes* have started generating content. They have subscribers/viewers in millions from various social groups. Notably, subalterns have utilised digital media to constructively choose relevant, valuable and meaningful information, more than ever to educate themselves.

ICT and subaltern causes: With collective struggle, subalterns are reaching at the centre of democratic knowledge production and content generation, challenging the discriminatory and hegemonic patterns of the State. The April 2, 2018 mobilisation of Dalits and Adivasis across the country, against the dilution of the provisions of the SCS/STS (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, is a unique testament to a better and purposeful utilisation of internet technology by subalterns in India to assert their rights. Leaders became irrelevant and, despite that, it could become the largest unprecedented movement of this scale, in recent years, by subalterns.

Why is information society more liberating to subalterns? In agricultural societies, they could not acquire the land. On the contrary, in the information society, they could secure key positions from content generators to content managers and owners. However, the lack of financial resources limits them from projecting their accounts as general mainstream opinions. At the epistemological front, they have had considerable accomplishments by acquiring digital space but do not possess materialistic

resources to take the ownership of big mainstream media. The information society, further, has been converted into a revered room that furnishes more substance of respect and dignity to an ordinary subaltern. Fundamentally, the information society is based on ideals of inclusivity, mutual collaboration, open and free access to reliable data. The subaltern people's reliance is diminishing on mainstream news channels. This will further translate into the development of community-owned and driven online media outlets, leading to active involvement and participation of outcasts and subordinates. More so to democratise the media space in the information society.

Subaltern hyper self: In an information society, people use the new social channels (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and so on) to self-broadcast (uploading pictures and locations), reveal preferences (likes and dislikes), and share personal information (relationship status). This way they are developing informational selves, covering various aspects of human life.

Anonymous social identities and the idea of self could be reformulated on a digital platform to generate meaning and accomplish freedom of speech in society. Thai philosopher Soraj Hongladarom in his seminal work, *The Online Self*, maintains “viewing the self as made up of information makes it easier to account for the self in the online world.” The online self allows this unique opportunity, to conceal and change your identity to put your message across. The physical self, which is socially neglected, might form a new online identity (or social self) to legitimise itself socially, without revealing the original identity. The new online structure

changes the forms of earlier social structures.

Futurist Jason Ohler argues, “Our ability to hide our real life identities by using obscure user presences — from chat room names to avatars who look nothing like us — allows us to literally reconceptualise ourselves.” It testifies the departure from the earlier mode of existential self to the digital self, which is attributing more meaning to a digital subaltern self.

Indian and Western digital self: Culturally, individuality is not suppressed largely in the West due to an individualistic understanding of the self, rooted in the Cartesian self. In India, desires, fantasies and aspirations are peculiarly anchored by external factors other than an individual. People will, therefore, often go and create digital selves and put fake/distorted/misinformation about their identities to cherish what they always wanted to be without revealing much about themselves. It has given them more freedom to express, which has resulted in the online social selves dominating the real ones. Sometimes, the social self overpowers the real existential self. In general terms, humans are living in a world of “double social self.” The former springs from physical social space, the latter is caused by ICT and made compulsory due to economic and political compulsions. Novel digital subaltern metaphysics has yet to be thoroughly comprehended in India. It could empirically be concluded that the information society sells a justifiable hope of liberation and empowerment to subalterns in India.

(The writer is Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi)

Karachi: A metropolis in a watery mess

Its problems of infrastructure can be traced back to its sudden transformation into a major city and to the lack of attention paid to its planning



NADEEM PARACHA

metropolitan status, and its rather pragmatically formulated pluralistic culture, it can also make the city's major political and administrative stakeholders pull their individual weights in opposite directions. This makes it almost impossible for them to strike any workable consensus.

This is reflective of the city's segregated ethnic construct. Ever since the 1980s, various ethnic communities have ghettoised themselves in their areas of numerical influence. During times of ethnic tussles over the city's resources, ethnic groups prefer to remain in their areas. However, since economic survival demands venturing out and interacting with other groups, bridges do emerge and communities return to interact with each other. No matter how pragmatic the nature of this interaction, it often results in the creation of an overarching culture of interaction and inclusiveness, only to recede once again during ethnic commotions.

Common ethnic interests are what drive this interaction, until one community begins to suspect the motives of the other. The suspected motive is usually about usurping more than one's unsaid share of economic

resources. But there are no such rivalries between those who administer this city. Communication gaps remain and in case of emergencies, these cause uncoordinated, chaotic responses and futile finger-pointing. The city's ethnic diversity works in a curious manner, generating an always-squabbling pluralism.

Most large cities, even in developed countries, face a plethora of administrative and infrastructural problems. But lessons and data from their historical evolution aid them to adjust and resolve these problems. But unlike most cities, Karachi did not evolve as a city, as such, but it imploded into existence. Twice.

The region that became Karachi has an obscure history till the 18th century. According to ancient Greek texts, the Greek commander Nearchus, who accompanied Alexander during his invasion of India in 326 BC, called the region “Krokola”, a place by the sea inhabited by a tiny community of “primitive people.” However, 16th century Turks and Arabs called it “Kaurashi.” But it does not appear on any map until Sindh's Kalthora dynasty annexed it in 1759. It was “gifted” to

Balochistan's Khan of Kalat in 1767 before being annexed by Sindh's Talpur dynasty in 1794. By all accounts, it was still a small fishing town with less than 10,000 inhabitants, mostly Sindh and Baloch, who called it “Kolachi.”

The British invaded and occupied Karachi in the early 1840s and then annexed the rest of Sindh. They made Karachi and Sindh parts of the Bombay Presidency. The British rapidly developed Karachi's port and infrastructure. This led to migrations from the rest of India. From a population of less than 15,000 during the time of the British takeover, it witnessed a manifold increase. By 1856, the population had jumped to 57,000.

Suddenly, within a matter of a few decades, the rugged fishing town of 15,000 people became a rapidly-emerging port city. By the 1930s, the British were calling Karachi the “Queen of the East” and praising its enterprising, tolerant and diverse character. The city's sudden urban emergence and swift increase in population did create issues but the British introduced an effective model of city governance that continued to upgrade Karachi's infrastructure. The city governance system eschewed

politics based on religion or ethnicity and succeeded in managing the city's resources in such a manner that major and minor stakeholders felt included. In 1936, Sindh was restored as a province and Karachi was made its capital. According to the 1941 census report, Karachi's population then was 435,887. Over 50 per cent were Hindus, 40 per cent were Muslims, while the rest comprised Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews. Over 65 per cent spoke Sindh.

In 1947, the city imploded into another form of existence, this time as a capital of Pakistan. Karachi's demographics witnessed a dramatic shift when millions of Urdu-speaking Muslims (Mohajir) migrated to it. There was a 161 per cent increase in Karachi's population. The infrastructure left behind by the British could not accommodate the massive increase, and began to crumble.

In 1958, the Ayub Khan Government chalked out a resettlement plan which was to be accommodated by an ambitious industrialisation project. New low-income housing schemes emerged but factories and businesses were slow to reach these areas and there

was lack of transport. Pashtun and Punjabi migrants also began to arrive in droves. Slums began to sprout. Failure to effectively adjust the city's infrastructure to accommodate these changes led to ad hoc arrangements. In 1965, Karachi witnessed its first ethnic riot. In 1970, it once again became the capital of Sindh. In 1972, it witnessed another round of ethnic riots. Unable to check the influx of more inner-Pakistan migrations to Karachi, and stall the mushrooming of slums, the ZA Bhutto Government, in 1975, devised a “Karachi Master Plan” to upgrade the city's failing infrastructure. It planned to build new road networks and housing; construct transport terminals, warehousing, mass transit and so on. But the plan was not implemented after the 1977 coup of Zia-ul-Haq.

This resulted in the growth of the informal sector and mafia that emerged to serve a growing population of a failing city. Across the 1980s and 1990s, Karachi witnessed brutal ethnic and sectarian violence. Ethnic communities and mafia fought running battles to gain access to the city's dwindling resources. In 2000, the Musharraf dictatorship launched a Karachi

Development Programme. But this plan departed from the “social democratic” tenor of the previous (unimplemented) plans and adopted “neo-liberal” ideas. This meant putting more money in extravagant building schemes and less on the city's degrading infrastructure. For example, according to Hasan, whereas in the past slums became the source of clogging drains with sewage, in the last two decades, the same is being done by high income areas.

Construction of residential areas, both high and low income, on natural drainage routes also continues. Due to clogged drains, these natural routes now go through residential areas and roads, flooding them over and again. Rain run-offs have used these routes for thousands of years but builders fail to take this into account by building on them without any adequate drainage facilities. Ancient Greek texts quote Nearchus as saying “a great storm was raging” when his army reached Krokola, and the storm waters were emptying into the sea. Of course, at the time, there was nothing coming in the way of these waters.

(Courtesy: Dawn)

Three-pronged strategy to drive growth: Zydus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Consumer wellness firm Zydus Wellness has said it will take a three-pronged strategy to drive growth going forward.

As a part of the strategy, the company would accelerate growth of core brands with innovations to focus on portfolio diversification and expansion with an aim to recruit new customers. Besides, it is planning differentiated propositions for the products supported by strong 'Go To Market', Zydus Wellness said in an investors' presentation. The second pillar of the strategy is building scale in international business by focusing on South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, the Middle East and Southeast Asia region, it added.

Banks sanction Rs 1.63 lakh cr to 42 lakh MSMEs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The finance ministry on Sunday said banks have sanctioned loans worth over Rs 1.63 lakh crore to more than 42 lakh business units under the Rs 3-lakh crore Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) for the MSME sector. On the disbursement front, however, over Rs 1.18 lakh crore doled out to 25 lakh MSMEs, till September 10, which were hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns.

The scheme is the biggest fiscal component of the Rs 20-lakh crore Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in May to mitigate the distress by providing credit to different sectors, especially micro, small and medium enterprises



(MSMEs).

As of September 10, as reported by public sector banks (PSBs) and top 23 private sector banks, "additional credit amounting to Rs 1,63,226.49 crore has been sanctioned to 42,01,576 borrowers", the ministry said in a statement.

"Amount of Rs 1,18,138.64 crore has been disbursed to 25,01,999 borrowers," it said while sharing the progress of implementation of various

schemes under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan package.

Sharing details of other schemes being implemented by the finance ministry, the statement said banks have approved purchase of portfolio of Rs 25,055.5 crore under Rs 45,000-crore Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme 2.0 for NBFCs, HFCs and MFIs to do fresh lending to MSMEs and individuals scheme as on August 28.

Lenders are currently in the process of approval/negotiations for additional Rs 4,367 crore, it said. Talking about income tax refunds, it said the department has issued Rs 1,01,308 crore to more than 27.55 lakh taxpayers between April 1, 2020 and September 8, 2020.

"Income tax refunds of Rs 30,768 crore have been issued in 25,83,507 cases and corporate tax refunds of Rs 70,540 crore have been issued in 1,71,155 cases. In fact, all corporate tax refunds up to Rs 50 crore have been issued in all cases, wherever due. Other refunds are under process," it said. With regard to Rs 30,000 crore Special Liquidity Scheme for the stressed non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)/housing finance companies (HFCs)/micro finance institutions (MFIs).

Discoms' outstanding dues rise 36% to Rs 1.29 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power producers' total outstanding dues owed by distribution firms rose over 36 per cent year-on-year to Rs 1.29 lakh crore in July 2020, reflecting stress in the sector.

Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total of Rs 94,704 crore to power generation firms in July 2019, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

The portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions between the generators and discoms.

In July 2020, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 60 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 1,16,817 crore, as against Rs 75,411



crore in the year-ago period.

According to the latest data on the portal, total outstanding dues in July has decreased over the previous month. In June 2020, total outstanding dues of discoms stood at Rs 1,30,118 crore. However, the overdue amount in July 2020 has increased from Rs 1,15,623 crore in June 2020. Power producers give 60 days to discoms for paying bills for the supply of electricity. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

In order to give relief to power generation companies (gencos), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1, 2019. Under this mechanism, discoms are required to open letters of credit for getting power supply. The central government had also given some breachers to discoms for paying dues to power generating companies (gencos) in view of COVID-19-induced lockdown. The government had also waived the penal charges for late payment of dues in the directive.

Odisha's agri push to boost entrepreneurship among youth

PNS ■ BHUBANESHWAR

As agriculture plays a vital role in the economy and livelihood of the majority of people, the Odisha government is according priority to the farm and allied sector to provide opportunities to young entrepreneurs, a senior official said.

Adequate measures should be taken to encourage young entrepreneurs to make use of the opportunities of the schemes of the Centre and the state government for agricultural growth of the state, and investment in the sector, said Agriculture Secretary Saurabh Garg. Schemes like Agriculture Infrastructure Development Funds, Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture and Mukhyamantri Krushi Udyoga Yojana will strengthen the states economy while ensuring its agricultural



growth, Garg said addressing a webinar. The webinar titled 'Agri-Business: Scopes and Opportunities' was organised on Saturday by Odisha Corporate Foundation (OCF), a non-profit organisation.

Noting that Rs 1 lakh crore loans will be provided to the farmers in the country by banks and other institutions under the Agricultural Infrastructure Fund, he said Odisha farmers can avail loans

of Rs 2,500 crore under this fund.

Farmers as well as those keen to invest in agriculture and allied fields should reap the benefits, he added. Director, Agriculture and Food Production, M Muthukumar said the use of new technologies and the availability of proper agri infrastructure will help the younger generation to take a plunge into the sector.

BenQ expects biz to grow 15-20%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT peripheral firm BenQ expects around 15-20 per cent growth in India business this year on pick up in sales demand from home segment for monitors and high-definition projectors, according to a top official of the company.

According to BenQ India Managing Director Rajeev Singh, the company's institutional sales for flat screen wall and projectors have suffered due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but its impact has been compensated with increase in sales of monitor and projectors by retail customers.

"In terms of percentage, we are definitely looking at a 15 to 20 per cent increase. We are expecting at least three times growth in our monitor business during this year as compared to last year, and we work on a calendar year basis,"



Singh told PTI. He said because of work from home, learning and entertainment at home, the demand for company's business to consumer (B2C) products has increased, specifically for monitors.

Before COVID-19, two-thirds of BenQ's business came from sales of projectors and interactive flat panels and one-third of business was being contributed by monitors. According to IDC, the company recorded 163 per cent year-on-year surge in sales of monitors during April-June quarter in 2020.

ICAI seeks extension of GST annual return filing deadline

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has written to the GST Council seeking deferment of 2018-19 GST annual return filing deadline by 3 months till December 31. The last date for filing annual return for 2018-19 fiscal for Goods and Services Tax (GST) registered taxpayer is September 30. In its representation to the GST Council, the ICAI said majority of the offices are working only partially due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We request... to provide appropriate relaxation to the registered persons and extend due dates of filing GST annual return and GST audit for the year 2018-19 by 3 months till December 31, 2020."

Credit guarantee for startups soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is working on two schemes -- credit guarantee and seed funds -- to support startups in the country, a top government official has said.

DPIIT Secretary Guruprasad Mohapatra said that an inter-ministerial consultation process is on to work out the contours of the two schemes.

We are working on a credit guarantee scheme and a seed fund scheme. Both are under inter-ministerial consultations," the secretary told PTI. He said there would be a corpus in the credit guarantee scheme which would be given to banks and they will leverage that to lend to startups. This scheme would give banks a

comfort to lend, he said adding that it is for credit not for venture capital.

"This is for capex credit," Mohapatra added. On the seed fund scheme, Mohapatra said that most startups actually face problems in raising finance or funds in the ideation to the proof of concept stage.

Some states like Gujarat and Kerala already have schemes like seed funds, but they are small, he said. "The central government ministries also have, but we want to put a pan India scheme," the secretary said. Both the schemes would require approval of the finance ministry and then the DPIIT would seek nod of the Union Cabinet for these two schemes. The department is encouraging states to develop their startup policy to promote budding entrepreneurs.

India's coal import drops 35% in Aug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import declined by 34.9 per cent to 12.46 million tonnes (MT) in August on account of subdued demand for the dry fuel from consuming sectors like power and cement.

The country imported 19.14 MT of coal in August last year, according to provisional compilation by mjunction, based on monitoring of vessels' positions and data received from shipping companies. mjunction, a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL, is a B2B e-commerce company that also publishes research reports on coal and steel verticals. Also, the first five months of the current fiscal saw 32.51 per cent decline in coal import at 73.08 MT, over 108.29 MT during the year-ago period, it said. Coal India (CIL), which accounts for over 80 per cent of domestic coal output, has been mandated by the government to replace at least 100 million tonnes of imports with domestically-produced coal in the ongoing fiscal.

Retail inflation will come down: CEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Attributing the rise in inflation to supply-side frictions, Chief Economic Adviser K V Subramanian has exuded confidence that retail inflation will come down in the days ahead with the easing of lockdowns. According to the government data, retail inflation rose to 6.93 per cent in July, mainly driven by rising prices of food items like vegetables, pulses, meat and fish.

However, wholesale price-based inflation declined 0.58 per cent in July, even as food items turned costlier. "If you look at inflation... it's primarily because of those supply-side frictions, but as local lockdowns are actually being reduced, these frictions should basically go down," he told PTI. "Overall, the difference between wholesale and retail inflation is primarily due to supply-side factors which should decrease and therefore going forward even the retail inflation should ease," Subramanian said.

There are fears that retail inflation would remain at an elevated level during the rest



of the year limiting the scope for the RBI to further ease the benchmark interest rate.

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by the RBI Governor has been given the mandate to maintain annual retail inflation at 4 per cent until March 31, 2021, with an upper tolerance of 6 per cent and a lower tolerance of 2 per cent.

Retail inflation so far has been in the tolerance range of MPC except for breach in July. In June, retail inflation was 6.09 per cent.

At the same time, WPI inflation in June was at (-) 1.81 per cent, while for the month of May and April it was (-) 3.37 per cent and (-) 1.57 per cent respectively. Manufacturing shrank 39.3 per cent, construction contracted 50.3 per cent, mining output fell 23.3 per cent, and electricity and gas segment dropped 7 per cent.

SBI Card to enrol 'delinquent' customers in restructuring plans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SBI Card is in the process of enrolling "delinquent" customers, who did not repay after the end of moratorium, in the RBI restructuring scheme or its own repayment plan to provide them more time for repayments, a top company official said. Due to the moratorium, a number of customers had not been paying for the first three months and the company treated them as standard accounts in line with the entire industry. However, since then, as the first moratorium ended, SBI Card made it a customer-led enrolment in the second moratorium in which a lot of customers did not enrol, SBI Card Managing Director & CEO Ashwini Kumar Tewari said.

"Therefore, we had a large chunk of customers who came out of the moratorium. A lot of them did not pay also. And these became what we call as more delinquent customers."

"So with these delinquent customers, we are now working to enrol them either into



the RBI restructuring scheme or our own repayment plans so that they get more time and better interest rate to pay their dues," Tewari, who took charge after a month ago, told PTI in an interview.

According to the company, it had Rs 7,083 crore under moratorium in May which came down to Rs 1,500 crore in June. Those who would be availing the company's restructuring plan will have a benefit over the RBI restructuring plan as SBI Card will not report such cases to the credit scoring agency CIBIL.

In March, the RBI had allowed the first three-month moratorium on payment of all term loans due between March 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020.

UCO Bank yet to take up asset quality study

PNS ■ KOLKATA

State-owned UCO Bank has not been able to make an analytical study of its asset quality even after the end of the loan repayment moratorium period on August 31, heeding a Supreme Court directive that no accounts shall be downgraded for now, an official said. On September 3, in a relief to stressed borrowers who are facing hardship due to adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the top court had said that accounts which were not declared as non-performing assets till August 31 this year, shall not be declared NPA till further orders.

The apex court had also earlier expressed its reservation over the idea of 'charging interest on interest' from those borrowers who were willing to avail of the loan repayment moratorium, a facility extended by the Reserve Bank of India during the pandemic times. UCO Bank MD and CEO A K Goel had earlier said the lender would like to ascertain its asset quality, once the

moratorium period ceases on August 31.

"We are not able to carry out that exercise as the apex court has directed that no accounts will be downgraded till further orders", Goel told PTI. With the RBI guidelines, the lender has started an exercise of making a list of eligible borrowers whose accounts could be restructured with the rider that they should not have any overdue for 30 days as on March 1, 2020. He said the bank has already obtained the board approval for this. Goel said the lender has already prepared a standard operating procedure to identify accounts which are really affected by the COVID-19 crisis. "If borrowers are really affected by job loss or salary cut, then the bank will go all out to lend them a helping hand," he said. According to him, the bank would ask for salary slip of February 2020 and also that of August.

Asked about the credit off-take growth, Goel said it was almost "negligible" in the first quarter of the current fiscal.

Tourism industry pins hope on festive season

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The tourism sector, crippled by the COVID-19 pandemic, hopes to see some businesses in the upcoming Durga puja and Diwali seasons with queries from interested travellers coming in, officials of the industry-bodies said on Sunday.

In the domestic and short-haul segments, people are showing interest, Travel Agents' Federation of India (TAFI) eastern region head Anil Punjabi said.

"There is interest and queries are coming in about destinations and safety measures, but these are yet to be translated into bookings," he said, adding that people have changed their priorities amid the COVID-19 crisis.



"There will be businesses in the Durga Puja and Diwali seasons with interest growing among people, though it is likely to be much less than what it used to be in the previous years," Punjabi told PTI. With people starting to learn to live

with the pandemic, at least some of them are likely to start travelling with requisite safety measures, he said.

The TAFI eastern region head said the tour operators are providing people with all kind of information regarding

tourists' destinations and the safety of the places.

A lot depends on how the COVID-19 situation emerges in the next few days as people would not want any cancellation. "Bengal is a value-for-money destination and is safe also," he said, expressing hope that domestic tourists would travel during the holiday season.

The reopening of Darjeeling hills to outsiders has led to tourists making queries about bookings in different destinations there for the Puja season, according to Raj Basu, convener of the Association for Conservation of Tourism.

"Many destinations in Darjeeling hills and Doars forest in North Bengal are in village areas, which have

around 70 per cent share of tourist footfalls," Basu told PTI.

Since these places are spread across villages and are not like hotels or resorts in urban centres, operators of tourism clusters are being informed about safe practices.

"Each cluster comprises around 12 to 15 villages. At the meetings in each cluster, sensitisation is being done so that the tourists, the operators as also the villagers stay safe while livelihood is also earned," Basu said.

He said safe practices and how to deal with any kind of emergency situation are being described through workshops to the village tourism operators in Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Doars areas.

Covid treatment accounts for 11% of health insurance claims: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Treatment for COVID-19 accounted for as much as 11 per cent of the total health insurance claims paid by insurance companies during the first five months of the current financial year, says a research conducted by Policybazaar.com. The research further revealed that 89 per cent of health insurance claims during April 1, 2020 and August 31, 2020 were for other major illnesses, including cancer, heart problems, kidney and treatment.

Policybazaar.com, which accounts for about 10 per cent of India's retail health insurance market, said the data pertains to April 1 to August 31.

The insurtech brand further said the increasing incidence of coronavirus cases and the rising cost of treatment have been promoting more and more people to opt for health insurance in these uncertain times.

"As per Policybazaar data, COVID claims are only 11 per cent out of overall claims. The rest 89 per cent are of other major illnesses..." it said. The COVID-19 scare, it said, "has triggered everyone to

prioritise health insurance like never before not only for protection against a pandemic but also against any bigger events or illnesses like lifestyle disease which will stay here forever."

As regards the cost of treatment, the insurance aggregator said COVID-19 treatment may cost more than Rs 10 lakh in case of prolonged hospitalisation. A comprehensive health insurance policy with Rs 10 lakh sum insured for a 32-year-old individual costs anywhere between Rs 7,000-9,000 annually, it said.

From Miss Asia Universe to a Fitness Enthusiast



The Pioneer's SHIKHA DUGGAL speaks to former Miss Asia Universe and fitness enthusiast — Sonal Singh. The co-founder of an online fitness platform providing health education to people, 1-on-1 guidance, and community support named 'Fittr', Sonal's motto in life is to help inspire people to overcome their challenges so that they can pursue professional and personal growth by leading healthier lives. This Pune-based fitness start-up has also managed to raise two million in pre-series 'A' funding from Sequoia Capital India's Surge, an accelerator programme for early-stage startups in India and Southeast Asia. The startup is now backed by actor Suniel Shetty and has been selected for the US-based accelerator, Y Combinator's batch of 2020. Here are some excerpts from the chat with the illustrious fitness expert



From a corporate professional to a fitness expert, shed some light on this beautiful journey for our readers to know how Sonal Singh entered into one of the largest fitness communities in the world?

I was working at Deloitte as a strategy consultant for 4 years in London when I quit my job and moved to India. When I moved here, I worked as a freelance consultant, helping brands build their businesses online. When I took some time off and entered the Ms Asia Universe competition, I met Jatindra Chouksey from Fittr who trained me and I won the title. We came together because we were strongly

aligned with the cause of helping people. My corporate experience helped tremendously as I head strategic initiatives and spearheaded the fundraiser to help raise two million in funds from Sequoia's Surge program. I also successfully onboarded key clients such as Philips India, Reliance, and Tata onto the platform.

You are standing on a successful pedestal today, so how do you differentiate between self-esteem and attitude?

Your outlook towards things and attitude determine your self-esteem — no one else. I strongly believe that our most important sale is to sell our self to ourselves every day and unleash the power within you. My internal confidence and external achievements helped me

maintain my success. We can accomplish anything if we believe in ourselves apart from accepting ourselves for who we are, which is an important factor for success. Our self-esteem is an assessment of our self-worth!

Who/what do you consider to be the cause of your success?

The determination to get better and, pushing myself out of my comfort zone on a daily basis! I'm also extremely grateful for a very supportive and loving family. My education, hard work, sacrifice, and dedication to my family have allowed me to break through the glass ceiling and earn my place in Fittr. They often tell me how proud they are of my accomplishments and how much they value me for using my abilities to make

their lives better. I was never instilled with a pang of certain guilt for my devotion towards my career as if that somehow means I am less devoted to my family. Instead, they idealise the true definition of womanhood in me!

COVID has indeed shattered many sectors across the nation, one of them being the fitness industry. Do you think technological innovations practiced by renowned gyms have made it possible for the fitness enthusiasts to engage better? Was it a successful move?

I think COVID has helped us value the fundamentals more than ever. You don't need extensive equipment or an expensive gym membership to get fit.

You can do it from the comfort of your home with a coach training through an app or by following an exercise session online. The awareness related to health and fitness has increased during the lockdown and it's easier to train and exercise safely at home amid these unprecedented times. The fact that the fitness industry has shifted to digital platforms to survive this challenging period is what may become the future of this industry as well.

Have you accepted work from home as the new normal? Do you embrace it or do you feel it's causing you trouble?

It was definitely an adjustment at first as I travel a lot for work. I make up every day and practice a quick gratitude exercise so that I'm emotionally fit to

manage the challenges of the day. When your perspective shifts from one of the expectations to be grateful, you explore the best version of yourself. When you approach life from this mindset, magic happens!

At present, what's Sonal Singh's purpose in life?

When I quit my job in London and moved to India, everyone questioned my decision and told me I had made a huge mistake. Rather than let this deter me I continued to carve my own path because I had a strong belief that my purpose would be fulfilled here. My personal mission is to help people unlock their potential and pursue their passion by becoming fitter versions of themselves both, physically and mentally.

Serving the Covid-hit with aplomb

At a time when a majority of professional sports persons rest content after making contributions when natural calamities destruct the nation and wreak havoc all over or during the current Covid-19 terror, only a handful of celebrities are physically around consoling the people, who have been subject to traumatic times. Tinsel town personalities also prefer to contribute to the cost but stay away from actually being on the ground.

To the select few, who go the extra mile to personally handover succour to the victims, belongs the tennis professional from Suryapet, Rekha Boyalapalli, who is currently based in Hyderabad.

A top 50 player on the AITA circuit, who has also made a name for herself in ITF World Tour with her exploits, her obsession is for tennis but her passion is elsewhere—helping the needy and the accursed have-nots. It is to reach out to a larger section of such anguished families that she floated Rekha Charitable Foundation, which has been in the forefront of helping people in dire straits.

Besides distribution of protein-enriched food to pregnant women and postnatal mothers, she frequently visits orphanages, slums and homes for the aged.

"I was moved seeing the misery caused by Covid-19. There were heart-rending scenes all over and not every-



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one in distress was receiving succour. I thought the Foundation had to attend to these people, first and foremost. Apart from the daily-wage earners and slum-dwellers, we also distributed vegetables and essential commodities in the presence of senior officials of Greater Hyderabad Municipal

Corporation (GHMC) in some localities of Hyderabad," explains the Chairperson of Rekha Charitable Foundation, who incidentally holds a diploma in Swadharna Yoga.

Adding further, she says "one of the worst impacted was the migrant labour class. They had come to the State



lockdown relaxations were announced. Our volunteers did a great job."

Charity and doing something for others has been ingrained in her from childhood, for which she remains indebted to her elders. Although into tennis as a career option, Rekha initiated rural sports development activities in various disciplines, including kabaddi, cricket, track and field, volleyball at Adivemula village in Nalgonda district.

"Our priority in the present testing times will be to bring relief to the Covid-hit families," she avers.



Laugh out loud, this time, in Tamil

After 2 successful Hindi seasons of the popular stand-up comedy competition, Amazon Prime Video enters into the regional comedy space with its Tamil spinoff. Aspiring comedians compete to become the future of comedy in the Tamil stand-up comedy scene. The contestants will be mentored and judged by widely renowned Tamil comedians: Karthik Kumar, Praveen Kumar, and Rajmohan Arumugam.

While comedy as a genre is not new to the Tamil audiences, the format of the show is fresh and engaging. It's the first time that a 'competition' is being introduced, in a genre like Stand-up comedy for the audiences to engage with. 'Comicstaan Semma Comedy Pa' is expected to bring forth the local flavour — borrowing from the unique nuances of Tamil culture, with exclusive sets per-

formed by each of the participants.

With one unable to venture outdoor in any recreational activities, events and live performances have taken a huge hit so to say. But in the age of digitisation, OTT platforms and other platforms on the web are paving the way for these artists to connect to a large number of audiences more than ever before. Be it live streams, online comedy shows or entertaining content like Comicstaan Semma Comedy Pa, each one of them is proving to be a boon for stand-up comics and more so for us who are craving for a dose of laughter.

On OTT platforms being a boon for artists much like him, comedian, and more recently a mentor on the popular Tamil spin-off Comicstaan Semma Comedy Pa, Karthik Kumar quipped, "I think the valuable thing that OTT platform like Amazon Prime Video does is, that it amplifies our craft

of stand-up comedy across genres and regions. It gives us access to a wider set of audience that opens up wider avenues for the industry and its comics to explore in the future. Had we taken the regular route, it would have easily taken us years to sensitize our audience to the concept. Through Comicstaan Semma Comedy Pa, we are able to achieve that in one year. Comicstaan is also helping towards educating the audience and encouraging them to try it themselves too. People should not think comedy is done just by comedians. When someone watches a comedy film, they introspect, question it, and relate to it, making it a part of pop-culture. And that's what Comicstaan has achieved. More than just putting stand-up shows online, the show educated people to another level and did it so powerfully. It's like a vitamin pill for this development."

HEALTH BENEFITS OF RED RICE NOODLES

We have all grown up eating noodles either as a Sunday brunch, in birthday parties or an occasional surprise treat. It could be the much loved instant 2 minutes noodles or the Indo-Chinese version of hakka noodles. It still is a comfort food for many of us since it brings about some very happy childhood memories. Although kids absolutely love it as a meal but as adults, we feel guilty since we know what goes into making noodles. Both instant as well as hakka noodles, available in the market, are made with maida/refined flour whose nutritional value is literally zero. It causes digestive issues as well as wreaks havoc to the blood sugar and cholesterol levels in the body. Most noodles also contain MSG and other artificial flavour enhancers which have been time and again proven to be very harmful to our health. Does it mean that we should keep our kids away from noodles? Not necessarily, says Priya Prakash, Co-Founder, Naturally Yours. Red rice noodles is an ideal healthy alternative to regular noodles. It is completely devoid of maida and is made using only red rice and whole-wheat flour. This makes it a very good source of dietary fibers and antioxidants. It is easy to make and takes barely 10 minutes to cook, thus making it a great choice for individuals who want to eat healthy but are hard-pressed for time. It is also ideal for moms, who can get their kids to consume wholegrains without a fuss, since it is in the form of their favourite meal, she suggests.



PRAKASH SHARES TOP 10 HEALTH BENEFITS OF RED RICE NOODLES.

- ❑ **Easy to digest:** Red rice noodles have high fiber content due to the presence of wholegrains. This helps to support healthy digestion.
- ❑ **Provides all the benefits of nutritious red rice in kid friendly format:** It provides you with the goodness of red rice, which has 10 times more antioxidants than brown rice and is also very rich in essential nutrients, iron, vitamin, phosphorus and fiber.
- ❑ **Tastemaker is MSG free:** The tastemaker is free of MSG, artificial additives, taste enhancers, colour, preservatives etc. It is made using natural spices like turmeric, ginger and pepper which also support a healthy digestion. Thus making it ideal for kids.
- ❑ **Time Saver:** The most important

- benefit is that these noodles are easy to make in under 10 minutes. The noodles tastes very similar to regular noodles and can be used in different recipes like Ramen, schetzwan, chopseuy etc.
- ❑ **Kid friendly meal:** Super easy way to introduce wholegrains in children's diet since they absolutely love noodles.
- ❑ **Rich in antioxidants:** Red rice has 10 times more antioxidants than brown rice. The antioxidant called Anthocyanin is the pigment which gives red rice its reddish-purple color. These are powerful anti-inflammatory agents and also help to promote skin and eye health.
- ❑ **Only Natural spices:** The tastemaker is made using only natural spices like turmeric, ginger, pepper etc which help to support a healthy digestion. There are no artificial sweeteners or unfamiliar ingredients.

- ❑ **Ideal for individuals following weight management diets:** Since it is made using wholegrains, the fiber content in these noodles helps to slow down digestion and makes you feel fuller for a longer period of time. This in turn prevents you from overeating or reaching out for unhealthy junk food in between your meals, thus supporting healthy weight management.
- HERE'S A SIMPLE RECIPE FOR YOU TO TRY AT HOME.**
- ❑ Take about 2L of water in a large pan and boil on high heat. Add a tsp of salt in it.
 - ❑ Once the water has come to a rolling boil, add Red Rice Noodles.
 - ❑ Stir once to make sure that the noodles are not sticking together or to the bottom of the pan.
 - ❑ Continue to boil on high heat, stirring

- occasionally, until the water returns to a rolling boil (about 2 minutes)
- ❑ Once the water begins to bubble and foam, you may wish to turn down the temperature a bit to keep it from boiling over
- ❑ Boil for another 5 to 7 minutes.
- ❑ Test a piece of noodles to see whether it is the texture you're looking for (cooked but still a bit firm)
- ❑ Drain the water and keep the noodles aside. Rinse it and then toss it with a bit of oil to make sure that the noodles don't stick to itself.
- ❑ Sauté the vegetables of your choice (like onion, carrot, capsicum, cabbage, beans etc) in 1 tsp of oil.
- ❑ Add the seasonings from the seasonings pack and mix well. In case it becomes too dry, add a tsp of oil to it.
- ❑ Toss it with the cooked Red Rice noodles and serve hot.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



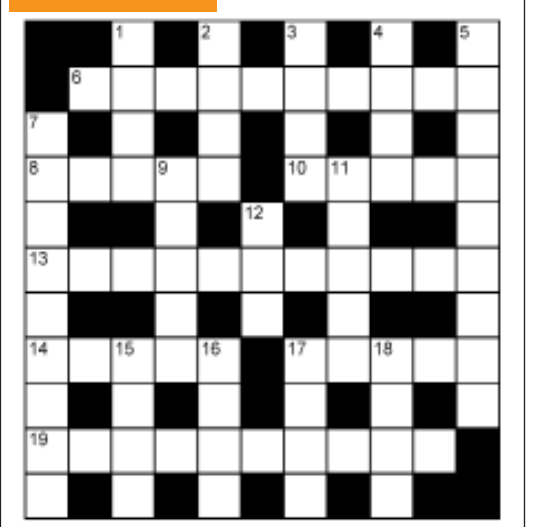
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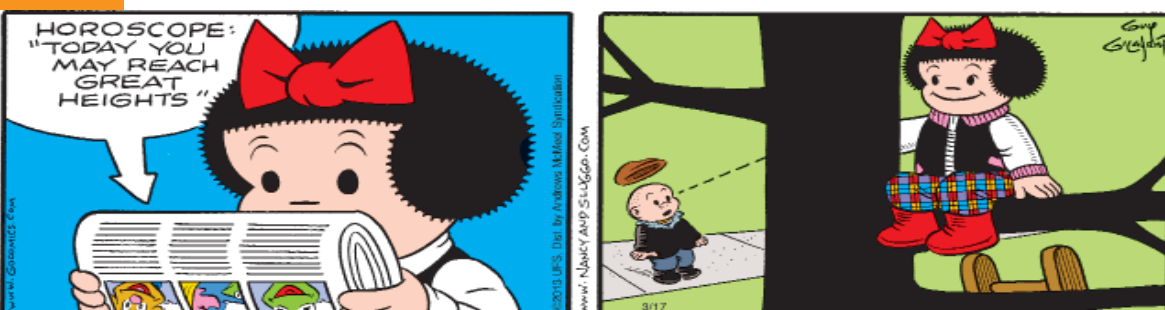
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- 6 A team game
- 8 Foe
- 10 A bamboo-eating animal
- 13 Measure temperatures with this
- 14 Player of bagpipes
- 17 Stairs
- 19 Book of word meanings

DOWN

- 1 Not in danger
- 2 All right, but not especially good
- 3 Halt
- 4 A sign of tiredness
- 5 A big sea bird
- 7 A many-legged creature

SOLUTION I

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



Nani: We are slowly forgetting about the HERO OR VILLAIN



Telugu star Nani, who has played an antagonist for the first time in his 25th film *V*, says that it is not anymore about just the hero or the villain as there is a slow shift towards grey roles. Talking about actors now playing characters with shades on screen, Nani said that the change is very clear and evident. "Now, we are slowly forgetting about the hero or villain. We are slowly shifting towards greyer roles. It used to be black and white before. There used to be a bad and a good guy. Now it's not like that," Nani told IANS. "I think now even a hero will have flaws and even a villain will have some good qualities in him. So, I don't think we can tag them like that anymore. The change is very clear and evident," he added. Nani says that actors are now much more open to grey characters. "I think the thought process is changing a little bit and we are much more open to the grey roles than before," he said. The Telugu action thriller *V* was recently released on Amazon Prime Video. *V* is also Nani's third collaboration with the director Mohana Krishna Indraganti. Nani's debut film *Ashita Chamma* was also directed by Mohana.

HOLLYWOOD TECHNICIAN ROPED IN FOR PK'S NEXT?

Power Star Pawan Kalyan is all set to resume the shoot of his upcoming much-hyped courtroom drama, *Vakeel Saab*, from October. Makers of the film are planning to release it on the eve of Sankranti 2021. Apart from *Vakeel Saab*, which is a remake of Hindi film *Pink* that starred Amitabh Bachchan, Pawan Kalyan is also working with *Kanche* and *Gauthamiputra Satakarni* fame Krish for a film. Touted to be a period drama set in pre-independence India, the film will feature actors from multiple industries, including Bollywood. Since Krish is popular in the Hindi film industry, he is said to have convinced the *Gabbar Singh* star and the producer with the idea of making the movie in multiple languages including Hindi. Krish's directorial venture has enough scope for VFX work and he is planning to bring Hollywood technicians for Pawan Kalyan's film. Sources close to Krish revealed that the technician team who worked for Hollywood films like *Aquaman*, *WarCraft*, and others will handle the graphics for PK's next film which is going to be produced by AM Rathnam and has MM Keeravani on board to score the music.



Prakash Raj takes a dig at Kangana

Versatile actor Prakash Raj is popular for calling a spade a spade. He is one of the actors of the film industry who never shies away from speaking his mind. He is popular for sharing his views about various political and social causes. This time the actor took a dig at Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut. In the wake of Bombay's Municipal authorities demolishing the Manikarnika actress' office for violating the law, Prakash Raj took to Twitter to comment on the event. He tweeted a picture that read, "If one film makes Kangana Ranaut think she is Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, then Deepika Padukone is Padmavati, Hrithik Roshan is Akbar, Ajay Devgn is Bhagat Singh, Vivek Oberoi is Narendra Modi ji and Amir Khan is Mangal Pandey." The post comes at a time when netizens have been identifying Kangana Ranaut with her role as Rani Lakshmi Bai in the film *Queen of Jhansi*, *Manikarnika* after she spoke about "Bollywood mafias" and Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. While the tweet did not go down well with fans of the actress, as is evident from the replies to the tweet, several other fans of Prakash Raj have been retweeting the picture.

Pavan Sadineni to direct Kalyan Ram



After delivering a slew of films that did not do well, commercially, Nandamuri Kalyan Ram tasted success with the investigative thriller drama *118*, though his last film *Entha Manchivaadavuraa* failed miserably at the Box office. This time, the Nandamuri hero is hoping to deliver a hit movie, soon. According to the latest buzz in the film industry, Kalyan Ram is going to collaborate with the young director Pavan Sadineni of *Prema Ishq Kaadhal* fame for an interesting project. However, there has been no official update regarding the film yet. Although details regarding the genre of this upcoming untitled film are under wraps, sources say that the movie will go on floors next summer. The sources added that the script doesn't require Nandamuri Kalyan Ram to undergo any major makeover. Director Pavan Sadineni is said to be currently working on the script and an official announcement regarding this project will be out very soon. Kalyan Ram will also be next seen in the upcoming film *Ravan*, in which he will be seen essaying the role of Ravana. Touted to be a big-budget drama, the director is currently busy finalising the script for the film.



Raveena Tandon: There is nothing I'd change about my life

Actress Raveena Tandon looks forward to her upcoming role in *K.G.F Chapter 2*, with as much enthusiasm as she looks back at her career of 29 years, saying everyday in her life is a new lesson. "It's been a long and a great journey, for sure. It has taught me a lot. I remember I was so young when I started. It was not easy but I didn't quit and always worked hard to make a respectable place for myself. There's so much I have learned in all these years. Life is the best

teacher. Everyday comes with a new lesson," she said. Raveena was 16 when she made her Bollywood debut opposite Salman Khan in 1991 with *Patthar Ke Phool*, and since then her career has only been on the rise. Speaking about her career, Raveena also shared that she doesn't have any regrets in life. "I don't have any regrets in life. I never regret anything. I might have an incomplete dream but I never regret anything I have done. I believe destiny has a path to follow. I love my life. It could not be bet-

Vijay's name falsely used to call for auditions

In some latest news about Tollywood star Vijay Devarakonda, few production houses have been falsely advertising that a film with the actor in the lead role is going to hit the floors soon and that auditions for the cast are being cast. Apparently, these production companies put out false information that Devarakonda is looking for fresh faces to be cast in the film and called for auditions for actresses and actors. As soon as this came to the notice of the actor, his team put out a notice saying these rumors are false and that if there is any project related to Vijay Devarakonda, it will be officially announced by Vijay and his producers. "We have taken action against the criminals who are cheating by mentioning Vijay's name. Everyone should be vigilant against such fraudsters. We request that you double-check the information you receive. Official confirmation can also be verified on the actor's official social media handles," read the notice. The actor's next film, tentatively titled *Fighter* opposite Bollywood actress Ananya Pandey and directed by Puri Jagannath, is to resume shooting soon.



Most Read NEWS

Couple spends £2,000 to 'create' guests cardboard cutout

Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, a couple in the UK spent £2000 (nearly 2 lakh) on cardboard cutouts designed as look-alikes of their real family members and friends. In a Facebook post shared by the wedding photographer's page, Hawaiian Shirt Photography, a large number of cardboard cutout guests that almost seem realistic, can be seen attending the wedding of Romane and Sam Rondeau-Smith, from Bramley, Guildford. The duo had to postpone their wedding earlier in July due to the coronavirus outbreak, then later scheduled it for August 14. However, as the cases surged in the UK, the couple decided to use designed cutouts for guests instead. According to a local UK broadcaster, Mirror, the wedding planner was left in stitches after he witnessed the guests at the wedding. The couple said that they were pushed to take the step as only 30 people were permitted in the UK to attend a marriage function while the couple had almost 100 people on the guest list. Also, the social distancing protocol would have created the issue with the couple so they reorganized their full wedding reception with cutouts instead. So it was ultimately a total of 50 fake guests that attended the couple's big day.



NASA Astronaut shares 9/11 image as captured from space

September 11 or 9/11 is marked as one of the most unfortunate days in the history of mankind when the World Trade Center was destroyed in a well-planned terrorist attack. The unfortunate event demolished the Twin Towers in the USA on September 9, 2001, claiming 2,977 fatalities while leaving over 25,000 injured. As people observed 19th anniversary of the unfortunate day, they remembered the ones who lost their lives due to the terrorist activities. NASA scientist and astronaut Jonny Kim also paid his tribute to the dead. The message was accompanied by a picture of the USA on the morning of 9/11 in the year 2001. The picture was captured from the International Space Station by NASA scientist Frank Culbertson. Kim wrote, "Never forgotten. We honor and remember the nearly 3,000 lives lost and the heroes that gave everything in service. This picture was taken on the morning of the attacks on 9.11.2001 by Frank Culbertson of @nasa from the @Space_Station." The tweet received more than 1 thousand likes. A user wrote, "Watched in stunned silence from across the bay in NJ. Shocking day, never to be forgotten. Worse when it's close to home."



With travel limited, plane cafes take off in Thailand

With millions around the world stuck at home due to the pandemic, "plane cafes" in Thailand are offering customers the chance to pretend they are in the sky -- and the idea seems to have taken off. On board a retired commercial airplane in the coastal city of Pattaya, coffee drinkers make themselves comfy on first-class-style seats and pose for photos by the overhead lockers. Boarding passes in hand, some "passengers" even opt for a tour of the cockpit. "With this cafe I can sit in first class and also mess around in the cockpit pretending to be the captain of the plane," 26-year-old Thipsuda Faksaitong said. "It's a lot of fun." Chalisa Chuensranoi, 25, said her visit was as good as any trip she had taken before the pandemic, which shuttered Thailand's borders in March. "Sitting right here in the first-class section... really gives me the feeling of actually being on a plane, cruising through the air," she said. In another cafe at the headquarters of national carrier Thai Airways in Bangkok, hungry diners appear even to have missed plane food as they gobble up spaghetti carbonara and Thai-style beef served on plastic trays by cabin crew. But for Intrawut Simapichet, 38, who came to the cafe with his wife and baby, the experience is about more than a meal.



Pictures of hairless cat with no eyeballs go viral

A hairless cat with no eyeballs has become an internet sensation, having amassed an army of fans on Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. Jasper the cat was adopted by his owner Kelli at the age of two, when he was 'seemingly healthy'. However, a couple of years later he was diagnosed with FHV (feline herpes virus), and later developed a corneal ulcer in his right eye - which became so bad that he had to have it removed. According to his Facebook page, which has more than 11,000 likes, he 'went on being a happy, healthy, now one eyes kitty', but in September 2018 he got a corneal ulcer in his remaining eye. Once again, removal was Jasper's only option, meaning he would be completely blind. Thankfully, the moggy managed to adapt 'super well' - although a mild stroke in April 2019 meant he wasn't out of the woods just yet.



QUEEN OSAKA

Naomi Osaka comes from set down against Azarenka in Flushing Meadows final to win her 2nd US title

AP ■ NEW YORK

After one errant forehand in the first set of the US Open final, Naomi Osaka looked at her coach in the mostly empty Arthur Ashe Stadium stands with palms up, as if to say, "What the heck is happening?" In response to another wayward forehand against Victoria Azarenka seconds later, Osaka chuckled her racket. It spun a bit and rattled against the court. Surprisingly off-kilter in the early going Saturday, Osaka kept missing shots and digging herself a deficit. Until, suddenly, she lifted her game, and Azarenka couldn't sustain her start. By the end, Osaka pulled away to a 1-6 6-3 6-3 victory for her second US Open championship and third Grand Slam title overall. "For me, I just thought," said Osaka, who trailed by a set and a break, "it would be very embarrassing to lose this in an under an hour." This, then, is what she told herself with a white towel draped over her head at a changeover when things looked bleak: "I just have to try as hard as I can and stop having a really bad attitude." It worked. A quarter-century had passed since a woman who lost the first set of a US Open final wound up winning: In 1994, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario did it against Steffi Graf. "I wasn't really thinking about winning. I was just thinking about competing," Osaka said. "Somehow, I ended up with the trophy." Osaka is a 22-year-old who was born in Japan to a Japanese mother and Haitian father; the family moved to the US when she was 3. Osaka, now based in California, arrived for the US Open intent on claiming the championship, to be

OSAKA ADDED TO HER TRIUMPHS AT THE 2018 US OPEN - EARNED WITH A BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE IN A MEMORABLY CHAOTIC AND CONTROVERSIAL FINAL AGAINST SERENA WILLIAMS - AND 2019 AUSTRALIAN OPEN

sure, but with another goal in mind, as well: continuing to be a voice for change by calling attention to racial injustice. She showed up for Saturday's match wearing a mask with the name of Tamir Rice, a Black 12-year-old boy killed by police in Ohio in 2014. That was the seventh mask she'd used during the tournament, after honoring other Black victims of violence: Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Trayvon Martin, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Philando Castile. "The point," Osaka explained, "is to make people start talking." Last month, Osaka refused to compete after the police shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake, in Wisconsin - she said she would withdraw from her semifinal at the Western & Southern Open, although decided to play after the tournament took a full day off in solidarity. Osaka and her coach, Wim Fissette - who used to work with Azarenka - have said they think the off-court activism has helped her energy and mindset in matches. "I wanted," Osaka said, "more people to (see) more names." So perhaps it was no coincidence that this win over Azarenka, a 31-year-old from Belarus also seeking a third Grand Slam title but first in 7½ years, made Osaka 11-0 since tennis resumed after its hiatus because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Osaka added to her triumphs at the 2018 US Open - earned with a brilliant performance in a memorably chaotic and controversial final against Serena Williams - and 2019 Australian Open. Azarenka carried an 11-match winning streak of her own into Saturday, including a stirring three-set victory over Williams in the semifinals, stopping the American's bid for a 24th Grand Slam title.

Azarenka won the 2012 and 2013 Australian Opens and lost to Williams in the US Open finals each of those years. "I thought the third time was the charm," Azarenka said, "but I guess I'll have to try again." Even after Osaka surged ahead 4-1 in the third set, the outcome was unclear. Azarenka drew to 4-3, then stood and stretched during the ensuing changeover. "Had a little bit of a energy dip," Azarenka said. Osaka regained control, then laid down on the court when the final was over. The 23,000-plus seats in the main arena at Flushing Meadows were not entirely unclaimed, just mostly so - while fans were not allowed to attend because of the coronavirus pandemic, dozens of people who worked at the tournament attended - and the cavernous place was not entirely silent, just mostly so. One of the lucky few in the house: Osaka's boyfriend, rapper YBN Cordae. "I'm very grateful for the opportunity to play in front of millions of people watching on TV," Azarenka said.



HAMILTON RUNS SUPREME

AP ■ MUGELLO

Lewis Hamilton won a hectic Tuscan Grand Prix on Sunday to clinch his 90th Formula One win and move one behind Michael Schumacher's record. The first F1 race on a Mugello track with super-fast corners usually used by MotoGP riders was incident-packed throughout. Two crashes on the first seven laps saw six drivers go out, and a red flag suspended the race for the first time after the second one. A second red flag late on following Lance Stroll's heavy crash meant another grid restart - on Lap 46 of 59 - and gave Valtteri Bottas another chance to beat race leader Hamilton if he made a strong start from second. Hamilton held firm and overtook Bottas, who passed him back to finish second but lost more ground to Hamilton in the title race. Bottas pushed hard and got to within 1.1 seconds of Hamilton on the penultimate lap but the British driver clocked a fastest lap on the last one to take a bonus point. Red Bull driver Alexander Albon drove well to finish third and clinch a first career podium that will boost his chances of keeping his seat alongside team star Max Verstappen next year. Hamilton can equal Schumacher's record for wins at the Russian GP in two weeks and take a step closer to matching Schumacher's record of seven world titles.



Fantastic Foxes

Vardy twice converts from spot in 3-0 away win against WBA AP ■ WEST BROMWICH Timothy Castagne scored on his Leicester debut before Jamie Vardy netted two penalties in a season-opening 3-0 victory over newcomer West Bromwich Albion in the Premier League on Sunday. Castagne, a defensive signing from Atalanta, made an impact at the other end by heading in a cross from fellow Belgian Dennis Praet in the 56th minute. Vardy doubled the lead from the penalty spot in the 74th after being pulled back by Kyle Bartley. Vardy was on target 10 minutes later - again from the spot - after James Justin was brought down by Dara O'Shea. Vardy was the league's top scorer last season which ended in empty stadiums. Fans are also still shut out at the start of the new campaign due to coronavirus restrictions.

Tail takes Eng to 231

AP ■ MANCHESTER

England's decision to bat first appeared to backfire with the world champions limited to 231-9 in the second one-day cricket international against Australia on Sunday. Australia is looking to wrap up a series victory after beating England in the first ODI on Friday, also in Manchester. No England batsman reached 50 at Old Trafford on Sunday with ODI captain Eoin Morgan (42 runs off 52 balls) and test captain Joe Root (39 off 73) the top-scorers. Both men were dismissed by leg spinner Adam Zampa who finished with 3-36 off 10 overs. Morgan was out leg before wicket after Australia captain Aaron Finch opted to review the original not out decision, leaving England on 117-5 in the 29th over. No. 9 Tom Curran (37 off 39) and No. 10 Adil Rashid, who hit an undefeated 35 off 26 deliveries, came to England's rescue at the end, sharing 76 for the ninth wicket. England's explosive opener Jason Roy (21) was run out while attempting a quick single from the non-batting end after impressive fielding from Marcus Stoinis. England is in danger of its first ODI home series defeat since 2015.



SINGLES

WARNE TO MENTOR RR YOUNGSTERS

DUBAI: Legendary spinner Shane Warne has been appointed mentor of Rajasthan Royals ahead of the 2020 IPL besides his existing role as the team's brand ambassador. Warne has been associated with IPL since its inception in 2008 and led the team to its only title triumph in that inaugural year. As a 'Team Mentor', Warne will work alongside head coach Andrew McDonald. They both were teammates in Victoria from 2003-07. "On my dual role, it's always a great feeling to be back with Royals, my team, my family. It's exciting to be working across all elements of this franchise that I love," Warne was quoted as saying in a press release.

SIMEONE TESTS CORONA POSITIVE

MADRID: Atlético Madrid coach Diego Simeone has the coronavirus. The Argentine wasn't showing any symptoms and was in isolation, the club said on Saturday. Simeone and the rest of the team were tested on Friday. The club did not say if anyone else was infected. The Spanish league stopped play from March until June because of the pandemic. The top flight managed to finish the season in July without any major infections.