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RNI No. TELENG/2018/76469
Established 1864
Published From
HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW
BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
BHUBANESWAR RANCHI
DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA
*LATE CITY VOL. 2 ISSUE 339
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 18, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

PAYAL RAJPUT IN A KANNADA REMAKE
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VISTARA TO OFFER IN-FLIGHT WIFI ON DREAMLINER FROM TODAY

Vistara will offer in-flight WiFi services on its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, which are currently being used to operate Delhi-London flights, from Friday onwards, the private carrier said on Thursday. In a press release, the airline said: "As an introductory offer, the service will be available free of cost to all Vistara customers for a limited period."
Vistara is the first Indian airline to offer in-flight wifi services. The carrier said it plans to introduce the WiFi services on its Airbus A321neo plane as well, subject to regulatory approvals. The airline has two Dreamliner aircraft in its fleet and both of those are being used to operate Delhi-London flights currently.

UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH DISCHARGED FROM AIIMS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who recently recovered from COVID-19 and was admitted to AIIMS for a complete medical checkup, was discharged on Thursday evening, officials said. He was admitted to the premier hospital on September 12. The home minister has been discharged from AIIMS, an official said. Earlier in the day, Shah had addressed an event in his constituency Gandhinagar in Gujarat through video conference. On August 2, Shah, 55, had said on Twitter that he had tested positive for COVID-19. He had undergone treatment at Medanta Hospital and was discharged after he recovered from the disease.

PULWAMA-TYPE ATTACK AVERTED WITH RECOVERY OF 52 KG EXPLOSIVES

A Pulwama-style terror attack was averted on Thursday by the Indian Army with the recovery of 52 kg of explosives in Karewa area of Gadikal in Kashmir, Army officials said here. The location where the explosives were recovered was near a national highway and close to the site of last year's Pulwama terror attack that had killed 40 CRPF personnel, they said. "We have averted another Pulwama-type attack," said an Army official. According to the officials, the explosives were found in a water tank in the area during a search operation around 8 AM.

B'WOOD SUPPORTS URMILA AFTER KANGANA 'SOFT PORN STAR' COMMENT

Many actors and filmmakers from the industry, including Ram Gopal Varma, Swara Bhasker and Pooja Bhatt on Thursday praised Urmila Matondkar's vast body of work after Kangana Ranaut controversially slammed the "Satya" star as a "soft porn star". Matondkar had called out Ranaut's claims about nepotism in the industry and Bollywood being riddled with a drug problem. In an interview with Times Now on Wednesday night, Ranaut called her a "soft porn star" who is not known for her acting. Ranaut's comments were met with criticism from the industry, with many hailing Matondkar's consistent "grace and dignity" throughout her career of over 25 years.

Hanuman, the embodiment of communication skills

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No force can stop Indian troops from patrolling

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Irdai likely to extend relief for insurers

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Reevaluate startup rankings: TS to Centre

Says Telangana is 'leader' not 'aspiring leader'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana, rattled by the latest rankings that take the state a few notches down among states with regard to the startup ecosystem, has sought reevalution of the startup rankings released by the Centre. The state has written to the Centre pointing out that Telangana, given its attainments, ought to be under the category of 'Leaders' and not 'Aspiring leaders'.

In the second edition of the startup rankings, Telangana has been reckoned as 'Aspiring leader', though in the 2018 rankings Telangana ranked among 'Leaders'. Besides, the state scored zero in three areas: Incubation support, Seed funding support, and Venture funding support.

These measures of evaluation, despite the robust and unmatched startup ecosystem in Telangana, has now raised questions about the methodology adopted by the Centre and the possibility of mistakes creeping in during the evaluation process.

The state government, in its note to the Centre, has sought reevaluation as it aspires, and is equipped, to be among the Top 3 ecosystems in the country.

For, Telangana hosts the country's largest incubator T-Hub and the nation's only women's incubator We-Hub. So, naturally the authorities were aghast to note the 'zero' percentage that TS has scored in Incubation support.

Continued on Page 2

Shortcomings in judicial area cast a shadow over TS ranking

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State government, which has a good track record EODB rankings, was rattled when it scored zero on two accounts pertaining to Commercial Courts, with the Centre placing the state at Number 3 position in the State Business Reform Action Plan 2019 Ranking, down from the 2nd place that TS attained in the 2018 rankings. Telangana met all the criteria for EODB reforms, except for two pertaining to the judiciary, for which it scored zero. One of the criterion was reportedly the failure to fill vacancies in commercial courts and the other apparently was publishing cause lists in commercial court electronically.

Continued on Page 2

'Very heavy rains in TS' warns IMD

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the South-west Monsoon continuing to be active over Telangana, IMD issued a 'Be prepared' alert on Thursday. The Met department has issued heavy to very heavy rainfall alert for Hyderabad and other districts of Telangana.

IMD issued warning of heavy rainfall, accompanied by thunderstorm and lightning in the state, over the next three days.

Very heavy rain occurred at isolated places in Medak and Kamareddy and heavy rain occurred at isolated places in Sangareddy, Rajanna Sircilla, M.Malkajgiri, Rangareddy, Nizamabad, Peddapalle, J.Bhupalpally and Vikarabad districts of Telangana.

Continued on Page 2

Union Minister Harsimrat Badal quits over new farm bills

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a setback to the Modi government, Shiromani Akali Dal president Sukhbir Singh Badal announced in Lok Sabha on Thursday that Harsimrat Kaur Badal resigned from the Union Cabinet in protest against the three farm bills, tabled in Parliament by the Centre for passage.

In his speech during a discussion on two of the farm bills -- the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, Sukhbir Singh Badal said the proposed laws will "destroy" the 50 years of hard work put in by successive Punjab governments and farmers to build the agriculture sector.

He recalled Punjab's massive contribution in making India self-sufficient in food grain production as he vehemently opposed the bills.

"I want to make an announcement that our Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal will resign from Cabinet," he said in concluding remarks.

He also refuted suggestions that his party initially supported three ordinances, which these bills seek to replace, and asserted that Harsimrat Kaur Badal had expressed her concerns in the Cabinet meeting and also wrote to Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar, highlighting "flaws" in the proposed legislations.

Hitting out at the Congress, which has sought to corner the SAD over these bills, he accused the party of "double speak" on the issue and noted that the abolition of the APMC Act was part of its manifesto in both the 2019 Lok Sabha election and the 2017 Assembly polls in Punjab. The Shiromani Akali Dal is the BJP's oldest ally and has stood by the saffron party through thick and thin.

The SAD president said the three bills, including the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, which has been passed by Lok Sabha, are going to affect 20 lakh farmers and 15-20 lakh farm labourers in Punjab alone. Punjab's mandi system is the best in the world with a network of 1,900 setups across 12,000 villages, he said.

Judiciary biased against AP govt: Vijayasai

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

YSRCP general secretary and parliamentary party leader V Vijayasai Reddy on Thursday stated that Andhra Pradesh has been facing not only financial but also judicial troubles.

Vijayasai Reddy raised in Rajya Sabha the issue of the Andhra Pradesh High Court issuing an order allegedly gagging the media from reporting on an FIR lodged against a former Advocate-General along with 12 others.

Questioning the legitimacy of the order on the floor of the House, Vijayasai Reddy pointed out that the same order also went onto enforce a stay on the investigation being carried out by the ACB.

During a discussion on Covid, the senior YSRCP leader said: "The court has taken some quite unusual and legally questionable decisions. The state is suffering not only financially but also judicially.

Continued on Page 2

HC reserves orders in plea against LRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday refused to pass any interim order without knowing the stand of the state government on the implementation of the controversial Layout Regularisation Scheme (LRS).

A division bench of the Telangana High Court, comprising the Chief Justice of the State Justice RS Chauhan and Justice B.Vijaysen Reddy, issued notices to the state government and other authorities and asked them to file a counter affidavit in a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) petition filed before it challenging GO MS No. 131 issued on August 31. this year by the state government for the regularization of unapproved and illegal layouts under the Land Regularization Scheme (LRS) in both rural and urban areas of Telangana State.

Continued on Page 2

TS amends LRS rules, restores 7 slabs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As informed in the Telangana Legislative Assembly, the state government issued revised GO for LRS Scheme on Thursday.

As per the G.O. Ms. No.315 issued by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, seven slabs have been provided, instead of the four slabs proposed in the earlier G.O.

LRS charges are now 20% of the market value of the plot at the time of registration for plots below 3,000 sq yards. The charges are 30%, if the plot size is between 3,001 sq yards and 5,000 sq yards; between 5001-10,000 sq yards, it will be 40 per cent; between 10,001-20,000 sq yards, it will be 50 per cent; between 20,001-30,000 sq yards, it will be 60 per cent; between 30,001-50,000 sq yards, it will be 80 per cent; and for plots above 50,000 sq yards, it will be 100 per cent.

The revisions have been made in view of a number of requests from the general public and public representatives that regularization charges should be reduced since the ones specified are very high compared to rates stipulated in the LRS Scheme 2015, and, considering the COVID-19 situation, it would be very difficult for the common man to pay the same.

Continued on Page 2

Charge Arun Shourie over Raj hotel sale: Court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One of the grandest palace-hotels in Rajasthan was grossly undervalued and sold at a huge loss to the taxpayer in 2002 and former Minister Arun Shourie should be charged for it, a special CBI court has said. In a corruption case involving the sale of Laxmi Vilas Palace Hotel in Udaipur, the court has asked for criminal cases against minister.

"Unknown officers and private persons indulged in this conspiracy from 1999 to 2002 to cause loss of money. The land was valued at Rs 45 per square yard. Even a spoon in the hotel would be costlier than that," said a special CBI judge.

At TIMS, 103-yr-old man beats Covid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 103-year-old battled coronavirus successfully and has been discharged from the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) hospital Gachibowli. The patient, Paruchuri Ramaswamy, has returned to the aged care facility where he had caught the virus. Paruchuri is an inmate of the Home for the Aged run by the CR Foundation. Recently, some of the inmates and workers of the Home were infected by Covid-19. They were admitted to TIMS, Gandhi and Nature Cure hospitals.

Dr. K. Narayana, president of CR Foundation, appreciated the services being rendered by the Telangana State Government facilities, especially TIMS, Gandhi Hospital, Nature Cure Hospital and King Koti Hospital, for treatment of COVID-affected patients, including elderly people. The CPI leader expressed his gratitude to the staff and administration of the Medical & Health Department and Etela Rajender, Minister for Health, Government of Telangana for their services.

2 youngsters drowned on city outskirts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two youngsters in their mid-twenties were drowned on Thursday in a quarry that was overflowing with stormwater run-off at Kothwalguda in Shamshabad on the outskirts of the city on Thursday.

The deceased were identified as Mallesh (24) and Jai Krishna (25), both construction workers and residents of Shivarampally village of Rajendranagar mandal in Ranga Reddy district.

The youngsters had come for work at a construction site in Kothwalguda and had gone to the nearby quarry, which was brimming with water following the heavy downpour on Wednesday.

Continued on Page 2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi : Pratipada: 12:50 pm
Nakshatram: Uttara Phalguni: 07:00 am
Hasta: 04:06 am (Next Day)
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 10:39 am – 12:09 pm
Yamagandam: 03:10 pm – 04:41 pm
Varjyam: 02:23 pm – 03:47 pm
Gulika: 07:38 am - 09:08 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 10:50 pm – 12:14 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:45 am – 12:34 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Light rain showers
Temp: 28/23
Humidity: 93%
Sunrise: 06.04 am
Sunset: 06.15 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated September 17, 2020 5:00 PM

Flutter as crocodiles surface in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The sightings of crocodiles in Puranapul area of the Old City of Hyderabad on Thursday created a sensation, with many onlookers getting a rare chance to have a look at the reptiles from close quarters.

Due to incessant rains that lashed the city and its surroundings over the past 48 hours, several crocodiles in major reservoirs and tanks were washed ashore. Two such crocodiles waddled their way to the city and were sighted at Puranpul.

Alerted by locals, wild-life conservation authorities, along with police and Nehru zoological park personnel, took steps to catch the reptiles.

Officials believe that the crocodiles might have strayed into the city from Himayat Sagar on the outskirts of the city.

Indian cities drop in Global Smart City Index

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Four Indian cities — New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru — witnessed a significant drop in their rankings in the global listing of smart cities that was topped by Singapore.

The Institute for Management Development (IMD), in collaboration with Singapore University for Technology and Design (SUTD), has released the 2020 Smart City Index, with key findings on how technology is playing a role in the Covid-19 era.

In the 2020 Smart City Index, Hyderabad was placed at the 85th position (down from 67 in 2019), New Delhi at 86th rank (down from 68 in 2019), Mumbai was at 93rd place (in 2019 it was at 78) and Bengaluru at 95th (79 in 2019).

"Cities in India (New Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru) suffer significant drops this year. This can be attributed to the detrimental effect that the pandemic has had where the technological advancement was not up to date," the report said.

It further added that "Indian cities have suffered more from the pandemic because they were not prepared".

From 15 indicators that the respondents perceive as the priority areas for their city, all four cities highlighted air pollution as one of the key areas that they felt their city needed to prioritise on.

For cities like Bangalore and Mumbai, this was closely followed by road congestion while for Delhi and Hyderabad it was basic amenities, the report said.

The 2020 Smart City Index (SCI) was topped by Singapore, followed by Helsinki and Zurich in the second and the third place respectively. Others in the top 10 list include Auckland (4th), Oslo (5th), Copenhagen (6th), Geneva (7th), Taipei City (8th), Amsterdam (9th) and New York at the 10th place.

In SCI's context, 'smart city' describes an urban setting that applies technology to enhance the benefits and diminish the shortcomings of urbanisation.

The second edition of the SCI ranked 109 cities worldwide by capturing perceptions of randomly chosen 120 residents in each city.

Hundreds of citizens from 109 cities were surveyed in April and May 2020 and asked questions on the technological provisions of their city across five key areas: health and safety, mobility, activities, opportunities and governance.

Reflected in this year's rankings is that cities have ever differing approaches to technology as managing the pandemic has become increasingly important in local politics, the report said.

"We cannot ignore the impact of Covid," said IMD's Professor Arturo Bris, who led the work of the ranking as the Director of the World Competitiveness Centre at the Swiss management institute which is behind it.

Modi turns 70, wishes pour in from all corners

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned 70 on Thursday, wishes from home and abroad poured in for him. Extending his greetings, Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli tweeted: "Warm greetings to Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji on the auspicious occasion of your birthday. I wish you good health and happiness. We will continue working closely together to further strengthen relations between our two countries."

In his message to Modi, Russian President Vladimir Putin said: "I look forward to continue constructive dialogue with you and work closely together on topical issues of the bilateral and international agenda." President Ram Nath Kovind also took to Twitter to wish Modi and said: "Happy Birthday to Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. You have set an example of Indian life values and democratic tradition. "I pray to God that he always keeps you healthy and happy and the nation continues to receive your invaluable services."

Extending his wishes, Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted: "Wishing a Happy Birthday to the most popular leader of the country who is always committed towards the service of the nation and devoted towards welfare of poor."

In a tweet, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said: "Greetings and warm wishes to PM Shri Narendra Modi Ji on his birthday. India has benefited tremendously from his astute leadership, firm conviction and decisive action. He has been working assiduously towards empowering the poor and marginalised. Praying for his good health and long life."

Extending his wishes to the Prime Minister, Union Information & Broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said: "PM Modi has no competition with any political party, everytime he breaks his own record. He has a great vision for the country."

Javadekar was speaking at the launch of a website and e-book dedicated to the Prime Minister. Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi too wished the Prime Minister on his birthday.

In a letter written in Hindi, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu wished the Prime Minister and congratulated him "on your hard work in taking the country to new heights". Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy said: "Wishing Narendra Modiji a very happy birthday. May God bless him with a long and healthy life dedicated to the service of the nation".

Opposition leader and former chief minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has also extended birthday greetings. "I extend my warm birthday greetings to Prime Minister Narendra Modiji. May you be blessed with the best of health to lead the nation through these testing times," said Chandrababu Naidu. He also shared a photograph with Modi.

Andhra Pradesh BJP president Somu Veerraju also joined the political leaders in greeting Modi. "Happy birthday to the dear son of Bharat, Narendra Modi," said Veerraju. Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao in a letter to the Prime Minister said: "On behalf of the Government and people of Telangana, I wish you a very happy birthday and pray the God to shower his blessings on you to serve the nation for many more years."

"I look forward to continue constructive dialogue with you and work closely together on topical issues of the bilateral and international agenda," said Vladimir Putin to Narendra Modi

BJP announces 'Know Namo' quiz

The ruling BJP, which is organising 'Seva Saptah' to celebrate the 70th birthday of PM Narendra Modi, on Thursday announced 'Know NaMo quiz', inaugurated a website and released an e-book to mark the occasion. Union Minister Prakash Javdekar and BJP vice president Shyam S Jaju inaugurated the website and released an e-book at the BJP headquarters in Delhi on the occasion of PM Modi' birthday. While urging people to wish Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday through the Namo App, the BJP also announced the start of the "Know Namo" quiz whose winners will get books autographed by the PM. The quiz which begins today will have questions on PM Modi and BJP. "How much do you know about PM Narendra Modi? Take `The Know NaMo Quiz` on NaMo App - http://nm4.in/dnldapp Winners walk away with books signed by PM Narendra Modi himself!" the tweet by the BJP read. The party also urged people to post their wishes.

Healthy lifestyle - Modi's success mantra

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is regarded as one of the most influential political leaders across the globe, is celebrating his 70th birthday on Thursday (September 17, 2020). For 70-year-old PM, age is just a number for him since he has been a fitness freak and an ardent believer in the Yogic way of living since his childhood days.

The charismatic leader, who is known for his excellent oratory skills, vision and innovative ideas, has been working assiduously towards empowering the poor and marginalised. India has tremendously benefited from his astute leadership, firm conviction and decisive action. From fasting, regular morning walks to doing yoga, here are a few things that help him maintain a healthy lifestyle and make him one of the fittest leaders across the world.

It is a known fact that the PM is a hard taskmaster, works round the clock and sleeps for just 4 hours. Yes, it is true, the PM follows a proper sleeping schedule and wakes up by 04:00 AM every morning. PM Modi, who lives a very disciplined lifestyle, is a known Yoga practitioner. As soon as he wakes up, the first thing he does in the morning is practicing yoga. It would not be incorrect to say that he has played a pivotal role in popularising Yoga throughout the world.

At numerous occasions, especially on International Day of Yoga, the PM can be seen practicing various 'asanas' of yoga. He has been encouraging Indians, especially youths, to adopt a health lifestyle and imbibe a sense of Indianness in their personality. In order to keep himself fit and agile, the Prime Minister, apart from doing some physical exercises, takes a short morning walk every day

PM Modi has always promoted Ayurveda and said that after yoga, the world will accept India's age-old Ayurveda principles soon.

Covid deaths in Telangana breach the 1,000 mark

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

53.87 per cent of the deceased in Telangana had comorbidities. Seventy per cent of 1,65,003 cases reported so far in the state were asymptomatic

The number of deaths due to Covid-19 in Telangana crossed the 1,000-mark on Thursday with nine more deaths while 2,159 new cases pushed the state's tally to over 1.65 lakh. Telangana is 13th state in the country to see over 1,000 Covid deaths. Five of these states have fewer cases than Telangana. Telangana health officials say the case fatality rate in the state is low at 0.60 per cent compared to many states. The national average is 1.62 per cent.

According to the director of public health, 53.87 per cent of the deceased in Telangana had comorbidities. Seventy per cent of 1,65,003 cases reported so far in the state were asymptomatic. As many as 65.23 per cent of those tested positive were in the age group of 21-50 years. Officials said that the ratio of those above 51 years dropped to 21.82 against 24.71 per cent earlier. Those below 20 years are now 12.95 per cent against 10 per cent earlier.

Officials said 64.83 per cent of those tested positive were male while the remaining 38.17 per cent were female. During the last 24 hours ending Wednesday 8 p.m., Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) reported 318, a slight drop from 325 reported the previous day. Its neighbouring districts Rangareddy and Medchal Malkajgiri reported a daily jump of 176 and 121 cases respectively. Sangareddy, another district bordering the state capital, recorded 64 cases.

Outside Hyderabad and surrounding districts, Nalgonda topped the list with 141 cases followed by Siddipet (132), Karimnagar (127), Warangal Urban (98), Nizamabad (84) and Khammam (77). The state also saw 2,108 people recovering from the virus during the same period. With this the total number of recoveries have gone up to 1,33,555

The state's recovery rate has further improved to 80.94 per cent against the national average of 78.59 per cent. The authorities conducted 53,094 tests during the last 24 hours.

'Very heavy rains in TS'...

Continued from Page 1

The heavy rains are due to the cyclonic circulation that persists over Telangana & neighbourhood now, extending up to 2.1 km above mean sea level. IMD also predicted waterlogging and drainage clogging, apart from massive damage to trees and electric poles leading to disruption of transport in some areas of the districts for a few hours to a few days. Rain continued to inundate Hyderabad. In all, 126 greivances related to water-logging, six concerning wall collapse as well as 28 related to fallen trees and branches were reported to the call center of GHMC, which, up to 6-00 pm on Thursday, received 205 greivances related to monsoon issues.

Reevaluate startup rankings...

Continued from Page 1

That apart, even after running an illuminating program like 'Intinta innovator', TS scored only 1% on awareness and outreach due to the apparently blinkered approach adopted during evaluation. Despite having T-Works and We-Hub, TS state secured only 16% on the Institutional support front. Moreover, TS, in spite of having pioneered in launching a clutch of IT-related policies -- such as innovation policy, drone policy, IoT, and Block Chain policy -- secured a meager 37% in Simplifying regulations. The latest skewed rankings come at a time when TS is gearing up to establish the world's largest incubator T-Hub2 by 2020. The rankings suggest that the Centre has thrown cold water on the state's plans.

Shortcomings in judicial area ...

Continued from Page 1

Despite the state scoring zero in these two categories, it could achieve the third position because of the weightage given to user feedback. Telangana outscored seven other states and secured third position even with two points backlog. Highly placed sources said that there were 10 states which had met all the criteria and Telangana would have been ranked 11th if the rankings were based purely on reform points. The silver lining is that, due to real action happening on the ground and the industry backing the state, the rank was three.

The BRAP rankings reflect the fact that the level of industrialisation is extremely high in Telangana and the facilities provided to businessmen are exemplary. Sources also pointed out that if the two criteria were met, the state would have been ranked number 1. The ranking was based on performance of states on 180 reform points, covering 12 business regulatory areas, including access to information, single-window system, labour and environment, with the larger objectives being attracting investments and ease of doing business. Sources also raised a suspicion over the political motive behind ranking, as the Center purportedly did not want to release ranks this year but grades. Only in the last moment rankings was declared, allegedly because a particular northern state got a better rank.

Judiciary biased against AP govt...

Continued from Page 1

A quite unusual and legally questionable decision has been taken in the interim order of the AP HC, imposing a ban on media and social media from mentioning anything related to a FIR filed by the police against the former Advocate-General of the police and others."

Stating that it was an unusual order from the court, the MP said there appeared to be no material to justify such censorship other than the allegation by the petitioner that it has foisted the case. It accompanies an order saying that there would be a stay on the case itself.

"This is political vendetta being practiced by someone who has served during the previous regime. The Judiciary is not impartial. Judiciary is biased against the Government of Andhra Pradesh," Vijayasai Reddy alleged. A similar issue was raised by YSRCP floor leader in Lok Sabha P Mithun Reddy on Wednesday.

"Law should be equally implemented for every citizen, be it the PM or a common man," Mithun Reddy had said.

2 youngsters drowned on city outskirts

Continued from Page 1

Police believe that the youngsters might have slipped into the quarry while clicking pictures at the quarry. "It is yet to be known if both fell together or one of them fell first and the other drowned while trying to rescue the first one," police said.On being alerted by villagers, the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport police personnel reached the spot and retrieved the bodies with the help of swimmers. A case has been booked. The bodies were shifted to the Osmania General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Inflows into Singur cheer up farmers

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

The inflows have increased to over 66,000 cusecs. As the Manjira's catchment area witnessed rains during the past three days, the inflows have swelled

Singur project has been receiving considerable inflows since Wednesday. Singur, built at Singur village of Pulkal Mandal, was receiving just below 1,000 cusecs until Tuesday morning. The hopes of farmers of Sangareddy district have come alive as the project got considerable inflows after a three years gap.

The inflows have increased to over 66,000 cusecs at one point of time on Thursday. As the Manjira's catchment area has witnessed heavy rains during the past three days, the inflows have swelled. The 66,000 cusecs of the inflow is the highest inflow recorded at the project since 2017. JE Mahipal Reddy has said that the inflows have come down to 64,000 cusecs by Thursday at 6pm. The project now holds 11 TMCfts of water against its full storage capacity of 29.91 TMCft. The project got about 8 TMCft water during the past three days with the storage level increasing from 3.3TMCft

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES

GOLD
₹ 53, 960 (10 gm)
₹ 70 ↓

SILVER
₹ 69, 000 (1kg)
₹ 0

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG

Dressed/With Skin	₹191
Without Skin	₹218
Broiler at Farm	₹132

EGG RATES ₹/100

HYDERABAD	480
VIJAYAWADA	501
VISAKHAPATNAM	502
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.80

HC reserves orders in plea...

Continued from Page 1

The PIL plea was filed by the the General Secretary of the city-based Forum For Good Governance M. Padmanabha Reddy.

Arguing the case on behalf of the petitioner, his counsel told the HC that the LRS rules had been framed by the state government in violation of some of the existing laws like Section 58 of the Telangana Urban Areas Development Act 1975, Section 585 of the GHMC Act 1955, Section 44 2 (V) of the Telangana Town Planning Act 1920, Section 238 (1) of the Telangana Municipalities Act 2019, Section 561 of HMDA Act 2008, and Section 286 of the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act 2018. He urged the HC to issue interim orders in the issue and stay the operation of the GO.

However, the division bench said that it can't pass any interim orders without giving the opportunity of being heard to the state government and adjourned the matter to October 8 of the next month for further hearing.

TS amends LRS rules...

Continued from Page 1

As per the GO, if 10% open space is not available in the unapproved layout, pro-rata open space charges at 14% of the plot value prevailing as on the date of registration of such plot will be collected, instead of the rate prevailing as on 26.8.2020 proposed earlier.

The government clarified that LRS regularization charges includes NALA charges i.e, conversion charges for agricultural to non-agricultural use and no separate NALA charges are required to be paid by the LRS applicants.

'Huge potential for oil palm cultivation'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana is poised to become one of the largest cultivators for Oil Palm cultivation in the country due to availability of fertile land and favorable conditions for growing this crop on a large scale. The multiple irrigation projects in the state have contributed to improved irrigatable conditions making Telangana a prominent state for Oil Palm plantation and processing activities.

Oil Palm is a very versatile crop and has multiple benefits for farmers, it gives the highest yields and returns per acre compared to most commercial crops. Currently, Oil Palm is being grown in only 4 districts (Nalgonda, Suryapet, Khammam, Bhadradri) of Telangana and is cultivated in about 45,000 acres producing 30,000 tonnes of crude palm oil.

Speaking on the potential, Sanjay Goenka, MD & CEO - 3F Oil Palm said, "By reaching the targeted 7 lakh acres, Telangana will be in a position to generate additional revenues by selling the surplus produce to other states. Palm Oil is very versatile and affordable oil simply because of its high productivity and ability to flourish with minimal requirements."

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
NIT No.: 33/EE-6/CRZ/GHMC/2020-21, Date: 16.09.2020
Nature of the Work: Supply Additional Labour for special Sanitization and Supply of Sodium Hypochlorite Works, **Estimate Amount(Rs. in Lakhs):** 25.20, **Start Date/ Last date & time for receipts of Bids:** Download Start Date 17.09.2020 at 4.00 PM Last Date Receipt of Bids 24.09.2020 at 4.00 PM, **Officer Name, Address and Cell No:** Smt. M. KIRAN, EE, Div-6 CRZ, GHMC, Hyderabad Cell. 9849283820
R.O. No. : 5030-PP/CL/NOVT/1/2020-21
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, CIRCLE-6, CHARMINAR ZONE GHMC

OFFICE OF THE MEDICAL SUPERINTEDENT : AREA HOSPITAL, VANASTHALIPURAM., RANGAREDDY DISTRICT - Pin-500070
Rc. 1086/AH VSP/2020 INVITATION OF QUOTATION Date : 15.09.2020
It is invited for Sealed quotations to finalize the Rate Contractor from the eligible Medical Suppliers to supply Drugs, Surgical and Lab Items for a period of one year as per the requirement for Area Hospital, Vanasthalipuram, Rangareddy District. Applications are available at O/o. Medical Superintendent, Area Hospital, Vanasthalipuram, Rangareddy District from **21.09.2020 to 28.09.2020** in office timings **10.30 AM to 05.30 PM** and application cost **Rs.500/-** and EMD cost **Rs.10,000/-** to get for more information, please visit **O/o. Medical Superintendent, Area Hospital, Vanasthalipuram, Rangareddy District, timings 10.30 AM to 05.30 PM.**
Sd/- Dr. R.Haripriya., MBBS,DGO, Medical Superintendent, Area Hospital, Vanasthalipuram, Rangareddy District
R.O. No.: 491/DR/CL-AGENCY/NOVT/1/2020-21 Dated 17-09-2020

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Inter students can now take admissions online: TSBIE

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education announced the academic year and admission details of the first year intermediate batch, for 2020-21, on Wednesday.

This time the students can log on to the official website of the TSBIE to fill up the form and take admission in their choice of Government Junior College.

However, students have to still meet the principals of the institutions for processing their forms. The online classes for the first year intermediate will commence on September 18. All principals have been instructed to make provisional admissions on the basis of internet marks memo. The provisional admission will be confirmed after the production of original SSC pass certificate and transfer certificate issued by the school authorities.

Pandemic affects education of special children severely

NAMRATA SRIVASTAVA
■ HYDERABAD

A lot of kids with disabilities find comfort in routine, but when the routine gets disrupted; their anxiety levels go up and tend to behave differently.

The Coronavirus pandemic disrupted the lives of children across the board, but it caused immense stress for those with disabilities, especially the hearing and speech impaired and children with autism and other sensory processing disorders.

National convener of Special Educator's Forum, Kalpagiri shares how difficult it is for these kids to cope with the pandemic. "We certainly cannot open the schools, but online classes for these kids are not possible since their attention span is less and they get distracted easily. Even in a class, it is a bit difficult to handle these kids. But when they get used to a teacher, it really helps their growth. One important point here is, these kids may forget what was taught to them due to this long gap due to the pandemic. Most of them will have to be taught from the scratch. No learning certainly has taken a huge affect on these kids."

Swathi Kureti, a special educator, who runs the school Special Friend, free of cost for special kids who come from the slum areas, shares the hardship of the kids.

She says, "If the family is well-to-do, they can at least afford good food and some toy or board activities for special kids in the family. However, I teach kids who come from lower economic strata. The parents of these kids keep calling me to take classes, however since we have no permission I can't do that. I try to keep in touch via phone, but that doesn't help much. Unfortunately, most of these kids have already started forgetting what was taught to them."

Dr Garima Vegivada, Clinical Director, Speech Language Pathology, however shares, that these students can be taught on call for whatever time suits the kids. "Lack of daily therapies in such children actually lead to overall backsliding. Since these kids need full-time care and they not going back to their routine at the earliest impacts the family's social and financial fortunes, with several being working parents busy with their daily routines while struggling to make ends meet. The educators can, however, teach the kid as per their wish and not force them to sit through a set period of time."

GHMC polls: TRS gets social media combat-ready too early

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The social media is agog with GHMC poll campaign, kicked off four months ahead of the actual elections.

Pending surveying BC voters, reserving wards for various categories, issue of election notification, the social media has come alive with posts pertaining to development projects executed in the city.

Generally speaking, poll campaign is kicked off only after issuing an election notification.

In sharp contrast, the campaign has unrolled in social media for the GHMC polls.

Several TRS leaders have been posting development works executed in and around Hyderabad in social media platforms without actually seeking votes. The social media posts mostly pertain to the development projects executed in the vicinity of bio-diversity junction, LB Nagar. The video clippings include various projects like construction of flyovers and underpasses.

Further, construction of 2BHK houses for the homeless poor, the cable suspension bridge over Durgam Cheruvu are also included in the social media campaign, which the political observers say that it can be called poll campaign to benefit the TRS in the forthcoming GHMC polls.

To enable the TRS to gain campaign advantage, the party activists and sympathisers have been posting development works in social media.

However, some corporators are also making field visits and inspecting development works being executed and are posting the clippings of development works in WhatsApp groups.

They also take part in TV talk shows conducted by some private organisations in You Tube channels to high light development works initiated.

Some others have been calling on TRS working president KT Rama Rao to ensure that they get the party nomination again in the GHMC polls. They are also explaining the works done by and sharing their future plans with him.

The corporators have been mounting pressure on officials to complete development works in their respective jurisdiction as early as possible.

IN BRIEF

BRAOU to conduct eligibility test-2020 on September 27

Dr BR Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) will conduct the Eligibility Test-2020 in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on September 27 from 10 am to 12.30 pm.The university advised the students to visit the university portal www.braouonline.in and download the ET-2020 hall-tickets two days before the examination.
For further details, the students can contact phone-040-23680241/251 or helpdesk numbers 7382929570/580/590/600.

HMRL-Uber join hands to provide public transport

Now metro users can plan their end to end journey using Uber App, as it provides an option to use public transport. L&THRML and Uber on Thursday launched its 'Public Transport' journey planning feature, which will allow riders in Hyderabad the option to plan their transit journey with real-time information and end-to-end directions all within the Uber app.The feature provides a comprehensive overview of HMRL and TSRTC bus service information with details of the fastest and cheapest routes to help riders make the smartest possible journey choices.Uber riders will be able to view 'Public Transport' as an option along with other familiar modes like UberGo, Premier, Uber Auto, in their Uber app. MD of HMRL NVS Reddy said, "Uber's technology can help riders optimise their time by providing all available transport options on the Uber app and in turn allow us to better serve travel needs. We need to harness the power of public-private partnerships to improve transport infrastructure."

SCR holds review meeting on safety & freight loading

General Manager of South Central Railway Gajanan Mallya conducted a review meeting on safety, freight loading and punctuality on Thursday from Rail Nilayam at Secunderabad through video conferencing. Gajanan Mallya conducted a detailed review of all the safety measures to be taken to ensure safety at all station yards and private siding premises. He also reviewed the track maintenance works going on the zone and advised the officials to adhere the guidelines strictly to ensure the safety of the track. He also reviewed the problem being encountered in train movements and directed officials to take coercive action at the earliest. He advised to remove the caution orders to the possible extent wherever feasible, so as to further speed up the train movements. He instructed all the DRMs to arrange for Covid testing of all the staff at divisional offices and workshops to improve confidence among staff.

Remote monitoring platform to monitor vitals of Covid patient

Vigocare – 'Vitals on the go' announced the launch of Covid remote patient monitoring platform that empowers healthcare providers and doctors to fight the Covid-19 pandemic while ensuring safety and wellbeing. With the risk of infection looming over healthcare establishments, Vigocare is bringing to the market a unique and well-timed approach to help doctors and health providers monitor patients from 'Anytime – Anywhere'. CEO of Vigocare Dr Sekhar Chennupati said "The exponential spread of pandemic has placed people at direct risk and is bound to overwhelm and continue to create a sense of panic and fear. With the launch of our medical-grade remote monitoring services for Covid care, we see it as our responsibility to bring health care closer to consumers and build a connected care platform. Vigocare aims to not only help in the fight against Covid but also encourage both health providers and consumers to become digitally enabled and go contactless."

CBI books two Hyd firms for diverting funds

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The CBI has booked a case against three city-based companies and three persons for diverting funds to the tune of Rs.107.98 crore.

The case was registered based on a complaint lodged by PNB Deputy GM Sardeshpande Vinayaka Krishna, stating that the companies and their directors availed financial credit limits by way of term loan of Rs.300 crore.

During implementation of the project, they failed to maintain the time schedule of the contract and execute the construction in accordance with the contract awarded by Uttar Pradesh State Highways Authority (UPSHA).

The UPSHA terminated the concession agreement with the company which did not repay the interest and the account was declared as Non-Performing Asset with an outstanding amount of Rs.107.98 crore, the FIR said.

Telangana gears up to identify beneficiaries for 2BHK houses

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao and Housing Minister V Prashanth Reddy reviews the progress of construction works of 2BHK houses in GHMC limits on Thursday

With the 2BHK houses in GHMC nearing completion, the government is geared up to identify beneficiaries.

MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao and Housing Minister V Prashanth Reddy reviewed the progress of construction works of double bedroom dignity houses in GHMC limits in Hyderabad on Thursday.

The Ministers said that 10 per cent of 2BHK houses or not more than 1,000 being built for GHMC beneficiaries in surrounding districts of Hyderabad have to be given to locals of those districts. To this extent the collectors of the respective districts will have to conduct the selection process of beneficiaries.

During the meeting, the Minister instructed the officials to ensure transparency in identifying beneficiaries. The Ministers also asked the GHMC Commissioner to coordinate with the district collectors in GHMC limits while finalising the beneficiaries list. The officials informed the Ministers that the construction works of the 1 lakh dignity houses in GHMC limits are fast progressing and are nearing completion.

KTR directed the officials to gear up the process of selection of beneficiaries especially in the wake of the approaching deadline for construction of double bedroom houses.

He also instructed the officials to ensure that the previous beneficiaries' names who already received houses did not appear in the latest list.

KTR asked the officials to increase greenery at the double bedroom dignity housing sites. He asked them to plant saplings from now onwards.

MA&UD Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar, Housing Department Principal Secretary Sunil Sharma, and GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar were present in the meeting.

Heavy rain brings down boulders at ORR exit-16

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Continuous rains in the city and suburbs for two days dislodged boulders from the hillocks near Exit-16, Rajendranagar. Boulders came onto the ORR, forcing the authorities to divert the traffic.

On Wednesday night, boulders had rolled down at the same location near exit no.16. Maintenance agency and team of officials are monitoring the situation. The situation was under control and it was not a serious incident, he said. This was the second consecutive day when boulders rolled down from hillocks on ORR.

Rajendranagar was among the areas which witnessed very heavy rains over the past two days. The HGCL and HMDA officials claimed there were no untoward incidents in the mishap. The operating and maintenance agency and a team of officials rushed to the spot and cleared the debris. Barricades have been placed to alert motorists driving on this part of the expressway.

It may be mentioned here that ORR road was built through a rocky terrain.

India needs Rs 1.35L-cr for virus vaccine: Doctor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the hopes set on the vaccine for Corona, a city-based neurologist predicts that even of the vaccine is priced at Rs 1,000 per unit, the total cost if it would be Rs 1,35,000 crores and translate to Rs 2,70,000 crores, if a person is administered two doses.

Dr Sudhir Kumar, neurologist, Apollo Hospitals said, "An effective vaccine is the important method of winning over Covid, as there is no cure for it."

He pointed that in the initial phases, there would be scarcity of vaccine as not everyone would get vaccine from day one. This would inadvertently lead to situations, such as black-marketing of vaccines, exorbitant pricing of vaccine by private parties, rich and mighty getting access to vaccine and could even lead to law & order problems.

The neurologist suggests that the high risk groups have the first access to vaccines including frontline workers.

He points that the immunisation of the entire population is imperative because even if a single person is left, he can be a potential source of infection recurrences in future.

He said, "Government should get into a dialogue with private companies involved in developing vaccines. Fair price should be negotiated with them. Sale and distribution should not be left to individual vaccine makers. Government should ensure a fair pricing of the vaccine so that it can be afforded by all."

Brothel house raided; 7 victims rescued, 2 held

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Kalapather police raided a brothel house run from a residential house in NS Kunta and caught three persons including two organisers. Seven victims were rescued during the raid.

Acting on a tip off, the team under the supervision of B Anjani, Assistant Commissioner of Police Charminar raided the house and found a couple organising prostitution at the house. The victims who were said to be from different parts of the country, were shifted to the rescue home.

The police officials seized Rs. 32,000 cash and three mobile phones from the place.

Rectify streetlight issues, says Mayor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mayor Dr Bonthu Rammohan held a review meeting with the Electrical Wing at GHMC Head Office on Thursday.

The Mayor instructed the electrical wing officials and contractors to ensure that all street lights should glow further said that to rectify the switch boxes at the polls which are damaged by making necessary repairs and painting. He further instructed all street lights, LED lights at the junctions should work and said that some of the lights on main roads are less than prescribed watts and there should be replaced with 110 watts. All the works should be attended and rectified by 1st week of October 2020 and said that he will hold a performance meeting in the first week.

TS Governor lauds selfless service of activists

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Thursday said that offering selfless service to the underprivileged and other downtrodden sections is a noble activity.

She said that those who dedicate their life for such selfless service of others are real great people.

On the occasion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday celebrations, the Governor conducted a virtual felicitation to five eminent activists-Prof Shantha Sinha, Dr Mamatha Raghuveer, Sunitha Krishnan, Dr Anitha and Dr Vijay Kumar Goud in appreciation of their services.

Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan said that it takes courage and positive attitude to serve the needy and thus risking our life and wellbeing.

Expressing concern over the plight of children and exploitation of women still prevalent in some areas, the Governor pointed out that poverty was the root cause of the problem and we must all do concerted efforts to end the vicious circle of poverty, unemployment, backwardness and exploitation.

"When I was doing my PG House Surgeonship at Tanjavur Medical College, I was moved by the plight of people who used to bring in their ailing children in bullock carts due to poverty and lose the Golden Hour advantage in some cases," she added.

Activists laud TS for well-rounded midday meal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

While some states of India are being bashed for not including eggs in midday meals, state government has been lauded over the years for providing a rounded meal to all students in government and anganwadi establishments.

As per a report by Institute for Human Development, students get three eggs every week in government schools and seven eggs every week in anganwadi schools.

Alka Singh, a child right advocate, who has done a survey in various states of the country regarding the quality of mid-day meals said, "Students in Telangana are provided one of the best mid-day meals in country. The government has made sure that all kids have a well-balanced diet that contains all nutrient and vitamins. That is a commendable job compared to other states. Several anganwadi establishments in the state are in fact working with the local communities, involving them in kitchen gardens. This imparts knowledge to the parents about how to make sure the kids are well fed. They not just contribute towards a child's growth, but spreading awareness among the community as well."

Sharing the importance of eggs being included in a child's diet, which is being neglected in other states, Nutritionist Dr Janaki said, "Just like milk, egg is also a whole meal. It contains all the vitamins, protein and carbohydrates. For kids, who only get one good meal per day, eggs play an important source of nutrients."

No food for children during the pandemic

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Since the start of pandemic, Telangana government has not been providing any food/raw material/money for the food to any kid, who depended completely on them for one good meal per day.

As per a report by Central Square Foundation, a NGO, Telangana government has taken no steps to provide food to the kids during pandemic.

R Venkat Reddy, National Convenor of Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation, shares, "I can't deny that mid-day meals provided in Telangana are good. But for the past six months the state government hasn't done anything to aide kids, who depended on mid-day meals as the only source of nutrition. The parents have been feeding them whatever little they have, but that is not enough."

He adds, "While states like Karanataka, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Haryana is either providing dry rations or giving money to the parents, Telangana government has done nothing regarding the matter, even though the central government has been providing their share of funds for it."

Hanuman, the embodiment of communication skills

Hanuman, Hanumanth or Anjaneya, a mighty minister of the monkey king Sugriva, appears in the Ramayana for the first time in Kishkindha Kanda-the fourth part of the epic.

He is the leading character Sundara Kanda. Lord Rama and Lakshmana, while searching for Sita abducted by the monster king Ravana, reach the foothills of Rushyamook Mountain where, in the precincts of Kishkindha, king Sugriva lives in exile. Afraid of his elder brother Vali, Sugriva assumes that they have come there to kill him at the instance of Vali. Hanuman realises why Sugriva is worried and pacifies him with his communication skills, saying: "If a king of your stature and calibre loses his reasoning, logic, wisdom, intellect and integrity, then how can he save his people? Do not form opinions merely on face value."

Sugriva deploys Hanuman to elicit information about Rama and Lakshmana.

Hanuman, on meeting Rama, tellls the brothers: "My lords! Who you are? Why did you come here? By looks you seem to be kings, sages or gods."

His communication with Rama and Lakshmana is so interesting that they are spellbound and do not interrupt him. Hanuman tells them about himself and also about Sugriva, his exile and Vali.

Rama is pleased and tells Lakshmana, "Hanuman appears to be an expert and exponent of grammar. There is no aberration in his words. He hasn't uttered a single word out of context. He is a true, devout and committed emissary."

Upon reaching Sugriva, Hanuman introduces the brothers so eloquently that the exiled king gets to know everything and in the right perspective. "He is the personification of truth, bravery, courage, divinity and what not. Since his wife was abducted by Ravana, in search of her, soliciting your friendship he came here with his brother. You ought to go to him and worship him," he says. Ultimately, a bond of friendship develops between Rama and Sugriva.

Rama is pleased and tells Lakshmana, "Hanuman appears to be an expert and exponent of grammar. There is no aberration in his words. He hasn't uttered a single word out of context. He is a true, devout and committed emissary."

After Vali is killed by Rama in a duel between the brothers, Hanuman consoles Vali's wife Tara saying: "Past is past. What you are supposed to do now is not cry but plan for the future. Your son Angad, still a boy, needs to be taken care of and it's your responsibility,"

Later Rama performs the coronation ceremony of Sugriva as the Monkey King of Kishkindha.

When Hanuman feels that Sugriva has forgotten the responsibility of searching for Sita, he reminds him saying: "O King of Monkeys! You acquired prosperity, wealth and a kingdom. Your friend's work is yet to be accomplished. It's better that you immediately initiate efforts to do the work entrusted to you by your friend."

VANAM JWALA NARASIMHA RAO

Sugriva jumps into action and sends monkey warriors. Hanuman is sent to the south. Hanuman and his colleagues search every nook and corner for Sita, but in vain.

Meanwhile, Vali's son Angad, dejected at not finding Sita anywhere, decides to stay back with his supporters away from Kishkindha, the thoughts of revolt against Sugriva apparently in his mind.

Hanuman realises Angad's intentions and cautions him of the consequences in unequivocal terms, in perhaps the most eloquent of words in the Ramayana.

On the advice of Sampathi, Sugriva's monkeys reach the ocean to cross it and reach Lanka. Unable to cross it, the monkeys feel dejected, and here again, Hanuman displays his oratorical skills and enthuses them. On reaching Lanka, Hanuman is stopped from entering the city by Lankhini, the chief sentry who questions his credentials. Unperturbed, Hanuman tells her that he came to see the beautiful city with its army, ramparts, domes and houses. He is finally allowed to enter. Hanuman finds Sita in the Ashoka garden. He climbs a tree and speaks first about Dasarath and manages to attract Sita's attention. He then mentions Dasharath's elder son Rama, his qualities, his valour, his omniscience, omnipotence, omnivorous characteristics etc. Having heard her husband's name, she is even more interested. Hanuman concludes by saying: "I am fortunate that I could find Sita here." By now Sita is convinced about Hanuman's sincerity and confirms that she is indeed Sita. It is then Hanuman reveals the purpose of his coming there to Sita. Here again Hanuman uses all his communication skills by praising Rama and his qualities.

He says that Rama, with such great qualities, sent him as his emissary to find out where Sita was. To remove all doubts in her mind, Sita asks Hanuman to explain in detail how he became a friend of Rama and also describe the appearance of both Rama and Lakshmana.

On taking leave from Sita, Hanuman takes a look around the city and then voluntarily surrenders in order to reach Ravana. Before Ravana, Hanuman again displays his oratorical skills. "At the behest of King Sugriva, I am here to see you and your Lanka. I saw Sita in your Lanka (He does not mention abduction, but says that she is in his custody illegally). You, who literally studied all pious literature, should not indulge in troubling women like this. This will lead to annihilation of your kith and kin and the entire kingdom. None can face Rama in the war. Hand over Sita to Rama," Hanuman tells Ravana. Time and again, Hanuman proves that he was an embodiment of communication skills.

Parties get into poll mode

K VENKATESHWARLU
HYDERABAD

Though EC is yet to announce the dates for Dubbaka by-poll and Graduate MLC elections, major political parties have intensified their efforts to show their mark

Though the Election Commission has to announce the date for the Dubbaka by-poll and two Graduate MLC elections, all major political parties have intensified their efforts to show make their mark. Earlier, the ruling TRS thought to stay away from Graduate MLC elections but later changed its mind and prepared ground to face the election. According to sources, the ruling party is going to take the two graduate elections on prestigious note and contemplating to not only to retain the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal constituency but also to grab the Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar constituency this time. As part of this, the party is contemplating to field Hyderabad Mayor Bothu Rammohan as its candidate.

On the other hand, the party is contemplating to field Chief Minister's OSD Deshpathi Srinivas as party candidate for the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal constituency, it is learnt. However, the TRS almost finalised Solipeta Sujatha as the candidate for the Dubbaka by-election and the party has to announce the name officially. On the other hand, the Congress leaders are applying for the party ticket as TPCC Chief Uttam Kumar Reddy invited applications for Dubbaka by-elections and two graduate MLC constituency elections. According to Gandhi Bhavan sources, the party received 10 each applications for the graduate MLC elections. Still two more days are left for applying for the party ticket. The party leaders would apply on the last two days seeking graduate MLC tickets as the party candidate T Jeevan Reddy won the Karimnagar graduate MLC elections with a huge majority, the sources said.

TPCC official spokesperson Indira Shobhan applied for Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar graduate constituency MLC ticket. Speaking to 'The Pioneer', she said that she will be the lone woman candidate seeking a ticket for the graduate MLC ticket. However, three candidates - Narsi Reddy, Sravan Reddy and Narsimha Reddy and few others are in the race for the Dubbaka Congress ticket. TJS president Prof M Kodandaram is preparing ground to contest Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduate Constituency and as part of it he is touring the districts to know the pulse of the graduate voters.

On the other hand, the Left parties, especially CPI stated that it would think on the elections only after the EC releases notification. Meanwhile, BJP has also started efforts to field its candidates. Raghunandan Rao is touring Dubbaka constituency to contest the elections.

R&B Dept invites bids for construction of TS secretariat

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The R&B Department has issued a notification inviting tenders for execution of the Rs 500 crore secretariat building from Friday onwards. The last date for submission of the tenders would be October 1. It quoted the cost of the project as Rs 500 crore. The technical bids would be opened on October 1, the last date for submission of the tenders. The financial bids of winners of the technical bids would be opened on October 5. The bidder who quoted the least amount would be declared as contractor for execution of the secretariat buildings. A pre-tender meeting would be held on September 26 with intending participants in the bidding. The R&B Chief Engineer I Ganapati Reddy said that the intending bidders need not wait till the last date and can file their bids during the deadline.

TELANGANA LIBERATION DAY

Congress, BJP hoist national flag at party offices

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Political parties in Telangana hoisted the national flag at their offices to mark 'Hyderabad Merger Day' on Thursday and paid tributes to the freedom fighters who fought for the merger of erstwhile Hyderabad state with the Indian Union.

While the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), the Opposition Congress and other parties celebrated the occasion as 'Hyderabad Merger Day', the BJP commemorated it as 'Telangana Liberation Day'. It was on this day in 1948 that the princely state of Hyderabad merged with the Indian Union following 'police action', as the Indian military operation against the Nizam's army is popularly called.

The celebrations at Telangana Bhavan, the TRS headquarters, were led by the party's working president and Minister KT Rama Rao. He hoisted the national flag and garlanded the statues of 'Telugu Talli' and Telangana ideologue Professor Jayashankar. Ministers Mohammed Mehmood Ali, P. Ajay and TRS leaders participated in the programme while following Covid-19 precautions.

'Telangana Merger Day' was also celebrated at Gandhi Bhavan, the headquarters of the Congress party. State Congress Chief Uttam Kumar Reddy unfurled the national flag. He said Hyderabad merged with India, thanks to the efforts of then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He claimed that only the Congress and the Communists fought for Hyderabad state's merger with India.

The BJP and the AIMIM had nothing to do with the merger, he added. The Congress leader said it was unfortunate that a communal colour was being given to the historic struggle. The fight against the Nizam had nothing to do with religion but by linking it with religion, these parties were trying to distort history, the Congress leader added.

The TDP, the CPI and the TJS also celebrated 'Telangana Merger Day' with their leaders hoisting the national flag.

TPCC president N Uttam Kumar Reddy hoisting the national flag at Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad on Thursday

Only Congress deserves credit for Hyderabad's merger: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC president N Uttam alleged that the BJP, TRS and MIM were trying to distort and communalise the history of Hyderabad's Merger with the Indian Union. Speaking after hosting the national flag at Gandhi Bhavan on the 72nd anniversary of Hyderabad Merger Day at Gandhi Bhavan on Thursday, Uttam said that only Congress and Communist parties have struggled for Hyderabad's merger with Indian Union. He said BJP or its predecessors did not participate in the struggle against Nizam's Rule.

In fact, BJP did not even exist when Congress leaders were struggling against the Nizam's Rule. However, today BJP leaders were trying to communalise Hyderabad's Merger with Indian Union by calling it a 'liberation' by distorting the history. Similarly, he said TRS and MIM too were trying to communalise the history for political gains. "They are trying to make an issue out of Hyderabad Merger Day's celebration while the fact is Congress party has been celebrating the occasion since 1949 without any hue and cry," he said.

Officials demolish MLA's camp office in Warangal

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Officials demolishing camp office of Wardhannapet MLA Aruri Ramesh in Warangal district on Thursday

The authorities of the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) demolished the camp office of Wardhannapet MLA Aruri Ramesh located on the bund of a nala on the Hunter road near Bhadrakali tank in the city on Wednesday. About five years ago, Aruri Ramesh built the camp office on the Bhadrakali tank-Hunter Road nala.

It may be recalled that the heavy rains that lashed the city inundated many residential colonies in the city. Municipal Administration Minister subsequently had toured the city inspecting the inundated colonies and asked the municipal corporation authorities to widen the nalas and pull down all structures built on the nalas.

Acting on the directions of KTR, Warangal Urban District Collector constituted a task force to identify the to widen the nalas in Hanmakonda and Warangal cities. It may be added here that MAUD Minister K T Rama Rao, who visited flood hit Warangal on August 18, said that all the encroachments should be removed in one month. A special task force led by District Collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanumanth was also formed to monitor the removal of the encroachments on the nalas as the encroachments had caused inundation of many colonies in August due to very heavy rainfall.

The MLA also expressed his readiness to have his camp office pulled down by the officials.

HC seeks call details of Ramagundam CP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday issued orders to the state government and asked it submit the phone call details of Ramagundam Police Commissioner in Sheelam Rangaiah's alleged custodial death incident that took place at Manthani police station of Peddapalle District on May 26, 2020.

A division bench of the HC also extended the orders issued to the DGP of the state to ensure that the petitioner advocate in the case PV Nagamani and her husband Gattu Vaman Rao were neither threatened by any police officer nor called to any police station as long as the case was sub judice before it.

The advocate Nagamani, who had urged the HC to issue directions to the police to register an FIR in the custodial death case and to conduct the re-post-mortem on the body of the victim in her petition, filed affidavits by including the details of the alleged harassment of her and her husband by police and their threats in compliance of the high court's orders issued on September 10 of this month.

The division bench asked Nagamani to file her reply to the objections to the report submitted by Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar in the issue in six week's time.

High Court issues notices to State, Centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday issued notices to the State and Central governments and asked them to respond to a PIL filed before it urging issuance of directions to all the Clinical establishments established under the Clinical Establishments Act 2010 in the state to attach the Cycle Threshold (CT) value, which is also called T value to Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) test results of COVID-19 patients for containing the spread of the deadly virus. The bench tagged the case with the batch of other pending PILs filed on the COVID-19 issue. It later posted the matter to September 24 for further hearing.

LS Speaker takes part in Green Challenge

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha speaker Shri Om Birla on Thursday planted a sapling of 'Rudraksha' in the premises of Parliament on the occasion Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 70th birthday. The Lok Sabha speaker while appreciating TRS MP Joginapally Santosh Kumar for carrying out the Herculean task of Green challenge and carrying forward it successfully, asked the people to take initiative to protect environment as it's the need of hour.

2BHK: Talasani gives Bhatti a guided tour

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav along with CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka inspecting 2BHK works in city on Thursday

Picking up the gauntlet, Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav on Thursday went to Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka's residence in the city, along with GHMC Mayor Bonthu Rammohan and officials, without intimation, and offered to show Bhatti around the areas where 2BHK units, officially referred to as dignity houses, have come up.

This was in response to the challenge that Bhatti made in the State Legislative Assembly on Wedensday, asking the government to show him where one lakh 2BKHK houses are being constructed in the city. Bhatti then commented that the TRS was enacting "2BHK drama" with an eye on the upcoming GHMC polls.

In a dramatic fashion, Talasani took Bhatti at his word and picked up the latter from his residence. Bhatti, surprised at Talasani's unannounced visit to his house, nevertheless accompanied the Minister, along with Congress leaders, to various construction sites. Talasani showed Bhatti double bed room houses that have come up at Jiyaguda, Gode-ki-Kabar, Kattelamandi, I-Max, Boiguda and West Marredpally. That done, Talasani said Day-2 tour with Bhatti would continue on Friday as all sites could not be covered on Thursday. Later, speaking to media persons, Talasani said: "We have to visit 60 more places. On

Friday, we will visit the double bed room houses at Kolluru, Quthbullahpur and LB Nagar. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's idea of constructing double bed room houses is to see that the poor live in a comfortable manner. Everything is free in double bed room houses; however, the beneficiary has to pay some amount in regard to Indiramma

Houses. The government wants to complete the double bed room houses as soon as possible. Bhatti was also satisfied with the construction of the double bed room houses. I will make Bhatti roam along with me till I show him 1 lakh double bed room houses. These works were not taken up for elections. The idea is to help the poor. The beneficiary is getting a new residence, though they paid Rs.5 lakh in the form of rent for the last 4 years", he said.

Bhatti, however, said: "The government is stating that it has constructed 1 lakh houses. It has to show where it has constructed them. We saw 3,428 houses. The government gave double room houses to only 400 people. We will examine the houses even on Friday. The Quality Wing is examining the quality of the houses. I will respond on the quality of the houses only after getting the report from the Quality Wing engineers. I will respond only after examining the double bed room houses on Friday. Most of the houses constructed by the government that I saw today are those that were built only after demolishing the houses of the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries are bemoaning that they have been facing a lot of troubles for the last four years. They said that they vacated their houses four years ago and are facing troubles in paying rents", he said.

Congress leaders V Hanumantaha Rao, K Laxma Reddy, Feroz Khan, Anil Kumar Yadav, B Venkat and others accompanied Bhatti Vikramaraka.

Chaudhary Cheruvu overflowing due to heavy rains in Sanjivanrao Pet in Medak

Rains lash Medak dt

PNS ■ MEDAK

Sangareddy, Siddipet and Medak districts witnessed heavy rains throughout Wednesday and Thursday. Several streams such as Nallavagu, Haldi Vagu, Pedda Vagu, Nakkavagu and others streams were in spate following the incessant rains. A majority of the minor irrigation tanks are overflowing.

Medak district recorded 38.6mm rainfall during the past 24 hours at 8.30 am on Thursday while Sangareddy district recorded 36.4mm rainfall. While Nallavagu project, built across Nallavagu stream, has been overflowing for over three days, Ghanpur anicut, built across river Manjira at Edupayala temple, was receiving heavy inflows.

SHORT READS

Tribal girl gang raped, one arrested

Godda (Jharkhand): A tribal girl has allegedly been gang-raped in Jharkhand's Godda district, police said on Thursday. One accused has been arrested and a manhunt has been launched to nab the other, district Superintendent of Police Y S Ramesh said.
The incident took place near Basdiha village in Lalmatia police station area on Tuesday night, he said. As per the FIR lodged by the survivor, she was going to Lalmatia with her friend on a motorcycle on Tuesday evening when their vehicle got stuck in the mud near Basdiha, the officer said. "Two motorbike-borne passersby beat her friend up, snatched his mobile phone and dragged the girl to a nearby bush, where they took turns to rape her till late night," theSP told PTI. The survivor managed to escape from the spot on the pretext of attending nature's call and informed the police, he said. A team was formed under Mahagama Sub-divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Veerendra Chaudhary and one accused was arrested on Wednesday, the SP said.

ED files charge sheet against Kashmiri separatist

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate has made Kashmiri separatist leader Shabir Shah's wife Bilquis Shah an accused in a 2005 money laundering case against him and reported hawala dealer Mohammad Aslam Wani for alleged terror financing to cause unrest in J&K.The probe agency named her as an accused in its supplementary charge sheet filed in the case on Wednesday. Additional Sessions Judge Dharmender Rana will take up the matter on November 10.
In the charge sheet filed by ED's special public prosecutors N K Matta and Rajeev Awasthi, the probe agency said that Bilquis Shah, along with Shabir Shah had received Rs 2.08 crore from Aslam Wani.
It said the claim was based on Wani's disclosure in the case, where he admitted that "all amounts were in cash and were handed over to Shabir Ahmad Shah and on three occasions to Dr. Bilquies Shah".

India ranks 116 in World Bank's human capital index

Washington: India has been ranked at the 116th position in the latest edition of the World Bank's annual Human Capital Index that benchmarks key components of human capital across countries.
However, India's score increased to 0.49 from 0.44 in 2018, as per the Human Capital Index report released by the World Bank on Wednesday.
The 2020 Human Capital Index update includes health and education data for 174 countries – covering 98 per cent of the world's population – up to March 2020, providing a pre-pandemic baseline on the health and education of children, with the biggest strides made in low-income countries.The analysis shows that pre-pandemic, most countries had made steady progress in building human capital of children, with the biggest strides made in low-income countries. Despite this progress, and even before the effects of the pandemic, a child born in a typical country could expect to achieve just 56 per cent of their potential human capital, relative to a benchmark of complete education and full health, the Bank said. Malpass said that the World Bank is trying to work to restart the learning process.

No force can stop Indian troops from patrolling: Rajnath on border row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday asserted that no force in the world can stop Indian soldiers from patrolling the country's border in Ladakh region.

Making a statement in Rajya Sabha on the situation in eastern Ladakh, he said China has amassed troops on the border and in response India has made appropriate counter deployment.

China, he said, made "provocative military manoeuvres" on August 29/30 in an attempt to change the status quo in the south bank area of Pangong Lake in the Ladakh region at a time when the two sides were engaged in military and diplomatic talks to de-escalate tensions.

The defence minister said there is a mismatch between what China says and does.

"Unki kathani aur karni alag hai (their actions are at variance with their words)," he said

The skirmishes and face-off in the last few months with China, that left 20 Indian soldiers dead and inflicted heavy casualties on the Chinese sides as well, were primarily over the issue of patrolling the Ladakh border. "No force in the world can stop Indian soldiers from patrolling. Our soldiers have sacrificed their lives only for this," the minister said.

He was responding to a clarification sought by former defence minister A K Antony on the issue of Indian forces not being allowed to patrol in certain parts of the Galwan valley. "I want to make it clear (that) skirmishes and face-off are because of this (issue of patrolling)," he said, adding the patrolling pattern is traditional and well defined.

Singh made the statement in Rajya Sabha after the government and opposition agreed not to have a discussion on the sensitive issue.

Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, however, allowed members to seek a few clarifications on the statement, which was almost identical to the one Singh had made in Lok Sabha on September 15. The minister said India and China are yet to resolve their boundary question. "China does not accept the customary and traditional alignment of the boundary between India and China," he said.

"We believe that this alignment is based on well-established geographical principles confirmed by treaties and agreements, as well as historical usage and practice, well-known for centuries to both sides," he said.

The Chinese position, however, is that the boundary between the two countries has not been formally delimited, that there exists a traditional customary line formed by the extent of jurisdiction that they claim was exercised historically by each side, and that the two sides have different interpretations of the position of the traditional customary line," he said. China, he said, continues to be in illegal occupation of about 38,000 square kilometers of Ladakh. Besides it also holds 5,180 sq km of Indian territory in Pakistan occupied Kashmir that Pakistan had illegally ceded in 1963. "I would like to mention here that as yet there is no commonly delineated Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the border areas between India and China and there is no common perception of the entire LAC," he said, adding more than two decade old agreements call for two sides to maintain minimal forces along the LAC.

On the latest situation, the minister said India has noticed a buildup of troops and armaments by China in the border areas adjacent to Eastern Ladakh since April.

"In early May, the Chinese side had taken action to hinder the normal, traditional patrolling pattern of our troops in the Galwan Valley area, which resulted in a face-off," he said. Even as this situation was being addressed by the Ground Commanders, in mid-May the Chinese side made several attempts to transgress the LAC in other parts of the Western Sector. This included Kongka La, Gogra and North Bank of Pangong Lake.

"These attempts were detected early and consequently responded to appropriately by our armed forces," he said.

"We made it clear to the Chinese side both through diplomatic and military channels that China was, by such actions, attempting to unilaterally alter the status quo,: he said.

Less than 3% population in tribal dts Covid +ve

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Less than 3 percent population in 177 tribal-dominated districts in the county has been detected as positive for coronavirus, the government told the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda also told the Upper House that so far, there has been "no report of major outbreak of the disease in tribal areas".

Citing a recent study conducted by IIT Delhi, the minister said, "Less than 3 percent of the population in 177 districts with 25 percent tribal population or more has been detected as corona positive".

The minister also said the COVID response team of his ministry has formulated a pandemic response plan to protect the livelihoods and health of Scheduled Tribes.

"The same has been approved by the Secretary, Tribal Affairs, and circulated among various stakeholders for necessary action. States and Union Territories have been asked to utilize funds from state tribal sub plans and submit a comprehensive proposal on these lines under various schemes of the ministry," he said.

Measures in the response plan include provision of community kitchens in tribal areas, ensuring supply of ration, basic financial support through direct benefit transfer, improving village-level water availability, and support towards creation of isolation and quarantine facilities in areas with ST population.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has also done mapping of sectoral gaps down to the level of gram panchayats and villages in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development, Munda said.

'Getting permanent UNSC membership our priority'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday said it has accorded the "highest priority" to getting permanent membership in an expanded UN Security Council that reflects contemporary global realities.

Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan said India is actively engaged in the ongoing inter-governmental negotiations on reform of the powerful body at the UN and has been working alongside other like-minded countries and groupings.

Muraleedharan was replying to a question on whether the government was making serious efforts to acquire a permanent seat for India at the UN Security Council (UNSC).

"Government has accorded the highest priority to getting permanent membership for India in an expanded UN Security Council that reflects contemporary global realities," he said.

"India in collaboration with other pro-reform countries has been consistently making efforts to build support among the UN member states for expansion of the UNSC, in both permanent and non-permanent categories," the minister said.

At present, the UNSC comprises five permanent members and 10 non-permanent member countries which are elected for a two-year term by the General Assembly of the United Nations. The five permanent members are Russia, the UK, China, France and the United States and these countries can veto any substantive resolution. There has been growing demand to increase the number of permanent members to reflect the contemporary global reality.

Govt says it did not incur expenses for 'Howdy-Modi'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday said it did not incur any expenses for the 'Howdy-Modi' event in the US city of Houston in September last year and that it was organised by a not-for-profit group.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a thunderous reception when he, accompanied by US President Donald Trump, addressed a crowd of over 50,000 Indian-Americans at the event in a stadium in Houston on September 22, 2019. Specifically asked whether the government incurred any financial expenses for the event or funded its organisers, Muraleedharan said "no".

Recoveries exceed active cases of Covid by over 30 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 recoveries have crossed 40 lakh and exceed the active cases of infection by 30,15,103, taking the recovery rate to 78.64 per cent, the Union Health Ministry said on Thursday.

The total number of active cases in the country has crossed 10 lakh as on date. There are 10,09,976 active cases of COVID-19 in the country which comprise 19.73 per cent of the total caseload, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Close to half -- 48.45 per cent -- of the active cases are concentrated in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. "Together with the states of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, these five states contribute nearly 60 per cent of the total active infections," the ministry underlined.

Maharashtra (17,559) contributed more than one-fifth of the new recoveries (21.22 pc) while the states of Andhra Pradesh (10,845), Karnataka (6,580), Uttar Pradesh (6,476) and Tamil Nadu (5,768) contributed 35.87 per cent of the new recoveries. These states together account for 57.1 per cent of total new recoveries, the ministry said adding, "Spurred by high recoveries, the national recovery rate continues to follow its rising curve. It has risen to 78.64 per cent as on date." India has been registering very high recoveries for two consecutive days, the ministry said.

Unemployment issue not political: Priyanka

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Thursday that the problem of unemployment was not a political issue, but a humanitarian one and promised to extend all possible help in the matter.

Holding a video conference with around 50 youths, who hailed from different districts of Uttar Pradesh and had cleared the test for teaching posts but have not got their appointment, Priyanka Gandhi said it was her belief that the government would have to listen to the voice of the youth.

"We will have to fight from the roads to the legislature. The Congress is not going to back out on this," a party release quoted Priyanka Gandhi as saying. "This is not a political issue for us, but a humanitarian matter. This is a question of justice."

The Congress general secretary assured the youth that her party would extend all possible help in this matter.

The video conference, which lasted for over one-and-a-half hour, was attended by over 50 youths, state Congress media convenor Lalan Kumar said, adding that event was a part of the dialogue over unemployment.

US company to pay $3L to resolve H-1B violations

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A New Jersey-based staffing company has agreed to pay USD 345,000 to settle allegations that it has violated immigration and employment regulations concerning continuous employment and wage requirements of workers it had brought to the US on H-1B visas.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. H-1B visas are most sought-after among Indian IT professionals.

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Department of Labour and the US Attorney for the District of New Jersey ordered Savantis Solutions to pay USD 345,000 to resolve allegations against H-1B related violations.

Savantis, formerly known as Vedicsoft Solutions, has a presence in India as well. The company is involved in consulting, technology and staffing, utilising primarily foreign nationals in the US pursuant to H-1B visas.

Anarchy prevailed in country before Modi took charge, says Adityanath

PTI ■ GOLAKHPUR

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath wished Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday on Thursday, saying anarchy prevailed in the country before he took charge and there has been a big change during his tenure.

Adityanath was speaking at an event at the Gorakhnath temple's old age home where he distributed artificial limbs to differently-abled people to mark the prime minister's birthday. He also distributed 40 tricycles, six wheelchairs, 20 smart canes and 25 hearing aids. "The country has experienced a big change in the last six years due to the proficient and far-sighted leadership of PM Modi. Almost all the developed countries admire our prime minister," the chief minister said.

"When he took charge, there was anarchy, mismanagement, distrust and insecurity in the country. PM Modi, with his able leadership, brought the development of the country on track," he said.

"Poor people are getting benefits of the 'PM Awas (Yojana)' along with free power connection and toilets. Benefits of welfare schemes like 'Ujjawala' and 'Kanya Saubhagya' are also reaching the people. The government is putting in efforts to extend the benefits of all schemes to the last man," he said.

Mortality rate lowest: Harsh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday said India's COVID-19 mortality rate at 1.64 per cent is lowest in the world and the government is targeting to bring it down to less than 1 per cent.

Replying to a debate in the Rajya Sabha, he said India's recovery rate of 78-79 per cent is one of the highest in the world.

He said though total cases may have crossed 50 lakh, active cases are less than 20 per cent.

Deaths in India due to coronavirus pandemic are less than many nations in Europe, he said, adding the government was determined to cross the US in testing rate as well.

'Nations need to come together to provide vital treatment'

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

Describing the coronavirus as the number one "global security threat" facing the world today, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has said that nations need to come together to provide vital treatment to suppress transmission and save lives over the next year.

"This is also the moment when the international community needs to come together to defeat the virus. Many pin their hopes on a vaccine - but let's be clear: there is no panacea in a pandemic. A vaccine alone cannot solve this crisis; certainly not in the near term," Guterres said at a press conference on Wednesday.

He said nations need to massively expand new and existing tools that can respond to new cases and provide vital treatment to suppress transmission and save lives, especially over the next 12 months.

Guterres voiced concern that the outbreak is out of control and the world will soon pass "the grimmest of milestones" with one million lives lost to the virus. "The COVID-19 pandemic is a crisis unlike any in our lifetimes, and so this year's General Assembly session will be unlike any other, too," he said.

"In this 75th anniversary year, we face our own 1945 moment. We must meet that moment," he said.

Centre should apologise, says Kisan Congress

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The All India Kisan Congress (AIKC) on Thursday condemned the alleged lathicharge on protesting farmers in Haryana recently and demanded an apology from the Narendra Modi government.

Restore status quo ante on LAC with China: Oppn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders in the Rajya Sabha asked the government on Thursday to restore status quo ante as on April this year on the India-China border. Cutting across party lines, members in the Upper House of Parliament expressed their solidarity and support to the armed forces, which are facing a standoff situation against the Chinese army in eastern Ladakh. Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anad Sharma and former defence minister A K Antony of the Congress asked the government to take efforts to restore the status quo ante of April and resolve the over-three-month-old border standoff.

Some members such as Prasanna Acharya of the BJD and Sanjay Raut of the Shiv Sena cautioned the government while entering into any agreement with China over the present situation.

T cells play bigger role in reducing Covid severity

■ LOS ANGELES

Vaccine candidates for COVID-19 should elicit a broad immune response that includes antibodies, and the body's helper and killer T cells, according to a study which says weak or uncoordinated immunity may lead to a poor disease outcome.

The research, published in the journal Cell, confirms that a multi-layered, virus-specific immune response is important for controlling the novel coronavirus during the acute phase of the infection and reducing COVID-19 disease severity.

"Our observations could also explain why older COVID-19 patients are much more vulnerable to the disease," said study senior author Shane Crotty from the La Jolla Institute for Immunology in the US.

"With increasing age, the reservoir of T cells that can be activated against a specific virus declines and the body's immune response becomes less coordinated, which looks to be one factor making older people drastically more susceptible to severe or fatal COVID-19," Crotty said.

In the research, the scientists collected blood samples from 50 COVID-19 patients, and analysed multiple branches of their immune system -- novel coronavirus specific antibodies, helper and killer T cells.

It was particularly important to us to capture the whole range of disease manifestation from mild to critically ill so we could identify differentiating immunological factors," said study co-author and infectious disease specialist Sydney Ramirez. The researchers found that all fully recovered individuals had measurable antibody, helper and killer T cell responses against the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2.

However, they said the response varied widely in acute COVID-19 patients, with some lacking neutralising antibodies, others helper or killer T cells or any combination thereof.

"When we looked at a combination of all of our data across all 111 measured parameters we found that in general, people who mounted a broader and well-coordinated adaptive response tended to do better," said Carolyn Moderbacher, another co-author of the study from La Jolla Institute for Immunology.

"A strong SARS-CoV-2 specific T cell response, in particular, was predictive of milder disease. Individuals whose immune response was less coordinated tended to have poorer outcomes," Moderbacher said.

The scientists found that the effect was magnified when they broke down the dataset by age.

"People over the age of 65 were much more likely to have poor T cell responses, and a poorly coordinated immune response, and thus have much more severe or fatal COVID-19," Crotty said.

The scientists explained that as people age, the immune system's supply of deployable immature T cells dwindles, with fewer cells available to be activated to respond to a new virus.

Time to join hands to battle Covid, says BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The opposition should join hands with the government to battle the "unprecedented" COVID-19 crisis that has brought the globe to its knees rather than indulging in "petty criticism and blatant sarcasm", BJP leader Rajeev Chandrasekhar said in Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Participating in a discussion on the COVID-19 pandemic and the steps taken by the Government, he said "Some are now questioning lockdown...this wisdom of hindsight is easy to develop but early interventions were crucial," and termed the lockdown "unambiguously" necessary.

Almost all countries resorted to lockdown as the pandemic was unprecedented since 1918's Spanish flu, he said and added that under the present situation, lockdowns are necessary tools in the tool kits of governments till vaccines are developed. He said it is a tough choice between "life and livelihood" and credited the government for minimising economic contraction by taking a slew of steps to help revive different sectors.

HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | SEPTEMBER 18, 2020

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Who will regulate TV?

If the SC has to intervene every time on mala fide content on channels, it will be flooded with petitions. We need a neutral code

It is sad that the fourth estate, which ought to be a thriving institution in its own right — showing a mirror to society and advocating rights and issues that politics ignores — now needs regulation or correction by other institutions. Weaponised as a tool of governance and propaganda for long, it took the Supreme Court to stop it from destroying the social fabric instead of mending it. The top court restrained a channel from telecasting a controversial programme that sought to "expose" a "conspiracy and jihad to infiltrate Muslims" into the Indian civil services. The court was right to see through the agenda to vilify a certain community on the pretext of an investigation and perpetuate a narrative suited to the political climate of the day. It had to halt broadcast that would have aggravated an already prejudiced sentiment in the country and, as it said, challenged the constitutionally mandated plurality of India. But then how many broadcasts will it stop given the partisan nature of the hundreds of news channels in India today, some of them owned and funded by political parties themselves? How will it manage the whataboutery and a slew of counter-petitions of why a certain programme doesn't deserve to be aired while others do? What is divisive and what is not? The court also deliberated on national debates on television channels, which the bench felt required regulation. To bolster its argument, it cited parallel investigations being carried out in criminal investigations, quite clearly implying how motivated interests were manufacturing a national mindset that would go by a heave of emotion rather than facts. Given these observations, the court would then have to become a media watchdog, too, stretching its resources no end. As it is, the Government, a day after the verdict on the channel perceived as friendly to it, filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court, arguing that if the latter desired to undertake the exercise to regulate the media, then it should first do so for digital media, and not electronic media, because social platforms have a faster and wider reach. That is indeed another problem, as given their dependence on open traffic, digital platforms have often been the purveyor of hate speeches and campaigns that have fuelled unrest on the ground. There are more than 50 documented cases of mob violence triggered by misinformation spread over social media in India over the last two years. Many platforms, including Facebook and YouTube, have only to upload an uncensored clip that swiftly becomes credible headlines when picked up by TV media. Facebook and Twitter are too big and have become influencers in their own right, embedding themselves in policies of the regime that is crucial to their business plans in respective countries. Facebook, with over 2.3 billion monthly users across its family of networks, has become too much of a behemoth to be democratic. But its subsidiary messaging board, WhatsApp, is by far the most popular of the platforms. With India accounting for 400 million of its global base of 1.5 billion users, it ends up being the focus of discussions on the spread of misinformation. It has become as much an information propagator as it has a disseminator.

The court mentioned setting up a committee of five citizens who can come up with standards for electronic media but what about existing frameworks, which are toothless at the moment? There is no statutory regulatory mechanism but self-regulatory bodies like the News Broadcasters' Association (NBA), Broadcast Editors' Association and News Broadcasters' Federation have failed to rise to the occasion and ensure a modicum of professionalism. Besides, this multiplicity of authorities generates its own politics and lobbies. The NBA does take up broadcast complaints seriously and has a code of ethics but because it is in the nature of just guidelines and not mandatory, there is no bold, punitive action. Usually, errants are let off with an apology or a minor rap on the knuckles. Besides, members of the NBA are from channels themselves and their hands are somewhat tied up by the prevalent business model of journalism, the kind that links coverage and pitches to revenue and funding. Till we have a singular code that's trustworthy, neutral or effective or till we have a legally empowered regulatory body, there will always be conflict of interest. Of course, the best regulation would be if broadcast media stuck to sensible rather than sensational journalism. Our Constitution has guaranteed the right to freedom but it implies we follow our duties, too. In a democracy, the media is as much accountable to citizens as are other institutions. It cannot be a self-serving clique but has to call out its own and self-cleanse in the interest of holding up its institutional integrity. Or it could content itself with scripting doggerel.

No country for children

The World Bank's human capital index shows the potential development of kids slid to 50 per cent in pandemic times

As expected, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has not just been on health and global economies; its multi-pronged effect is now threatening to erase the gains made in improving child education and health in the years before the outbreak. This fallout of the contagion is the most evident in the poor and Third World nations, the World Bank said while commenting on the Human Capital Index for 2020, which ranks countries on how well children are prepared for the future, with an emphasis on factors like schooling and healthcare. Despite the fact that most countries made steady gains in improving health and education prior to the pandemic, the virus has dealt a body blow to all these efforts. Children in a low-income country will likely achieve only 56 per cent of their human capital compared to ones with access to a complete education and full healthcare. This is alarming as human capital is absolutely vital to the financial and economic future of any country as well as its social well-being. And as World Bank President David Malpass has warned, "inequalities among children are set to increase" and as "more than one billion children have been out of school due to COVID, they could lose as much as $10 trillion in lifetime earnings." In our case, the girl child would be the first victim as her education is the first casualty in poor households forced to choose between feeding the family and reserving knowledge pursuit as a rare privilege. Besides, while the education of children from well-heeled families will not face so much disruption, students from marginalised families and in rural areas will suffer, both due to lack of smartphones, computers, laptops and the lack of infrastructure and knowhow on how to use these enablers. Though both teachers and students have adapted to online classes to a large extent in urban areas, teachers themselves are not satisfied because they feel that the learning experience can never compete with brick and mortar classrooms. In an online setting, students may have more distractions and less supervision, which can reduce their motivation to do well academically. First there is the issue of keeping students engaged. Then how do you teach subjects which require live experiments and demonstrations? What of personal attention to struggling students? Research shows that students who struggle in physical classes are likely to struggle even more online. Also, being in school/college in person with teachers and other students creates social pressures and benefits that can help motivate the young to engage.

On the health front, too, there is cause for concern as the lockdown impacted programmes tackling malnutrition. With schools closed, children from impoverished families have been deprived of their one, daily nutritious food in the form of free mid-day meals. Immunisation programmes have been hit by the lockdown as has the community vigilance by the ASHAs and ANMs, who were the first point of contact for parents with sick children. If the world had to work hard to provide an equitable world for children, it will have to work doubly hard to mend the damage caused by the contagion in the years to come.

The tale of two IPLs

IPL is one of the rarest sports spectacles which completely subverts otherwise ubiquitous nationalist and parochial discourses

SUMANYU **SATPATHY**

After months of uncertainty and speculation, the Indian Premier League (IPL) is all set to start; outside the country of its origin and minus the shrieking fans. Everyone, even its critics and detractors, admits to its stupendous popularity. For most of its supporters and fans, it is an event almost of national importance, no less than the General Elections. In fact, a year ago, a large majority of Indians were simultaneously subjected to two kinds of spectacles: one in the sports arena and the other in the political playing field. The dates for both overlapped for a period of one month as the grand spectacle of the IPL (March 23-May 12, 2019) coincided with the heat and dust generated by the General Elections. The Code of Conduct was immediately effective after the dates for the elections were announced on March 10, 2019. In between the elections, the din over the IPL rose to a crescendo and climaxed with the final in which the Mumbai Indians defeated Chennai Super Kings at a "neutral" venue in Hyderabad. As the great excitement over IPL subsided, all hell broke loose over the no-holds-barred election campaigns. There is no doubt about the ephemerality and inconsequentiality of the first, nor about the epochal nature of the second. And yet, many cricket fans think otherwise.

With the pandemic and economy playing havoc, and none of the venues in India playing host, the event may have already lost its usual sheen. Also, the forthcoming elections in Bihar are no match for the national polls last year. Yet, now that both the events are round the corner, it is a good time to reflect on how both affect the public psyche. For cricket has always been seen, at least in the former colonies, as a weapon for political dominance or even as an instrument to fight back dominance; any reader of CLR James' *Beyond the Boundary* would know that. Until the advent of IPL, cricket was about national teams and races. As James says, "Cricket…had plunged" him "into politics long before [he] was aware of it. When [he] did turn to politics, [he] did not have too much to learn." What lessons in politics does the IPL proffer?

The Election Commission lays down the rules of the game in the Model Code of Conduct. The IPL follows most of the rules laid down by the International Cricket Council (ICC). During the IPL and also the General Elections, many of these rules were flouted, decidedly or allegedly. The IPL cricketers, drawn from across cricket-playing nations, were bought and sold much before the event. Apparently, inconsequent to the followers of the game, the prices, sometimes incommensurate with the reputation of many players, were headlined. Many high profile players and erstwhile heroes were left unsold or sold late. Political parties also tried to highlight names of politicians who crossed over from their rivals' party. There seemed to be a competition of sorts to rope in glamorous cricketers or film stars from Chennai and Mumbai, from Bhojpuri to Tamil stars. Many of them even floated new parties for the cause of democracy, freedom of expression and so on.

In a certain sense, they were engaged in completely different practices; in another sense, they shared certain commonalities, especially in the visual space of the electronic media. The high octane media coverage, with experts in both "fields" crying themselves hoarse regarding the current performances, strategies and forecasts, was common to both the arenas. A few IPL specialists like Gautam Gambhir, who until last year were commenting both on cricket and political matters, jumped into the fray, hoping to prove their political prowess.

But, of course, the man in the street took a keen interest in both, while the satellite channels made merry with increased TRPs and phenomenal commercial gains. In the background of both, the Balakot airstrikes fed the emotions directly and indirectly: directly in the political arena of elections, and indirectly by the absence of cricketers from Pakistan.

> THE ONE PUZZLE THAT SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS NEED TO SORT OUT AND EXPLAIN IS HOW THE SAME PEOPLE CAN BE SO DEEPLY INVOLVED IN TWO KINDS OF SPECTACLES, ONE ENTRENCHED IN RABID NATIONALIST DISCOURSE AND ANOTHER WHICH IS AGGRESSIVELY INTERNATIONALIST. SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS WILL BE TESTED AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF BIHAR POLLS

For one thing, the IPL is not about national teams. No one cares which country the players come from. The jerseys are of individual franchises and one looks in vain for the nationality behind the jersey in case the player happens to be one of the lesser-known. No, IPL is not about nations and nationalism. Nor is it about parochialism. The teams are named after cities but even the Indian players are not from these cities. They could well be from the city of the rival team. Sourav Ganguly can be the coach of Delhi Daredevils playing against the Kolkata Knight Riders for whom he had earlier played and whose coach he had eventually become. Shah Rukh Khan (a Delhiite) living in Mumbai is the owner of Kolkata Knight Riders. The same kind of fuzzing of identities is seen even among spectators.

Talking of Shah Rukh Khan brings to mind the two sets of affiliation leading to a triangular bonding. Politics and Bollywood, politics and cricket, and cricket and Bollywood. For decades, Prime Ministers have made it a point to pose with winning cricket teams and cricketing heroes. But these are about winning international tournaments like the World Cup. Seldom does one see politicians in IPL events. Last year, around the time of the General Elections, many actors posed with major politicians. One of the X-factors in popularising IPL was that popular film stars like Shah Rukh Khan and Preity Zinta owned franchises.

Whereas communal-based politics is the order of the day, cricket and Bollywood, at least superficially seen, symbolise communal amity. Last year, exactly at a time when communal identities were dominating electoral arithmetic, and politicians were busy dividing and stereotyping people with a certain kind of facial hair, Indian cricketers had broken down this identity divide by almost all of them flaunting facial hair.

Such is the privileging of cricket over other sports. The one cricketing spectacle that the spectators in the subcontinent look forward to is the Indo-Pak encounter during which rabid nationalism rises to the fore. IPL, in contrast, is one of the rarest sports spectacles which completely subverts otherwise ubiquitous nationalist and parochial discourses. The one puzzle that social psychologists need to sort out and explain is how the same people can be so deeply involved in two kinds of spectacles, one entrenched in rabid nationalist discourse and another which is aggressively internationalist. This year, some of these questions will be tested against the backdrop of the Assembly elections in Bihar.

(The writer is a well-known scholar; he is the former head of Dept. Of English, Delhi University and author of books such as Tenth Rasa *and* The Will to Argue)

SOUNDBITE

We must show unity like never before to overcome today's emergency, get the world moving and working and prospering again, and uphold the vision of the Charter.

UN Secretary-General
—Antonio Guterres

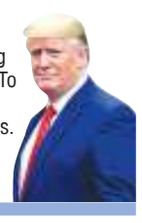
Three vaccine candidates are in different phases. We are hopeful that by the start of next year, a vaccine will be available in India.

Union Health Minister
—Harsh Vardhan

It's an absolute delight to welcome back Indian cricket with the Dream11 IPL and I hope this tournament can infuse positive energy into the lives of millions.

Former cricketer
—Sunil Gavaskar

Our biggest threat to this election is Governors from opposing parties controlling ballots, millions of ballots. To me, that's a much bigger threat than foreign countries.



US President
—Donald Trump

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Export agro-produce

Sir — India must prepare to export agricultural products to accomplish the two aspirational goals set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi: double the income of farmers and achieve the aim of a $5 trillion economy, which seem rather far-fetched now. Indian traders encounter several hurdles in exporting agricultural products and we need the Government's diligent intervention and support. India needs to chalk out a strategic plan and ensure increased percentage from 2.2 per cent to 5 per cent in global trade before 2025.

Rahul Chouhan
Ujjain

Pakistan violates norms of NSAs' meeting

After Nepal's Cabinet endorsed a new political map showing Lipulekh, Kalapani and Limpiyadhura under its territory, amidst a border dispute with India, Pakistan has come out with a new map of its own. The new political map includes territories of Jammu and Kashmir and a part of Ladakh, claiming these territories as belonging to Pakistan. The map also claims Junagadh, Manavadar and Sir Creek in Gujarat as part of Pakistan.

At the online meeting of the National Security Advisors (NSA) at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Pakistan used the map as a backdrop for its representative. Indian NSA Ajit Doval raised strong objection to Pakistan using the illegal map and walked out of the meeting, saying such an act was a blatant violation of the SCO Charter.

Despite the fact that fora like SCO do not allow bilateral issues to be brought to the table, Pakistan tried to use the platform to internationalise the Kashmir issue. The provocative action of Pakistan is in violation of the norms of the NSAs meeting. Pakistan seems to be emboldened by China's attempt to alter the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Instead of showing the territories of other countries as its own, Pakistan needs to save Balochistan and stop violating human rights in these areas.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan, Karnataka

The five million mark

Sir — The rapid progression of COVID-19 has sent India's confirmed cases beyond the sombre five million mark. It now accounts for about one-sixth of the total global cases. This also means that one in every 260 people in India is infected with the virus. The exponential growth is borne out by the fact that it has taken just 11 days for the cases to rise from four to five million. These are official figures; the true figures could be far higher.

India is among the few countries where there has been no flattening of the curve. It is projected that India will emerge as the country with the most number of infections in a matter of weeks. So far, more than 82,000 people have died from the virus.

Yet the Government's reply to "unstarred" questions in the Parliament has been lacklustre. It further claims it has no data on the number of deaths of migrant labourers. It has not cleared GST dues to cash-strapped states and is being secretive about PM CARES Fund. Derek O'Brien of Trinamool Congress rightly described it as the "PM CARE LESS Fund".

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Voice of dissent

Sir — Member of Parliament and veteran actor Jaya Bachchan was praised by many in Bollywood for raising her voice against those defaming the Hindi film industry. Her remarks came a day after BJP's Lok Sabha MP and Bhojpuri actor Ravi Kishan said that there was a problem of drug addiction in the film industry. Bachchan disagreed with these claims. She said that the film industry had been ridiculed by social media and the Central Government must protect and support it. While many within the industry praised the actor for speaking up against the negativity surrounding the industry since Sushant Singh Rajput's death, fact is they didn't collectively campaign against mindless vilification or try to restore their credibility. Had not Bachchan raised her voice, the industry would have kept silent.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Irresponsible media

Sir — The Supreme Court has strictly prohibited showing the remaining episodes of *Sudarshan TV's Bindas Bol* programme as its objective was to "vilify Muslims." The claims made by the channel also question the credibility of UPSC examinations. The media must be responsible and take appropriate measures to not promote oligarchy.

M N Alam
Saharanpur

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The intelligent future is here

Events of 2020 have hugely accelerated the human civilisation's race towards finding an alternative to its own organic intelligent brain

KUMARDEEP **BANERJEE**

Now that most of us are becoming video-conferencing experts, innovating on every call with a new virtual background, while also ordering groceries online and keeping an eye on the latest news updates popping up on our phone and computer screen, will it be too early to crystal gaze into a not-so-distant future, say 2021? Yes, it may be too early to call 2020 a "gap year", specially when each new day has its own set of surprises. But there is no harm in peeping a little into next year's trends. First, there is no escaping the fact that technology will tremendously impact the way we live, work, exercise, eat or buy next year, too. If the pandemic has thrown us into an ocean of uncertainties, if we look around carefully, it is an ocean of data. Those that learn to swim through pretty quickly and get a raft or something to latch on to will soon realise the potential of this ocean of opportunities. It has already started happening but a new technology called Artificial Intelligence (AI) will take over most of what is today relegated to a digital world.

To start with, algorithms would be put to use for early detection or even prediction of pandemics, assessment and even solutions for traffic patterns in a city, incremental/severe weather forecasts, healthcare, care for the most vulnerable and so on. But soon, like everything else, it will be all-pervasive in every little life decision. I am not sticking my neck out to say it will happen by next year but events of 2020 have hugely accelerated the human civilisation's race towards finding an alternative to its own organic intelligent brains. The world is already flush with examples on how AI will have multiples of applications from that which is already available across the web. In short, we are on the verge of entering a new technological era which is predictive, sophisticated and has an eerie inorganic intelligence almost running into infinity (it is not enough to cut the cord and think that an AI system has switched off; remember there are thousands of machines crunching data points from multiple sources to predict simple buying behaviour). This will definitely have a deep impact on the human race.

Next will come an age of extreme speeds of data access over the air or 5G. The world would have already been piloting cutting- edge 5G or fifth-generation mobile technology across large geographies and would have been near phase-wise national rollouts, had the pandemic not hit. India definitely has lost a year in the 5G race. However, the protocols and network vendor partner solutions may have been made more secure as a result of the delay.

In fact, 5G is likely to see the first level of deployment in urban areas (where the revenues are) and besides helping you download (at say five times the speeds of your current streaming action) social media videos/your favourite films and cricket matches, will also prove to be a great tool for remote and risky jobs. If some of the arterial sewer lines in a city are fitted with 5G chips, there could be a possibility of completely eradicating the need for human intervention in maintenance of a city's drainage system. If the data coming in and also fed into the chips are analysed at the back-end by smart machines (think AI), who, then takes decisions to deploy little machine worms into the sludge to clean a choke or fix a leakage or even defuse a toxic gas emission, it would mean saving a few thousand precious lives each year. Together with this will come the ultra-smart homes (the protocols for which are already in advanced stages of negotiation by big tech companies) where perhaps your cooking burner will decide the menu and your bar may order itself a few of your favorite wines in case you aren't stocked for the weekend. While robotic surgeries performed over the network specially for remote terrains (read rural) are already happening outside India, a self-driving car in Chandni Chowk may be further away.

Now that the all-pervasive technology has started to co-exist with us in our altered carbon realities, the threats to humanity will also increase. These threats would be increasingly cyber and 2021 will likely see more cyber security attacks (small, big, macro) than all of these years of digital revolution put together. The tell-tale volumes of these cyber security attacks (think SIM cloning, phishing attacks, stealing of bank passwords and OTPs) are already giving consumers and lawmakers a nightmare with increased adoption of the digital world during these work from home times. Think of the manifold increase of these forces as the technology world starts getting more complex with evolving protocols and appendages. You are more likely to hear the word cyber security in almost every important public forum and ministerial dialogues than you have ever heard in your life. Along with these, and one can only wish, multilateral solutions to tackling emerging threats will also emerge, which prevent anti-State forces from manipulating users of emerging technology. There will be new policy regimes, language and grammar for embracing these brave new islands we are heading towards, but let's keep those for a later piece.

(*The writer is a policy analyst*)

POINT**COUNTER**POINT

SHE (URMILA) WAS MAKING A MOCKERY OUT OF MY STRUGGLES. SHE IS JUST A SOFT PORN STAR NOT KNOWN FOR HER ACTING SKILLS FOR SURE
—ACTOR
KANGANA RANAUT

IT'S DISHEARTENING TO SEE SOMEONE TALKING ILL NOT ONLY ABOUT ME, BUT ALSO JAYA *JI*, WHO IS AN MP AND HAS RAISED HER VOICE ON SO MANY ISSUES.
—ACTOR
URMILA MATONDKAR

Spare a thought for our kids

Let our children, including those at the margins of territory, identity, services, social and economic interventions, find themselves future-ready

SUMITRA **MISHRA**

Infants and children — naked, hungry, crying, sleeping in overcrowded trucks, on the shoulders of their tired parents and caretakers. These were some of the heart-breaking pictures that emerged as everyday lives were disrupted following the COVID lockdown put in place in March across India. The multiple fault lines of our societal order were more visible than ever as migrant workers and their families were seen out on the roads across major cities, while the rest of us took to working from home. This was not "a long walk to freedom". It was a walk back home through a terrain that was as indifferent as it was strange. It was reverse migration, a story of lost livelihoods and ever-increasing struggles. For some, it was a walk to their deaths.

As we battle the Coronavirus and its varied impacts on our lives, it is important that we do not lose sight of these fault lines. It has especially hit the families of workers in the unorganised sector, who do not have adequate social protection, support and additionally find it hard to provide adequate care to their children.

One of the casualties of the lockdown was the slew of programmes tackling malnutrition. As per the National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16), 21 per cent children below the age of five in India were undernourished, 91.4 per cent of the children aged six to 23 months did not receive an adequate diet, one in three (38 per cent) of children under five years of age was stunted, one in five (21 per cent) of the children was wasted, 36 per cent were underweight. The lockdown resulted in a more dire situation where the resulting socio-economic impacts, the closing down of anganwadi centres and the resource crunch minimised the likelihood of availability of food to counter malnutrition.

These intersecting impacts of poverty, gender discrimination, caste and class differences, violence, issues of availability and accessibility of services to the young child and lack of professionalisation of childcare workers are brought to the fore in the *State of the Young Child in India* (SOYC) report, that Mobile Creches, an organisation working for early childhood development (ECD), released recently. While the report was finalised before the pandemic hit the world, it nevertheless offers important insights into the status of India's children under six years of age — who form over 13 per cent of the country's population — in addition to a critical examination of legislative frameworks designed to address their needs. The report also goes beyond a homogenising understanding of the child, as it emphasises various disadvantaged categories within this age group and the dire situation they are in. It calls for specific interventions for each vulnerable category, otherwise it results in a risk of lifelong consequences of deprivation.

The results emerging from the indexing can be used to draw out good practices from top performers like Kerala and Goa and turning more attention towards the poor-performing regions and States like Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. With recommendations stemming from exhaustive analysis, it can also enable in envisioning a post-pandemic world where the issues of marginalisation and neglect receive due attention and policy intervention.

The Integrated Child Development Services scheme (ICDS), the world's largest programme catering to children, requires recalibration for it suffers from design and capacity deficits, does not adequately address the components of care and early education and is still a long way from reaching the most marginalised in an effective and equitable manner.

> THE PER CHILD EXPENDITURE IN THE COUNTRY FOR 2018-19 WAS AN ABYSMALLY LOW FIGURE OF ₹1,723. THIS MUST BE ENHANCED TO ₹1.25 TRILLION ANNUALLY TO COVER FUNDING GAPS AND ENSURE HOLISTIC INTERVENTIONS. THIS APPROACH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BRING IN RETURNS THAT WOULD EXCEED BUDGETARY SPENDS ON ANY ALTERNATIVE WELFARE PROGRAMME

The youngest child is often the most invisible and exceptionally vulnerable. This calls for tapping development opportunities in this young age that can set a healthy foundation for life. Investment in ECD not only has the potential to enhance individual capacity and economic growth, it also provides an opening for women empowerment by recognising the overlapping rights of women and children and bringing in State interventions and increased budgetary allocations.

The SOYC report recognises the biological role in care-giving yet questions the gendered stereotypes that result in an undue burden on the mother. In the unorganised sector especially, women are bogged down by a triple burden — the responsibility of childcare, work outside the home that mostly entails unequal access to the market, longer working hours, unhealthy working environment and lesser wages, and the household work as well. Often, young children are seen lying or roaming around these unsafe work sites since these women are deprived of maternity or childcare benefits. This weak support system compromises their ability to provide quality care to the infant/child. Therefore, it is important that where families are unable to provide due childcare, compounded by their multiple issues, the State steps in as an enabler. As the sole scheme to cater to the needs of children of women engaged in the informal sector, the Government-sponsored National Créche Scheme has actually seen a reduction in the number of creches, with only 7,930 of them functional across the country in 2019, which translates into one creche per 21,000 children. The scheme needs to be re-imagined and strengthened with serious revision of the budget, and this can also be supplemented by a phased conversion of anganwadis into anganwadi-cum-creches.

The pandemic-induced lockdown witnessed a rare visibility of anganwadi and ASHA(Accredited Social Health Activist) workers as they emerged to be the first line of defence in dealing with the contagion. However, as the SOYC report notes, they are otherwise marginalised — not seen as a professional cadre, treated as part-time workers, paid well below the minimum wages in most States. There is a pressing need for their critical role in the childcare ecosystem to be recognised, acknowledged, professionalised and for their remuneration to be in line with their responsibilities. The professionalisation of this service will also mean adequate training of these workers and can strengthen the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) component, which remains a weak focus of the ICDS.

All children in the ages of three to six should have a right to quality ECCE, irrespective of whether they are located at anganwadi centres, pre-primary sections of Government, private schools or any other pre-school centres.

For the country, prioritising ECD can translate into fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goals and its international commitment towards child rights. While data paucity on multiple dimensions of child well-being hampered the indexing process and a more accurate insight in certain areas, the budgetary analysis through national-level data and allocations to States brings forth issues of inadequate allocation, under-utilisation, lack of management capacity to cater to the needs of children.

The per child expenditure in the country for 2018-19 was an abysmally low figure of ₹1,723. This must be enhanced to ₹1.25 trillion annually to cover funding gaps and ensure holistic interventions. This approach has the potential to bring in returns that would exceed budgetary spends on any alternative welfare programme.

Coronavirus has significantly altered the way we thought of our lives, our work and our very support systems. It has taught us lessons, tragic ones at that.

Yet, it is in this moment that we must recognise the deprivations, neglect and exclusion that mar equitable access of various vulnerable groups, including children, to essential services. Let our children, including those at the margins of territory, identity, services, social and economic interventions, find themselves capable for the future.

(*The writer is Executive Director at Mobile Creches and an early childhood development activist*)

We are being sucked into an ash pond

Fly ash is inevitable while producing thermal power. However, leaving it to pollute the environment is not desirable

KOTA **SRIRAJ**

Fly ash, a by-product of coal-fired electricity-generating power plants, has always been a predominant challenge for the environment, as its unsafe disposal or ineffective recycling can pose a direct threat to the quality of the air we breathe. Such is our dependence on thermal power plants for energy that apart from the air pollution caused by these behemoths, the fly ash is also compromising other aspects of our environment.

For instance, the breach of the fly ash dyke at the Vindhyachal NTPC Super Thermal Power Station in Singrauli district of Madhya Pradesh in October 2019 led to the seeping of nearly 35 lakh metric tonnes of fly ash into the Govind Vallabh Pant Sagar, popularly known as the Rihand water reservoir. The Essar power plant at Mahan in the same district, too, saw breaches in its fly ash dykes leading to its seepage into the environment.

The huge level of water pollution triggered by the seepage of fly ash into the Rihand reservoir raised a red flag and the National Green Tribunal (NGT) imposed an interim penalty of ₹10 crore on the NTPC and Essar after reviewing the ground report filed by its committee. Additionally, the NGT also rapped the Lanco-Anpara power plant to stem the excess ash pond flow into the reservoir. The fly ash caused soil pollution, too, due to which agricultural land became infertile and standing crops suffered.

Thanks to the fly ash pollution, the levels of mercury in the soil, air and water spiked besides causing health complications for local communities as the Rihand reservoir is a source of drinking water for many. All these adverse developments took place despite the existence of statutory notifications from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) under the Environment Protection Act (EPA) that mandates a 100 per cent utilisation of fly ash.

However, the full extent of the damage caused by the fly ash pond breach has come to light now thanks to a new report submitted recently by the joint committee comprising the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Roorkee. The report estimated that the fly ash breach by Essar Power Limited caused damages worth ₹7.35 crore while the damage inflicted by the fly ash dyke breach at the NTPC plant was pegged at a whopping ₹104 crore. The committee based its damage estimations on two parameters: One was the Green House Gas (GHG) emissions caused by the clean-up operations and two the extent of water pollution due to ash overflow.

The use of diesel during the clean-up operations caused the carbon footprint to spike, leading to the damage estimation spiking as well. Similarly, the fly ash infusion into the water bodies led to heavy metals and suspended solids leaching into the water. This, too, was translated into cost and added to the damages.

Thermal power stations are still the mainstay of our power sector with renewable sources of energy being nowhere near the required potential to take over as primary sources of our needs. Moreover, the opening up of the coal sector for mining to private players, besides nixing of the mandatory coal-washing requirements, is set to increase the production of fly ash in the future.

Already the ash ponds are overflowing across the nation due to increasing output and decreasing utilisation. As a result, the dykes are frequently breaking, leading to the ash polluting the nearby fields and water bodies.

The last 10 years saw the ash ponds contain a humongous 627 million tonnes of unused material. This is three times the fly ash being generated per year today, which is 200 million tonnes per annum. The close of 2019 saw an unused fly ash stock quantity of 1,647 million tonnes in India, which is eight times the annual generation quantity.

This is despite the fact that India has the regulations in place that mandate 100 per cent usage of fly ash and there is technology available to put this into action. Yet we are still far from a "full utilisation status."

The Government-driven initiative to promote the use of fly ash in the construction material industry has not been a spectacular success as red bricks continue to be sold and used in open violation of the Government's rules that ban them. Bricks are made out of top soil which is a precious part of our environment. An inch of top soil takes 500,000 years to form as it essentially involves the breaking down and erosion of rock.

If the Government cannot shut the countless red brick kilns that can be seen dotting the countryside, it cannot promote the use of fly ash in the building material industry. The buyer will have no option but to continue with the traditional red brick, which is easily available. Once the red brick production and supply chain is broken, it will not only save the top soil but also stem the pollution caused by these kilns as they use diesel and sugarcane waste as fuel.

Fly ash can be successfully used to produce bricks in combination with gypsum or lime. The resultant brick is not only eco-friendly but lighter and stronger. Technologies are available today that use compressed natural gas (CNG), an eco-friendly fuel, to fire autoclaves or huge ovens to manufacture fly ash bricks. Each autoclave can manufacture 22,000 fly ash-lime bricks in an eight-hour span.

So, if the thermal power plants in the country were mandated with a target to produce a certain quantity of bricks using the autoclave technology, then the problem of excess fly ash would disappear. There are ways to ensure full utilisation of fly ash; only a strong political will is required to implement the rules that have been put in place for this.

(*The writer is an environmental journalist*)

FOREIGN EYE

LANKA NO THREAT TO INDIA

Sri Lanka's 'India First' strategic security policy, outlined by the new Foreign Secretary, Colombage, is a timely reiteration of a policy of past 20 plus years, but seldom understood in the northern neighbourhood. In doing so, Colombage, a former Navy chief, becomes the first Sri Lankan official or politician to articulate the nation's foreign policy so comprehensively and cogently, that too in a well-articulated manner, publicly.

(*Ceylon Today* editorial)

CAPSULE

JSW Paints ropes in Alia, Ayushman as brand ambassadors

New Delhi: JSW Paints, part of the USD 12 billion JSW Group, on Thursday said it has signed Bollywood actors Alia Bhatt and Ayushmann Khurrana as its brand ambassadors.The company will launch an integrated marketing campaign featuring both the Bollywood actors and will be rolled-out across the company's current markets in south and west India starting this month and will be aired during IPL, JSW Paints said in a statement.Making colours accessible to all through our 'Any Colour One Price' approach is our tribute to every Indian's love for colour. In order to take this campaign to an India that is getting younger and better every day, we wanted thoughtful ambassadors and believe that Alia Bhatt and Ayushmann Khurrana are perfectly placed to take our message forward," JSW Paints MD said.

BSNL's 44 pc mobile network equipment from ZTE

New Delhi: More than 44 per cent mobile network equipment of state-run BSNL is sourced from Chinese firm ZTE and 9 per cent from Huawei, Parliament was informed on Thursday. While replying to a question on the market share of Chinese companies ZTE and Huawei in India, Minister of State for Communications Sanjay Dhotre said that the government maintains no data of Chinese telecom gear makers. Based on information collected from telecom operators, Dhotre said that Reliance Jio Infocomm has not deployed any telecom equipment from ZTE and Huawei for providing services. "Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has 44.4 per cent of its mobile network equipment from M/s ZTE and 9 per cent from M/s Huawei. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) has 10 per cent of its mobile network equipment from Chinese equipment manufacturers," Dhotre said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. The minister also clarified that the DoT has not issued any order regarding providing source code for security testing.

Coal India arm CCL plans to instal 80 MWp in FY21

New Delhi: State-owned Coal India Ltd's arm Central Coalfields is planning to install 80 Megawatt peak (MWp) ground-mounted solar power plant in the ongoing fiscal year.Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL) said that action has also been taken for installation of solar plants on rooftops as green energy will reduce day-time demand.Apart from rooftop solar projects, CCL is in process of awarding work for 20 MWp solar power plant at Piparwar, which is expected to be installed in the current FY 2020-21," the company said in its recent report.In addition, CCL is also planning "to install 80 MWp ground-mounted solar power plant at different command areas of CCL during FY 2020-21," it said. BHEL has successfully commissioned 400 kilowatts peak (kWp) solar power plant at Darbhanga house, the headquarter of CCL. "Rooftop grid connected solar power plants of total capacity 220 KWp, 125 KWp and 50 KWp...have been installed and commissioned," it said.ill date, CCL has generated more than 7.2 lakh units of solar power with the installed solar power plants.

Indian govt networks badly in 'mega hacking scheme'

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

The US Justice Department has charged five Chinese citizens with hacking over a 100 companies and institutions in America and abroad, including the Indian government's networks, and stealing valuable software data and business intelligence.

Deputy US Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen on Wednesday announced three indictments have been unsealed in the matter that collectively charge five Chinese nationals with computer hacking and charge two Malaysian nationals for helping some of those hackers target victims and sell the fruits of their crime.

The Malaysian nationals were arrested on Sunday and the Chinese nationals have been declared fugitive, according to a Justice Department statement.

Rosen severely criticised the Chinese government.

"The Department of Justice has used every tool available to disrupt the illegal computer intrusions and cyberattacks by these Chinese citizens. Regrettably, the Chinese Communist Party has chosen a different path - of making China safe for cyber-criminals so long as they attack computers outside China and steal intellectual property helpful to China," the deputy attorney general said. "In about 2019, the conspirators compromised Government of India websites, as well as virtual private networks and database servers supporting the Government of India. The conspirators used VPS PROVIDER servers to connect to an Open VPN network owned by the Government of India," the indictment said.

In the attacks, the conspirators installed 'Cobalt Strike' malware on Indian government-protected computers, it added.

According to the charges, the computer intrusions affected over 100 companies in the United States and abroad. The victims ranged from software development, computer hardware, telecommunication, social media and video game companies. Non-profit organisations, universities, think-tanks, foreign governments, pro-democracy politicians and activists in Hong Kong were also targeted.

Security researchers have tracked the intrusions using labels "APT41," "Barium," "Winnti," "Wicked Panda," and "Wicked Spider."These intrusions facilitated the theft of source code, software code signing certificates, customer account data, and valuable business information, the researchers said.

These intrusions also facilitated the defendants' other criminal schemes, including ransomware and "crypto-jacking" schemes, the latter refers to the group's unauthorised use of victim computers to mine cryptocurrency. The Chinese hackers also targeted government computers and networks of Vietnam and United Kingdom. The hackers, however were not successful in compromising the government computer networks in the United Kingdom.

Sensex tanks 323 pts on weak global cues; Nifty below 11,550

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The BSE Sensex tumbled 323 points on Thursday, weighed by losses in index heavyweights Reliance Industries and HDFC twins amid negative cues from global markets after the US Fed highlighted the uncertainty surrounding economic recovery.

The 30-share BSE index ended 323 points or 0.82 per cent lower at 38,979.85. The NSE Nifty fell 88.45 points or 0.76 per cent to 11,516.10

Bajaj Finserv was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding over 2 per cent, followed by PowerGrid, L&T, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, TCS and Sun Pharma.

On the other hand, HCL Tech, Infosys and Maruti finished higher. According to traders, domestic equities traded on a negative note tracking weak cues from global markets after the US Federal Reserve hinted at key policy interest rate staying close to zero at least through 2023 without unveiling any additional stimulus plans.Bourses in Shanghai, Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended with significant losses. Stock exchanges in Europe too opened on a negative note.Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.26 per cent lower at USD 42.11 per barrel.

Sebi to rope in agency to maintain investor complaints

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets watchdog Sebi plans to rope in an agency to process and maintain records of investor complaints received by the regulator.The mandate for the agency is to receive grievances from investors through physical or electronic mode and categorise them.

The agency will also be responsible for tracking complaints' status online and conducting follow-ups, besides preparing action taken reports (ATRs) and updating the status of grievances on Sebi's online platform for complaints, SCORES.Complaints Redress System (SCORES), which registers and tracks investor complaints against listed entities or intermediaries, is a web-based and centralised grievance system developed by the markets watchdog.

The regulator, in a notice, invited applications "in prescribed format for pre-qualification of agencies for processing and maintenance of records of investor complaints received at Sebi".

The scope of the work also includes despatching complaints to intermediaries or companies and mailing acknowledgment letters to investors. Besides, the selected agency will be responsible for proper storage facility of the complaints received and ATRs for two years and any other work related to investor awareness and education as well as investor grievance redressal.

Spelling out the eligibility criteria, Sebi said the agency should have an expertise in the field of handling registrar and transfer activities or depository services or have an experience of handling investor matters.

The agency should have provided similar services to public sector undertakings, public sector banks, financial institutions and listed companies, among others.

The annual average turnover of the contractor should be at least Rs 55 lakh during the previous three years and should not have incurred any loss in two consecutive years during the past five years ended March 2020.

Hindalco signs pact with Hindustan Copper

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hindalco Industries on Thursday said that it has entered into a pact with Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) for the long-term purchase and sale of copper concentrate produced by the PSU.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by Hindustan Copper Ltd Chairman and Managing Director Arun Kumar Shukla and Hindalco Industries Managing Director Satish Pai. This is a unique public-private partnership (PPP) that aligns with the government's clarion call for Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. This partnership is a major step towards import substitution and reducing the nation's dependence on imported copper concentrate, Hindalco Industries said in a statement. Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) is the only producer of copper concentrate in India.

Sales of M series may cross 20 mn units

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech giant Samsung on Thursday said it expects its cumulative sales from its M series of devices in India to cross 20 million units by the end of the year.

The company, which competes against rivals like China's Xiaomi, Vivo and Oppo in the Indian market, had introduced its M series of smartphones in February last year aimed at strengthening its position in the online channels.

"Beyond the USD 3.5 billion in GMV (gross merchandise value) that the M series has built out to do, the number of consumers who have come into the M series, by the exit of 2020 from launch, will be in excess of 20 million devices," Samsung India Senior Vice-President Asim Warsi told PTI.

Previously, the company said the cumulative sales from this range is expected to cross USD 3.5 billion by the end of 2020.

Samsung India had launched six devices under the M series last year and eight devices this year. Asked about future launches, Warsi said the company has an "interesting" line-up for the next year.

In February last year, Samsung had introduced the India-first M series, hoping to re-capture its pole position from rival Xiaomi. The company is also aggressively expanding its own online store to bolster sales.

Warsi said the M series is rooted and built to meet the needs of Gen-Z (those took born between January 1995 and December 2003) in India and has since then been expanded to many other markets.

According to research firm Counterpoint, smartphone shipment in India declined 51 per cent y-o-y to just over 18 million units in the June 2020 quarter, impacted by the nationwide lockdown imposed by the Indian government to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

NPPA extends ceiling prices of knee implants

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Pharma ceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) has extended ceiling prices of knee implants till September 14, 2021, the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers said on Thursday. A notification in this regard has been issued by NPPA under the Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) 2013, the ministry said in a statement.The drug pricing regulator on August 16, 2017, had for the first time fixed the ceiling prices of orthopaedic knee implants for a period of one year. This period has been subsequently extended by one year at a time, it added.

The previous extension ended on August 15 this year and, "the ceiling prices for knee implants for knee replacement system was due for review by August 15, 2020", the statement said.

In its meeting on August 6, NPPA after observing the sales data collected from 14 major companies decided that the ceiling prices for knee implants as applicable on August 15 may be further extended up to one month till September 15.

Irdai likely to extend relief for insurers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Regulator Irdai is mulling over a plan to allow the tenure extension of COVID-19 specific insurance products as the vaccine for the disease is seemingly away by some more time, its chairman Subhash C Khuntia said on Thursday.

Besides, the insurance sector watchdog is also working towards facilitating a standard product for coronavirus, which will be easy to understand by policyholders and will not require "voluminous policy documents".

"With regard to extending the tenure of the COVID-19 related products, we are hoping that the vaccine would not be delayed for too long. But now that it appears that it will take some more time, we will take decision about extending the tenure of the policy at an appropriate time," Khuntia said while addressing the CII Insurance and Pensions Summit webcast.

Corona Kavach, which was launched on July 10 and is being offered by both general and health insurers, is a standard health insurance policy created to meet the treatment requirements for coronavirus infection.

The term of the policy ranges from three-and-a-half months to nine-and-a-half months, with maximum insured amount at Rs 5 lakh.

On new COVID-19 insurance products, Khuntia said, "We are coming out with a standard product, the idea is that a standard product, which is to be sold by all the companies, should be so that it becomes much easier for the policyholder to pick up that product. And they don't have to go through voluminous policy documents...," he said.

He also explained how the domestic insurance industry is faring amidst the global economic slowdown and hoped that the sector will recover soon as the nature of the service is counter-cyclical, meaning it is needed the most at the time of crisis and distress.

Overall, the insurance business had a de-growth of 19.1 per cent in April as compared to the last year. Now there has been a positive growth of 2.1 per cent during April-August this fiscal as against the previous year's same period, said the Irdai chief.

"Life insurance has grown by 2 per cent and non-life by 3.6 per cent (till August 2020). So it is a positive sign and I am quite hopeful that this growth rate will pick up now. I think the next quarter will be much better than this quarter.

UK defends planned Brexit deal breach as Biden slams move

PNS ■ LONDON

The British government struggled Thursday to overcome American opposition to its plans to breach the Brexit withdrawal agreement with the European Union, after Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden became the latest U.S. politician to express alarm.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's move to break parts of the EU divorce deal relating to Northern Ireland has triggered fears it could undermine the 1998 Good Friday peace accord that ended decades of violence between Irish nationalists and British unionists."We can't allow the Good Friday Agreement that brought peace to Northern Ireland to become a casualty of Brexit," Biden tweeted.

"Any trade deal between the U.S. and U.K. must be contingent upon respect for the Agreement and preventing the return of a hard border. Period," he wrote.

Britain and the EU jointly promised in the Brexit agreement to ensure there are no customs posts or other obstacles on the Northern Ireland-Ireland border. The open border is key to the stability that underpins the peace settlement. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab is in Washington this week, and has been trying to assuage American concerns that a pending government bill would undermine Northern Ireland peace, if passed by lawmakers. He is meeting U.S. politicians including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has warned that Britain won't secure a much sought-after trade deal with the United States, if it undermines the peace accord.

Raab insisted the U.K. has an "absolute" commitment to the Good Friday Agreement. He described Britain's planned law as "precautionary" and "proportionate."Johnson argues the law is intended to be an insurance policy against unreasonable behavior by the European Union that could threaten the unity of the U.K. by disrupting trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K. The bloc has demanded the U.K. drop the plan by the end of September or face legal action.The bill, which began its journey through Parliament this week, has also caused an uproar in Britain. Five former British prime ministers have criticised Johnson's willingness to break international law, and the government's top legal civil servant and most senior law officer for Scotland have both resigned.

Investment in P-notes continues to soar; hits 10-month high in Aug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investment through participatory notes (P-notes) in the domestic capital market surged to over Rs 74,000 crore till August-end, making it the highest level in 10 months.

This marks the fifth consecutive monthly rise in the investment through the route, also signaling at growing confidence of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) in the local market.

P-notes are issued by registered FPIs to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process.

According to Sebi data, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets — equity, debt, hybrid securities and derivatives — stood at Rs 74,027 crore till August-end, while the same was at Rs 63,228 crore at the end of July.

The figure at August-end was the highest level of investment since October 2019, when the total value of P-note investments in the Indian markets stood at Rs 76,773 crore.

"The rise in FPI participation through P-notes shows their rise in confidence, since the 15-year lows of P-notes participation in March 2020," said Divam Sharma, Co-founder at Green Portfolio, a Sebi registered portfolio management services.

The forward looking FPIs are selectively taking a fresh long position in the markets on hopes of an early revival of the economy from a complete lockdown phase of first quarter, he noted.

"This also brings a positive outlook to FPI participation in Indian markets since the descent of the P-notes participation post 2017, when Sebi prohibited FIIs to issue ODIs (offshore derivative instrument) having derivative instruments as underlying security other than for hedging their position in equity," he added.

Prior to that, investment level was at Rs 62,138 crore, Rs 60,027 crore and Rs 57,100 crore at the end of June, May and April, respectively.

Amazon's all-women delivery station in Guj

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce major Amazon India on Thursday said it has set up an all-women delivery station in Kadi, Gujarat - its second such facility in the country.

The new all-women delivery station, operated by a delivery service partner, is part of the company's efforts towards increasing participation of women in the workforce, a statement said.

Kadi is located close to 50 kilometers from Gujarat's capital Ahmedabad, with a population of close to 80,000 people. In 2016, the company had launched its first all-women delivery station in India, with its partner in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, it added.

The Delivery Service Partner program is a last-mile delivery model of Amazon India, where the company works with partners to leverage their local knowledge of the community. The technological support is offered by Amazon India to facilitate deliveries.

"This first-of-its-kind station in Gujarat is completely managed and run by women across managerial and delivery associate roles. Amazon India has introduced several measures to ensure a safe workplace for women by creating awareness and building various feedback mechanisms to address concerns through open dialogues," the statement said.

As of now, eight women have been hired for the facility. A helpline number has also been created for associates - who will deliver packages within a 2-5 km radius of the station - to dial in for any support or help needed during the day.

"Our vision is to enable women to discover meaningful career opportunities across the operations network at Amazon India. We have created more than 6,000 opportunities for women across our network where they continue to thrive and excel," Prakash Rochlani, Director, Last Mile Operations at Amazon India, said. Amazon India said it has created opportunities for more than 200 women across its fulfilment network in the state. Recently, the company opened a delivery station, operated by a delivery service partner, in the state which is completely run and managed by transgender individuals.

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Friday
September 18, 2020

WHO IS YOUR WEEKEND MOTIVATION?

In his latest address of *Mann ki Baat*, Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted that the month of September will be observed as 'Poshan Maah' — Nutrition month. Monsoon is here and if every ounce of yourself wants nothing but to stay tucked in bed and not move an inch, look no further than these celebs. Serving as fitness motivation to get you out of bed and kickstart the day on an energetic note, these celebrities from diverse star industries share their diet secrets with us, writes **SHIKHA DUGGAL**

Name: HARSHITA SHARMA

Profile: Fashion model

Healthy Habits: Keeps her meals that are low in carbohydrates and fat, detox her body with numerous liquids such as lemon water.

Cheat day treat: Desserts are her weakness — every day new hacks keep coming up sometimes the cravings are just too hard to deny.

Diet secrets: Only to drink more liquid, the fashion model detox herself with lemon detox water. It helps promote hydration, supports weight loss, a good source of vitamin C, and helps with digestion.

Hottest nutrition trend: The popular health trend of IF that helps her lose weight, improve health, and simplify her lifestyle.

Daily meal plan: If she's on a diet she opts for salads, whether she is eating out or at home. It's the fixings that make the difference when it comes to salad calories.

So what makes a diet-friendly salad? For a healthy salad, start with a variety of colourful veggies, fruits, beans, and mixed greens. When possible, opt for dark, leafy greens. Then pile on tomatoes, shredded carrots, cabbage, broccoli, mushrooms, red bell peppers, etc.

Name: RESHMA PASUPULETI

Profile: Tamil actress

Healthy Habits: Going to bed early, bike riding every day, and incorporating workout routines. Having her morning detox drink — ginger and lemon helping her body cleanse and alkalise, acting as a great immunity booster. A simple breakfast sets the tone for her day so that she doesn't amplify her cravings even before the day begins. Smoking and drinking are a big no-no for the actress!

Cheat day treat: Pizza or ice-cream

Diet secrets: Consuming a high protein and vitamin-rich diet providing plenty of nutritional benefits, however, dieting rigorously isn't her mantra of living a fit lifestyle. Instead, she devours small proportions of food.

Hottest nutrition trend: Increasingly looking for alternative proteins that are natural and low in preservatives. Furthermore, the consumption of clean meat.

Daily meal plan: The actress ingests gluten-free quinoa meals that's high in protein and fibre containing amino acids. Use twice as much water as quinoa, then cook uncovered until the quinoa has absorbed all the water. Once the water is all absorbed, remove the pot from heat, cover it, and let the quinoa steam for 5 minutes. That's when the quinoa pops open into fluffy quinoa perfection.

Name: PRANAVI MANUKONDA

Profile: Telugu film actress and television personality

Healthy Habits: Drinking plenty of water, and almond a day and regular exercises.

Cheat day treat: When Pranavi hits a glitch, she goes out to have burgers.

Diet secrets: She follows a liquid diet that helps up speed weight loss by drinking fresh juices to load up on a variety of antioxidants, along with the traditional breakfast staple, i.e., an egg diet.

Hottest nutrition trend: 'Maa ke haath ka khana' — the best nutritious trend anyone could ever follow!

Daily meal plan: She recommends a full liquid diet including lemonade, soup broth, gelatine, smoothies, etc. It cuts the calories you take in and can help you lose weight, but you shouldn't stay on them for very long.

Name: SHIVSHAKTI SACHDEV

Profile: Hindi television, Telugu actress

Healthy Habits: Coconut oil, barley, or kesar water as a morning ritual to set herself for a great day ahead.

Cheat day treat: Guilt-free pizza

Diet secrets: Believes in losing fat and not giving prior importance to weight by practicing intermittent fasting, supporting her body's internal clock.

Hottest nutrition trend: 16:8 diet — consuming her daily calories during the middle of the day.

Daily meal plan: Keeps herself hydrated at all times, the actress reveals she has detox water as her daily meal helping her body get rid of toxins, improving energy levels, and lose weight.

How to make detox water? All you need is water and a selection of fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Simply chop up your ingredients and add them to hot or cold water, depending on your preference. Be sure to remove the ingredients later on though, so they don't begin to decompose.

'OTT opening doors for 'Hybrid' viewing'

Even as consumers and artists have long been debating OTT vs TV vs Theatre, the fact that it was the TV that has kept families together amid the pandemic is a no brainer. Experts believe that while OTT has seen a rise, it was more of individual viewership in comparison to two or more people viewing TV. Sukhpreet Singh, Corporate Head — Marketing, Dish TV India & Watcho (the OTT platform of Dish TV India) speaks to *The Pioneer*'s **K RAMYA SREE** about the changes the DTH industry has witnessed over the last two decades, OTT vs TV, strategies to attract audiences and more

As the entire nation sails through these challenging times due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, there is one industry that has been keeping its services going to keep everyone entertained as all of us were locked up indoors — the Satellite TV industry. Dish TV India is one such platform that worked tirelessly only to satisfy the needs of its customers with their presence in every nook and corner of the country.

Sukhpreet Singh, Corporate Head — Marketing, Dish TV India & Watcho (the OTT platform of Dish TV India) feels, in India, DTH is responsible for the surge of TV channels across genres; entertainment, infotainment, news, music, sports and has changed the way India watches TV. "Over the first decade, we saw a huge adoption of DTH over analog TV. Digitisation also forced analog cable to go digital with CAS. This transition to digital TV and DTH is considered the preferred mode of TV viewing and has continued till the last phase of digitisation which culminated last year. In the second decade, the last few years have seen huge adoption of HD. It has been a great journey with all aspects such as customer experience, service, hardware, broadcast technology, and content evolving. We are still seeing large sections getting into TV viewing and the PayTV ecosystem and at the same time, we are witnessing hybrid viewing (linear and online content) taking precedence," he tells us.

TV VIEWERSHIP NUMBERS PROVIDED BY BARC SHOWS THE CONTINUOUS GROWTH OF CONVENTIONAL TV CHANNEL VIEWERSHIP IN MOST GENRES. OTT IS ONLY HELPING IN INCREASING CONTENT CONSUMPTION, ESPECIALLY 'INDIVIDUAL' VIEWERSHIP, SUPPLEMENTING THE 'FAMILY TV VIEWERSHIP'

While many feel the existence of OTT has hit the TV industry real hard, the BARC numbers prove otherwise. TV viewership numbers provided by BARC shows the continuous growth of conventional TV channel viewership in most genres. OTT is only helping in increasing content consumption, especially 'individual' viewership, supplementing the 'family TV viewership', and opening doors for 'Hybrid' viewing.

Sukhpreet says, "In India, where a large section of the population still prefer TV as their primary source of entertainment, it has also been witnessed that there is an emerging and growing set of viewers that prefer viewing content online on OTT platforms. At the bottom end, there are still many households getting into TV ownership and experiencing linear TV. Therefore, there is a huge diversity in this market and OTT is opening doors for 'hybrid' viewing."

With a potential to deliver content from any mode (online or linear), to any screen (big or small) and anywhere (in the home or out of home), Dish TV has an unmatched range of devices — Standard, HD, and Hybrid, the latest one having been developed in partnership with Android TV and Amazon Alexa using state-of-the-art technology.

It is known that the firm has been in the industry for quite some time now and has also ventured into the OTT platform. On how different is this from presenting content to creating content on OTT platforms, Sukhpreet explains, "Content creation and curation is a specialised domain and is very different from content distribution. However, the core requirement is to understand consumer preferences, present them with quality content that our viewers can easily relate to, providing a platform that reaches our consumers and leaves the creative and production to experts." It is also learnt that Dish TV is witnessing an increase in the amount of consumption of regional language content, specialised content, and educational content!

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Shilpa Shetty addresses cheating allegations against her, Raj Kundra; says 'Truth will be out soon'

Actor Shilpa Shetty has addressed the cheating allegations levelled against her and husband Raj Kundra for allegedly duping an investor in a gold purchase scheme. Shilpa said that the 'truth will be out soon'.

Sachin Joshi, a non-resident Indian (NRI), approached the Khar police in March with a complaint that he had been cheated by Satyug Gold Pvt Ltd, a gold trading company formerly headed by Shetty and Kundra, an official said in a *PTI* report.

According to the complainant, he had purchased nearly a kilo of gold for Rs 18.58 lakh from the company in a gold scheme in March 2014, he said.

Under a five-year plan, the buyer was offered a gold card at a discounted rate and promised a certain quantity of gold redeemable at the end of the term, he said. Joshi's term plan ended on March 25, 2019, and when he tried to redeem the card, he found that the company's office at Bandra Kurla Complex had shut down.

Shilpa has now told *IANS* the allegations are false. "All these allegations made by Sachiin Joshi are completely false and baseless. At Satyug Gold, each and every client's orders have been fulfilled in time. We have even deposited 1kg gold for which Sachiin Joshi is yet to pay the demurrage charges legally applicable. Not many know, we also have a cheque bouncing case in court against this serial defaulter. If we didn't wish to give him the gold, we would not have deposited it in court. The court has now appointed an arbitrator where we have presented the charges that are due and clearly mentioned on the invoice and website. The truth will be out real soon," she said.

Earlier in March, Raj had also commented on the same. "It is to state that the claims made by the so-called NRI or Gutka Baron's son (as the media terms him) namely Mr Sachin Joshi is totally false and frivolous. I would like to clarify the news doing the rounds and blatantly picked up by other news agencies without verifying the facts with other parties involved. This act of Mr Sachin Joshi is yet another attempt to malign and tarnish my image and reputation in the country. He has made several attempts before so this is nothing new," he wrote in a statement.

Jackie Shroff to reunite with Rajinikanth after 30 years

Actor Jackie Shroff, who was last seen playing a negative role in Tamil film *Bigil*, will also reportedly play the antagonist in Rajinikanth's upcoming film *Annaatthe*. The film might mark the reunion of the actors after three decades since they worked together in Uttar Dakshin.

As per a *Pinkvilla* report, Jackie is being considered for the role. Prakash Raj, who was recently confirmed to be a part of the project, also plays a negative role. However, neither the makers nor Jackie have confirmed whether he's officially part of the project yet. Directed by Siva, *Annaatthe* is tipped to be a rural drama and will feature Rajinikanth as a caring brother. While Keerthy Suresh will be seen playing Rajinikanth's sister, Meena and Khushbu Sundar will be seen in key roles. The film's music is by D Imman. The film was officially launched last December in Chennai in a low-key affair.

On being signed for Rajinikanth's film, Keerthy had said in a tweet, "Extremely happy to announce this magical milestone in my journey. From being awestruck by Rajinikanth to sharing screen space with him will be my most cherished memory in my life. Thank you director Siva and Sun Pictures."

Meanwhile, reports have emerged that the shoot for *Annaatthe* will resume from the first or second week of October. However, it isn't clear yet if Rajinikanth will join the sets immediately.

Rajinikanth was last seen on screen in Tamil film *Darbar*, which was directed by A.R Murugadoss. In the film, he played an angry cop out to avenge his daughter's death. The film was directed by A.R Murugadoss. *Darbar* was a box-office disaster. Following the failure of the movie, Rajinikanth is said to have agreed to reduce his remuneration by half for *Annaatthe*.

Kanye urinates on his Grammy award, seeks support from other musicians

The phrase 'taking a piss' was used figuratively, at least up until Wednesday night, when American singer-songwriter and music producer, Kanye West, took it literally and presumably took a pi** at one his Grammys (out of the 21 that he has won in total) in the toilet, and posted a video of it on Twitter.

The shocking video came after Yeezus went on a Twitter rant, accusing record labels of "trapping" musicians with their record deals and making "money off our work without even trying".

In his rant, West wrote accusing labels, particularly Universal Music, of owning the rights to the masters (the primary source from where all the copies of a song are produced) of his songs. He also went to share his contracts, signed with the labels, asking it to be read by "every lawyer in the world", and promised that he will produce no new music, until his demands are met. He also reached out to several musicians, including U2's frontman Bono, former Beatles member Paul McCartney, Drake and "even Taylor (Swift)" to support him.

Netizens, as always, are still trying to come to grips with Yeezus' latest meltdown on social media. And, while some thought that the video, as pointed out by Grammy winner Dianne Warren, was "vile and disrespectful", some called it a historic moment. Earlier this year, in July, in another Twitter rant, West had said that he was "trying to divorce" his wife, Kim Kardashian West. Kim, later posted a long message on Instagram, saying that Kanye was bipolar, which was also revealed by Kanye himself in 2018, requesting everybody to be kind and empathetic towards her "brilliant but complicated" husband.

The same month, a few days before he accused Kim of cheating on him and him doing the same, he also had announced that he would be running for the Presidency, in the upcoming presidential elections in the US, which are scheduled to take place in November.

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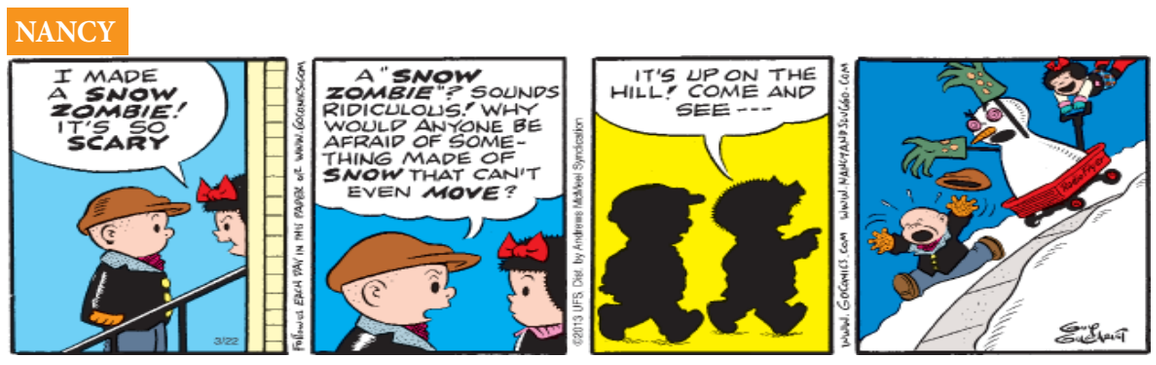
GARFIELD

NANCY



GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

SUDOKU

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

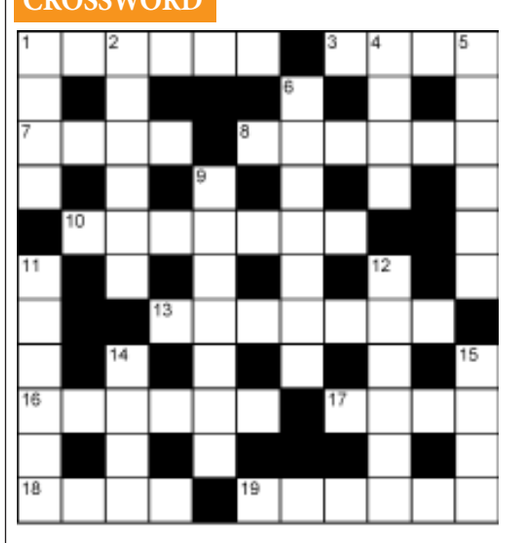
Yesterday's solution

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

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.

CROSSWORD



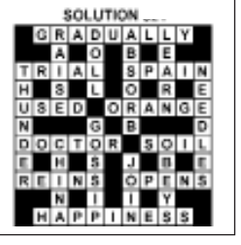
ACROSS

1 Use these on envelopes
3 Icy
7 A scented flower
8 Hot remains from a fire
10 Got away from
13 A month
16 A hole in a hill for a train
17 Birthday present
18 Scraps of material
19 A funny play or film

DOWN

1 Certain
2 Help
4 Finished
5 Plates
6 The leader of an empire
9 Looked at
11 Quicker
12 Make up your mind
14 Cosy
15 Don't go

SOLUTION



PAYAL RAJPUT IN A KANNADA REMAKE

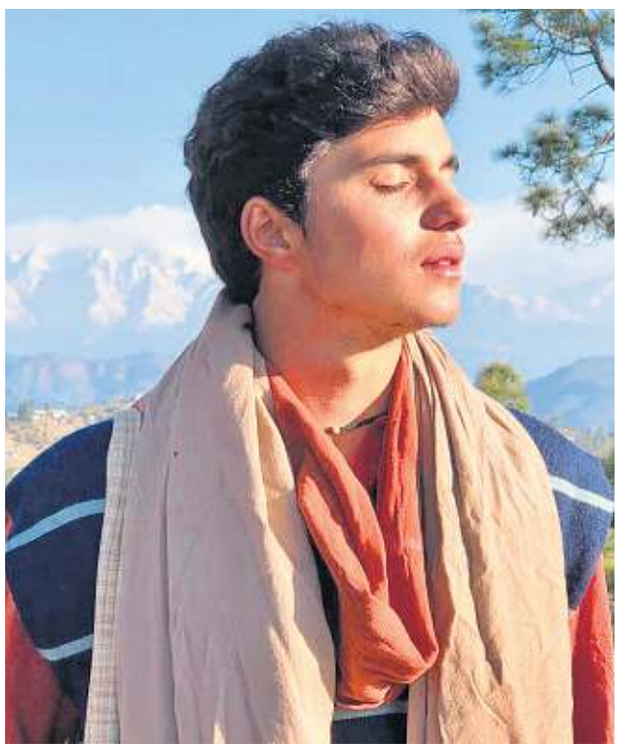
The actress, who is going through a lean patch lately, has been signed on to play the lead in Kannada super hit *Aa Karaala Ratri* Telugu remake for streamer *aha*. She gets to play a substantial role in the film, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

In his quest to stack up *aha*'s library and make the platform a one-stop destination for Telugu entertainment, Allu Aravind has been commissioning multiple projects of late. After green-lighting shows with Sarath Kumar, Tamannaah and Punarnavi Bhupalam among others, we now hear that he has given his consent to a web film. According to a source, it is an official remake of 2018 Kannada-language suspense thriller *Aa Karaala Ratri*, with original director Dayal Padmanabhan attached to direct the Telugu version as well.

Based on a Kannada play by Mohan Habbu which was translated from the tragic English play Lithuania by Rupert Brooke, the Kannada film told the chain of events that unfold after a mysterious traveler visits a poverty-stricken family and requests to be allowed to stay overnight. Praised for its writing, acting and direction, the film emerged as one of best Kannada movies of 2018.

The film told the chain of events that unfold after a mysterious traveler visits a poverty-stricken family and requests to be allowed to stay overnight.

For the Telugu version, *aha* has managed to rope in notable faces. "Payal Rajput has been tapped to play that was essayed by Anupama Gowda in the original. It's a performance-oriented role and she is gung-ho about landing it. Chaitanya Krishna has been signed on for the other important role. The Telugu version will mostly be titled *Aa Kalarathri*. The director is on the hunt for a suitable place to zero in on the setting," adds the source.



Lyca dubbing film on young Modi into Telugu

An hour-long film on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which was announced by acclaimed director-producer Sanjay Leela Bhansali last September, will be dubbed into Telugu as well. Production house Lyca, known for their big-budgeted cinema, will be associating with the Telugu and Tamil dubbed versions. The Telugu version has been titled Manoviragi, revealed the makers on account of Modi turning 70 on Thursday.

Written and directed by Sanjay Tripaathy, the film, a joint production venture between Bhansali and Mahaveer Jain, is based on an untold chapter from the life of Modi that is not in the public domain.

"The story was very well-researched, and the turning point of our PM's life as a young man really intrigued me. I felt that it's an unheard story which needs to be told. It has a universal appeal and message," told Bhansali to *HT* last year. Privileged to be presenting the Telugu and Tamil versions, Subaskaran of Lyca said the film, starring Abhay Varma, will depict the formative and teenage life of Modi.

Presently in post-production, the film has been shot in Modi's home state Gujarat and in Uttarakhand. It is slated to release shortly.

Karthik Ratnam lands a big role

Although Sithara Entertainment has refrained from officially announcing it, they do have the rights to remake Malayalam super hit *Kappela* in Telugu. While Vishwak Sen has already been spoken to play one of the leads, it has now come to light that for the other lead role, Karthik Ratnam of *C/O Kancharapalem* fame has been signed on. He will be seen as an auto rickshaw driver in the film.

According to a source, producer Naga Vamsi had a rather tough time picking an actor who makes his ends meet by driving a rickshaw in the film. "The actors that Vamsi approached were in two minds to accept it. Although they liked the part, the fact that Vishwak's role in the end makes all the difference to the story prompted them to overlook it. Karthik though felt it's an opportunity that will stabilize his position in the industry and agreed to it," adds the source.

Vamsi has shifted attention to find a suitable actress and a director for the project, which will mostly roll towards the end of this year or next year.

The original revolved around an ordinary, innocent girl (played by Anna Ben) who falls for the charm of an auto rickshaw driver (Roshan Matthew). And when she meets him finally after endless conversations on phone, she understands that things are far from rosy.

KAMAL HASSAN announces film with *Khaidi* director

Celebrated actor-filmmaker Kamal Haasan on Wednesday announced that his 232nd film will be directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, who is known for his action-thrillers like *Maanagaram* and *Khaidi*. Buzz about this combination has been swirling around for the past one month in Kollywood circles, with superstar Rajinikanth initially attached to front it and Raaj Kamal Films International (RKFI) set to produce.

Kamal shared a teaser poster of the flick, which features a silhouette of what appears to be the protagonist, composed by a compilation of guns and bullets, hinting that the film may be an action-thriller. "Once upon a time there lived a ghost..." it blares in bold. "Another journey begins," the veteran, who is also headlining Shankar's *Indian 2*, tweeted.

While details about when it will get off the ground are to be announced, the 65-year-old megastar indicated that they are targeting a summer 2021 release. Produced by RKFI, the film will have musical accompaniment by Anirudh Ravichander. "Excited to be scoring for Kamal Haasan sir in a Lokesh Kanagaraj directorial (sic)," the composer wrote on Twitter.

According to reports, the filming of the untitled film will take place in and around Chennai, with Tamil *Bigg Boss* fame Tharshan poised to play a key supporting role.

SS Rajamouli on a holiday

Filmmaker SS Rajamouli and his wife Rama who have recovered from COVID-19 are enjoying the pristine beauty of Western Ghats. On Wednesday, they were spotted at Himavad Gopalaswamy Temple in Chamarajanagar district, Karnataka offering prayers. Otherwise busy with shooting, the couple is utilising the COVID-19 induced break for a spiritual tour.

Meanwhile, word on the street has it that Rajamouli has decided to resume filming on *RRR*, starring Jr NTR and Charan, from next month by following all safety protocols. The film has been on pause mode since March and it is understood that the filmmaker will begin filming by shooting Alia Bhatt's portions first. Alia plays Sita, who comes at a crucial juncture (in the film) and changes the course of the story.

Tarak and Charan will join the sets in November. The director, it is said, wants to wrap up the filming by March next year.

Set in 1920s pre-independent India, RRR, a production venture of DVV Danayya, revolves around the fictional exploits of two real freedom fighters Komaram Bheem (played by NTR) and Alluri Seetharama Raju (Charan). Before the pandemic brought the shoot to a halt, Rajamouli managed to complete close to 75-80 per cent of the shoot.

MAXWELL CAREY OZ TO SERIES WIN

Glenn Maxwell and Alex Carey pose with Royal London ODI series trophy after the duo helped Australia win third game AP

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Glenn Maxwell and Alex Carey struck centuries in a 212-run stand to help Australia reach a record target of 303 at Old Trafford with two balls remaining and secure a ODI series win over England.

Mitchell Starc started the third and deciding game on Wednesday by taking wickets from the first two balls of the match, and ended it by sweeping a four for the winning runs under lights as the Australians consigned England to its first loss in a bilateral ODI series at home since 2015.

It was a record ODI chase at the Manchester venue — bettering England's 286-4 against New Zealand in 1986 in a 60-over match — and gave Australia a famous series win over the world champions to take back Down Under from their white-ball tour that also included a 2-1 loss in a T20 series.

Replying to 302-7, Australia slumped to 73-5 only for Carey and Maxwell to produce Australia's highest sixth-wicket partnership in ODIs and turn the tide. While Carey was the steadier of the pair with his 106 off 114 balls, Maxwell delivered some trademark big hits — he had seven sixes, all over the short boundary on one side of the ground — for his 90-ball 108.

"Maxy is in the team to do a specific role, and that's to be able to take the game away from opposition but also be that guy to counterattack and swing momentum in changing rooms," Australia captain Aaron Finch said.

"What makes him so damaging is he can play all around the ground. I don't think there're many bowlers in the world that can trouble him when he is having one of those days. The way he navigated that innings and took it deeper and deeper ... He did that perfectly."

Maxwell eventually fell with 15 balls left and Australia needed 14 off the last two overs. Carey couldn't see the tourists home, either, departing for 106 to a fabulous diving catch by Mark Wood off the seventh-to-last ball.

"It probably wasn't the ideal situation when I came in but being the last batter, I suppose I had a bit of license to go for it right from the start," Maxwell told *Sky Sports*.

"We thought if we could take it as deep as we could, myself and Alex, we might be a chance at the back end."

Starc entered, with Australia needing 10 off the last over bowled by legspinner Adil Rashid, and smashed his first ball down the ground for six. After two singles, Starc swept Rashid round the corner and the ball sped to the boundary rope, sealing a three-wicket win and sparking cheers from his teammates on the balcony.

England captain Eoin Morgan said Australia were "too good for us", adding: "To lose two wickets for no runs and then post over 300 is a huge positive for us. I think Jonny Bairstow was outstanding today. Carey and Maxwell played outstandingly well."

Playing without Steve Smith for the third straight game this series after the star batsman failed to recover from a knock to the head, the Aussies looked in big trouble after Marnus Labuschagne's sloppy run-out left them five down, with just bowlers to follow Maxwell.

England will regret a no-ball by Archer — his first in ODI cricket — off which he had Carey caught at third man when on 9. Wicketkeeper Jos Buttler also dropped a tough chance off a nick by Maxwell when 44.

"Small opportunities that we might have taken advantage of might have changed the game," Morgan said, "but when you've been beaten by a better side, you have to put your hand up."

It was England's only series loss of its international summer — during which all of its games have been played in a bio-secure bubble without fans — after taking on the West Indies, Ireland, Pakistan and Australia in various formats.

Brief scores: England 302/7 (Jonny Bairstow 112, Sam Billings 57; Adam Zampa 3/51) lose to Australia 305/7 (Glenn Maxwell 108, Alex Carey 106; Chris Woakes 2/46) by three wickets.

36-hour quarantine for Eng, Aus players

New Delhi: The Indian Premier League franchises will be heaving a sigh of relief as all the 21 Australian and English players arriving to the UAE from the United Kingdom will have to undergo just 36 hours of quarantine instead of the earlier prescribed six days.

All the franchises which have English and Australian players arriving after the white ball series in the UK had appealed for reducing the quarantine period and the BCCI under Sourav Ganguly's leadership has been able to successfully sort the issue out with local authorities in the UAE.

"Yes, I can confirm that all the English and Australian players have to now undergo 36-hour quarantine instead of six days. The matter has been sorted and most of the teams will now have their big stars available from the first game itself," a senior IPL functionary privy to development told *PTI*.

The likes of Steve Smith, David Warner, Jofra Archer, Jos Buttler will arrive in the UAE late on Thursday night (UAE time) and on arrival will undergo RT-PCR test for Covid-19.

"The BCCI did a great job in reducing the quarantine period to 36 hours. This means teams like Chennai Super Kings (Josh Hazlewood and Tom Curran), Rajasthan Royals (Smith, Buttler, Archer) will have all their players available from their first game. Ditto for Kings XI Punjab that has Glenn Maxwell in its roster and Delhi Capitals that has Alex Carry," a franchise official said. **PTI**

MI will miss Malinga's experience: Rohit

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma on Thursday conceded that "incomparable" Sri Lankan pace legend Lasith Malinga, who has opted out of this year's IPL, will be severely missed by his defending champion team given his "unbelievable" past performances.

The 37-year-old Malinga, who is IPL's highest wicket-taker with 170 scalps to his credit, has pulled out citing personal reasons in a major blow to the four-time champions.

"I don't think it is easy to come and fill his boots. He has been a match-winner for Mumbai. I have said it many times, whenever we sort of find ourselves in trouble, Malinga was the one to bail us out from that," Rohit said in a pre-season online press conference.

"His experience will be missed, what he did with MI is unbelievable and it is unfortunate that he is not a part of the team this year.

"We have got likes — (James) Pattinson, Dhawal Kulkarni, Mohsin (Khan) and these are the names that we are looking to replace Malinga with. But obviously what Malinga did for Mumbai, it is not just comparable," he added.

Talking about his own role, Rohit said he will continue to open.

"I opened the entire tournament last year and I will continue to do that. Again I keep all the options open, whatever the team wants, happy to do that.

"Even when I play for India, message from my side to the management has always been the same 'do not close any doors' keep all the options open and I will do the same here as well," he said.

India's white-ball vice-captain also felt that correct reading of conditions would be crucial to his team's fortunes.

"The challenge for us will be

to adapt to these conditions here which probably none of us are used to, because not a lot of cricketers from our group have played here," Rohit said.

"I think mentally it is about going out there and understanding what the pitch is doing, and based on that, you need to plan your game — whether it is your batting or bowling. So we have had a good chat around the group about that," he elaborated.

Talking about the opening match against the Chennai Super Kings, he said Mumbai is ready for the challenge.

"CSK are probably one of the successful IPL teams and you can't take them for granted...They will come out all guns blazing. None of us have played cricket for months now, so obviously everybody wants to start on a high.

"So, we will be expecting a great contest between the two and we need to focus on what we need to do as team and all our bases are covered," Rohit signed off.

Need to be mindful of Hardik's workload: Jayawardene

Abu Dhabi: Monitoring comeback man Hardik Pandya's workload is paramount for Mumbai Indians coach Mahela Jayawardene as he intends to groom a "few more finishers" for the upcoming edition of IPL.

Hardik will play his first game in a year on Saturday having undergone back surgery for stress fracture last year.

"Hardik is coming back from an injury. So we will have to be mindful of that but he is looking very good in the nets. Both the players (Pandya brothers) have been fantastic for MI over the last three or four years. It brings a lot of energy to the group," Jayawardene said during MI's virtual media conference.

The Sri Lankan legend was asked whether Hardik will again be assigned the finisher's job.

"We have used him (Hardik) in different roles in the past and we will look into that. We will have quite a number of other players who can fix into that role as well, so whenever the opportunity is there we ask anyone to finish the game off," said the former Sri Lanka captain.

"It doesn't just fall on Hardik but it is one of his responsibilities, so we want to try and challenge players in different ways in this camp, so we will continue to do that," he said. **PTI**

'We had nothing to lose'

Manchester: Australia's Glenn Maxwell said "we had nothing to lose" after his century helped seal a dramatic ODI series win over world champions England on Wednesday.

Asked what he was feeling as he walked out to bat, Maxwell said: "I was probably feeling we had nothing much to lose. I suppose coming in at 70/5, it is probably hit or bust at that stage.

"If you lose another wicket in the next five or 10 overs it is pretty hard to expect the bowlers to do the job at the back. Having trust in my own technique and in my partner at the other end, myself and Alex have had some good partnerships over the last few of years and I really enjoyed batting with him at the other end." **AFP**

Nitish hopes to learn from Morgan's leadership qualities

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Kolkata Knight Riders left-handed batsman Nitish Rana is excited to play alongside Eoin Morgan and hopes that he will imbibe some of reigning World Cup-winning skipper's leadership qualities.

The England limited-overs skipper was bought at the auction for ₹5.25 crore as he's set to reunite with the franchise after his stint from 2011-2013.

The 34-year-old will be joining the side after leading England to their maiden World Cup glory in 2019 and Rana, who led Delhi at domestic level, is excited.

"I hope I also have that sort of leadership quality so that it helps in my domestic team and I grow as a player," Rana said in a media interaction.

"He is one such rare left-handed batsman who dominates white ball cricket. He's a World Cup-winning captain of a successful country. I'm looking forward to learning many things from him."

On the slow pitches in the UAE, a pace-heavy KKR lineup will have limited spin resources in Sunil Narine and Kuldeep Yadav.

Rana, who bowls part-time offspin, is also looking forward to get some more overs under his belt this time.

"Bowling is not a new thing to me. I've been bowling in domestic cricket. It's good that spinners will get an advantage here so that I also will get some grip. I've improved as a player and a bowler. Hope I get more overs and help the team."

The left-hander said he does not have a fixed batting slot and is ready to serve the team at any position.

"I will bat as per team demand. I don't have a fixed batting slot. I'm available to serve the team at any spot."

Having served long injury lay-offs respectively, the 2018 U-19 World Cup winning duo of Kamlesh Nagarkoti and Shivam Mavi are back in full throttle, Rana said.

"Nagarkoti was unfortunate to be injured for two years. He's back strong. But this time, both of them are back in full rhythm and clocking 140kph-plus consistently. It will be challenging for any batsman. I hope they will do well," he added.

Virat not fazed by empty stands at IPL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli on Thursday said his teammates have become "acceptive" of living in the IPL bio-bubble and there is no "desperation" for a change of environment as they approach the tournament proper from September 19.

RCB landed in Dubai on August 21 and have been training for more than two weeks, including some intra-squad practice games.

"To be honest we have become more acceptive of the situation around us. Acceptance is the biggest change I have experienced (since day 1 here)," said Kohli in a virtual media conference organised to honour citizens who have become "COVID Heroes" amid the pandemic.

"When we spoke of the bio-bubble for the first time, we discussed about appreciating the things we have and the situation. All of us have become very relaxed in that environment.

It will be the first time that IPL matches will be held in the absence of a packed crowd but Kohli said it is the need of the hour.

"All of us have thought about it (initially) and it would be a strange feeling and I won't deny that. But the feeling has changed little bit after the training sessions and practices games," he said.

"At the end of the day you just need to understand why you started playing the game, you started playing for the love of it. Crowds are main part of the game but that is not what you play for.

"I can only say one thing that our intensity levels will not drop, I can assure you. There is a larger reason why all this is happening."

Kohli was joined by teammates Parthiv Patel and the young Devdutt Paddikal in the interaction.

"It has sunk in (staying in bio-bubble). We did not put saliva on the ball during practice games and are taking care of ourself. It is very important to be safe," said Patel.

"Honestly, it is my third year with the team, I have never seen this kind of environment before in my career. Everyone is smiling and that is what is important," he added.

RCB to honour Covid heroes by wearing tribute jersey

New Delhi: Royal Challengers Bangalore players will sport the jerseys with the "My COVID Heroes" written on them all through the IPL to pay tribute to all those on the frontline in the battle against the pandemic.

The slogan honouring the "COVID Heroes" will be printed on the back of the playing as well as the training jerseys, the team announced on Thursday. **PNS**

CA working in tandem with Royals over Smith's concussion

PTI ■ DUBAI

Cricket Australia on Thursday revealed that Steve Smith is following "concussion protocols" which are crucial for his return to cricket in the IPL and asserted that it is "not willing" to compromise with the fitness of the Rajasthan Royals skipper.

CA said it is working in tandem with RR to ensure his smooth return to competitive action after missing the entire England ODI series due to the concussion suffered during training.

"Cricket Australia has strict protocols when it comes to head impacts and concussions and, as we've seen over the last 12 months, we're not willing to compromise on those," CA's head of sports science Alex Kountouris said in a statement.

"Steve is making progress and working with our medical team through the concussion protocols required to return to play," he added.

Smith was hit on the head during a net session prior to the first ODI in Manchester and since then recovered well but not enough to play a competitive cricket.

Kountouris said the franchise and CA will be working together to monitor Smith's fitness upon his arrival in the UAE.

Smith had also endured a concussion during last year's Ashes game at the Lord's and subsequently missed a Test match.

Rafael Nadal returns the ball to Pablo Carreno Busta during their second round match, at the Italian Open tournament AP

SINGLES

INDIA DROP TO 109 IN FIFA RANKINGS

Zurich: The Indian men's football team have dropped by one place and are placed at the 109th position in the latest FIFA rankings. India have 1187 points and have not lost or gained any since the last update which took place in July. Meanwhile, Belgium remain at the summit ahead of France and Brazil, while England continue to occupy fourth place. Portugal (5th,+2) have moved into the top five thanks to victories over Croatia (8th,-2) and Sweden (18th,-1).

LEEDS, SOUTHAMPTON ELIMINATED IN CUP

London: Premier League teams Leeds and Southampton lost to lower-tier opposition in the second round of the League Cup. While a second-string Leeds team lost a penalty shootout 9-8 to third-tier Hull after a 1-1 draw in regulation, Southampton fielded a full-strength lineup but still lost 2-0 at home to second-tier Brentford. Everton eased past fourth-tier Salford 3-0 thanks to goals by Michael Keane, Gylfi Sigurdsson and Moise Kean, while Aleksandar Mitrovic scored Fulham's goal in a 1-0 win at Ipswich.

FANS BARRED FROM BUNDESLIGA OPENER

Munich: Fans will not be allowed into the stadium when Bayern Munich hosts the opening game of the Bundesliga season because of a local spike in coronavirus cases, the mayor of Munich said on Thursday. But games in other cities scheduled to proceed with fans on Saturday and Sunday.

HARIKRISHNA SLIPS WITH 2 LOSSES

Chennai: Indian Grandmaster P Harikrishna slipped to fifth spot from a share of lead after a win-less day at the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz online chess tourney, where he lost to Ian Nepomniachtchi and world number one Magnus Carlsen. Harikrishna, who shared the lead with Lev Aronian after three rounds, lost the fourth round of the Rapid event to Nepomniachtchi, then drew with Armenian Aronian before losing the sixth to Carlsen.

BAIRSTOW ENTERS TOP-10 IN ODI RANKINGS

Dubai: Englishman Jonny Bairstow broke into the top-10 following a string of good performances against Australia. Bairstow topped the series aggregate with 196 runs to re-enter the top 10. The previous best for him was ninth position in October 2018. **Agencies**

Messi nets 2 in friendly win

AP ■ BARCELONA

Lionel Messi scored his first goals of Barcelona's preseason as coach Ronald Koeman left Luis Suárez and Arturo Vidal off his team for a second friendly match.

Messi netted two goals and set up one more in a 3-1 victory over second-tier Girona, Barcelona's second training match since Koeman took over as coach.

The goals were also Messi's first since his failed attempt to leave the club this offseason.

Barcelona posted a photo on Twitter of Messi and Koeman clasping hands when the star forward was substituted along with most of his teammates with half an hour to go. It seemed meant to deliver a message of unity between the player and manager amid one of the most tumultuous periods in the club's recent history.

Girona offered little resistance to Barcelona's attack, formed by new signing Francisco Trincão, Philippe Coutinho, Antoine Griezmann and Messi.

Messi's perfectly placed pass sent Trincão clear for the Portugal forward to square the ball to Coutinho, who only had to scoop in the 20th-minute opener. Messi doubled the lead in the 45th with a shot from outside the area that went in off the upright.

Samuel Saiz got Girona on the scoreboard after half-time before Messi got his brace with a shot that took a deflection off a defender to fool the Girona goalkeeper.

Liverpool edged closer to landing the services of their coveted asset as on Bayern Munich officials on Thursday said the club has agreed a transfer for Spain midfielder Thiago Alcantara. Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick praised Thiago while confirming he has bid goodbye FC Bayern/Twitter

Draxler wins for PSG at the death

AP ■ PARIS

Julian Draxler's header deep into stoppage time gave Paris Saint-Germain a 1-0 home win against Metz and spared the defending champion a fourth straight match without scoring.

After losing the Champions League final 1-0 to Bayern Munich last month, PSG opened its league campaign with a 1-0 defeat at Lens followed by a 1-0 loss at home to Marseille on Sunday in which three PSG players were sent off.

PSG finished this game with nine men after center half Abdou Diallo was red carded for a second yellow midway through the second half and left back Juan Bernat limped off injured near the end.

After missing a host of chances, another embarrassing setback looked likely for PSG until Metz goalkeeper Alexandre Oukidja failed to properly clear Angel Di Maria's cross from the left.

The opportunist Draxler headed home in the 93rd minute to save coach Thomas Tuchel from more pressure.

"We had chances to score in the first half, but we missed all of our good chances," Tuchel said.

Key midfielder Marco Verratti was sidelined with a minor injury, while striker Kylian Mbappé was also absent as he continues his recovery from the coronavirus. Mbappé could return for Sunday's difficult match away to coach Patrick Vieira's Nice.

PSG was also missing Neymar, left back Layvin Kurzawa and midfielder Leandro Paredes against Metz. They were suspended after being sent off following a stoppage-time brawl against Marseille. Neymar claims he was racially abused during the game by Marseille defender Álvaro González.

But the league's disciplinary commission said on Wednesday night that so far there is not enough evidence to summon the players for a hearing.

The disciplinary commission suspended Kurzawa for six games, while Neymar and Paredes each got a three-game ban plus one game suspended.