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INTIMATE SCENES
GET DIFFICULT FOR
ME SOMETIMES:
SNEHA ULLAL

Page 11

UAE TO LAUNCH AN UNMANNED SPACECRAFT TO MOON IN 2024

A top official in the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday said his country plans to send an unmanned spacecraft to the moon in 2024. The announcement by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who is also the ruler of Dubai, comes after the launch of a Mars probe earlier this year by the UAE. "It will be an Emirati-made lunar rover that will land on the surface of the moon in 2024 in areas that have not been explored previously by human missions," Sheikh Mohammed wrote on Twitter. If successful in 2024, the UAE could become the fourth nation on the Earth to land a spacecraft on the moon, after the US, the Soviet Union and China.



CANNES FILM FESTIVAL TO HOLD THREE-DAY SPECIAL EVENT IN OCT

Cannes Film Festival has announced a three-day event, scheduled to take place in October, where four previews of films from the 2020 official selection, the short films selected in competition and the Cinefondation's school films will be screened. The Palais des Festivals will host a 'Special Cannes' event, which will run from October 27 to 29, the organisers said in a release posted on the festival's website. The announcement comes months after the 2020 edition of the prestigious movie gala was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. The festival will be organising the event in collaboration with the Cannes City Council.



VENKAIAH TESTS POSITIVE; IN GOOD HEALTH

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu on Tuesday tested positive for Covid-19, the Vice-President's Secretariat said. It said Naidu, 71, is asymptomatic and in good health. "The Vice President of India who underwent a routine Covid-19 test today morning has been tested positive. He is however, asymptomatic and in good health," the Secretariat tweeted. Venkaiah Naidu has been advised home quarantine. His wife Usha Naidu has been tested negative and is in self-isolation, the tweet said.



INSTITUTES TO BE RATED BASED ON SUPPORT TO FEMALE STAFF

Science and Technology institutes will be rated based on the support they give to female staff under the new Science Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP), 2020, that aims to make the arena more diverse. Besides stressing on support to female staff, the focus of ranking parameters will also be language and geographical locations. "There will be a separate chapter on equity, inclusion and diversity in the new science policy," Department of Science and Technology Secretary Ashutosh Sharma said. Deliberations are underway to have a new STIP which is expected to be unveiled by December, he said. The percentage of women in the area of science, technology, engineering and mathematics is low.



Will Jagan adopt the political path that Naidu tread?

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Oppn wants only middlemen to thrive, not farmers: Modi

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India looking to store oil overseas in US: Pradhan

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TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Chaturdashi: 12:25 am (Next Day)
Nakshatram: Purna Bhadrapada: 03:15 am (Next Day)
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 12:05 pm - 01:34 pm
Yamagandam: 07:38 am - 09:07 am
Varjyam: 07:51 am - 09:37 am
Gulika: 10:36 am - 12:05 pm
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 06:26 pm - 08:12 pm
Abhijit Muhurtham: —

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Thunderstorm
Temp: 29/22
Humidity: 80%
Sunrise: 06:06 am
Sunset: 06:05 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated September 29, 2020 5:00 PM

WORLDWIDE GRIEF

Death toll from coronavirus tops 10 lakhs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Joginder Chaudhary was his parents' greatest pride, raised with the little they earned farming a half-acre plot in central India to become the first doctor from their village. For the coronavirus, though, he was just one more in a million.

After the virus killed the 27-year-old Chaudhary in late July, his mother wept inconsolably. With her son gone, Premalata Chaudhary said, how could she go on living? Three weeks later, on Aug. 18, the virus took her life, too yet another number in an unrelenting march toward a woeful



milestone. Now, 8 1/2 months after an infection doctors had never seen before claimed its first victims in China, the pan-

demic's confirmed death toll has eclipsed 1 million, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University.

The United States, where the virus has killed about 205,000 people, accounts for 1 out of 5 deaths worldwide, far more than any other country despite its wealth and medical resources

cases are increasing at the fastest rate in the world.

The United States, where the virus has killed about 205,000 people, accounts for 1 out of 5 deaths worldwide, far more than any other country despite its wealth and medical resources.

It's not just a number. It's human beings. It's people we love, said Dr. Howard Markel, a professor of medical history at the University of Michigan who has advised government officials on containing pandemics. On a Thursday morning in February, Markel's mother, 84 and infirm, was stricken by an illness later diagnosed as COVID-19.

Continued on Page 2

RO down, TS sees further decline in Covid cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Close on the heels of reports that Covid-19 cases have shown a declining trend in TS, comes another heartening bit of information that the pandemic's RO -reproduction number- too has come down.

A disease's RO is the number of cases, on average, an infected person will cause during their infectious period. RO is used by scientists to nail down the intensity of an infectious disease outbreak. Estimates of RO have been essential to characterise and manage pandemics, be it the 2003 SARS, the 2009 H1N1 influenza, the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa, or the latest Covid-19.

Director of Public Health Dr G Srinivasa Rao said on



- Covid-19 reproduction rate down in TS: DPH
- 'IT companies can resume work from office'

Tuesday: "The corona reproduction rate (RO) peaked at 1.9 in July and is now only 0.5. That's why we say it (viral load) will decline very soon".

The Telangana Medical Health Department is, therefore,

anticipating corona cases to decline in all districts by the end of September. Srinivasa Rao said: "There is a decline in the trend of coronavirus cases in the state, but it is not normal yet".

The Director of Public Health said that IT companies and other business entities could start commercial operations in full compliance with Corona regulations. Continued on Page 2

...but rush at Durgam Cheruvu can trigger another outbreak

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Director of Public Health Dr G Srinivasa Rao has requested people to contain their excitement of visiting the dazzling Durgam Cheruvu cable-stayed bridge as such gatherings could trigger another round of Covid-19 outbreak.

"Recently, cable-stayed bridge was started in Gachibowli. It is a great thing to have largest cable. People will have excitement to see, which is not wrong, but we have to consider Covid-19 cases. If we don't take precautions, a cluster of cases can come up like an outbreak. Cable bridge won't disappear in 1 or 2 months. It will be with us and after us. We can



People thronging newly opened Hanging Bridge on Durgam Cheruvu.

see whenever we want. If u gather like this in hundreds, the situation will worsen". The Telangana Health Department shared pictures

from the gathering, showing there was no physical distancing and most of the people were not even wearing masks. Continued on Page 2

CBI books a case in 167-cr loan fraud

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Central Bureau of Investigation booked a case against Chadalavada Infratech Ltd., (CITL) and its directors on Tuesday for allegedly causing loss of Rs 167 crore to the State Bank of India. The agency registered the case on a complaint from the State Bank of India.

The company's managing director Chadalavada Ravindra Babu has been named in the CBI case, apart from other unknown people.

The bank authorities, in their complaint, stated that the company's management had committed fraud by siphoning off and diverting funds in a criminal conspiracy to cheat.

Continued on Page 2

Ashwini Dutt petitions AP HC for compensation for his land

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Top Telugu film industry producer Ashwini Dutt has petitioned the Andhra Pradesh High Court for compensation for the land he gave for Gannavaram airport development land pooling agreement during the previous Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government.



"We can claim loss of damage and loss of compensation

against the respondents (government) due to policy decision taken by the state government for abandoning the development of Amaravati capital city as planned and promised by the state government earlier," said Dutt's petition.

He said several developmental plans are abandoned. Continued on Page 2

Court fiat on Rakul's plea over media reports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought to know from the Centre, Press Council of India and the National Broadcasting Association what steps they have taken on the court's order to treat as a repre-



sentation actor Rakul Preet Singh's plea to stop media reports from connecting her with the Rhea Chakraborty drug case and take a decision on it. Justice Navin Chawla directed them to file status reports indicating the steps taken by them pursuant to the court's September 17 order. Continued on Page 2

KTR sounds bugle for 'early' GHMC polls

L VENKAT RAM REDDY ■ HYDERABAD

IT Minister and TRS working president K T Rama Rao created ripples in political circles on Tuesday when he jumped the gun and talked about 'early polls' to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation.

Addressing party MLAs and corporators from GHMC limits, KTR said GHMC elections might be held anytime after the second week of November and asked party leaders and cadre to gear up for the early polls.

The present five-year term of GHMC is set to end in February 2021.

KTR also said that the performance of around 15 TRS corporators had not been up to

the mark, thus hinting that TRS would replace some of the sitting corporators with new faces for the civic body polls.

KTR's remarks created a buzz in political circles and heated up the political atmosphere across the state all of a sudden. There was intense debate over what could have prompted the TRS government to talk about 'early polls' to GHMC. It also fuelled speculation that the TRS government may also advance Warangal and Khammam municipal corporation polls scheduled for March 2021 as it wants to hold simultaneous polls for all the three major municipal corporations this November/December itself. Continued on Page 2

Dubbaka by-poll on Nov 3

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Central Election Commission (CEC) announced the schedule for the Dubbaka Assembly bye-elections, along with that of by-polls for 55 other Assembly constituencies and one Parliamentary constituency across the nation.

Accordingly, polling for the Dubbaka by-election will be held on November 3. Counting will take place on November 10. Notification for the election will be issued on October 9. Continued on Page 2

2 minors married off to alleged rapists

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a shocking incident, elders of a village in West Godavari "solemnised" the marriage of two minor rape survivors with the rapists. The incident came to light on Tuesday when one of the "grooms" accused of rape, rapist approached the local police to file a complaint of child marriage as he is just 17 years old.

The incident took place in a village under Dwaraka Tirumala mandal in West Godavari district where the two minor girls (16) were married off to two brothers — one of whom is a minor — who



allegedly raped and impregnated the girls.

As they received the complaint, the cops intervened and booked rape cases against the two brothers under the POCSO Act. The cops also filed a case against five villagers

who performed the marriage. According to Eluru sub-division in-charge DSP G Pydeswara Rao, two rape accused are brothers aged 17 and 19.

The two girls used to work in agricultural land in Dwaraka Tirumala mandal in West Godavari district. The two brothers after befriending them were in a physical relationship.

When the girls became pregnant, there was uproar in the village. To resolve the issue, the village elders performed marriage of the 17 year-old boy with the 16 year-old girl on September 27.

Unhappy with the marriage, the minor boy, showing the photographs of his marriage lodged a complaint with the police stating that he was the victim of child marriage.

After investigating the matter, the police booked two brothers for raping minors under Section 6 of POCSO Act and Section 376 and also under Section 312 for trying to abort the fetus with tablets.

Meanwhile, the police have also booked a case against five persons for performing the marriage.

The two minor girls were sent to Eluru government hospital for medical tests.

At times, politics throws up such dicey situations that even a questionable path adopted by one's arch-rival in the political arena sounds OK. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, who has been running the government with self-confidence, is now not averse to adopting the path shown by his bête noir Nara Chandrababu Naidu, who had tactfully chosen to sail with the Bharatiya Janata Party to retain his power in the unified state of Andhra Pradesh 22 years ago! Is Jagan ensuring a safe and rosy political future for him in the present political situation that is BJP-centric in the country by tilting towards BJP? He appears to be seriously exploring this option as he knows well the benefits of joining hands with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at an opportune time. Given the fact that BJP got a handsome majority because of Modi's charisma, Jagan may be weigh-

Will Jagan adopt the political path that Naidu tread?



PIN POINT

ing the benefits of being close to the ruling party at the national level. What are the repercussions of Jagan getting close to BJP? Some adverse reactions can be witnessed from minority sections as they tend to brandy political outfit joining hands with BJP as one driven by political mileage rather than ideological basis. Will there be any such reaction from minority sections whose patronage is now being enjoyed by the ruling YSR Congress party? How can such situation be tackled without tarnishing the image of party? These are some of the questions making the rounds in some circles.

A sizeable number of Muslims supported the YSR Congress party in last year's Assembly elections. In return for their support, Jagan made

Naidu, who was spearheading politics of the United Front that ruled the country for nearly two years between 1996-98, suddenly dumped the Third Front constituents, sending shock waves to his political colleagues of non-Congress parties.

one Muslim legislator Deputy Chief Minister, who is one among five Deputy CMs drawn from different downtrodden sections of society. So, some party circles feel that there is no scope for minorities getting angry, should YSRC embrace BJP.

Interestingly Naidu did not get adverse reaction from the Muslim community when he joined hands with BJP in 1998 first and continued friendship with the same party only

to forge an electoral alliance with BJP in subsequent elections of 1999 for the Lok Sabha. In the Assembly elections held simultaneously, Naidu registered an impressive victory on the strength of Vajpayee's boosted image following the Kargil war.

Naidu, who was spearheading politics of the United Front that ruled the country for nearly two years between 1996-98, suddenly dumped the Third Front constituents,



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

sending shock waves to his political colleagues of non-Congress parties. Instead of maintaining equidistance from both Congress and BJP, Naidu aligned with BJP immediately after the conclusion of mid-term polls to the Lok Sabha in 1998. He decided to extend support to the BJP-led NDA

government headed by AB Vajpayee. He decided not to join the Union government to quell the criticism of joining hands with 'communal' BJP after fighting against the same party in the polls. Yet, he accepted the post of Lok Sabha Speaker offered to Telugu Desam and made GMC Balayogi Speaker then.

The YSRC may face difficulties if its traditional friends, including AIMIM, turn against Jagan and influence the minority community here against the Chief Minister. Jagan's bonhomie with Telangana counterpart K. Chandrasekhar Rao too helped a lot in the name of 'return gift' to Naidu to get people's mandate.

Presently, the Congress and Communist parties are taking out rallies to protest farmers' laws brought out by the Modi government. The opposition

parties have painted the laws as draconian laws and are striving to draw the attention of people, particularly farmers on this issue.

Jagan's YSR Congress party wholeheartedly supported the farm bills in Parliament, probably without knowing the seriousness involved in that subject. In their exchange of favours, YSRC and BJP are believed to have acted out of sheer mutual interests. Jagan even lambasted opposition parties for criticising farm laws passed by Parliament. How can farmers get remunerative prices in the absence of MSP and Agricultural Market Committees? How can poor farmers take on corporate entities? These are the concerns of farmers as well as general public now.

After supporting BJP for the first time in 1998, Naidu had gone for an alliance with BJP

in 1999. He was in a position then to even demand Prime Minister Vajpayee whatever he wanted for the state. Once, during a visit to flood-hit areas, he suddenly stopped the convoy of vehicles on the middle of the road, got down his car, and made a telephonic call to Vajpayee in full public glare for apprising him of the flood situation. In 1998, Naidu's TDP won only 12 seats in the Lok Sabha. Naidu bagged 29 seats out of 42 in 1999.

Going by the same logic, Jagan may repeat the same as per the assessment of his party circles. If the current public mood, in the context of the recent farm laws, turns against the BJP-led government, the ensuing situation may not be favourable for the government headed by Jagan. It remains to be seen whether Jagan can tackle the backlash from farmers.

Court fiat on Rakul's plea over media reports

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The court sought their replies on a fresh application moved by the actor seeking interim directions to them to ensure that the media does not broadcast any programme or publish any article connecting her with the case. The court asked NBA to take up her representation on October 3. It told the Ministry that the government cannot say it will not look into the alleged false reporting by the media. The court wanted the status reports on action taken before the next date of hearing on October 15. The actor, in her application, has sought an interim order against the media till the time the NCB completes the investigation in the drug case and files an appropriate report before the competent court.

Forest cover in Telangana increases by 163.31 sq km

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The area under forests in Telangana has increased by 163.31 square km. This is attributed to the state government's Haritha Haaram programme yielding positive results.

With the help of the satellite imagery, the National Forest Survey Institute surveyed the forests in Telangana and concluded that the area under forests in the state has increased.

Avenue plantation programme, village nurseries, social forestry development programmes and other activities of the state government have produced favourable results.

Saplings have been planted in 12,730 hectares in two years under avenue plantation programme. The forests constitute 20,582.31 square km out of the



total area of 1,12,077 square km, which is only 18.36 per cent of the geographical area of the state.

During 2015-19 period, trees were felled in 9,420 hectares under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 for industries and to meet other needs.

But, under Haritha Haaram over 150 crore saplings have been planted during the past four years.

As per the 2015-17 Forest Survey of India report, the state of Telangana ranked number five in terms of development of forests. The geographically small states in the North-East have ranked top in terms of development of greenery. In fact, 75 to 90 per cent of the geographical area of the North-East constitutes forests.

However, only 10 to 27 per cent of the land area in big states constitutes forests. The

national average for development of greenery is put at 24 per cent of the land area. However, the greenery in Telangana is spread only in 20.6 per cent of the land area.

Compared to 2015, the development of greenery increased by 565 square km in 2017. However the report for 2017-19 indicates the increase in green cover in the state by 163.31 square km.

The latest survey indicated that only Adilabad and Khammam districts have 33 per cent forest cover. The report said that decrease in the forest area in undivided Medak district by 6.69 square km, whereas the green cover has increased in other districts.

Dense forests were limited to Warangal, Adilabad, Khammam and Karimnagar districts. The state has three national parks and nine wild life conservation parks.

Alert for deadly Congo fever in Maha's Palghar

PNS ■ PALGHAR

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, authorities in Palghar have issued an alert for the deadly Crimean Congo Hemorrhagic Fever (CCHF), or Congo fever, believed to spread from animals to humans, top officials said here on Tuesday.

The collectorate has directed all meat and poultry sellers and consumers to remain on alert and take precautions as the Congo fever has a high mortality rate between 10-40 per cent even as no vaccine is available for treatment.

"We have asked all meat sellers to take necessary measures for hygiene and cleanliness, spray of insecticides, use

of gloves, gumboots, masks, and proper checks on all animals brought into Maharashtra via the Gujarat borders in consultation with the departments concerned," Collector Dr Manek Gursale said.

District Civil Surgeon Kanchan Vanare said that though there were no Congo fever cases yet in Palghar, precautions have been listed after infectees of this disease were found in neighbouring Gujarat, which borders Talasari taluka in the district.

"Though much is not known about the disease, it is believed to spread through Hyalomma tick, a parasite which thrives on the blood or flesh of infected animals, fowls, or other birds. Anybody consuming

infected meat may experience symptoms of high fever, head and body aches, nose-bleeding, stomach pains, red eyes etc," Vanare explained.

Animal Husbandry Department Deputy Commissioner Dr PD Kamble cautioned in a circular that since CCHF cases were found in some districts of south Gujarat bordering Maharashtra, it was likely to spread to this state.

"If it is not diagnosed and treated in time, nearly one third of the patients succumb. As per the World Health Organisation, it has a fatality rate of 10-40 per cent, with no vaccines available for either humans or animals," read the circular.

RO down, TS ...

Continued from Page 1

Coronavirus had come under control in the state due to measures taken by the Telangana government, he said.

Speaking to media persons in Hyderabad, he pointed out that the death rate and positivity rate had also come down significantly. "In July, at 23 per cent, the positivity rate was highest, but it came down to 5 percent in September. Recovery rate in Telangana is higher than the national average. Only Bihar, Odisha and Kerala have higher recovery rates than us. We have a higher recovery rate than all other states."

There are 29,477 active cases, which is 15.42 per cent of the total cases. The death rate is about 0.58, which is very less. About 45% of people died of coronavirus, while 55% of people with other comorbidities infected with coronavirus died. "Telangana is doing 79,206 tests per million and only Delhi and Assam are doing more than

us," the DPH said.

Srinivasa Rao said, "About 1,200 test centers have been set up in the state. So far, 45 lakh rapid tests have been done. We are currently testing 55,000 per day. We will not reduce the number of tests, but if needed we will increase. Those who have a negative rapid test and have symptoms must undergo RT-PCR tests."

Around 10,000 of the 55,000 tests are being conducted in GHMC area alone. On reports of declining number of tests on Sundays, DPH said, "We conduct only around 35,000 tests on Sundays as there is less response from people."

What is RO?

RO, or the reproduction number, is used by scientists to nail down the intensity of an infectious disease outbreak. Estimates of RO are key to characterise pandemics, be it the 2003 SARS pandemic, the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic, the 2014 Ebola epidemic in West Africa or the latest Covid.

WORLDWIDE GRIEF

Death toll from coronavirus...

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She died before midnight.

It's our brothers, our sisters. It's people we know, Markel said. And if you don't have that human factor right in your face, it's very easy to make it abstract. Even at 1 million greater than the population of Jerusalem or Austin, Texas, more than four times the number killed in the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean the toll is almost certainly a vast undercount.

Many deaths were probably missed because of insufficient testing and inconsistent reporting, and some suspect concealment by countries like Russia and Brazil.

I can understand why ... numbers are losing their power to shock, but I still think it's really important that we understand how big these numbers really are, said Mark Honigsbaum, the London-based author of The Pandemic Century: One Hundred Years of Panic, Hysteria and Hubris.

Few people can testify to those numbers like the Rev. Mario Carminati, a priest in the northern Italian province of Bergamo, which was hit by one of Europe's first major outbreaks last spring. When the

virus overwhelmed local cemeteries, Carminati opened his church to the dead, lining up 80 coffins in the center aisle. After an army convoy carted them to a crematory, another 80 arrived. Then 80 more.

It was something completely unpredictable that arrived like a bolt of lightning in a clear sky ... and struck our reality, he said. Government leaders in countries such as Germany, South Korea and New Zealand worked effectively to contain it.

Brazil has recorded the second most deaths after the U.S., with about 142,000. India is third and Mexico fourth, with more than 76,000.

Oscar Ortiz, an oil platform worker for Mexico's state-owned Petroleos Mexicanos, said he felt helpless while ill and quarantined this spring, as 14 of his coworkers died from the virus, three in a single week.

It's very painful to see this and not be able to do anything, said Ortiz, whose company has reported more than 300 deaths in its ranks.

India, whose government relaxed tight restrictions in recent months to jump-start an economy where many subsist on earnings from day labor, is the latest example.

When the pandemic actually started to get under control to some extent, the lockdown was eased and then completely lifted, said K. Srinath Reddy, president of the Public Health Foundation of India. The virus had a free passage and could spread much more easily.

With so many of the deaths beyond view in hospital wards and clustered on society's margins, the milestone recalls the grim pronouncement often attributed to Soviet dictator Josef Stalin: One death is a tragedy, millions of deaths are a statistic.

The pandemic's toll of 1 million dead in such a limited time rivals some of the gravest threats to public health, past and present.

COVID's grip on humanity is incomparably greater than the grip of other causes of death, said Lawrence Gostin, a professor of global health law at Georgetown University. He noted the unemployment, poverty and despair caused by the pandemic, and deaths from myriad other illnesses that have gone untreated.

Up to now, the disease has left only a faint footprint on Africa, well shy of early modeling that predicted thousands more deaths.

Durgam Cheru...

Continued from Page 1

The DPH also pointed out that, apart from people, even political parties need follow Covid-19 norms. He said, "Recently in political party meetings, one leader came from Delhi and there was a rally, many people gathered without masks. GHMC elections and by-elections are coming up. Political parties and people should take all

Covid-19 precautions. We request people to avoid large gathering as it will become source of infection".

Srinivasa Rao reiterated the need to follow social distancing norms, apart from wearing a mask.

He wanted people going to bars and clubs to maintain social distance and wear masks as the possibility of getting infected in such closed places is very high.

Dubbaka by-poll on Nov 3

Continued from Page 1

The last date for filing nominations is October 16. Scrutiny of nominations will be done on October 17. Withdrawal of nominations will be allowed till October 19.

The Dubbaka bye-election has been necessitated by the death of MLA Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy. The mainstream political parties—TRS, Congress and BJP -- are seri-

ously preparing strategies to hoist their party flag at Dubbaka.

The TRS party is going to field Ramalinga Reddy's wife Sujatha.

Finance Minister T Harish Rao is single-handedly touring the constituency to ensure that the party candidate's wins with a huge majority.

Harish Rao has taken up the campaign for the Dubbaka election as a prestige issue.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 52,530 (10 gm)	
SILVER	
₹ 60,700 (1kg)	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹191
Without Skin	₹218
Broiler at Farm	₹132
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	495
VIJAYAWADA	510
VISAKHAPATNAM	515
RETAIL PRICE (in Hyderabad)	₹4.95

TRS govt to distribute...

Continued from Page 1

"This year, the government has spent Rs 317.81 crore on Bathukamma sarees. This year, the Bathukamma sarees distribution will begin on October 9 under the supervision of District Collectors.

"The sarees will be distributed through local women groups. The sarees have been produced with 287 kinds of designs. A total of 99 lakh sarees will be distributed this time," it said. He further said the Telangana government had been working towards the welfare of the weavers' community and in the past six years had introduced many welfare schemes exclusively for the weavers.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

No.: 252338/CPRO/GHMC/2020, Dated: 28.09.2020

Sealed Tenders are invited from the reputed Printers for the printing and supply of approx (750) nos. of Cloth Banner size per sqft Multi Color printing 130 GSM thickness, 1) Tender Schedule are available in the GHMC Library Section, H.O. Hyderabad for Sale from 28.09.2020 to 30.09.2020 upto 1 PM on payment of Rs.1000/- by way of DD drawn in favour of the Commissioner, GHMC. 2) Last date for submission of tender forms upto 01.10.2020 by 2 PM, the tenders will be opened on the same day i.e. 01.10.2020 at 4 PM, for further details contact Ph: 7985007432 & 91000525125

FOR COMMISSIONER, GHMC

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

e-Procurement Tender Notice

Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for one road work for 7th cell under Non-Plan Grants in Miranabad district of Miranabad Circle vide Engineer-in-Chief (R&B) State Roads & CRN : NIT No. 3215/N2/B/DCE/JG/EE-40DEE-1/WEE-32020-21, Dt. 25.09.2020.

Tenders can download the tender schedules from e-market place for e-tender.telangana.gov.in from 30.09.2020 at 5:00 PM onwards. The last date of receipt of tenders is 08.10.2020 upto 5:00 PM. Further details can be seen at e-procurement market place from www.tender.telangana.gov.in

Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief (R&B)

State Roads & CRN

DPH No.343-DPCL-Agency/Advt/12020-21

KEESARA BRIBE CASE
ACB arrests 5 more persons

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The ACB on Tuesday arrested five more persons including two realtors and a computer operator working at the office of suspended Keesara Tahsildar E Balaraju Nagaraj. Apart from the computer operator K Venkatesh and realtors Rao Venkateshwar Rao, Chalamala Venkata Jagadishwar Rao and Chalamala Bhaskar Rao, the ACB also nabbed Kandadi Srikanth Reddy, son of K Dharma Reddy, who allegedly managed to secure pecuniary benefits from Nagaraj. The ACB produced the five arrested persons before the special court after which they were remanded in judicial custody. Nagaraj along with VRA B Sairaj and two realtors - Ch. Srinath Yadav and K. Anji Reddy were arrested by the ACB on August 14 in connection with the Rs 1.10 crore bribe case.

CSE top choice for several tech students this year too

NAMRATA SRIVASTAVA
■ HYDERABAD

Over the past few years, engineering aspirants in Telangana have shown more interest in Computer Science Engineering, than in other streams. With EAMCET results to be declared in a few days, educationalists say that this year too CSE will be the top choice for several students. D Srinivas Varma, a well-known educationalist says that CSE became the preferred choice for several students since the academic year 2016-17. "Telangana has campuses of several leading IT industries in the state. The students are thus inclined to pick Computer Sciences as their stream for engineering. Several students from the state also go abroad for further studies or jobs and the scope for CSE students is



better," he says. Eight students from Telangana scored a perfect 100 in JEE Mains this year. It wasn't a surprise that five of the top scorers wanted to pursue an undergraduate degree in CSE. Talking about her dream, Chukka Tanuja, the only female student in the country to score a 100 in JEE Mains this

year said, "I have always loved mathematics. I want to become a Computer Science Engineer since it has more scope than the other field." This trend however has taken a severe toll on the number of students enrolling in other engineering streams. Srinivas Varma said, "Several colleges in the state have

reduced the numbers of seats available in engineering streams such as Mechanical, Civil and EEE and kept them for CSE. In fact, there is almost no demand for Mechanical or Civil engineering these days. Students who opt for these courses have to do substantial field work as well. Their jobs also have field posting. Students think that if they can earn double the amount sitting and working in AC offices, why would they do these courses." The increase in demand for CSE courses has also resulted in an increase of the 'donation' amounts parents pay to secure the seats in top colleges. Ivas Varma says, "In a good college, the donation for CSE seat can be between Rs 8 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, plus the Rs 1 lakh annual fees. For smaller colleges, the donation amount can go up to Rs 2 lakh."

The world is looking at Hyd for Covid vaccine: Governor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan said on Tuesday that the whole world is looking at Hyderabad to come out with Covid vaccine. She said that scientists and other researchers in Hyderabad have been working tirelessly to bring out the effective vaccine to prevent and fight the Covid. She hoped that the vaccine might come by the end of this year. The Governor was interacting with the scientists involved in Covid vaccine research and trials at the Bharat Biotech campus. "I salute all those scientists and other researchers for their relentless work to come out with a vaccine for the Covid. Not only Telangana or India, the whole world is hoping that our scientists would come out with an effective and safe vaccine for the Covid," Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan said.



"We must ensure that vaccine must also be cost-effective and reaches all the people all over the world. The vaccine must benefit all irrespective of their socio-economic status or their country of living," the Governor added. She also called for creation of better awareness to motivate the people of different sections to go for the vaccine once it comes. The real challenge is to get all immunised.

The Governor during her interaction with the Bharat Biotech founders Dr Krishna M Ella and Dr Suchitra Ella appreciated their efforts and achievements in supplying a record number of three billion doses of different vaccines. The Governor presented a 'Badge of Thank You' to Dr Suchitra Ella for leading the COVAXIN research and trials and hoped that their efforts would succeed soon.

Residents warned against letting sewage on roads

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Gachibowli Traffic police have warned people, especially residents of gated communities and apartments, against allowing sewage onto the roads. Officials said this may cause inconvenience to the motorists and sometimes lead to mishaps too. According to the Gachibowli police, the area had several major multinational companies, star hotels, establishments, high rise residential apartments and colonies apart from lakhs of

employees working in several firms. "Many employees daily come to Gachibowli for their jobs from all corners of the city and sewage on the road can lead to mishaps," an official, adding that strict action would be taken on people resorting to such practices. Cases would be booked against building owners too, the Cyberabad Police said, adding that people could lodge a complaint on such acts on WhatsApp on 9490617346 or call on 8500411111 or through social media.



'Restore non-Covid services in Gandhi'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Eatala Rajender directed the authorities to restore Coronavirus as well as other medical services in all hospitals, including Gandhi Hospital, in the wake of calls from students and junior doctors studying in various medical colleges to immediately start non-Covid services to avoid any loss in the academic year. Minister conducted a review meeting with senior officials of the Medical Health Department on Tuesday. The Minister reviewed the details of the patients in the hospital, beds and the services being provided to the patients and Oxygen Facility. The officials



explained that the number of coronavirus cases are decreasing as anticipated by the medical health department. However, the Minister said that the number of tests should not be reduced at all. The minister appealed to the people to be vigilant even when the corona spread and avoid large gatherings.

TAKING STOCK



Principal Secretary of Urban Development Arvind Kumar on Tuesday inspects the ongoing works on link roads project taken up by HRDC. At least four such roads will be ready in October and will be opened for public

TS to equip all beds in govt hospital with oxygen supply

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government is gearing up to make oxygen supply available to all the 22,000 beds in government hospitals. Director of Medical Education Dr Ramesh Reddy said, "Oxygen will be available to every bed in government hospitals in the coming days. These services will be not only useful for Covid patients but for others too." The DME said, "Earlier, only 1665 beds had oxygen supply before Covid pandemic but now oxygen is currently available for 7172 beds." Dr Ramesh said, "We have more than 22,000 beds in various government hospitals in Hyderabad and in districts which are being equipped with oxygen facility. We have in total including 8860 beds dedicated to Covid care. Of these 7172 beds have oxygen supply. We have 1225 ICU beds which are specially dedicated to Covid patients." He dismissed the claims of shortage of ventilator and oxygen supply.



He said, "Oxygen storage capacity is available in all hospitals. We have set up a liquid oxygen tank of 20KL in 6 new hospitals. We planned to setup 24 oxygen tanks, by end of October these will be made available. In hospitals like TIMS, we have made enough tanks available which will run for a week without supply. In second rung hospitals, we have augmented the cylinders capacity. We procured 3000 such cylinders of which 2000 have already been deployed." He said that "Central government planned it in such a

manner that because Medical oxygen requirement is increasing, they are procuring from industrial oxygen. This will come from different areas, we are getting it from Bellary, Bilai, Vishakapatnam. Central government gave clear instructions to remove any cross border restrictions for movement of oxygen". He said that if the cases continue to decline, the government will devise new strategies to remove Gandhi hospital as Covid hospital. Non Covid medical services are being launched in all hospitals.

Man posing as Army officer cheats people

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Special Operations Team (SOT) on Tuesday arrested four persons on charges of posing as Army personnel and kidnapping and threatening a youngster from RC Puram. The arrested persons were Nagaraju Raghu Varma alias Colonel Karthikeya, a driver from West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, K Rajesh from West Godavari of Andhra Pradesh, L Rama Krishna from Vizianagaram of Andhra Pradesh and R Jore Singh, a student of Nizam College and native of Kamareddy district. According to the police, Nagaraju Raghu Varma, posing as an Army officer, cheated people. He created fake ID cards and purchased Army uniforms and also forged fake gallantry awards apart from procuring one dummy pistol. He introduced himself as an Army officer at Lal Bazaar and

Narayanguda. "He created several people by promising jobs in the Indian Army by taking about Rs 7 lakh from them. He took rented cars and affixed Army stickers to make them look like army vehicles." Cyberabad Commissioner VC Sajjanar said. "He also attended various social programmes and shop opening ceremonies in uniform in various places in his native district and put cut-outs of him in his local area," Sajjanar added. Recently, again posing as an Army officer, Nagaraju along with his associates allegedly kidnapped and extorted money from a young businessman. "They blindfolded him and claiming to be Army personnel, took him to an undisclosed location and extorted Rs 30,000 from him before setting him free," police said. Police officials arrested the accused on Tuesday and further sent for judicial remand.



Residents feel unsafe to change Metro trains to reach destination

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The response to Metro Rail has been gradually increasing from public with only 31,000 commuters per day in the first week of starting the Metro Rail on September 7, after the Covid induced lockdown. Now the commuter traffic has increased to 50,000 per day. However, the people are not keen to change Metro rails to reach their destinations. They prefer to undertake direct journey to their destinations if the increased number of commuters travelling by Miyapur to LB Nagar route, compared to those travelling on Nagole-Rayadurgam and JBS-MGBS routes. If a resident of Dilsukhnagar wants to travel to Begumpet, the commuter has to change

train at Ameerpet. Similarly, a person who boarded Metro Rail at Narayanaguda wants to travel to Punjagutta, the commuter has to change the train at MGBS Metro Rail station. During normal days, people used to change the trains to reach their destinations. Now, they are not prepared to change trains over fear of contracting the Coronavirus suspecting that they might come into contact many more persons. The Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) buses are not completely operational yet, so many prefer personal transport. As a result, traffic jams are being noticed at important junctions in the city. Residents who do not like to travel by Metro rail have been

travelling by personal transport. Even those who wish to travel by Metro are also using Metro Smart Card or QR Code ticketing facility. The Metro rail at Chennai gave 20 per cent concession on Metro Smart Card charges or QR Code ticketing facility, which was not the case with the Hyderabad Metro Rail. In Hyderabad and Bangaluru, daily 4.5 lakh used to commute per day by Metro rail prior to the Covid pandemic. But their number did not cross 50,000 per day under the existing circumstances. Everywhere in world, those who travel by tube rail have come down. London, Hong Kong and New York have reported huge drop in commuters who travel by tube rail.

New courses to begin in IITs from this academic year

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The IIT-Hyderabad is going to introduce B Tech bio-engineering course from this academic year with total number of 30 seats in the course. This is in spite of Covid playing havoc with the academic year. IIT-H director Murthy said that starting the course was necessary as need arose to study on ventilators and other medical equipments due to Coronavirus. Similarly, the institution is going to introduce e-waste resource in M Tech. The introduction of new course was not limited to IIT-Hyderabad alone but all the 23 IITs in the country are ready to increase the number of seats in them and also introduce many new courses. The seats reserved for girls last year up to 17-18 per cent will be increased this year to 20 per cent. The increase in the super numerary seats and the seats available to students in new courses will be more than 300 in IITs. Last year, total number of seats made available to students was 13,674. This year the seats would cross the 14,000-mark. A clear picture is likely to emerge after October 6. The increase in seats would benefit those who took the IIT-JEE Advanced exam. The Delhi IIT is introducing B Tech course in engineering and computational mechanics.



'Advanced tech in polls will enhance efficiency'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State Election Commissioner C. Parthasarathi on Tuesday said that the usage of advanced technology in forthcoming elections will enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability. The SEC was addressing the GHMC officials on the concluding day of training programme on Te-Poll software. In the wake of the Covid pandemic, the SEC said that the usage of maximum technology will help all the stakeholders to conduct elections smoothly. With the advent of technology, voter can download voter slip and know the details about polling station through online within no time, he added. Parthasarathi told that maximum usage of technology will ease process of polling from nomination to declaration of poll results. Te-Poll software will allow contesting candidates and party candidates to view all the details

online. It will also reduce manpower working hours as well ensures accuracy, he told. He said the training programme is aimed at training GHMC officials on election process management, polling personnel randomisation system, counting personnel randomisation system, election expenditure module and others. Parthasarathi said that the face recognition software is going to be piloted in about 150 polling stations, which accounts to at least one polling station from each ward in the ensuing elections. He said it is one of the advanced innovations to identify voter with the available data. He informed that EC is planning to pilot e-voting process for senior citizens, disabled persons and others. He said SEC in coordination with IT&C department is trying out the possibilities of going for e-voting in elections. He also said e-voting will stand as a role model innovation for the entire country.

'Need to increase participation of graduate voters in MLC elections'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao appealed to all the Corporators and public representatives to put in maximum efforts to improve the poll percentage in Hyderabad for MLC elections by enrolling all graduates as voters. KTR held a meeting with GHMC Corporators, MLAs and elected public representatives in Hyderabad on Tuesday. Regarding the forthcoming Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy and Mahabubnagar Graduates MLC elections enrollment from October 1, the Minister appealed to all the Corporators and public representatives to enroll their names in the voters list and encourage the graduates to enroll. KTR said that all the details of the development works executed during the last five years would be compiled into a report titled as 'Pragathi Nivedika', and would be released shortly. He said that the government, in the



past five years, had spent over Rs 67,000 crore for taking up different development works in Hyderabad. The Minister directed all the public representatives to explain the citizens in detail about all the good work taken up by the government in Hyderabad. Assuring that all long-standing issues of ownership rights of non-agricultural properties would be sorted out, the Minister said awareness had to be created among citizens regarding the Dharani portal and the exercise being taken up by the government.

"Due to different reasons, registrations and title related issues of properties in few places have been held up in the city. The state government would address all such issues," the Minister said. The government had launched an exercise for people to voluntarily register details pertaining to non-agricultural properties on the Dharani. He stated that there would be complete transparency in the process and there would be no scope for middlemen or agents in the exercise and people need not pay a single rupee.

In spite of Covid, farmers raise crops in 1.33 cr acres in Kharif

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In spite of the Coronavirus at its virulent form in villages, farmers did not develop cold feet and raised crops in 1.33 crore acres in Kharif season.

Apart from this, vegetables, fruits, turmeric, red chillies, oil palm and other horticultural crops have been raised in 9.72 lakh acres.

The agriculture department has made it clear that cultivation of crops to such extent was unheard earlier.

The Coronavirus pandemic has caused hurdles to farming activities. Earlier, the agriculture workers used to travel en masse to fields on tractors. Now, the farmers feel that their input costs increased as they have to provide transport facility to agriculture workers in smaller vehicles.

Harvesting of the Kharif crops is likely to begin next



month. The officials in the agriculture department say that finding workers and transportation of harvested crops would become a major problem.

The agriculture department has said that paddy harvesters are available in the state. But there is no machinery to pluck

cotton. Lakhs of agriculture workers are needed since the area under cotton crop has increased during the kharif phenomenally.

According to Goverdhan Yadav, a farmer from Dhanora village in Adilabad district, agriculture workers from neighbouring Maharashtra are

not willing to travel to bordering Adilabad and Mancherial districts.

It is customary for the agriculture workers to arrive here from Maharashtra to take part in agriculture operations in bordering districts in Telangana. Agriculture works have been delayed as the work-

ers from Maharashtra did not arrive here over the fear of contracting the Coronavirus. In spite of the problem, he said that he raised turmeric in three acres, ginger in two acres, chillies in two acres, soya beans in six acres and cotton in 40 acres.

Similarly, another farmer from Gurrampodu village of Nalgonda district Velugu Yadaiah said that the farmers faced difficulties as shops remained closed during lockdown period. The shopkeepers were highly irregular in opening shops. Even if they open shops, they sold goods at higher prices. Somehow, he and other farmers managed to procure all necessary inputs and overcame the shortage of workers and cultivated lands. He said that the farmers would be happy provided they get good price for their harvested crops.

Telangana sees more Covid recoveries than fresh cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

More people recovered from Covid-19 than the new cases reported in Telangana during the last 24 hours, officials said on Tuesday.

A total of 2,259 people recovered from the pandemic while 2,072 were found infected by the virus.

Nine more people succumbed to Covid, pushing the death toll to 1,116.

The fatality rate in the state dipped marginally to 0.58 per cent against the national average of 1.57 per cent.

With fresh cases, the state's tally mounted to 1,89,283, of which 29,477 are active. These include 23,934 who are in home/institutional isolation.

The number of recoveries so far mounted to 1,58,690. The recovery rate has gone up further to 83.83 per cent against the national average of 82.88 per cent.

After the week-end drop in the number of tests, the authorities tested 54,308 sam-



ples including 23,895 primary contacts.

With this the state has so far tested 29,40,642 samples. According to a media bulletin released from the office of the director of public health and family welfare, samples tested per million population improved further to 79,206. It says the daily testing target for the state is 5,600 per day as per the WHO benchmark of 140 per million per day.

A total of 17 government-run laboratories, 43 private laboratories and 1076 rapid anti-

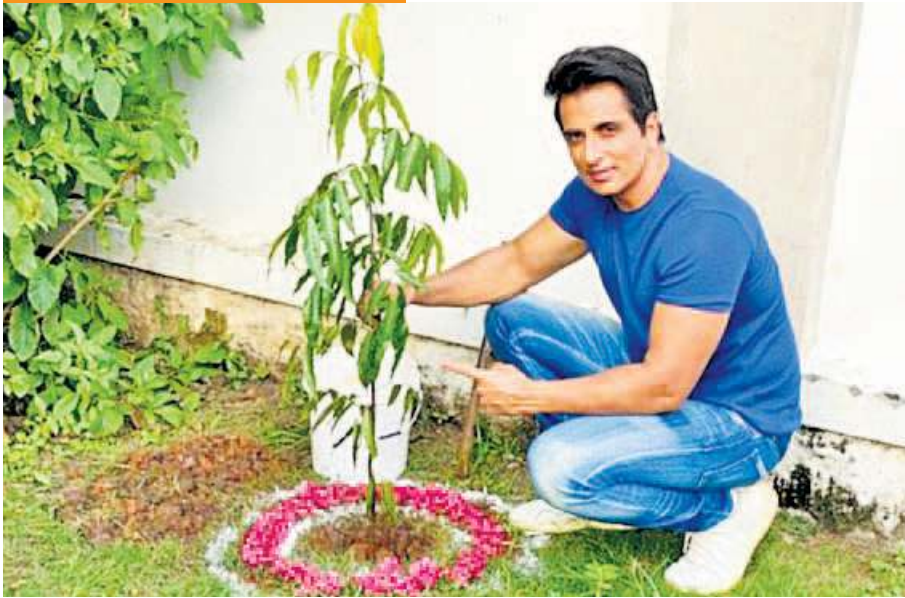
gen test centres are conducting the tests.

Out of 1,89,283, 70 per cent (1,32,498) are asymptomatic while the remaining 30 per cent (56,785) are symptomatic.

The data also shows that 64.13 per cent of those tested positive are in the age group of 21-50 years while 22.76 are above 51 years of age. Those below 20 years are 13.13 per cent.

Officials said 64.28 per cent of those tested positive were male while the remaining 38.72 per cent were female.

GREEN DRIVE



Actor Sonu Sood, who is often dubbed as the 'messiah of migrants' for his philanthropic work, participated in the Green India challenge by planting a sapling in the Ramoji Film City on Tuesday

SCR to run spl trains for UPSC candidates

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The South Central Railway (SCR) zone's Vijayawada division will operate two special trains between Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam to facilitate civil services examination candidates to appear for the exam.

"In order to facilitate the candidates attending Union Public Service Examination (UPSC), SCR will run two special trains between Vijayawada - Visakhapatnam - Vijayawada," said a railway zone spokesperson.

Train number 07233 from Vijayawada to Visakhapatnam will depart Vijayawada at 3 p.m. on Saturday and arrive at Visakhapatnam at 10 p.m. on the same day.

Likewise, the return train bearing the number 07234 will depart Visakhapatnam at 8:30 p.m. on Sunday and arrive at Vijayawada at 4 a.m. on Monday.

Enroute, the special trains will halt at eight stations, Eluru, Tadepelligudem, Nidadavolu, Rajamundry, Samarakota, Tuni, Anakapalli and Duvvada.

The civil services examination has been scheduled on Sunday. In a separate development, the railway zone restored train halts at several places in the southern state.

"Consequent upon permission of AP state government to restore stoppages, SCR has decided to restore the stoppages which were eliminated earlier," said an official.

Jagga Reddy: Cong will be stronger with new in-charge

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MLA from Sangareddy has opined that the Congress party will become strong with the decisions of new Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore.

He exuded confidence that he got confidence that the party would form government in Telangana in 2023 elections.

Jagga Reddy said that Manickam Tagore had not warned him of his absence in the Core Committee meeting; however, the media and social media misinterpreted his meeting with Tagore.

SWACHH BHARAT

Hat-trick by Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister E Dayakar Rao has said that Telangana achieved hat-trick by winning first prize three times in a row in implementing Swachh Bharat.

In the category of districts, the Karimnagar district ranked number three in the country, he said.

He attributed the success to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao implementing Palle Pragati and Pattana Pragati programmes in the state.

He thanked KCR for implementing cleanliness programmes in villages and towns and the Centre, for announcing the awards. The Centre annually presents awards under Swachh Bharat.

Deputy director in the

department of water and sanitation Yugal Joshi said that Telangana ranked number one in the country in the implementation of the Sundar Samudayak Suchalaya campaign, Samudayak Sauchalay Abhiyan and Gandagi Mukh Bharat campaign implementation. Joshi sent a letter in this regard to panchayat raj department. The letter also indicated that Karimnagar district ranked number three in the country in implementation of the campaigns, he added.

The awards would be given away to the state on October 2. Union Jal Sakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekawat will distribute the awards in virtual mode. Panchayat Raj secretary Sandeep Kumar Sultanania will receive the award.

Vinod Kumar selected to TISS advisory council

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Planning Board Vice-Chairman B Vinod Kumar has been appointed member of the advisory council of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). Vinod will hold the position for two years.

Director of Hyderabad Campus Professor Shalini Bharat announced the decision of TISS Chairman S Ramadorai here on Tuesday. According to a statement, Vinod was selected for the position considering his years of experience in administration and his present post of Vice-Chairman of the State Planning Board.

The TISS was established in 1936 as Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work.

KTR: Bathukamma sarees to be delivered at doorstep

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of the Covid pandemic, the state government is going to take up door-to-door distribution of Bathukamma sarees to the beneficiaries from October 9 ahead of Bathukamma festival celebrations to begin on October 17. The sarees will be distributed through local women groups under the supervision of District Collectors.

Along with Ministers P Sabitha Indra Reddy and Satyvathi Rathod, Textiles Minister KT Rama Rao inspected the display of Bathukamma sarees at Haritha Plaza hotel in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

Handlooms and Textiles Director Shailaja Ramaiyer and other officials accompanied them.

Elaborating that all the religions are treated equally by the Telangana government, KTR



said that sarees are being distributed by the government during Dussehra, Ramzan, and Christmas.

The state government is spending Rs 317.81 crore to distribute about one crore sarees among women aged above 18 years and having white ration cards. A total of 99 lakh sarees will be distributed this time.

Speaking on the occasion, KTR said the state government

had spent about Rs 1,033 crore to distribute four crore Bathukamma sarees over the past four years since its launch in 2017.

About 30 lakh metres of cloth was produced by thousands of weavers through 26,000 powerlooms in the state.

He stated that the Education Department is ordering government school uniform to powerloom weavers.

SRSP discharges 127 tmc of water into sea

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

The Sri Ram Sagar Project (SRSP), which is considered as boon for the entire northern Telangana districts has discharged over 127 tmc into the sea in just 15 days as the project received over 1,00,000 to 1,50,000 cusecs due to the heavy rains in the upper reaches of the project in Maharashtra. The inflows guarantee second crop in at least five districts.

The irrigation department officials put the total inflows



into the project since the monsoon season commencement on June 1 was 234 tmc.

The SRSP, whose storage capacity was limited to 90 tmc, has been discharging

water into Godavari river. The project's flood canal empties the flood water in Mid-Maneru reservoir. Similarly, the authorities release excess water to Kakatiya, Saraswati and

Lakshmi canals.

The Bhabli project gates in Maharashtra will remain open till October 29 suggesting that the SRSP will receive inflows even in October.

The silt formation in the SRSP has reduced the storage capacity to 90 tmc from 112 tmc.

The project received inflows of 14.77 tmc in 2014-15, 4.42 tmc, the least, in 2015-16, 254 tmc in 2016-17, 85 tmc in 2017-18 and 87 tmc in 2019-20 and 234 tmc so far during 2020-21.

Cong: EVMs, ballot papers are risky amid Coronavirus

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TPCC Election Commission Coordination Committee chairman Marri Shashidhar Reddy has opined that both ballot papers and EVMs have equal chance of further spreading the Coronavirus infection, hence they are not risk free.

Shashidhar Reddy said that the party leaders held a meeting with the State Election Commissioner on September 25 in connection with the letter to all political parties, to elicit their views on whether to conduct GHMC elections using EVMs or ballot paper.

Since the SEC did not provide any note with the pros and cons of both the options, "We requested them to do so. However, they did not respond to this. Meanwhile, we got in touch with experts who were responsible for managing the H1N1 pandemic in 2008," he said.

With September 30 being the deadline for the political parties to respond to the SEC, the Congress party will have a meeting on September 30 at 11 am along with members of the TPCC core committee and senior leaders to decide about the party's stand after weighing both the options on the basis of expert advice obtained, Shashidhar Reddy said.

‘Revenue Act is a boon to farmers’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Forests, Environment, Endowments and Housing Allola Indrakaran Reddy termed that the new Revenue Act as a boon to the agrarian community and woes of farmers would be a thing of past. He was addressing participants of a thanksgiving bullock cart and tractor rally taken out by farmers at Narnoor mandal centre on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Indrakaran Reddy asserted that Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had brought the Revenue Act for eradicating land disputes and encroachments of properties belonging to weaker sections and corruption by certain officials of the revenue department.

He said that farmers were forced to move from pillar to post, seeking mutations and minor corrections in the rev-

enue records. "The ordeals of the farmers would end soon with the advent of the Act. And, the menace of the corruption will be rooted out. Various transactions relating to lands can easily be done online."

The time involved in getting the records is going to be drastically reduced. The move to abolish the system of Village Revenue Officers was historic. It will usher in a new era," he remarked.

‘Dharani portal not user-friendly’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The IT experts are finding it difficult to link the Dharani portal with the Computer-aided Registration Department of Telangana. The portal is described as not user friendly as far as the issue of encumbrance certificates.

The state government suspended registration of lands and other properties on September 7. On September 19, the state government passed the New Revenue Act - Telangana Land Rights, Pattadar Passbooks Act - 2020.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to integrate the Dharani portal with the card. But the experts find that the Dharani portal is not user-friendly.

Meanwhile, the IT experts are leaving no stone unturned to overcome the technical problems.

Earlier, the government has decided to include agricultural and non-agricultural lands in the website separately.

The Chief Minister has also



asked the officials concerned to update the portal accordingly.

When technical problems were taken to the Chief Minister's notice, he asked the experts to take their own time, but to develop the portal without any glitches.

On experimental basis, registration of lands in two mandals of Vikarabad district is going on. The official machinery is understood to have not analysed the performance of the website though the registration is under way since two years. In 2018 itself, technical problems surfaced while inclusion of lands from webland and

Ma Bhumi website in Dharani portal.

It was complained that Dharani portal was not user-friendly. However, the government inclined to continue with the services of the portal.

Mainly the problems pertain to checking encumbrance certificates.

In the portal, Telugu alphabets were found along with survey numbers. The card displays English alphabets A, B, C and D and others along with survey numbers. The official machinery is involved headlong in rectifying the discrepancies.

A committee has been appointed to resolve the technical problems. The committee says that the glitches can be overcome within a week. But it is evident that it is not that easy to resolve the problems.

Once the technical problems were fixed, training programme on registrations and mutations should be given for five days.

After cleansing of land records, tahsildars observed that at least 3,000 mistakes crept in land records correction in each mandal. The process to rectify them was deserted half way. In each revenue village, 10 per cent of the land records show discrepancies in area of the land. If there are discrepancies between survey numbers and land records registering the lands and performing mutations was ruled out. The software does not allow registrations and mutations to take place. Several express the view that a special drive should be conducted to rectify the defects over a period of six months.

Oppn wants only middlemen to thrive, not farmers: Modi

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In a scathing attack on those opposing the new farm laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said they wanted only the middlemen to thrive and referred to the burning of tractor by Congress workers as an insult to farmers.

"They are opposing the freedom of farmers and want their problems to continue forever. By torching farming equipment, which the agriculturists worship, these people are now insulting farmers," he said without naming the Congress.

The Congress' youth wing activists on Monday morning set a tractor ablaze near India Gate, a few hundred metres from the Rashtrapati Bhavan and Parliament, to protest the contentious farm laws.

Modi said the opposition has only one way of doing politics in the country and that is by opposing things.

Terming it "opposition for the sake of opposition", the prime minister said that by

Modi said the opposition has only one way of doing politics in the country and that is by opposing things.

opposing big reformative steps by the Centre such as the farm laws, these forces were making themselves irrelevant in the society and in the country. He accused the opposition of opposing everything from GST, One Rank One Pension, Rafale deal, Statue of Unity, 10 per cent reservation for the poor and celebration of November 26 as Samvidhan Diwas.

He said that this politics of the opposition for opposition's sake was the root of the frustration of a party which had ruled for four generations.

"Frustration of a party which has ended up riding the shoulders of others despite wielding power for four generations is behind this politics



of the opposition for opposition's sake, Modi said.

He said none of the leaders of the political party had till date visited the Statue of Unity, built to honour the memory of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel whose contribution to unifying the country is well known. "Why? Because they had to oppose," he said.

He said people had seen for themselves the role Jan Dhan accounts played in direct benefit transfer schemes during the coronavirus pandemic and

they could also remember how it was opposed while being introduced by the Centre.

Without naming the Congress, he accused it of being neither with the farmers nor with the youth nor the soldiers and recalled that the party had demanded proof of surgical strikes instead of praising the bravehearts who carried out the exercise. He also recalled how it opposed the purchase of Rafale fighter jets.

Farm laws have to be opposed for country's future, says Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said the new farm laws will have to be opposed not just for farmers but for the future of the country, as he alleged that they were like a "stab in the farmers' hearts".

Interacting with a group of farmers from across the country, he said the GST and the noteban were also attacks on farmers, but these three laws will prove to be more detrimental.

Gandhi also claimed that the new farm laws will foster an East India company-like culture and this time, a "West India company" has come in.

"There is no difference between GST, noteban and these three laws. The only difference is that this is directly stabbing your heart with a knife," he said during the virtual meeting with the group of farmers.

"But I have clarity that this has to be opposed. Not for farmers, but for the future of India," he told the farmers in a nearly 11-minute long video shared on social media.



The Congress has opposed the new farm laws and party leaders and workers are protesting across the country, even as farmers' unions have launched a stir in Punjab and Haryana.

"The voice of farmers has a lot of strength. It is with the help of this voice that India attained independence and once again India will become independent through the farmers' voice," Gandhi said.

The former Congress chief said he had seen in Uttar Pradesh's Bhatta Parsaul village during his padyatra in 2011 that big businessmen wanted the farmers' land as well as their farm produce.

"The first fight I fought was

of land acquisition and the entire media attacked me," he said.

"They said this is a fight against black money but it was not true. The purpose was to weaken our unorganised sector and the poor, farmers and labourers," Gandhi alleged.

Talking to him, Dhirender Kumar, a farmer from Champaran in Bihar, said farmers are being exploited in the name of these laws and they will be forced to commit suicide due to hunger.

He said the 2006 bill abolishing the APMC Act in Bihar should be brought back and be implemented in the state once again.

Ashok Bootra from Yavatmal in Maharashtra feared that no one would buy the farm produce at minimum support price (MSP).

"I feel any farmer who protests will be put in jail. In 1840, the East India company used to put out the price of cotton from England and the entire world would buy at that rate. But the businessmen would know of the price in advance," he said.

SHORT READS



Guj: 3 labourers killed in building collapse in Vadodara

Ahmedabad: Three labourers were killed after a three-storey under-construction building collapsed in Gujarat's Vadodara city in the early hours of Tuesday, an official said. Besides, one labourer was rescued from the debris, fire officer Amit Chaudhary said.

The under-construction building collapsed around 12.30 am in Bavamanapura area of Vadodara, located around 110 km from Ahmedabad, he said.

"Three labourers, including a woman, died in the collapse, while the fire brigade managed to pull out one labourer alive," the official said.



Three held in IPL betting racket bust

Sambhal: Three members of a gang betting on Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket matches were arrested from Chandausi area here, police said on Tuesday.

The arrests were made from a house in Kayasthan locality under Chandausi Kotwali police station area on Monday night, SP Yamuna Prasad said. Those arrested have been identified as Rohit, Jishan and Lakhman Singh, he said, adding 12 mobile phones, three calculators, diary, register and Rs 1,875 were recovered from them.



Bhim Army protests at Safdarjung Hospital

New Delhi: Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad and his supporters held a protest on Tuesday at Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital, where a 19-year-old woman from Uttar Pradesh's Hathras died days after being gang-raped, demanding the culprits be sentenced to death.

The Dalit woman succumbed to her injuries Tuesday morning. At the protest, the Bhim Army chief said, "I appeal to all members of the Dalit community to take to the streets and demand death penalty for the guilty. The government should not test our patience. We won't rest until the culprits are hanged."

Azad had earlier demanded that the Uttar Pradesh government shift the woman to AIIMS for better treatment. "The state government is equally responsible for the death of our sister," he alleged.

The woman was gang-raped a fortnight ago. The accused had tried to strangle her to death as she resisted their rape attempt and in the process, she had also ended up biting her tongue and suffering a severe cut on it. The four accused have been arrested.

Maha tribals can now build houses near forest areas

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari on Tuesday issued a notification modifying the Forest Rights Act, 2006 that will enable tribals and other traditional forest dwellers to "build houses in the neighbourhood forest areas". It will prevent migration of those living in forests and provide them housing areas by extending the village site into forest land in their

neighbourhood, a statement issued by the Raj Bhavan said.

The notification has been issued by the governor using his powers under sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 5 of Schedule V of the Constitution. This will "enable the forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest-dwelling families to build houses in the neighbourhood forest areas," the statement said. The decision will provide a major relief to the scheduled

tribes (STs) and others living in forests in the scheduled areas of the state, it said.

During his visits to Palghar, Nandurbar, Gadchiroli and other districts having scheduled areas, it came to the governor's notice that certain STs and forest-dwelling families in the scheduled areas were moving out of their native villages and migrating elsewhere in the absence of housing areas for their growing families, it said.

13 held for charging money for entry into J-K

PNS ■ JAMMU

Thirteen people have been arrested for illegally charging labourers from outside Jammu and Kashmir on the pretext of facilitating their "smooth entry" into the Union Territory, police on Tuesday.

A probe has also been instituted against some policemen, including an assistant sub-inspector, after it came to light that they tried to allow entry of people from the second bridge over Ravi river in violation of the set protocol, Senior Superintendent of Police,



Kathua, Shailendra Kumar Mishra said.

"The entry to Jammu and Kashmir from outside is being allowed under certain guidelines as part of the efforts to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus... We came to

know that some mischievous elements, taking advantage of the situation, are misleading J&K-bound labourers in Punjab and charging from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 per head," Mishra told reporters in Kathua.

Cautioning the labourers against the touts, he said there is no need to pay money to anyone as everyone wishing to enter Jammu and Kashmir has to follow the set protocol and undergo COVID-19 test, which is done at Lakhampur free of cost.

"The touts used to approach

the labourers on their arrival in Pathankot since the interstate bus service is suspended and make them believe that their entry into the UT is impossible without their help," the SSP said, adding the frightened labourer fell prey to them and thus ending up losing their hard-earned money.

The rush sometimes used to increase on the Lakhampur corridor as it was only entry point into J&K before the opening of Atal Setu recently and taking advantage of this, the mischievous elements made it a source of income.



SI arrested for 'shooting at friend, killing father-in-law'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested its sub-inspector Sandeep Dahiya who allegedly shot at and injured his female friend here and later killed his father-in-law in Rohtak, officials said on Tuesday.

"Sandeep Dahiya has been arrested. He was picked up from Rohini. He is being interrogated and will be produced before the magistrate concerned," a senior police official said.

Dahiya, 35, was posted at Lahori Gate police station from December 21, 2017.

According to the Delhi Police, Dahiya had allegedly shot at his woman friend on Sunday during a quarrel with her in his car in north Delhi's Alipur area.

Another Delhi Police sub-inspector, Jaiveer, posted at Shahbad Dairy police station, had spotted the woman lying on the side of the road while he was crossing the Sai Mandir on the G T Karnal road and had taken her to a nearby hospital.

'Will fight against farm laws on all fronts'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh extended his government's full support to the agitating farmers on Tuesday and assured them of all possible legal and other steps to fight the "draconian new farm laws", including a special session of the Assembly to discuss and decide the way forward.

Singh said the Punjab government stands in full support of the farmers in these "dark and difficult times".

Chairing a meeting with the representatives of 31 farmers' unions here to take their views on the matter, the chief minister said he would be discussing the issue with his legal team



later in the day to finalise the next steps, including challenging the farm laws in the Supreme Court.

Besides the farmer representatives, All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary in-charge of Punjab Harish Rawat attended the meeting, along with state min-

isters Sukhjinder Randhawa and Bharat Bhushan Ashu, MLA Rana Gurjit Singh, state Congress chief Sunil Jakhar and the state's Advocate General, Atul Nanda, an official statement said.

"We will take all possible steps to counter the Union government's assault on the state's

federal and constitutional rights and fight for the interests of the farmers," the chief minister told the farmer representatives.

Singh made it clear that his government has no qualms about convening an Assembly session if that is the best course in the current circumstances.

Asserting that the Centre had no right to enact these laws as it amounted to "violation" of the Constitution and an attack on the federal structure, the chief minister said his government shares the concerns of the farmers and will do "whatever it takes to scuttle the Union government's attempt to ruin the farming community with these draconian legislations".

Victims of Mumbai terror attacks yet to get justice

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has said that the victims of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks and the 2016 Pathankot strike are yet to get justice because of the "unwillingness" and "non-cooperative" attitude of a particular country, in a clear reference to Pakistan.

At a virtual ministerial meeting of the 'Group of Friends of Victims of terrorism', India has strongly pitched for concerted global actions to effectively deal with terrorism and said it continues to pose a critical threat to international peace and security even in

the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

Representing India at the meeting on Monday, Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Vijay Thakur Singh also called for "redressing deficiencies" in the international efforts to ensure that perpetrators of terrorism are brought to justice.

"I would like to highlight that, for example, the victims of 2008 Mumbai terror attack and 2016 Pathankot terror attack are yet to get justice. This is due to the unwillingness and non-cooperative attitude of a particular country," Singh said.

No hope left from insensitive govt: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh Yadav on Tuesday condoled the death of the Hathras gangrape victim, and said "no hope" is left from the "insensitive government".

"A dalit daughter, who was victim of gangrape and brutality ultimately died. I condole her death. No hope is left with present insensitive government," Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi.

A 19-year-old Dalit woman from Hathras died at Safdarjung hospital in Delhi on Tuesday morning.

Manager of lab in Kerala held for issuing 'fake' Covid certificates

PNS ■ MALAPPURAM

A manager of a private lab in Valanchery in the district was arrested on Tuesday for allegedly issuing fake COVID-19 negative certificates to those travelling to various Middle East countries.

Arma lab in Valanchery, a franchise of a Kozhikode-based reputed Laboratory, allegedly collected lakhs of rupees from people for conducting test for coronavirus, police said. The lab in Valanchery also allegedly issued fake COVID-19 negative certificates to around 2,000



people without actually testing their samples at the Kozhikode-based laboratory, which was given license by ICMR to conduct test for COVID-19. As per the agreement between the labs, the Valanchery-based Arma lab has been designated as an agency to collect samples,

which will be sent to the Kozhikode-based laboratory for testing.

Police said the Arma lab authorities, who had allegedly collected 2,500 samples in the past few months, did not send all of them to the Kozhikode-based laboratory for testing. "Instead they had sent only about 500 samples for testing and issued fake COVID-19 negative certificates in about 2000 cases. The Arma lab authorities made 'fake' letter heads of the Kozhikode-based laboratory and issued the COVID-19 certificates.

Linked private company under ED probe, not Amnesty NGO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is no ED investigation against Amnesty International India Foundation, which on Tuesday declared halting its operations in the country, but against a private company linked to the NGO that allegedly received dubious export proceeds worth over Rs 51 crore, government sources said.

They said the Enforcement Directorate, a federal probe agency to check money laundering and forex violation



crimes, is investigating two entities -- Amnesty

International India Pvt Ltd and Indians for Amnesty International Trust.

Both are being probed under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and under the civil proceedings of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), they said.

The agency had issued a show-cause notice to Amnesty International India Pvt Ltd last September for alleged contravention of FEMA to the tune of over Rs 51 crore.

Caught in Covid worries, the future is too far from their thoughts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Carrying bricks and cement by day and jerry cans of water when their shifts get over, the workday continues without end for thousands of pregnant labourers forced to live life on the precipice with little time to spare on thoughts of what the future holds -- for themselves or their unborn child.

Uncertainty has always been a subtext of their lives and the pandemic has only sharpened it. But thoughts of COVID-19 and the risks of stepping out to work as the disease rages are a luxury for these women, many of them migrants eking out a precarious existence as construction workers hundreds of miles from home.

Some like Marjina, who is seven months pregnant, have taken a loan to tide over the difficult times when jobs and money are both scarce, others like Lalitha, approaching full-term pregnancy, continue to work with truncated wages because they have no other choice.

Living in slums that have come up in the shadows of the high-rise buildings they are helping construct in Raj Nagar Extension in Delhi's satellite town of Ghaziabad, the women know that regular doctor visits and medical checkups are not on the anvil at a time when



even two square meals are difficult.

They are lucky to just find work when they can, say the women, most in their 20s or even younger and in frail health after multiple pregnancies at a young age.

Recounting her day, 27-year-old Marjina said she gets up earlier in the morning, cooks, finishes the household work and heads to the construction site with her eight-year-old

daughter Marish and husband Mazru. The family eats just once a day.

She gets tired but there is no option. "I have been working with my husband for six years. We always had two meals a day but can't afford it any more," Marjina told PTI.

While Marjina makes Rs 250 a day, her husband gets Rs 300. "We have cut down our meals to one a day because we have taken a loan from a relative and need to repay it," she said. Living one day at a time as jobs dwindle, the women are forced to step up to help their husbands bring in money and there is little thought for what will happen tomorrow.

Another silent Nirbhaya

Dalit girl from Hathras dies after being brutally gang-raped. Where are the deterrent laws and action? Will we have to wait years again?



The “*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*” campaign is being slandered with each passing day as it becomes a “*Beti Hatao, Beti Darao*” mission in reality, with heinous crimes against the girl child and women going up every day across the country. So it is that just two days after Daughter’s Day, a 19-year-old Dalit girl was brutally gang-raped in Uttar Pradesh’s Hathras district. In a chilling throwback to the Nirbhaya case and the incident in Hyderabad not so long ago, the girl was left with her tongue cut out, ostensibly to prevent her from testifying. Her legs were bruised so severely and her spine was so lethally battered that she was completely paralysed while her arms could just about register a movement. Still she fought for her dear life over 15 days in hospital but gave up despite being brought to Delhi’s AIIMS. Yet there was no outcry for the last fortnight till she became just another cold statistic. Nobody mourned a young life snuffed out in its prime due to caste-based hatred, sexual depravity and a deteriorating law and order situation, particularly in the Hindi heartland. Exacerbating the situation, as usual, were the poorly conducted investigations and a slow justice system. The conviction rate for rape is only 27.2 per cent despite the fact that it accounts for 11.5 per cent of the total crime statistics. On an average, 91 rapes were reported every single day across India in 2018, according to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data. The Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) says that trial in rape cases should be completed in 60 days but that never happens because of the tardiness of police investigations. Then there are judicial flaws that need to be plugged when it comes to rape, the primary being bail to the accused, which should be denied till the probe is completed. Some independent studies indicate that the average time of finishing trial even in fast track courts is eight months. And even if one were to get death penalty, acquittals, appeals and mercy petitions mean that only about five per cent death penalties are actually upheld by the Supreme Court. A traumatised rape survivor hardly has the courage to go through such travesty and gives up midway. The 2012 Nirbhaya rape, which shook the conscience of not just the nation but the world, too, compelled our parliamentarians to strengthen the punitive justice delivery system based on the recommendations of a committee that included eminent jurists. It led to some crucial amendments to the law, which included changing the very definition of “rape”, the establishment of fast-track courts to ensure victims get justice without undue delay, harsher punishments for the accused with the provision of death sentence being added to it and the abolition of the two-finger test among others. Two other such incidents, in Kathua and Unnao, where two children were raped, had widened the scope of punishment for raping a child under 12 to death penalty. Undoubtedly, there has been an increase in reportage of crimes against women after Nirbhaya though much of them are still under-reported. Besides, as the Hyderabad incident has shown, question marks remain on the use of the death penalty as criminals are now murdering their victims to destroy evidence. For the criminal, there is no deterrent. But yes, he can be stalled if deterrence is built into the system by fast-tracking procedures and ensuring swift justice. Conviction rates need to go up proportionately. At present, fast-track courts are no different from the usual courts in terms of case pile-ups and vacancies. A quick, fair and unbiased judicial set-up with requisite number of judges is a *sine qua non*. A continuously responsive system is a bigger deterrent than one or two landmark rulings.

The unchecked crimes against women and the girl child are also skewering gender equity in the rural hinterland. According to a study supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), that was conducted in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, the increasing crimes against women have deepened preferences for a son. So much so that we have lost around 4,60,000 girls to sex selection at birth each year between 2013 and 2017, according to the UNFPA. When errands go scot-free and the woman’s family is left to wallow in pain and shame, a malaise becomes a societal archetype. And the girl child will continue to be vulnerable, either used as a tool in a caste war as the rapists in Hathras belonged to the upper caste, a sacrifice in a revenge drama or a family feud or a life cheap enough to be pawned by male-dominated codes. Predictably, there is a political slugfest over this latest incident, with the Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) slamming the BJP Government in UP for the sorry plight of law and order in the State. Their protests will once again be tainted by the ruling party as “crocodile tears” and a “political conspiracy” to “defame the Government.” The Opposition will predictably make the rape a subset of excesses on Dalits. But neither the Opposition nor the ruling party was there for the girl when she was writhing in hospital for a fortnight. And much to the shame of India’s most populous State, nobody wants to roll back UP’s unique distinction of reporting the highest crime spiral against women. As for justice, will we have to wait another seven years?

Amnesty shuts shop

The human rights watchdog may have looked at India through a Western prism but can we dispute its findings on Delhi riots?



The trouble with human rights watchdogs is that they have, by virtue of countering the establishment narrative, assigned themselves a certain kind of legitimacy and credibility without realising that some of their own investigations are compromised by subjective assessment rather than objective investigation. This has also been a problem with Amnesty International, which has many times been accused of looking at India through a Western prism. But as a robust democracy, we have it within ourselves to accept vilification and acknowledge cogent counterpoints. We shouldn’t need lobbyists to get the other side of the story; our media should be free to do that. Besides, by and large, the organisation has an international acceptability even if we take some of its reports with a pinch of salt. But by targetting Amnesty, which says it is now forced to shut shop in India because the Government has completely frozen its bank accounts here, we appear to be in the bracket of oppressor and authoritative regimes like China. And considering its activists have been particularly penalised for tracking dissent pan-India over the last two years, it gives them a moral upper hand and claim a witch-hunt. The reasons that the organisation lists behind the Government crackdown on it are the same as those cited by tormented civil society activists — namely “unequivocal calls for transparency in the Government, more recently for accountability of the Delhi police and the Government of India regarding the grave human rights violations in Delhi riots and Jammu & Kashmir.” Frankly, even without the Amnesty’s reports, there is far too much on-ground evidence of the charges it has made. And the way the disclosure statements and names in the chargesheet of the Delhi Police on the city riots have been circled out, targetting the liberal intelligentsia, protesters and activists while leaving out the inflammatory fringe Rightists, there is a move to freeze the right of democratic dissent. So the timing of its India exit suits Amnesty more than us at this point of time.

It would have made more sense had the Government zeroed in on Amnesty in 2016, when it was booked in a sedition case for allowing “anti-India” slogans on Kashmir at an event in Bengaluru. But to pursue it for violating foreign funding rules in 2019 obviously raises questions on intent. Amnesty though claims that its India operations have been funded domestically. The immediate context seems to be the report it released last month on the complicity of Delhi police in the riots. Yes we must defend our pluralism and challenge the official narrative. But by hounding out Amnesty, we have a public relations battle ahead. Nothing will happen to it. Nothing would have if it had been allowed to continue.

opinion06

New agricultural paradigm

The end of socialist-era impediments should ideally stimulate increased private sector investment across the value chain and help create jobs



SANDHYA JAIN

The over-hyped green revolution of the late 1960s introduced varieties of dwarf rice and wheat in northern India with a cocktail of chemical fertilisers and pesticides that sucked up groundwater and gradually made it unfit for drinking. The chemicals leached into the soil and water. State-sponsored propaganda about “miraculous yields” extended the phenomenon across the country, ruining soil fertility and the nutritious value of food crops; the impact on public health was noticed by the medical community but all voices were silenced. Today, Gurdaspur-to-Delhi trains are called “Cancer Express”, yet there has been no medical study of the harm caused by chemical agriculture to the health of humans, animals, soil and water resources.

Now, four momentous laws could pave the way for a revolution in which farmers drive the change, with technology playing a supportive role. If the Government repudiates the genetically-modified food crops lobby, India could return to farming methods that do not require costly inputs and force farmers into a vicious cycle of debt (and even suicide).

On September 16, 2020, one day before the three agriculture-related Bills were moved in Parliament, the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020 was passed, bringing all cooperative banks under the purview of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). It means stricter supervision of 1,482 urban and 58 multi-state cooperative banks, with deposits of ₹4.84 lakh crore.

The legislation undermines the strongmen who control the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs), *mandis*, loans and so on in many States. It is noteworthy that large farmers are resisting the new laws; earlier they opposed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) as they had to match wages or lose farm labour. The ongoing COVID pandemic has also improved the bargaining power of farm labourers and added to the bitterness of large farmers.

Often, agents arranged debt-funding for farmers from private moneylenders, who charged usurious interest and enjoyed political heft; such debt has been linked to



farmer suicides in some States.

Simultaneously, the Union Cabinet approved the ₹15,000 crore fund for animal husbandry as part of the *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan* stimulus package and a scheme for interest subvention of two per cent to “*shishu*” loan category borrowers for one year under the *Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana*. These developments form the sub-text of the farm Bills.

The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act 2020 allows sale and marketing of produce outside notified APMC *mandis*. State Governments cannot collect market fee, cess or levy for trade outside the APMC markets; inter-state trade barriers are nixed and provisions have been made for electronic trading of agricultural produce. No licence is needed; anyone with a PAN card can buy directly from farmers. The new system provides a dispute resolution mechanism in case farmers are not paid immediately or within three days.

The APMCs failed as they allowed vested interests to seize the system. States levied cess to earn extra revenue that was not part of the budget and was used for “discretionary” development spending, mostly under the Chief Minister’s orders. As the cess increased, political appointees took charge of the APMCs. Even the Food Corporation of India (FCI) paid cess. Small farmers were bur-

“THE NEW LAWS COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR A REVOLUTION IN WHICH FARMERS DRIVE THE CHANGE, WITH TECHNOLOGY PLAYING A SUPPORTIVE ROLE. IF THE GOVT REPUDIATES THE GENETICALLY-MODIFIED FOOD CROPS LOBBY, INDIA COULD RETURN TO FARMING METHODS THAT DO NOT REQUIRE COSTLY INPUTS”

dened with the cost of transport to take their produce to the *mandis* and deal with middlemen. For instance, waiting outside sugar mills, with heat evaporating the sugar content in the cane, desperate farmers have succumbed to agents (of near-by *mandis*) who arrive miraculously and dictate the price.

Under the new Act, politicians and urban elite farmers will find it difficult to get large “agricultural” incomes *mandi*-certified and pay zero per cent income tax, as payments have to be made against PAN cards.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 regulates contractual farming rules and State APMC Acts. Farmers can make contracts with a corporate entity or wholesaler at a mutually agreed price. The system already exists in 20 States; PepsiCo buys potatoes from 24,000 farmers across nine States. Further, 18 States already permit private *mandis* while Kerala and Bihar don’t have APMC *mandis* at all. More pertinently, the Act prohibits acquiring ownership rights of farmers’ land.

The Centre has funded ₹6,685 crore for the formation of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and the ₹1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF). The FPO will give farmers higher bargaining power while AIF and market reforms serve as additional enablers. They can invest

in farm equipment, infrastructure and build forward market linkages by making agreements with agribusinesses, thus improving access to technology and investment. Maharashtra Sahyadri Farmers Producer Co. Ltd, with 8,000 marginal farmers, exports 16,000 tonnes of grapes every season.

The end of socialist-era impediments should stimulate increased private sector investment across the value chain, creating jobs in logistics service providers, warehouse operators and processing unit staff. The rise of food-processing industries could create non-farm jobs in rural areas.

India processes less than 10 per cent of output (cereals, fruits, vegetables, fish, etc) and loses around ₹90,000 crore annually to wastage. Hopefully, market linkages will motivate farmers to diversify and grow crops such as edible oils and help reduce India’s edible oil import bill that currently stands at over \$10 billion.

Finally, The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 removes excessive control on production, storage, movement and distribution of food commodities; removes cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities, and paves the way for cold chain infrastructure to come up. Previously, control regarding the storage of essential commodities (onions, potatoes, edible oils, jute, rice paddy, sugar) gave draconian powers to authorities to raid “hoarders”, confiscate stocks, cancel licensing and even imprison offenders. This naturally discouraged investment in storage as entrepreneurs feared being prosecuted as “hoarders.” Lack of storage also contributed to volatility in prices as their stability depends on adequate warehousing infrastructure.

Henceforth, the ECA 2020 will be invoked only under extraordinary circumstances such as war, famine, natural calamity of grave nature and extraordinary price rise (100 per cent increase in retail price of horticultural produce over the preceding 12 months, or 50 per cent increase in retail price of non-perishables over the preceding five years).

Dismissing the propaganda that the new laws would end the minimum support price (MSP), the Centre has quietly ordered procurement, effectively nipping the canard that small and marginal farmers would be short-changed. Implementation will be the key.

(The author is a senior journalist. Views are personal)

SOUNDBITE

I think home quarantine can play a role in the future and it’s something that is being considered by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, particularly as we move beyond the phase we’re in now.

Australian PM
—Scott Morrison



There is an undercurrent of painful events — passing away of people, the tragedy of migrants walking home — everything is in the back of my mind.

Artist
—Atul Dodiya



Yogi Adityanath Government kept sitting for eight days. Why was no action taken against the culprits all these days? It was only when the case was highlighted that the administration woke up.

Congress General Secretary
—Priyanka Gandhi



I would say it is a very crucial time for the team and each player should have her own yardstick and must work on raising the bar.

Former hockey player
—Deepika Thakur



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Road to revival?

Sir — The 2015 Assembly elections in Bihar saw the Congress regain a reasonable space in the State legislature. After a gap of 15 years, the party’s tally rose to double digits, as 27 out of 41 candidates in the fray won their seats. But will the grand old party be able to revive itself this time again? The Congress began to lose its support base as it failed to address backward caste aspirations between 1988 and 1990, when four of its Chief Ministers were nominated to the top post only to be pulled down swiftly, giving in to the intra-party caste divides. The support base also suffered massive erosion following the desertion by Muslims after the Bhalgalpur riots in 1989 and Babri Masjid demolition in 1992. However, the electoral prospects for the party seem rather good this time, particularly for its role in mitigating suffering of the migrants and students during the lockdown and its active support to farmers’ protests against the enactment of the three new farm laws. Also, Dalits and Muslims are now mobilising in favour of Congress.

Nihal Raj
Noida

A reminder of the 2012 Delhi gang-rape case

A woman passenger was allegedly gang-raped inside a moving bus for the entire night on September 25. The police found her lying unconscious on Delhi Road in Meerut the next morning and rushed her to the hospital. This comes as a chilling reminder of the harrowing 2012 Delhi gang-rape case when the 23-year-old female medical student, who came to be known as Nirbhaya, was severely assaulted and gang-raped by five men and a juvenile inside a moving bus in South Delhi.

This is the third incident in the last one month in Uttar Pradesh when a woman passenger, on her way to Delhi, was gang-raped on a moving bus and that too by the staff. This highlights how law and order in the State has deteriorated drastically. The victim, according to reports, told the police that she had boarded a bus from Bhaivali bus stand on Friday night. En route, she was given a cold drink which had been spiked after which she lost consciousness and was raped by the driver and the conductor throughout the night.

Stormy affair

Sir — The tussle in the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), relating to the naming of the chief ministerial candidate for the 2021 Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly election, continues with no solution in sight. Both Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O

Panneerselvam, who are chief ministerial hopefuls, have dug in their heels and are slugging it out. Even the five-hour-long meeting of the AIADMK executive council on Monday failed to arrive at a consensus on who will be its chief ministerial candidate. The final decision will be taken on October 7. Hopefully, by then, Palaniswami and Panneerselvam will be able to sort out their dif-

ferences and come to a decision.

CK Subramaniam
Tirumangalam

Battle for the ballot

Sir — The popularity of the ruling Janata Dal (United) and the BJP-led Government, headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, is waning. While Nitish has been under fire for badly handling the

COVID outbreak and the returnee migrants, the BJP has taken on the defensive mode on questions of border security, economic stagnation and farmers’ backlash. This should be enough for the Opposition to challenge the State Government. However, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) and the Congress together have not been able to push the Government on any substantial matter. Being held under exceptional circumstances, the battle for the ballot promises to be a challenging and exciting affair.

Yash Pal Ralhan
Jalandhar

Legal fiction

Sir — The investigation into Sushant Singh Rajput’s death seems to have been sidetracked as officials haven’t been able to find any concrete evidence. It has become a whirlpool of misrepresented facts and concocted lies and sheer entertainment in the name of news, reducing a tragedy into a sensational drama.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

BJP all set to make it alone

It is well within its rights to expand its base and in times to come, go solo as the top brass believes in making the party electorally strong



KALYANI SHANKAR

The saffron party must slowly learn to live without its major allies now that its oldest partner, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), quit the BJP-led NDA alliance on Saturday. The BJP and the SAD had been partners even during the Jan Sangh days. However, with a brute majority in the Lok Sabha, the BJP's attitude now is "go if you want to leave." That is why there are no efforts to mollify miffed allies as it was done during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee era. There was a time in the eighties when it was difficult for the BJP to get allies but today Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in a strong position and hence the alliance partners are not needed by the party anymore.

The BJP had five major allies till two years ago. They were the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Shiv Sena, the SAD, the Janata Dal-United (JD-U) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). With the Bihar elections round the corner, the party is left with only the JD(U) as its major alliance partner now. The others are smaller parties. Out of all these NDA allies, the TDP was the first to leave in March 2018 over the issue of grant of special status to Andhra Pradesh. Soon after the TDP's departure, another one of the oldest allies, the Shiv Sena parted company in October 2019 on the issue of chief ministership in Maharashtra after the Assembly polls. The Sena formed the Government in the State under the Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray with the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) as partners. Now, the SAD too has left on the issue of the controversial farm Bills that were pushed through amid din and allegations of riding roughshod on the objections of the Opposition parties and allies alike.

The only partner the BJP itself dumped was the PDP in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). In any case, the BJP-PDP alliance was an uneasy marriage of convenience and the late PDP chief Mufti Mohammad Sayeed termed it as "an alliance of the North Pole and the South Pole."

The NDA partners had been unhappy with the BJP for long, claiming that they were not consulted or even informed about major issues. "Where is the NDA," asks SAD chief Sukhbir Badal. The relationship under Modi has changed compared to Vajpayee's time when one of the partners was the convener of the NDA while Vajpayee or later Advani were the chairmen of the alliance. There were NDA meetings on important issues. Though Modi has included the representatives of the allies, despite the BJP having a majority in both 2014 and 2019, there is no formal NDA structure now. However, the BJP needed them in the Rajya Sabha for pushing the Bills where it was in a minority.

The BJP, under the leadership of Modi has learnt the art of dividing the Opposition and pushing through even some controversial Bills like the recent farm ones and the earlier Citizenship Amendment Bill. Also, the Punjab elections are in 2022 and the next Lok Sabha polls are even further off, in 2024. Who knows what will happen by then? However, according to insiders, the BJP wants to improve its performance by going solo in the coming polls. The main grouse of the allies is that the BJP, which was the junior partner in Maharashtra and Punjab, has expanded its base in the last six years. Not only has it overtaken the allies, it has become the richest party, too. Notwithstanding the concerns of its partners, the BJP is aggressively pursuing its objective of coming to power in States where it is not in Government. The only aim of the party is to consolidate Hindu voters even further by eating into the votes of its alliance partners. It has a major presence in most big States and is now eyeing the South and the North-East for expansion. The saffron party has replaced the Left in Tripura and edged the Congress out in West Bengal and Odisha as the main challenger to the ruling party.

In the 552-member Lok Sabha, the NDA has 335 seats, of which the BJP alone has 303 representatives. It does not need partners in 334 seats and is dependent on allies in 212 seats. When the BJP came to power in 2014, it had only 23 Rajya Sabha seats but today, it has 87. So far, the party has managed to push even controversial Bills like the bifurcation of J&K and the Citizenship Amendment Bill by dividing the Opposition. The three farm reform Bills, too, were passed similarly.

The Modi regime wants to have ties in which the BJP stands to gain. This has mostly worked in the last six years. The BJP has overtaken the Sena in Maharashtra and in other States too it has improved its electoral chances. It is indeed well within its rights to expand its base and in times to come, go solo as the top brass believes in making the party electorally strong.

Is it not said that in politics there are no permanent friends or permanent enemies? The BJP, too, is banking on the old allies coming back to its fold and new allies joining it. If one looks at the coalition politics, which is practised by both the main parties — the Congress and the BJP — the Congress-led UPA too is not in a good shape.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

THESE (OPPOSITION) PARTIES ARE INSULTING THE FARMERS. THESE REFORMS WILL STRENGTHEN LABOURERS, YOUTH, WOMEN, FARMERS OF THE NATION.
—PRIME MINISTER
NARENDRA MODI

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



EVEN YOUR ALLY OF 24 YEARS, THE SHIROMANI AKALI DAL (SAD) HAS DUMPED YOU (ON THE FARMERS' ISSUE). MODI JJ, IS THE SAD INSULTING FARMERS?
—CONGRESS LEADER
KAPIL SIBAL

Education as revolution

The poor have found innovative ways of helping themselves and visionary leaders from among these communities are nurturing a growing industry of good quality private schools



MOIN QAZI

The state of India's school education continues to be abysmal despite so many high-sounding policy prescriptions being tossed around. There are, however, islands of excellence and even in this bleak landscape there are shoots of green. While Government schools are the mainstay of school education for the poor, some exceptional private schools are affordable even to the extremely marginalised. The accepted wisdom is that private schools serve the privileged; everyone else, especially the underprivileged, requires public schools. This logic is grounded on the assumption that the poor need Government assistance if they are to get a good education. Which helps explain why many school choice enthusiasts believe that the only way the poor can get the education they deserve is through Government schools.

But if we reflect on some of the underprivileged communities, we find these assumptions lacking. The poor have found remarkably innovative ways of helping themselves educationally and visionary leaders from among these communities are nurturing a large and growing industry of good quality private schools. Tikiapara, a sprawling slum in Howrah, is a witness and a willing participant in a quiet revolution led by Mamoon Akhtar that has the potential to turn around the lives of its residents, especially of its children. Mamoon was forced to drop out of middle school because his parents couldn't afford to educate him further. Three decades later, he is the driving force two schools in Tikiapara with 3,000 students, most of them children of unlettered parents. Mamoon's extraordinary journey from a victim to champion of the underprivileged started the day he decided that just because his family couldn't pay for his schooling, he wouldn't forego education. Mamoon's passion helped him overcome his deprivation.

His father was keen that his son get a good education. So he put him in one of the area's leading schools, St Thomas. After his father died, the teenager had to give up his studies and took up a librarian's job at a private school in Tikiapara, supplementing his income by giving private tuitions. Life would have gone on as usual but Mamoon couldn't get over the tragedy he suffered on being forced to lose out on education. The young idealist believed in giving direction to the fire within, not in extinguishing it.

In 1991, he started an informal "school", teaching five to six children in his own house in the Tikiapara slum. Thus began his lifetime romance with education. As the residents of the area became aware of this "school", more and more children started coming and soon there was no place to seat them. The enterprising Mamoon constructed a room on his own 600 square foot plot of land. In that one room, the Samaritan Help Mission School was born with 25 young and eager children flocking to it daily. The good Samaritan stretched his every rupee and canvassed from door to door to raise ₹28,000 per annum (in addition to his own contribution of ₹10,000). The organisation has continued to steadily grow through the years. The catchment area of the school can break the determination of even the greatest optimist but Mamoon is alive and equal to the challenge. The parents come from very poor backgrounds, some are rickshaw-pullers, drug peddlers and daily labourers. But with Mamoon's effort, their dreams of educating their children in an English-medium school has become a reality.

Social responsibility: As an educationist, Mamoon is also sharply aware of his role of a social reformer. Most children come from families afflicted with social maladies, with a large number of them being children of drug peddlers. Mamoon believes that schools should have the right to exclude pupils



TIKIAPARA, A SPRAWLING SLUM IN HOWRAH, IS A WITNESS AND A WILLING PARTICIPANT IN A QUIET REVOLUTION LED BY MAMOON AKHTAR, THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO TURN AROUND THE LIVES OF ITS RESIDENTS, ESPECIALLY OF ITS CHILDREN. MAMOON WAS FORCED TO DROP OUT OF MIDDLE SCHOOL BECAUSE HIS PARENTS COULDN'T AFFORD TO EDUCATE HIM FURTHER. THREE DECADES LATER, HE IS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND A SCHOOL WITH 3,000 STUDENTS, MOST OF THEM CHILDREN OF UNLETTERED PARENTS



only as a last resort and that too, to protect the other children in the class as well as teachers. The excluded children, he avers, can be affected by anxiety, depression and loss of self-worth. There is a decline in their mental health and children become very reclusive. The stress of the exclusion takes its toll on parents, too.

Mamoon knows the pain of deprivation only too well. At a time when there is a widespread practice of pupils being shunted off a school's rolls in order to manipulate its exam results or rankings in league tables — he is doing his every bit to ensure that children remain at school during the day. There are hundreds of pupils who joined his school after being booted out of another one. Taking in as many vulnerable pupils as possible is the core of this teacher's mission. His school is single-handedly ensuring pupils remain on the rolls. There are a number of youngsters who wouldn't be getting an education were it not for the Samaritan Help Mission School. In a world where schools are clearly pushing vulnerable pupils out through the back door with little thought to their next steps and best interests, he is embracing them with a cheerful heart.

With a little help from friends: When he canvassed for help from the community around him, Mamoon reaped a bonus — a strong connect with the community. In 2007, the Samaritan Help Mission School became accredited and recognised by the West Bengal Government. Today, it is a co-educational English-medium school, affiliated to the State Board of Secondary Education, with an enrolment of 1,300. The big thing is that with the school being an English medium one, it makes a major difference to the future prospects of the kids once they go out into the world. However, the odds are stacked against the children of this locality given the inter-generational nature of poverty and the poor developmental outcomes that families face. This impacts the children in many ways. They battle poor academic achievement, inferiority complex, maladjustment, lack of initiative and

an underdeveloped personality. Disheartened and discouraged by financial stress and their own inadequacy, parents are ill-equipped to adequately support their children. Sadly, parents in Tikiapara have little motivation to invest in their children's education. Fortunately, Mamoon's conviction and commitment are unflagging and his enthusiasm is contagious, sending hope in the community.

Some of the students are orphans; some have run away from home; all are underprivileged. The Samaritan Help Mission School charges them a measly ₹5 a year, and that too because the teacher believes that people will not value anything that is free. Funds to run the school come from Mamoon's savings and private donors whose motivation is inspired by the good Samaritan's devotion. This led to an addition to the original school on Mamoon's plot, the IR Belilious Institution on Belilious Road, covering two acres of land bequeathed by a Jewish couple, Rebecca and Isaac Raphael Belilious. The school today has a football field, basketball court, a water body, a two-storeyed school building and a bigger one coming up close by. As a child Mamoon swam there, to later see the water body turn into a municipal garbage dump and the Government school that used to run there become virtually defunct, the whole space go derelict and transform into a den of drug pushers. The land on which the second Samaritan Help Mission School stands had thus been a garbage dump for years until Howrah City Police and the Howrah Municipal Corporation got together to create a conducive atmosphere for Mamoon to expand his initiative. The police helped them (Mamoon and his staff) build a wall, remove encroachments and start a school there.

Creating safe spaces for children at risk: Many children studying in the two schools attest to the fact that they have a fun-filled, interactive and encouraging atmosphere and that the teachers are extremely supportive. Children are engaged in creative activities like sports,

quiz competitions, picnics and recreational programmes in the local parks. Regular cleaning campaigns in Tikiapara are organised in which students, teachers and other volunteers take an active part. Mamoon has also introduced a paramedic course for senior students. His policy of inclusive education has ensured that the constitutional right to primary education is a reality in this slum. There are schools which identify parents who are not well-educated and living in the slum. They are approached informally and told that it "will be difficult for your child to stay" in the hope that the parents agree to move out or home-school their child. But Mamoon's schools are a safe learning haven where no one is shunned — either because of creed, low academic scores or poverty.

Innovative approaches: Mamoon says that the process of teaching and learning is an intimate act that neither computers nor markets can hope to replicate. It is a small wonder then that the technology-centric corporate business model has not worked in reforming the school system as there is simply no substitute for the personal element. There is no substitute for a good teacher and nothing more valuable than quality classroom instruction. But we also need more involved parents to make learning more effective.

The core objective of a school is to provide high-quality instruction: Fostering good excellent teaching and a learning environment in which students can thrive. These schools don't develop randomly on their own; an essential ingredient behind each of these success stories is transformational leadership.

A lot of good programmes got their start when one individual looked at a familiar landscape in a fresh way. What they did was to simply change the fundamental approach to solving problems, and the outcomes have been truly revolutionary. Thus, people only need to summon their will power the way game-changers like Mamoon are doing to bring about change.

(The writer is a well known development professional)

How many child deaths will it take to stop hunger?

The wasted, stunted, anaemic and mentally underdeveloped youth of our country, who barely survived, cannot build a strong nation



AR SINDHU

In the fourth month of the lockdown, the UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) had warned India that if the nation does not seriously address the issue of hunger and malnutrition aggravated due to the shutdown and make proper arrangements for providing adequate nutritional food to underprivileged children, 3,00,000 more kids under the age of five would die within the next six months and make the toll total of around 12-13 lakh this year.

Even before the Coronavirus pan-

demical struck, the situation was quite alarming. In 2018, a whopping 8.8 lakh children under the age of six died in India, says the UNICEF. Nearly half of all our children are underweight, about 45 per cent are stunted (too short for their age), 20 per cent are wasted (too thin for their height), 75 per cent are anaemic and 57 per cent are deficient in Vitamin A. Half of the world's malnourished children live in India.

The rate of malnutrition among India's children is almost five times more than China and double than that in Sub-Saharan Africa, says a World Bank report. A study commissioned by the UNICEF in 2019 had found that over 80 per cent of adolescents in India suffered from hidden malnutrition. This includes deficiency of one or more micronutrients such as iron, folate, zinc, vitamin A, vitamin B12, and vitamin D.

According to the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Mission document of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, out of the total

child births of 2.5 crore annually in India, child survival is only 1.75 crore. Infant mortality is 0.8 crore annually or 80,00,000 children die every year in our country before six months of age. This means that on an average as many as 21,917 children die every day in India. Maternal and child malnutrition is one of the reasons for 68 per cent under-five deaths in India.

What has been the COVID-19 lockdown impact? With job and income loss on a large scale, closing of schools and consequently the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) and Anganwadis that gave hot, cooked meals, a poor Public Distribution System (PDS) and poor implementation of the announced schemes of free rations during the last five months, there is a situation of absolute poverty and hunger in our country that will have a serious impact on the already pathetic nutritional status of our people, especially the children and women.

The UNICEF has estimated that 120 million children living in South

Asian countries, including India, could slip into poverty within the next six months due to the COVID-19 crisis, taking the total number of such kids in the region to 360 million. The UNICEF also warns: "In the worst-case scenario, where health interventions are reduced by around 45 per cent, there could be as much as a 44.7 per cent increase in under-five child deaths and 38.6 per cent increase in maternal deaths per month."

In the last two decades, there have been many dialogues, debates, and legal steps like the Supreme Court Judgment on Right to food Act and so on to address the issue of malnutrition. But the schemes or missions rolled out by respective governments proved to be inadequate. The ICDS, the flagship scheme to address this crisis, has been deprived of funds despite the apex court's judgment for universalisation of the scheme. The fund allocation pattern has been changed to 60:40 in the last few years, putting a major financial burden on the States. With the

ongoing issues of lack of funds in States, things are going to worsen. In addition, there were drastic budget cuts. As an impact, according to the Global Hunger Index 2019, wasting among children in India rose from 16.5 per cent in 2008-2012 to 20.8 per cent in 2014-2018.

The much-acclaimed "Poshan Mission" is just policing of the Anganwadi workers, who are already overburdened with non-ICDS work. Similar is the case of the other schemes like the MDMS and the National Health Mission. At present, despite the warning bells, the announced packages do not address the problem of malnutrition. Moreover, there is an absence of a national composite guideline to address malnutrition at the community level.

To stop further loss of precious lives, there is an urgent need for the Government to show political will to recognise the right to food/nutrition of every citizen of India, make quality infrastructure and basic nutrition ser-

vices schemes like ICDS, MDMS efficient with increased financial allocation, so that the most marginalised and vulnerable are benefitted as well.

The pandemic has shown that the lakhs of community-based women caregivers like the Anganwadi workers and helpers, Accredited Social Health Activists and MDMS workers, are the crucial link between the community and policymakers. Their work must be regularised with minimum wages and social security, as recommended by the 45th Indian Labour Conference. Otherwise whom do we expect to be "skilling" for the 'Make in India' projects? The wasted, stunted, anaemic and mentally underdeveloped youth of our country, who barely survived, cannot build a strong nation. How many more deaths do we need before we realise so many of our children are dying?

(The writer is general secretary, All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers and national secretary of the CITU)



FOREIGN EYE



TEST, TRACE AND TEACH

Final figures on the take-up of UK's university places are not yet known. But predictions that the recruitment of international students would collapse due to COVID have not come true. This worst-case scenario having been avoided, UK's universities must ensure that students get the education they deserve, while obeying pandemic rules put in place. (The Guardian editorial)

SHORT READS



Hindustan Zinc raises Rs 3,520 cr via NCDs

New Delhi: Hindustan Zinc on Tuesday said it has raised Rs 3,520 crore through issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs). The issuer today...approved the allotment of 35,200 rated, listed, unsecured, redeemable, NCDs bearing a face value of Rs 10,00,000 each, aggregating to Rs 35,20,00,00,000 on private placement basis (Issue) by Hindustan Zinc, the company said in a filing to BSE. Hindustan Zinc is a leading zinc-lead miner. It is a subsidiary of Vedanta Ltd which owns 64.9 per cent stake in the company while the Government of India holds 29.5 per cent stake.



OYO's co-living arm offers discounts on monthly rent

New Delhi: Hospitality firm OYO's rental housing arm OYO LIFE on Tuesday said it will offer a 20 per cent discount on monthly rent to its customers starting from the fourth month of their stay. It has also taken several other safety measures at its centres as part of its efforts to attract new clients. OYO LIFE has taken more than 200 buildings from landlords to provide rental housing to working professionals and students. It has presence in nine cities. The company said in a statement that it has launched a distinctive offer of 20 per cent discount on monthly rent starting from the fourth month of the long-term stay.



Etrio raises USD 3 mn from Singapore-based investors

New Delhi: Electric vehicle startup Etrio on Tuesday said it has raised USD 3 million from Singapore-based investors. The Hyderabad-based company said it has raised the capital in Series A round from investors. The group of investors is led by Janardhan Rao, founder of Triumph Global Group - a Singapore headquartered international commodity trading house with a consolidated revenue of over USD 900 million, it added. The investment would fuel the company's foray into new electric vehicles in three-wheelers and bicycle segments, Etrio said. "With this funding, we will strengthen our product portfolio to target B2B logistics platforms for growth with diverse product offerings and more geographical presence," Etrio Co-founder and CEO Deepak MV said. It targets to enter the highly-dense three-wheeler EV market, starting with the cargo segment - aimed at e-commerce logistics space, and then subsequently set up its channel network for driving both passenger and cargo three-wheeler sales across major states in the north and south India, he added.

India looking to store oil overseas in US: Pradhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India, the world's third-biggest oil importer, is exploring storing crude oil in the US and other commercially viable locations to hedge its supply risks, Oil Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Tuesday.

Also, the country has tied up long-term crude oil supplies from the US, Russia and Angola to diversify its import basket beyond its traditional suppliers in the volatile Middle-East.

Speaking at a conference on the 'Energy Security Towards Atmanirbhar Bharat', he said India is now importing crude oil from over 30 countries, including from Africa, North and South Americas as well as Southeast Asia.

"We are also exploring over-



The country has tied up long-term crude oil supplies to diversify its import basket beyond its traditional suppliers

seas crude storage facilities in the US and other commercially viable locations," he said.

India and the US had on July 17 signed a preliminary agreement for cooperating on emergency crude oil reserves, including the possibility of India storing oil in the US emergency stockpile.

The nation currently stores 5.33 million tonnes (about 38 million barrels) of crude oil in

underground storages at three locations on the east and west coast, hardly enough to meet its 9.5 days needs.

The International Energy Agency (IEA) prescribes its members to have at least 90 days of stock in the strategic reserves.

India has been looking to expand the storage capacity by another 6.5 million tonnes Chandikol in Odisha and

Padur in Karnataka and is also exploring the possibility of hiring storage in the US to stock some oil that can be used in times of extreme price volatility or supply disruption.

The nation is as much as 85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil needs. It bought 101.4 million tonnes of crude oil from overseas during April 2019 to March 2020 - two-third of these coming from the Middle East countries such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

"New long-term contracts have been entered into by our companies with their counterparts in the US, Russia and Angola," he said.

Also, the import of gas (in its liquid form or LNG) has been diversified from traditional supplier Qatar to the US, Australia and Russia, he said.

Yamaha hopes sales in North East to grow 5-8% in 2021

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Amidst slump in auto sales due to COVID-19 pandemic, Japanese two-wheeler major Yamaha is expecting its Indian subsidiary to clock 5-8 per cent growth in North East in next year, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The company's wholly-owned subsidiary Yamaha Motor India Sales, which earlier said this year's sales in the Indian market will be the lowest in a decade due to Covid, is hoping that the North East market will continue to grow despite challenges.

Cairn seeks \$1.4 bn in losses from retro tax demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

British oil explorer Cairn Energy Plc on Tuesday said it is seeking from the Indian government USD 1.4 billion (about Rs 10,300 crore) in losses arising from the expropriation of its investments to enforce a retrospective tax demand.

In its half-yearly earnings statement, the company said it expects an international arbitral tribunal to shortly give a decree on its challenge to the Indian government seeking Rs 10,247 crore in retrospective taxes. "The main evidentiary hearing of Cairn's claim under the (UK-India Bilateral



Investment) Treaty took place in August 2018 in The Hague with a final hearing in December 2018. All formal hearings and submissions have now been made and the tribunal is in the process of drafting its award," the firm said. The tribunal, it said, has indicated that "it expects to be in a position to issue the award after the end of the summer of 2020, with no significant delay expected as a result of Covid."

Cairn said it is seeking "full restitution for losses of more than USD 1.4 billion resulting from the expropriation of its investments in India in 2014; continued attempts to enforce retrospective tax measures; and the failure to treat the company and its investments fairly and equitably."

This is the second most high profile tax litigation. Last week, an international arbitration tribunal ruled that India's efforts to claim Rs 22,100 crore in past taxes from Vodafone were in breach of fair treatment under the bilateral investment protection pact between the south Asian nation and the Netherlands.

BPCL's block acquisition under scanner

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI will look into alleged irregularities in state-owned Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd's (BPCL) investment in a gas block in Mozambique, the government's approval to the firm's further spending in the block has recorded, sources said.

The approval to Bharat PetroResources Ltd (BPRL), the oil and gas exploration and production subsidiary of BPCL, investing its share of the USD 24 billion cost of developing the gas fields in the Rovuma Area-1 Offshore Block came with a noting that the CBI will continue to look into alleged irregularities,

Sources said the government is looking into reasons why BPCL did not buy the entire 20 per cent stake offered to it by Anadarko.



sources with direct knowledge of the development said.

BPRL had in August 2008 bought a 10 per cent stake in Area-1 Offshore of the Rovuma Block from the US energy major Anadarko Petroleum Corp for USD 75 million. That same month

Videocon through its subsidiary acquired a 10 per cent stake in the same block for an equivalent sum.

Sources said Anadarko had originally offered a 20 per cent stake in Area-1 to BPCL but the state-owned firm bought only half of it and the rest was

picked up by Videocon.

Videocon in 2013 sold the same stake to ONGC Videsh Ltd for USD 2.475 billion.

Sources said the government is looking into reasons why BPCL did not buy the entire 20 per cent stake offered to it by Anadarko.

Global stocks mixed after Wall St rally ahead of US debate

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Global stocks were mixed Tuesday after Wall Street rallied as investors looked ahead to a debate between President Donald Trump and his challenger in the November election, Joe Biden. London and Frankfurt opened lower while Shanghai and Tokyo advanced.

US stock futures were lower a day after Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index gained 1.6 per cent, boosted by announcements of corporate acquisitions and gains by big

US stock futures were lower a day after Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index gained 1.6 per cent



tech stocks. "This is welcome cheer, but does not redeem equities from a negative September," said Mizuho Bank in a report.

With no obvious catalyst, its

analysts questioned whether the rise was driven by little more than "month-end short-covering," or traders buying stocks to fulfill commitments to re-sell them.

Great Wall Motors hopeful of hearing soon from Ind govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chinese auto major Great Wall Motors, which had announced USD 1 billion investment in India earlier this year, is hopeful of hearing soon from the Indian government on clearances for its proposals, including acquisition of General Motors' factory in Talegaon, according to a company official.

In January this year, Great Wall Motors (GWM) agreed to buy General Motors' (GM) Talegaon manufacturing facility in Maharashtra, subject to requisite government and regulatory approvals.

The transaction was expected to close in the second half of 2020.

Later at the Auto Expo in February, GWM announced investment of USD 1 billion (about Rs 7,100 crore) in India in a phased manner in areas including research and development, manufacturing, and sales and marketing. It included acquisition of GM's Talegaon plant.



Covid delays C'garh steel plant commissioning planned this year

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The commissioning of state-owned miner NMDC Limited's Rs 21,000 crore three-million tonne capacity steel plant in Chhattisgarh, targeted this year, has been delayed due to COVID-19 and is now expected by July next year, a top official said on Tuesday.

Experts from foreign countries, engaged in the project work, could not undertake a visit for an inspection and clearance in view of COVID-19 travel restrictions, the city-headquartered NMDC's Chairman cum Managing Director Sumit Deb said.

Senior officials of the PSU had earlier indicated that the plant would be operational this year.

Replying to shareholders' queries at the virtual Annual General Meeting, Deb said NMDC has so far invested Rs



16,000 crore in the plant and the total cost would be Rs 21,000 crore once completed.

Nagarnar steel Plants targeted date was this year but due to COVID-19 impact foreign experts could not visit the plant. Now the revised target is it will start by July 2021, he said.

He also said the company planned to take some debt also before commissioning the activity.

"The plant is on the verge of completion. We have some

balance work which will be taken up, the official said.

According to him, the steel plant is expected to generate annual revenues of Rs 14,000-Rs 15,000 crore (at the optimum production levels) with EBITDA (Earnings before tax depreciation and amortisation) margins of 15-20 per cent. Replying to a question on the demerger of the steel plant, Deb said the Board of Directors has already given the clearance with mirror shareholding.



IndiGrid approves induction of KKR's Esoteric as sponsor

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Infrastructure investment trust IndiGrid on Tuesday said its unitholders have approved induction of global investment firm KKR's associate Esoteric II as a sponsor.

"The unitholders of India Grid Trust (IndiGrid) have approved the induction of Esoteric II Pte Ltd, an affiliate of KKR & Co Inc (Esoteric II) as a sponsor (as defined under the InvIT Regulations) with special majority (> 75 per cent voting)," a company statement said.

The special resolution to induct Esoteric II as a sponsor was passed with a special majority in the 3rd Annual General Meeting of IndiGrid held on September 28, 2020.

All regulatory approvals including the board's assent are in place for Esoteric II's induction as a co-sponsor.

This move marks an extension of IndiGrid's strategic relationship with KKR and underscores IndiGrid as a compelling investment oppor-

tunity for long-term investors, it added. KKR is a leading global investment firm with over 43 years of experience and USD 222 billion of assets under management (AUM) as of June 30, 2020.

As part of KKR's first investment through its Asia Pacific Infrastructure strategy, it had invested Rs 1,084 crore in May 2019 and currently owns 23 per cent stake in IndiGrid.

Separately, KKR also owns 60 per cent stake in SIML, the investment manager of IndiGrid.

IndiGrid has a proven track record of consistent distribution over the last 13 quarters and has distributed a total of Rs 36.56 per unit to its investors since listing. The platform has maintained a AAA rating by efficiently managing its assets and making nine accretive acquisitions since its listing, in a competitive landscape. Its AUM has increased more than three-fold from Rs 3,800 crore in June 2017 to Rs 13,600 crore in September 2020.

Sebi gives more time to investors of Blessing Agro

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has extended till October 16 the last date for investors of Blessing Agro Farm and Assure Agrowtech to submit claims for refund of money invested by them in the illegal investment schemes floated by the firms.

Earlier, the last date for submitting refund applications along with original proof of investment for investors of Blessing Agro Farm and Assure Agrowtech was January 31 and February 29, respective-



ly. The Sebi-appointed administrators had continued to accept claim forms from investors of the two companies even beyond the due date as there were many requests from investors to extend the dead-

line, the regulator said in two separate public notices on Monday.

"Further, considering the Covid outbreak and resultant lockdown imposed during the last week of March 2020, which has caused disruption in postal services, the claim forms were even continued to be received even after the stipulated date," it said.

Administrators have been appointed for sale of properties of the firms to realise money for making payments to the investors.

SII to produce 100 million Covid vax doses for India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Serum Institute of India (SII) on Tuesday said it along with Gavi and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will manufacture an additional up to 100 million Covid vaccine doses for India and LMICs.

The latest collaboration between the partners brings the total number of vaccine doses to be covered to an aggregate of up to 200 million doses, SII said in a statement.

In August, SII had entered into a new partnership with international vaccine alliance Gavi and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to accelerate manufacturing and deliv-



ery of up to 100 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines.

The collaboration will provide upfront capital to SII to help it increase manufacturing capacity now, so that once a vaccine gets regulatory approval and WHO Prequalification, doses can be distributed at scale to LMICs, it added.

SBI Card, Amex join hands to leverage scale

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

SBI Card has joined hands with American Express (Amex) to leverage scale and differentiated offerings for its premium customers.

Under this partnership, SBI Card's top-end premium products will be available on American Express' network. "We have a card base of about 10.5 million at this point, this is still a very small number compared to the SBI customer base of 288 million. And if you look at the entire industry of 880 million debit cards, this is a long-long way to go," Ashwini Tewari, MD & CEO, SBI Card said.

‘Hiring rate, female workforce participation increase in India’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hiring rate and female workforce participation have increased in India, according to a 'Labour Market Update' put out by online professional network LinkedIn.

Hiring picked up by 25 per centage points by end of July as compared to June, it said. Female workforce participation increased from 30 per cent in April to reach 37 per cent at the end of July.

'Labour Market Update' is a monthly update on hiring trends and insights based on LinkedIn's 'Economic Graph',



adigital representation of the Indian economy built by conducting a close analysis of actions of more than 69 million members in India, it said.

Insights from its second edition show that hiring continues to recover, gender parity has improved, and disruptive digital skills can help to

increase the resilience of professionals to challenges in the current job market, it said.

One possible reason for increase in female workforce participation could be the strong support from live-in help and grandparents, as well as more flexible working hours with remote working schemes, which has allowed more women to enter the workforce despite schools and childcare facilities being closed during the lock-down, it said.

"The lockdown, which promoted acceptance of the work from home concept supported by flexible work hours, has

emerged as an opportunity for women to rebuild their careers and start afresh," said Pei Ying Chua, APAC Lead Economist, Economic Graph team at LinkedIn.

With the exception of the manufacturing sector, female representation across most industries increased during the lockdown period and continued to rise in subsequent months.

The data also showed that talent with more advanced digital skills have weathered the COVID-19 storm better than those with basic digital skills, it was stated.

Nutri Beverage by Cocoworks!

A paediatrician by profession, Narsimha Reddy knows that Hyderabad, once upon a time was attributed to a surrounding of undernutrition and that's when the idea of the astounding blend of coconut water with multiple nutritional flavours arose in his mind. Cocoworks India experiments on diverse tropical flavours with one singular utmost important element that is nutrition – tapping the continuing attention cocowork drinks have been attracting the Hyderabad market on a large scale. The clear liquid water is being marketed as a healthy, natural alternative with lots of nutrients being sugar-free. Communicating the idea of coconut water beyond flavours, the percentage of a drink is blended with health and wellness nutrients. “The three vital factors that we follow at cocoworks are sustainability factor, hygiene measures & a healthy drink with a freckle of taste. Healthy food is every person's right,” explains the founder.

An ed-tech startup by Varun Mayya

Varun remembers his earliest introduction to computers and coding, recalls having spent most of his childhood with computers after being gifted his own PC at the age of merely 7 years by his parents. His well-crafted entrepreneurial experience led him to introduce Avalon Labs & Avalon Meta to the world that has ventured into building everything from Software as a Service tool to Blockchain to Mental Health platforms since its inception in 2017. The organisation slowly built its way through success as it went on to work with numerous Fortune 500 companies as well as Series A, B funded start-ups from across the globe, and has now invested its resources into Meta which is on its way to change perspectives in the education world. “We focus on a free digital replacement for the existing education system combining higher education, new-age skills, and gaming, all set to leave a mark in the digital university space,” adds Varun, a widely known ed-influencer today!

The how of Maker's Hive

Inspired by Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, whose motifs helped direct 25-year old Pranav Vempati, CEO of Maker's Hive at Jubilee Hills built his acumen towards building cutting-edge assistive technologies to solve contemporary social problems of the populace in developing nations like India. Maker's Hive is born to leverage the gap in the assistive-tech industry, especially prosthetics, and build health-tech devices to turn the people with amputations from disabled to futuristically abled and from being a thing of pity to a source of envy. Their recent development — India's first bionic arm at just one-tenth of its cost in the western market is making a buzz all over the town! "The idea is to make quality healthcare available to everyone at an affordable cost. Imagine the hundreds of lives that we will transform through our creations. We don't want to sell our creations to hospitals, which would then hike up the price further and turn it into a business. We want to be able to impact people's lives and change the face of healthcare," explains Pranav.

The event ticket seller of Telangana

The idea crossed the mind of Naidu Darapaneni when he was attending professional conferences to identify a B2C activity to set up a business. With seven enthusiastic staffers, Mera Events began their journey of becoming one of the popular ticket selling platforms from a southern state. The baby steps were made as an event discovery platform. As people began to repose confidence in their start-up, the number of tickets zoomed and the next big mark of 50K was achieved in just a year-and-a-half. The founder adds, "Mera event has come to be known as a leading ticketing platform on the entertainment space with big events lined up. From those initial days to now, we have grown 300% — in six

years. While penetrating the market took time, but I knew it's a 10-year-long game. The early challenges helped us in gaining clarity. We will continue to grow with an equal focus on customers and professionalism."

Go Natural with Neeman's

From leading the corporate grind in major pharma and life sciences companies to being instrumental in their growth with his business analytical skills, today Taran Chhabra is the founder and CEO of Neeman's that's disrupted the Indian footwear industry in a big way. Once upon a time during his travel overseas, Taran had over packed and frustrated to a point asking himself that why did he have to carry 5 different pairs of shoes! That uncomfortable situation made him rack his brain and he wondered what if he can just carry 'ONE' pair of shoes. Surprisingly not one brand surpassed his mind — that's when he decided that if there isn't one then he'll make one! "The idea of designing a pair of shoes that adopted the shape of the wearer's foot and took the wearer comfortably from morning to night without leaving a trail of massive carbon footprint fuelled the research and development team at Neeman's. I also emphasised on making the inner material of the shoe only from natural wear," Taran tells us. Neeman's whose name is a loving combination of Taran's parent's first syllables - mother "Neelam" and father "Manjeet" has pioneered the use of Merino Wool in India for his commendable beginning.

Welcome to the World of Nature

“Our planet has always been working with us, it’s we who are not working with the planet! As Kanthi and I started working on this project our thoughts have closely matched on how we can bring awareness together to protect our mother nature,” shares Shilpa Reddy, co-founder of Sustainable

Living with Shilpa, which explores a lifestyle that reduces an individual's impact on earth's natural resources. "I was the one who proposed the venture to Shilpa as I believe in reducing ecological footprint by altering methods. Most projects take ample amount of time to pick up a base however it clicked at one go," adds Kanthi Dutt, co-founder. If it can't be reduced, reused, repaired, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled, or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned, or removed from production, they believe.

The urban kitchen proposal


Some urban farmers are on a mission to make cities self-sufficient, that's what HomeCrop is all about. With a purpose to transform unused urban spaces into organic vegetable farms, HomeCrop wants to bring sustainable and healthy production of organic fruits and vegetables back to our cities. They have overcome a lack of space by introducing modular kitchen gardens that can be easily installed on rooftops, balconies, and other free areas. With their urban farming expertise, growing your own vegetables has never been this easy. 26-year-old founder Manvitha expresses, "Initially when I started growing food in my backyard, I used soil and realised the many drawbacks of soil. I was inspired by the Cuban organoponics — the movement that started when sanctions were imposed and import of the agricultural inputs was not possible at all. I wanted to enable urban dwellers to use the unused space homestead to grow their veggies — the quality of which is progressively declining. I was unequipped to deal with the nematodes that kept cutting away at my roots. That's when my team started looking into alternatives for soil and came across the concept of growing food in a soil-less medium." Homecrop hopes to make use of most of the urban spaces to grow food.

I want to play a character who is extremely notorious. A village girl — mass and rugged. A character that will make everyone happy and make the audience wanting more of her. Like Sivangi played by actress Charmee Kaur

nels who wanted me to play a mother's character. I found it very funny. I told them it is not my age to play a mother's character and that I'm just 24 years old. I'm ready to play any character but Sunanda is confined to negative roles only for the small screen. I don't want to repeat the same in films or OTT. I want to debut with a good character."

Teluguis sometimes feel there is no work for Telugu artistes here, on that she rues, "I feel there is not much work for Telugu actors here. Since a few actors cannot come from Chennai after lockdown due to reasons best known to them, such characters have been replaced by the people here. When we question the cast being hired from other states, we were given silly reasons like "Telugu girls don't have a stunning personality, etc. We are not given important roles and there is nothing we can do about it."

Sunanda Mala Setti, who rose to fame after playing Neelambhari in *Mudha Mandaram*, has created a niche for herself in the small screen industry. A passionate dancer, Sunanda made her debut into Television with the 'Aata' show. For Sunanda acting is her everything and she believes that she is what today solely because of her profession. The 24-year-old Telugu beauty, popular for playing negative roles, speaks to **K RAMYA SREE** about her journey, films, wanting to play positive characters, and more...



Sunanda started her journey into entertainment with dancing. She is a passionate dancer since her childhood and was introduced to the small screen through this very art form. She tells us, "I have been very passionate about dancing since my earliest days. My father enrolled me in classical dance lessons. Later, I took training in western dance and gave my audition for Omkar garu's *Aata* show but I didn't get through. But I was taken as a side dancer for one of the contestants and that's how I was introduced to the TV through Zee

delugu. Later I had done a couple of reality shows.”

After proving her mettle in dancing and reality shows, she bagged her first serial — *Gokulamlo Seetha*. Meanwhile, she also tried to get into films but it was a few shady and negative experiences that kept herself away from films. She explains, “I played the role of a sister in *Gokulamlo Seetha*. Since it took one year for the project to telecast, I looked for a few opportunities in films but didn’t like them much. In films, if you don’t get the right character, you are sidelined. Also, I didn’t have the right route to get into films. As many say, a few people in the industry look for favors in return of a character in the film. I did face such issues and I was too young and naive to even know what is right from wrong. I didn’t like the process, hence, I chose to not get into films and continued working for serials.”

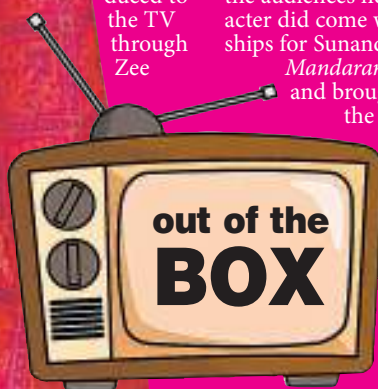
Although she did various other projects, it was *Mudha Mandaram* that gave her the fame she enjoys today, among the audiences here. But the character did come with a few hardships for Sunanda. “*Mudha Mandaram* gave me fame and brought me under the spotlight. After that serial, I had to take a break for a year-and-a-half because I was being asked for negative roles only. Even though I play a

positive role for one of my serials, once that project got over, I was still being approached only for negative roles. I returned with *Hitler Gari Pellam*, which had both negative and positive shades." She shares, adding, "The character Neelambhari in *Mudha Mandaram* was such a hit that there was negativity spread among the audience against me. I couldn't take it after a while. It affected my personal life. Later, my mother sat me down and explained to me that I don't become a negative person just because I'm playing negative roles and that my profession should not interfere with my personal life. But Neelambhari continues to be my most favourite character I have played so far. I have experienced so much while playing her."

For Sunanda, acting is her everything. She says, "My father passed away when I was in Class X. Ever since it was acting that fed me. I paid my education fee with the money earned through acting. I'm here only because of acting."

For a passionate actor like Sunanda, playing a notorious character on screen is her dream. She says, "I want to play a character who is extremely notorious. A village girl — masala and rugged. A character that will make everyone happy and make the audience want more of her. Like Sivangi played by actress Charmee Kaur."

Recalling one of the funny incidents during the lockdown, she says, "I received a call from one of the popular OTT chan-



what's brewing?

PARTY



● Nikita



● Tara



● Laya



● Manasa



● Ritu



Photos by SV Chary

● Vani



Sandalwood drugs case: No bail for Ragini, Sanjjanaa

The special Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) court of Bengaluru on Monday denied bail to Kannada actress Ragini Dwivedi and Sanjjanaa Galrani for their alleged connection with the high-profile Sandalwood drugs case.

The hearing on bail for these actresses as well as other accused in the

was adjourned till September 30. The NDPS court also rejected the anticipatory bail applications filed by two accused in the case, Vinay Kumar and Shiva Prakash, who evaded arrest until now.

The Central Crime Branch police are also on the lookout for actor Vivek Oberoi's brother-in-law, Aditya Alva, who has been named in the case.

The CCB has so far arrested high-profile party

planner Viren Khanna, alleged drug peddlers Loun Pepper Samba, Rahul Tonse, Prashanth Ranka and Niyaz in connection with the case.

Other than the probe by the CCB, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) is also conducting a parallel probe into the alleged money trail involved in this entire case involving two actors along with other co-accused on charges of money laundering.

The ED has already got permission from the First Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on Thursday that had granted permission to probe the charges.

Among others, the ED is expected to question Viren Khanna, Sanjjanaa's friend and real estate businessman Rahul Tonse, and Ragini's associate B.K. Ravi Shankar who is among the arrested in connection with the same case.

Actor Ragini Dwivedi who had initially skipped summons by the CCB police on September 3 was arrested the next day for allegedly not cooperating with investigation officials, following raids at her residence. Sanjjanaa Galrani, who was also subsequently raided in connection with the same case, was arrested on September 8.

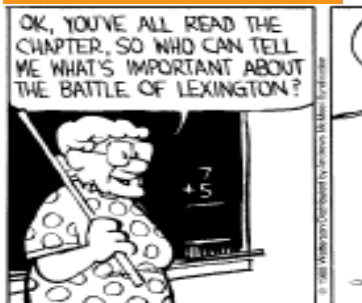
After a brief period in police custody, they were sent to judicial custody on September 14.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



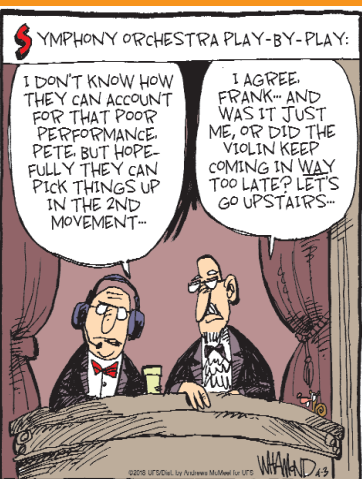
GARFIELD



NANCY



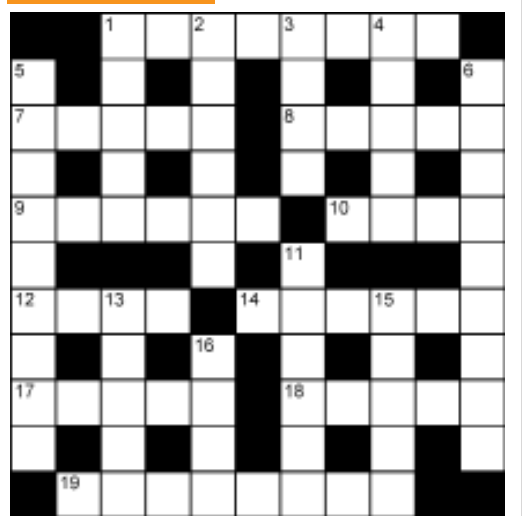
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Motion
- 7 A spicy Indian food dish
- 8 Similar
- 9 Quit your job
- 10 At this place
- 12 Remedy
- 14 Mother or father
- 17 Of greater age
- 18 A fruit with pips
- 19 A place for sick or injured people

DOWN

- 1 Dirty stains
- 2 A long journey by sea or in space
- 3 Animal flesh for eating

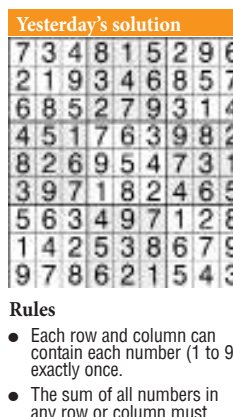
- 4 Loud sounds
- 5 A figure in a field to frighten birds
- 6 One third of fifty-one
- 11 With nobody in it
- 13 A communication device
- 15 Kick out of school
- 16 Catch a mouse with this



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



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.



Satish Vegesna JUMPS ON THE DIGITAL BANDWAGON

The filmmaker, after wrapping up his feature *Kothi Kommachi*, will be directing a web series, marking his digital debut. It will be an investigative crime drama, finds
NAGARAJ GOUD

Can't wait to mask up and watch movies in theatres: Nag Ashwin

Even as life around us is limping back to normalcy in Unlock 4.0, filmmaker Nag Ashwin is keen on the theatres reopening. A strong advocate of big screen experience, he said that he is all for safety but at the same time but with many public places resuming activity; he feels that cinemas too should follow suit. "I'm all for safety, but with gyms, bars, restaurants, malls, temples, bus, train, metro, flights open, it feels about time even movie theatres open...cant wait to mask up and watch movies the way they are meant to be watched...not pause, fast-forward, rewind... (Sic)," the director posted on Twitter on Tuesday, while indicating that he isn't a fan of watching content on laptops or mobile phones.

In May earlier this year, Ashwin even sought to know the opinion of his followers on drive-in theaters and whether it's a good idea "if theaters get license to serve beer/breezer/wine, like in other countries (sic)."

Ashwin is right now occupied with the pre-production of his next with Prabhas and Deepika Padukone. Touted to be a futuristic scientific-thriller set against the backdrop of an imaginary third world war, the film, a Vyjayanthi Movies production, will roll next year.

Haven't finalised actors yet for my next, says Swaroop RSJ

Agent Sai Srinivasa Athreya helmer RSJ Swaroop was "pleasantly surprised" with the reports that Nani is spearheading his next, an action-adventure drama with a generous dose of humour. He was travelling to Hyderabad from Bengaluru on Monday when he saw the combination notifications on his Twitter timeline. "The news doing the rounds is absolutely false. My film doesn't have a hero or heroine as such. We are short listing the names of the actors to spearhead the project. By October-end, we will finalise the cast and the technical crew," the director told *The Pioneer*.

To be set and shot in a village near Tirupati, Swaroop's new project official announcement earlier this month has piqued the cinephiles' interest as it is his second film after the commercial and critical success of *Agent*. He is collaborating with leading production house Matinee Entertainment for the untitled flick, which will have the cameras rolling in December. — NG

Joining the likes of Sukumar, Vamshi Paidipally, Maruthi and Venu Udugula who are at various stages of developing content for OTT space will soon be Satish Vegesna. According to a source in the know, the director, whose 2017 film *Shathamani* bagged a National Award for Best Popular Film Providing Wholesome Entertainment, will be delving into deeper waters as far as the genre is concerned. Branded as a family-genre specialist, he is already trying to shed the tag with his next film, *Kothi Kommachi*, fronted by Meghamsh and his son Sameer. The digital debut though will be a 360 degree turn for the filmmaker.

A source close to development tells us, "Satish's digital debut will be with a web series and the content is more or less ready. The project will get off the ground

THE SERIES WILL CONSIST OF NINE EPISODES. NO STREAMER IS ATTACHED TO THE PROJECT AS OF NOW. SATISH WILL TAKE A CALL ON IT MIDWAY INTO THE SHOOTING OR AFTER HE WRAPS IT UP.

will bankroll it, while familiar names will spearhead the casting. He has already initiated the casting process."

The source further adds, "The series will consist of nine episodes, with each episode running into 30-35 minutes. No streamer is attached to the project as of now. Satish will take a call on it midway into the shooting or after he wraps it up. One name that is already on board is that of cinematographer Sameer."

after he wraps up *Kothi Kommachi*, which rolls in early November. It's an investigative crime drama and Satish wants to craft it as a gripping thriller. He is confident that the show will be refreshingly new for the Telugu audiences. A prominent production house



Intimate scenes get difficult for me sometimes: Sneha Ullal

Actress Sneha Ullal, who is best known for her turns in Telugu films like *Ullasanga Utsahanga* and *Ala Modalaindi*, opened up about how she deals with intimate scenes.

"There are difficult scenes that I'm sure every actor goes through. For me, if intimate scenes are not organised correctly, or not choreographed correctly, they don't keep the ambience comfortable

then that affects me and my performance. I am the same in my personal life as well, I always need everything organised. Most of the times a lot of people get uncomfortable choreographing such scenes and the discomfort rubs onto me. So, intimate scenes get difficult for me sometimes," Sneha shared.

Sneha will be seen in the upcoming thriller show, *Expiry Date*, made in Telugu and Hindi. Directed by Shankar Marthand (of *Evaraina Epudaina* fame), the narrative of the thriller revolves around two couples and their extra-marital affairs. The plot takes a turn when jealousy and anger bring about an inherent change in the nature of the protagonists. Resultantly, their betraying and vicious nature comes to the forefront.

The show also features Tony Luke, Madhu Shalini and Ali Reza. It will premiere on Zee5 on October 2.



Tanga Productions to introduce another director

Presently associated with Anand Deverakonda's third project as producers, Tanga Productions duo of Vijay Mattapally and Pradeep Errabelli has given their consent to another project. Like their maiden film, with this one too they are introducing a new director, Prithvisena Reddy, to T-town. An intense love story, the film, to be made in Telugu and Tamil simultaneously, will have Sunny MR's musical accompaniment, while P Vasu is cranking

the camera. Spelling out the reason behind making the film in Tamil as well, director Prithvi, who has completed a two-year direction course from Whistling Woods International, told us, "The story is close to Tamil nativity as well, prompting us to take a call in making it in Tamil as well. When I shared the script to some of my Tamil friends from film school for feedback, they suggested that it be made in Tamil alone. But as I'm a Telugu guy, I was determined to make it in Telugu."

Fairly new faces will be headlining the project, which will roll from October first week. The surroundings of Hyderabad will host the first schedule. "We are building an old café set right now. The story unfolds in a small town; it's set in a factory backdrop. We are adhering to all safety protocols for the shoot. The first schedule will progress with limited cast and crew," the director pointed out. The untitled film is being slotted for a Valentine's Day release next year.

— NG

