

OPINION 6
TEACHERS TOO
MUST LEARNMONEY 8
TOTAL TAX COLLECTIONS
FALL 22.5% TILL SEP 15SPORTS 11
NOVAK REMAINS
PERFECT

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 17, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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NIVETHA PETHURAJ
BOARDS
CHANDOO'S
COMEDY DRAMA

Page 12

UM NITIN GADKARI TESTS CORONA
POSITIVE, ISOLATES HIMSELF

Union minister Nitin Gadkari tweeted this evening that he has tested positive for coronavirus, which has so far infected more than 50 lakh people in the country. Before him, at least seven union ministers, including Union home minister Amit Shah, and two dozen lawmakers have contracted the disease. In the mandatory covid tests for parliamentarians conducted before the monsoon session started on Monday, 17 members of the Lok Sabha and eight from the Rajya Sabha had tested positive. Mr Gadkari had tested negative at the time. His positive result came from a test conducted in Nagpur, sources said. Mr Gadkari had attended parliament on Monday.

WINNING 2023 TS ASSEMBLY POLLS
OUR SOLE AIM: MANICKAM TAGORE

Our sole aim should be to win the Telangana Assembly elections in 2023 and defeat the KCR regime," said new AICC Incharge of Telangana Manickam Tagore on Wednesday. In his maiden videoconference with Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee's senior leaders, Tagore said that it was unfortunate that the Congress party could not win from Telangana, a State for which Congress President Sonia Gandhi had 'sacrificed' another State (Andhra Pradesh) and also a major share of seats in the Lok Sabha. Therefore, he reasoned, winning the Assembly elections in Telangana should be the sole aim of all Congress leaders and workers.

WE SPENT 67,035 CR TO DEVELOP
HYDERABAD IN LAST 6 YRS: KTR

Minister K T Rama Rao asserted on Wednesday that the state government had been working tirelessly to make Hyderabad "a global city"; and hence, the city was emerging as a world-renowned destination. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly, KTR took a pot shot at the Centre, saying that since the formation of Telangana, Rs 67,035.16 crore had been spent by the TRS government for development of Hyderabad. "Although the central government does not fund the states in the name of the 'act of God', the KCR government is providing monthly funding to all the municipalities in the state," he observed.

BABRI VERDICT ON SEPT 30, LK ADVANI,
OTHER ACCUSED TOLD TO BE PRESENT

The judgment in the 28-year-old case involving the demolition of the Babri Masjid -- an event that changed the country's political landscape and social fabric -- will be delivered on September 30 by a special court hearing it. Among the list of 32 accused asked to be present in court are BJP veterans LK Advani and Murlidhar Manohar Joshi. Senior party leader Uma Bharti and former Rajasthan Governor Kalyan Singh are on the list as well. Mr Advani, Joshi and Uma Bharti -- key leaders of the BJP at the time, are accused of conspiracy that led to the demolition of the 15th Century mosque in December 1992.

My biggest mistake
was joining politics

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HC stays SIT probe into
Amaravati 'land scam'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Wednesday granted a stay on the actions of the Special Investigation Team constituted by the state government to conduct a comprehensive probe into various irregularities, particularly the land deals in the Amaravati capital region, during the previous Telugu Desam Party regime.

Justice DVV Somayajulu passed an interim order to this effect on two writ petitions filed by former minister Alapati Rajendra Prasad and TDP general secretary Varla Ramaiah, challenging the legality of the SIT.

The state government said it would move the Supreme Court against the HC orders.



Government Advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy termed the High Court orders "surprising" and "unfortunate".

The YS Jaganmohan Reddy government constituted the 10-member SIT, headed by a Deputy Inspector General -

rank IPS officer, on February 21 to conduct a comprehensive investigation into various alleged irregularities, particularly the land deals in the Amaravati Capital Region, during the previous Chandrababu Naidu regime.

Continued on Page 3

Farm sector bills
will boost agri
production

5

Tirupati MP Durgaprasad
dies of Covid in Chennai

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP Tirupati Lok Sabha Member Balli Durgaprasad Rao passed away on Wednesday at a hospital in Chennai following a massive heart attack while undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

Confirming the news, Durgaprasad Rao's family members said that the 65-year-old MP was recently admitted to a private hospital in Chennai after contracting coronavirus.

The news sent shockwaves among the rank and file of the YSRCP, while the family members plunged into grief.

Durgaprasad Rao was elected to the Andhra Pradesh Assembly for the first time in 1985 when he was just 28 years old.

He was elected to the Assembly four times from



Gudur constituency in Nellore district and served as a minister once. In 1994, he held the Education portfolio in the Chandrababu Naidu Cabinet.

He joined the YSRCP ahead of the 2019 elections and was elected to the Lok Sabha from Tirupati constituency.

Upon receiving the news, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy expressed profound grief over the demise of Durgaprasad Rao. The Chief Minister telephoned the MP's son and consoled him and also conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the family members.

Tirupati MLA B Karunakar Reddy said the untimely death of Durgaprasad Rao was tragic.

Continued on Page 3

AP Covid cases
inch towards
6 lakh mark

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The two Godavari districts, East and West, continued to witness a virulent spread of coronavirus while most other districts in Andhra Pradesh seemed to be gradually lowering their numbers as the state reported 8,835 fresh cases on Wednesday.

The latest Covid-19 bulletin said 10,845 patients had fully recovered in 24 hours ending 9 am on Wednesday, while 64 more succumbed.

The state's Covid-19 table now showed a total of 5,92,760 positive cases, 4,97,376 recoveries and 5,105 deaths.

The active cases came down further to 90,279, according to the bulletin.

After 48.06 lakh sample tests, the infection positivity rate stood at 12.33 per cent, as against the national average of 8.44 per cent.

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Chinese troops fired warning shots in Ladakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Chinese army fired a barrage of "warning shots" in the air at the North Bank of Pangong lake in eastern Ladakh last week to "intimidate" the Indian troops ahead of the talks between foreign ministers of the two countries in Moscow, official sources said on Wednesday.

The incident took place on the ridge line of Finger 4 where the Indian Army has been significantly increasing its deployment after occupying several strategic peaks on the southern bank of the lake, they said.

The sources said a sizeable number of troops from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) aggressively approached towards an Indian position but they returned sometime later as alert Indian Army personnel held on to their ground with firmness.

While going back, the Chinese troops fired 100-200 rounds of warning shots primarily to intimidate the Indian Army personnel, they added.

The incident took place ahead of a meeting between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi last

Pakistan persecutes Hindus, Sikhs,
Christians, India tells HRC at Geneva

Geneva: Describing Pakistan as an epicentre of terrorism, India has said that no one deserves an unsolicited lecture on human rights from Islamabad that has consistently persecuted its ethnic and religious minorities including Hindus, Sikhs and Christians.

Exercising the Right of Reply to the statements made by Pakistan at the 45th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) here, the Indian representative on Tuesday said that it has become habitual for Pakistan to malign India with

false and fabricated narratives for its self-serving malicious purposes. "Neither India nor others deserve this unsolicited lecture on human rights from a country that has consistently persecuted its ethnic and religious minorities, is an epicentre of terrorism, has the distinction of providing pensions to individuals on UN Sanctions list and has a Prime Minister who proudly admits training tens of thousands of terrorists to fight in J&K," the Indian diplomat said.

It was not surprising that other

Thursday on the sidelines of a Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conclave in Moscow.

The first incident of firing of shots was reported on the evening of September 7 near an Indian position in Mukhpari

area of Rezang-La ridgeline on the southern bank of Pangong lake. Both sides accused each other of firing in the air.

The Chinese troops unsuccessfully attempted to close in on the Indian position and it was the first instance of shots being fired at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in 45 years.

At the Jaishankar-Wang talks, both sides reached a five-point consensus to resolve the over four-month-long border standoff.

The agreement included measures like quick disengagement of troops, avoiding action that could escalate tensions, adherence to all agreements and protocols on border management and steps to restore peace along the LAC.

In the Lok Sabha, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the Chinese side has mobilised a large number of troops and armaments along the LAC as well as in the depth areas.

He said there are several friction areas in eastern Ladakh including Gogra, Kongka La and North and South Banks of the Pangong Lake.

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Three lion statues go missing from
Vijayawada Durga temple chariot

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Even before the row over the burning of the Antaredi temple chariot died down, three lion statues that adorn the silver-plated chariot of the historic Kanaka Durga temple in Vijayawada were found missing, triggering yet another political slugfest in AP.

The opposition parties attacked the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government over the missing lions while Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivasa Rao said the chariot was never used after they came to power last year.



Velampalli said a departmental committee was being constituted to look into the matter.

The TDP demanded that the Endowments Minister be

sacked forthwith and the temple executive officer be suspended. BJP state president Somu Veerraju visited the temple and inspected the chariot.

He said only one of the four lions fixed to the chariot was in place while the others were missing.

Even the remaining one had cracks on its feet, Veerraju said.

Police sources said the missing of the lion statues came to light three days ago when an inspection was conducted in the aftermath of the Antaredi temple chariot burning incident earlier this month.

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Onion prices double

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The almost incessant rain has affected onion production in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh leading to the vegetable being sold at Rs 40 per kg in places like Hyderabad.

This is double the price that it was sold barely a month ago. However, market sources attribute the sharp rise in price to the drop in supplies from neighbouring states by half. The spike in onion prices has



led to the Centre banning export of the vegetable till

such time the situation eases.

Continued on Page 3

China may ready Covid vaccine
by November, says top scientist

PNS ■ BEIJING

The general population in China may start getting access to locally manufactured Covid-19 vaccines from November or December, according to a top scientist from the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

During a programme telecast by state broadcaster CCTV this week, Wu Guizhen,



the CDC's chief biosafety expert said that preparations are underway for some vaccines to go into mass production.

The top scientists also talked about the smooth progress of several vaccine candidates that are in clinical trials, the South China Morning Post reported on Tuesday.

"I joined the experimental group and had a coronavirus shot in April," Wu said in the programme, adding that she felt "quite good in the past few months, nothing abnormal."

Continued on Page 3

Special Marriage Act violates privacy, says plea in SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday sought response from the Centre on a plea challenging the validity of some provisions of the Special Marriage Act which require two adults to put personal details in public domain for scrutiny before their wedding and they might have a "chilling effect" on the fundamental right to marry and privacy.

A bench headed by Chief Justice SA Bobde agreed to hear the petition filed by a Kerala-based law student who



has claimed that some provisions of the Special Marriage Act violates the fundamental rights of couples intending to marry, depriving them of their

right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Issue notice, the bench, also comprising Justices AS Bopanna and V Ramasubramani-

an, said.

During the hearing conducted through videoconferencing, the bench asked counsel appearing for the petitioner, "You tell us what is the solution? The moment you delete these, the people for whose benefit it was enacted will suffer."

Counsel for petitioner Nandini Praveen referred to the apex court's landmark verdict declaring Right to Privacy as a fundamental right under the Constitution.

"You are saying about privacy and that the whole world comes to know about it. But

look at its positive point also," the bench observed.

The plea has sought striking down of Sections including 6(2), 7, 8 and 10 of the Special Marriage Act as "unjust, illegal and unconstitutional".

"Publication of personal details often might have a chilling effect on the right to marry. In other words, couples are asked to waive the right to privacy to exercise the right to marry. This infringes the rights of autonomy, dignity and the right to marry, of various couples," the plea has said.

Continued on Page 3

No change in retirement
age for Central govt staff

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There is no proposal to change the age of retirement of Central government employees, Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

"There is no proposal to change the age of superannuation of central government employees. The state government employees are governed by the rules/regulations framed by their respective state



governments," he said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

The Centre was asked whether there was a proposal to retire employees after completing a maximum service period of 30 years.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Bhadrapada & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Amavasya: 04:29 pm

Nakshatram: Purva Phalguni: 09:48 am

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)
Rahukalam: 01:40 pm - 03:11 pm
Yamagandam: 06:07 am - 07:38 am
Varjyam: 04:09 pm - 05:34 pm
Gulika: 09:09 am - 10:39 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 12:38 am - 02:03 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 am - 12:34 pm

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy
Temp: 32/25
Humidity: 76%
Sunrise: 06:04 am
Sunset: 06:17 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated September 16, 2020 5:00 PM

Going by appearances—the massing of troops and armour on the border — an Indo-China war seems to be nearly imminent. Of course, there are talks between the two sides that have progressed upwards from the military to the foreign ministers' level now. Yet, the pervasive feeling in India now is that a conflict cannot be avoided. It is also clear that this conflict would be in the north of Kashmir region. But the million-dollar question is: Why should China go to war with India in this region? What is behind the conflict and why in this region? And what is the need for a conflict now? Hereby lies a tale.

In 2001, looking for an easier way to China from the Gulf

WHY CHINA WANTS TO GO TO WAR WITH INDIA



PIN POINT

area, Beijing proposed to develop a new port in the south-western corner of Pakistan at a place called Gwadar, located on the western end of the Arabian Sea in Baluchistan. This was nearly 200 km west of Karachi and, as per the Chinese plan, goods unloaded at the new port here could be transported (through new road and rail links) northward through Pakistan; passing over ultimately to the Xinjiang province of China. After the port proposal languished for a few years, the Gwadar port is now ready. Along with it has come a Special Economic

The road carrying wares from Gwadar passes from Pakistan to China over Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) that is legally India's land, but illegally in the control of Pakistan. Both China and Pakistan know this fully well and therefore they have apprehensions that the proposed Pakistan-China road can be the target of the Indian armed forces

Zone (SEZ) that will lead to location of some value-added industry in Pakistan and creation of many jobs in the region.

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KINGSHUK NAG

apprehensions that the proposed Pakistan-China road can be the target of the Indian

armed forces. Hence, the flexing of muscles by the Chinese beforehand to protect what is called as the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Even more troublesome for the Chinese, the road could be targeted by long-range precision bombing from Aksai Chin, which is a snowy height from where there is a clear sight over two hundred kilometers. Aksai Chin, under illegal occupation of China, belongs to India; it came under the Chinese from 1962. Similar firepower can be deployed from Ladakh as well.

Ladakh is the place through which the river Indus and its various tributaries pass downwards into Pakistan. The water

is not only pristine clear, but is also seen China-watchers as a potential resource for the Chinese who are presently setting up the 5 G telecom industry in their country. 5G requires large quantities of fresh water and for the Chinese the region is an allure to set up the industry for availing of the fresh water. The eastern side of China --in the belt between Beijing and Shanghai -- contains advanced manufacturing units. However, this area is highly water-deficient, which will only increase over time. Therefore, the likely choice of a fresh area, for locating the 5G industry. With the China Pakistan

Economic Corridor (CPEC) becoming operational, Pakistan is likely to come into the grip of China fully.

Earlier, Pakistan was in the camp of the US but ever since international terrorist Osama Bin Laden was found in a location close to that of an important military office, Washington has downgraded Islamabad. This is more so after the termination of the Taliban operating from Afghanistan. Thus, Pakistan is in search for a country to take care of its interest and protect it.

Many analysts perceive that now Pakistan will become a satellite state of China. Beijing also knows this and is promoting Pakistan to establish a new front that will compromise India. Nepal is also being promoted as another partner. How? This is another story.

Students told to contribute for development of nation

VIJAYAWADA: An orientation programme was conducted for freshers by SRM University-AP here on Wednesday. Dr P Sathyanarayanan, Founder, President and Chairman, in his opening address, highlighted his vision of learning beyond the classroom, fostering wisdom and knowledge of students through a holistic interdisciplinary approach. Furthermore, Prof VS Rao, Vice-Chancellor, acquainted students with various processes of SRM-AP. He informed students regarding revolutionising plans for the students emphasising on research from the first semester. He states, "Research should be seamlessly integrated with academic boundaries". He also inspired students to realise the excitement of science, joy in engineering, and academic rigour. In line with his vision, Prof D Marayana Rao, Pro Vice-Chancellor, emphasised on the contribution of science and technology that led to the progress and superiority of India across nations. Furthermore, he assures quality education to motivate students and urges them to contribute to the development of the nation.

Dr Jaya Prakash Narayana, former Secretary to Government of Andhra Pradesh, Dr RA Mashelkar, FRS, former Director General CSIR and Chancellor-JIO University, Padma Bhushan Dr K Varaprasad Reddy, Chairman Emeritus-Shantha Biotech, Saritha, IPS, Additional SP-CID, and other dignitaries will deliver lectures during the two week programme.

TDP chief demands CBI probe into attacks on temples

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday demanded for a comprehensive inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into attacks and encroachments at all major temples across the State in the last 15 months.

Naidu demanded that YS Jaganmohan Reddy break his silence on the unchecked vandalism and untoward incidents. Had the Chief Minister taken prompt and stringent action when the first attack took place, the ongoing atrocities and attacks would not have taken place, he opined.

Addressing an online conference, Naidu deplored that over 80 condemnable incidents took place at temples in the State under the present regime till date. There was no immediate and suitable action in any of these incidents which has led to an increasing rate in occurrence of similar attacks over the weeks.



Now, even Kanakadurga temple was not spared as three silver lions disappeared overnight. If the Chief Minister dismissed the Endowments Minister and Executive Officer, the culprits responsible for the incident would have been caught by now. The EO did not lodge a police complaint and helplessly wanted to wait for three days to respond to the incident.

Naidu deplored that the miscreants tried to pull the fourth lion also at Durga temple but they could not do it and then left the spot taking away the remaining three lions. An idol was disfigured at Shirdi Sai Mandir in Nidamanuru on Wednesday. The attacks on temples were continuing unabated. Till now,

■ The TDP chief deplored that over 80 condemnable incidents took place at temples in the State under the present regime till date. There was no immediate and suitable action in any of these incidents, which has led to an increasing rate in occurrence of similar attacks over the weeks

■ The Leader of the Opposition demanded that YS Jaganmohan Reddy break his silence on the unchecked vandalism and untoward incidents. Had the Chief Minister taken prompt and stringent action when the first attack took place, the ongoing atrocities and attacks would not have taken place, he opined

there were six instances of encroachments of temple lands, nine instances of attacks on temple properties, 11 cases of idol desecration, attacks on two priests, death of cows at three Gosalas, burning of chariots at two temples and so on.

The TDP chief advised Jagan to stop his party's meaningless counter attacks on the TDP and make proper efforts to prevent

Nani foresees bad days for Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Civil Supplies Kodali Sri Venkateshwara Rao (Nani) said that people taught TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu a lesson by restricting his party to just 23 seats and God has jailed him naturally.

He alleged that Naidu may think he may escape by obtaining stays from the courts in any case. "But he cannot escape from people and God. His position is horrible and he will see the worst days for sure."

Nani further stated that people know who Naidu is and what his father was. "With no property in hand he stepped into politics, joined TDP, backstabbed NTR, and now he says that he has earned very bit through his Heritage milk products business and claims that his company is worth Rs 20,000 crore."



Nani said that he has not seen one person who earned Rs 20,000 crore by selling milk, curd and cova. "This is openly evident that the TDP chief has illegal accumulation of property. He is a master in making his fortune by blinding the law," alleged the minister.

The minister made it clear that in any issue if Naidu's name is involved, cases will also be filed against him and

he will be sent to court by the present YSRCP government and further said that he may escape using his influence by getting stays and bails but will be temporary.

He has arranged some cronies in almost all the systems, including the media, and are supporting him for whatever corruption he did all these years and everybody will be punished very soon, said the minister.

Srikakulam-Angul natural gas pipeline project on schedule

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Srikakulam-Angul natural gas pipeline to cater to the natural gas requirements for the industries and domestic household consumers is progressing as per the schedule.

GAIL is executing a 690-km long Srikakulam-Angul natural gas pipeline project. It is passing through 10 districts of Odisha and one district i.e; Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh en-route the pipeline.

Replying to an un-starred question from Rajya Sabha MP V Vijayasai Reddy, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan said the Project Management Consultant (PMC) has been appointed on January 3 this year and order for 24" line pipe length of 80 km has been awarded and the same is

under manufacturing and delivery stage.

The detailed route survey for the mainline has been completed. At present, the project is going as per schedule and is expected to be completed within the prescribed schedule.

The target set to complete the project is July 2022. In all, 367 villages are expected to be benefited through the proposed pipeline. The PNGRB has authorised five Geographical Areas (GAs) en-route the pipeline for development of the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network. As per minimum work programme submitted to the PNGRB, the authorised CGD entities have committed to provide 10.59 lakh Piped Natural Gas (PNG) domestic connections to households in these five GAs.

Mobiles stolen from moving container

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a cinematic style, some miscreants stole mobile phones from a lorry while the vehicle was moving on the Chennai-Vijayawada national highway-16 near Guntur on Wednesday. The miscreants robbed 983 mobiles worth Rs 82 lakh by breaking the backdoor of the container while it was moving.

Addressing the media at Nallapadu police station limits of Guntur district on Wednesday, Guntur Urban SP RN Ammi Reddy said that the robbery took place in the wee hours of Wednesday on the NH 16 stretch of Chilakaluripet-Guntur. The



miscreants came on another vehicle and boarded the container without knowledge of the container driver. They boarded the container in different places by breaking the back door. They packed notepads, mobiles in the gunny bags and fled.

Ammi Reddy said that another lorry driver, who observed the robbing of mobile phones from the moving container, alerted the

container driver. He said that this type of incidents took place at Chittoor and Kurnool districts in recent times and this is the first case of thieves robbing mobiles and notepads from the moving container.

He said that the gang of Madhya Pradesh might be involved in the robbery. He said that the container was loaded with mobiles and notepads at Sri City of Nellore district on Tuesday evening. It was proceeding towards Kolkata but the incident took place under Nallapadu police station limits.

On receiving information, he said they formed six teams to nab the culprits.

Rs 4,095 cr to be invested for expansion of Vizag port

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rs 4,095 crore will be invested for the expansion and modernisation of Visakhapatnam port during the next three years. The capacity of the port will be increased from the current 126.89 million tonnes to 141.64 million tonnes by 2023. Responding to a question raised by Parimal Nathwani, industrialist and x YSRCP MP, Minister of State for Shipping Mansukh Mandaviya provided the details in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

The minister said that the Visakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT) has developed plans with investments from the private sectors in addition to the investments from internal resources in the major thrust areas of deepening of channels and berths. "The current capacity of VPT is 126.89 million tonnes. With the completion of ongoing capacity addition projects, the capacity is projected to be 141.64 million tonnes by FY 2023," said the minister.

The minister further revealed that there are 12 projects with



total investments of Rs 3,086 crore under the Design, Build, Finance, Operate & Transfer (DBFOT) model. Amongst these, the largest investment of Rs 633.11 crore, which is already underway, is for extension of the existing container terminal by adding 9.50 MMTA capacity. "The other large project of Rs 581 crore is for up-gradation of the existing mechanised facility in the outer harbour for iron ore handling to add a capacity of 16.20 MMTA.

The third-largest investment of Rs 444.10 crore is for the mechanisation of coal handling facilities and upgradation of GCB in OH to cater to 200,000 DWT vessels. Another nine projects entailing total investments of Rs 1,009 crore are for connectivity and logistics.

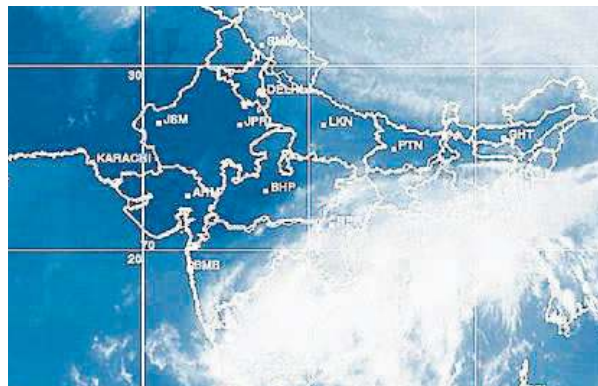
Widespread rainfall forecast across state

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The Met department has forecast widespread rainfall in several places in the state over the next couple of days. In the past three to four days, it has rained extensively in the state, leading to most of the water bodies filling up to the brim and overflowing.

"The low pressure area over Telangana and adjoining south Chhattisgarh has become less marked. However, the associated cyclonic circulation now lies over Telangana and neighbourhood and extends up to 3.1 km above mean sea level, tilting southwards with height," said a Met official.

As a result, an eastward shear zone, roughly along 15 degrees north latitude is per-



sisting and is now observed between 3.6 and 5.8 km above mean sea level.

According to the Met department, thunderstorms with lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in north coastal Andhra, south

coastal Andhra, Yanam and Rayalaseema over the next four days.

Meanwhile, Errakaluva (Red canal) in West Godavari district is gushing with copious inflows, leading to hundreds of acres of land getting sub-

merged.

Several low lying areas in the district have been submerged with rainwater. Many places in Eluru district headquarters have seen flooding due to the rainfall. In Denduluru, rain water was seen flowing through some paddy fields.

According to the Andhra Pradesh State Development Planning Society, all the districts have received excess rainfall on average from June 1, except Srikakulam, which is still deficient. Two districts, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam, have witnessed normal rainfall so far. The Met department has also forecast that a low pressure area is likely to develop over north-east Bay of Bengal and neighbourhood around Sunday.

AP asks NSO to explain literacy survey methodology

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Andhra Pradesh Commissioner of School Education V Chinaveerabhadru has written to the National Statistical Office (NSO) to understand more about the intricacies of an NSO survey after the state was rated worst in literacy in a certain category.

"Prima facie, there are grounds to reexamine the report. I would like to get into the sample methodology and questionnaire to understand the report better," said Chinaveerabhadru while pointing out that it was important to understand how the NSO had carried out the survey.

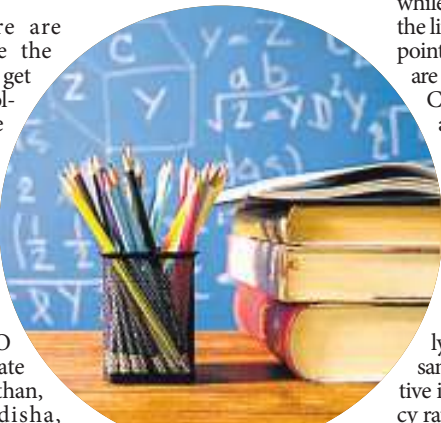
For 2017-18, the NSO rated the southern state lower than Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh in literacy rate for individuals above seven years of age.

The NSO allegedly surveyed 5,000 persons in some districts and even less in some others to arrive at this conclusion.

"I had asked the people concerned (NSO surveyors) to come and discuss the survey with me. They asked me to contact the NSO head, which I have done, and am waiting to hear from the organisation," he said. The Commissioner said that prima facie, there appear to be some issues with the survey and the report needed a re-examination.

In the 2011 Census, Andhra's literacy rate stood at 67 per cent while the NSO survey claimed the literacy rate was 64 per cent, pointing at a decline. "Since we are almost 10 years from the last Census, in any way, the literacy rate should only be increasing and not decreasing," the source pointed out.

According to the source, the NSO rating is only based on a sample survey, unlike the census, which touches every family in the state. "This is only a sample study -- its main objective is not to find out the literacy rate but about the consumption patterns. So, the data, or observations of the NSO study about literacy are tangential, or a byproduct of the research. The main objective is not to study literacy. So you need not give it more importance than what is required," the source added.



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AP Covid cases inch towards 6 lakh mark

Continued from Page 1

The tests per million increased to a record 90,016. East Godavari district, which revealed one of the lowest antibody levels of 14.4 per cent in the Sero prevalence study, continued to add its regulation 1,400 daily cases.

It has now touched a total of 81,064 cases, with 12,036 of them being active.

The neighbouring West Godavari, which too had a lowest Sero prevalence of 12.3 per cent, added 1,051 in the last 24 hours, pushing its overall tally to 53,571.

The district currently has 8,710 active cases.

Chittoor reported nine more Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours, followed by SPS Nellore seven, Guntur and Prakasam six each. Kadapa, Krishna, Srikakulam and West Godavari saw five new fatalities each, according to the bulletin.

SILVER PLATED LIONS AT DURGA TEMPLE MISSING

Political heat rising in state on temples issue

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Political heat is rising in the state after a series of incidents on temples across the state, while opposition parties vented their ire against the government in that regard. BJP state president Somu Veeraraju visited Kanakadurga temple on Wednesday, along with party leaders, where three silver plated lions adorning the chariot of Sri Durga Malleswara Swamyvarla Devasthanam here, popularly known as Indrakeeladri Kanakadurga temple, have gone missing.

The BJP state chief inspected the chariot where he was briefed by temple Executive Officer MV Suresh Babu about the missing silver plated lions. However, Veeraraju was not satisfied with his explanation on the issue. He



found that there were marks on the chariot of forcibly removing the silver plated lions by breaking them.

The BJP chief later met Governor Biswa Bushan

Harichandan and gave a representation on various incidents on temples in the state and arrests of BJP activists. He said that attacks on temples clearly establish that the government has been acting

in a vengeful manner against the Hindu activists with the objective of "teaching Hindus a lesson".

He recalled that 37 persons have been arrested under non-bailable sections and sent to judicial custody for 14 days. Ever since their arrest on September 8, the government has been opposing bail for them.

This oppressive attitude against Hindus seems to be a part of the government's appeasement politics to please and placate the Church and sections of the Christian community. Veeraraju requested the Governor to direct the government to forthwith release all those arrested and quash the cases unfairly registered against them. He appealed to the Governor for a timely intervention to help the beleaguered and harassed Hindus in the state

Complete projects at a brisk pace, Jagan directs officials

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Chief Minister directed officials to complete the irrigation projects on time and to focus on utilising flood water being discharged into the sea.

There should be no delay in the works of Nellore Barrage, Sangam Barrage, Owk tunnel-II, Pula Subbaiah Veligonda-Head Regulator works, Vansadhara-Nagavali Link, BRR Vamsadhara Project Stage-II and Polavaram project, he said.

He conducted a review meeting on work in progress of various irrigation projects in the state at the camp office here on Wednesday.

Gandikota reservoir should be able to store at least 23 tmc feet of water and the R&R works should be completed, along with Chitratavi balancing reservoir with 10 tmc feet of water. The com-



The compensation to farmers has been increased from Rs 6.5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh and he instructed officials to create awareness among farmers and convince them that the completion of irrigation projects would benefit them

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awareness among farmers and convince them that the completion of irrigation projects would benefit them.

Special Marriage

Continued from Page 1

writ petition is challenging certain provisions of the Special Marriage Act for those that violate the fundamental rights of the citizens under Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution. The impugned provisions require the parties to the marriage to publish their private details, open for public scrutiny, before 30 days of intended marriage," it said.

It said the provisions also allow anyone to submit objections to marriage and empower the Marriage Officer to inquire into such objections.

"The requirement of notice before marriage is absent in the Hindu Marriage Act and customary laws in Islam. Therefore, the said provision is also discriminatory and violative of Article 14," it said.

It said one of the provisions required that "Marriage Officer shall thereupon cause a copy thereof to be affixed to some conspicuous place", which is violative of fundamental right to privacy and equality.

The provisions throwing the personal information of the individuals open to public scrutiny, seriously damage

one's right to have control over her or his personal information and its accessibility, it said.

"Section 5 of the (Act) requires that a notice of intended marriage to be given by the parties to the marriage to the Marriage Officer of the district where at least one of the parties to the marriage has resided for a period of not less than 30 days immediately preceding the date on which such notice is given," it said.

Section 6 mandates that all such notices received shall be entered in the marriage notice book and the Marriage Officer shall publish a notice by affixing a copy thereof to some conspicuous place in his office, it said. As per Section 6(3), if the parties do not permanently reside within the jurisdiction of the officer who received the notice, a copy shall be transmitted to cause its publication in the relevant marriage office, the plea said. "Publishing details of notice of marriage by the marriage officers include the details of the parties like names, date of birth, age, occupation, parents' names and details, address, identity information, phone number etc," it said.

PIO pleads guilty in.....

Continued from Page 1

Sachdeva admitted that he contacted an acquaintance in Rhode Island and enlisted him to assist in accessing and stealing funds from the victims' bank accounts.

According to court documents, an FBI investigation determined that Sachdeva provided his acquaintance with personal and banking information sufficient to enable online access into the accounts of at least seven individuals, each over the age of 65. The investigation determined that the intended loss to these victims totalled US \$600,000, the statement said. Sachdeva did not know it, but his acquaintance in Rhode Island was assisting the FBI in an investigation into the fraud scheme. Appearing on Monday, Sachdeva pleaded guilty to seven counts of wire fraud, said United States Attorney Aaron L. Weisman and Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Boston Division Joseph R. Bonavolonta.

Sachdeva, who has been detained since his arrest, is scheduled to be sentenced on December 8.

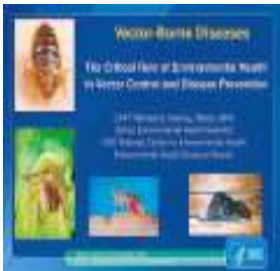
Fall in vector-borne diseases

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh, which is among the states with high concentration of Covid-19 cases, heaved a sigh of relief with the drastic fall in the vector borne diseases this pandemic year. People residing in rural and tribal areas of some districts in the state are prone to the vector-borne diseases. For instance, Visakhapatnam's Agency area reports the maximum number of malaria cases.

According to the case data maintained by the Health Ministry's National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme, there were only 453 dengue cases reported in Andhra Pradesh till July in 2020. Dengue cases see a rise during the rainy season. Despite good rain spells in the state, the cases remain low this year.

The dengue cases have seen a drastic fall in Andhra Pradesh as in the past 5,286, 4,011, 4,925 and 3,417 cases were reported in 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016 respectively. Speaking to The Pioneer, the Regional Director (AP) for Health & Family Welfare, Dr



Anuradha Medoju, said despite the pandemic, the health department employees were discharging their duties as per instructions issued in pre-monsoon and monsoon season.

On the other hand, Tata Institute of Genetics and Sciences based in Bengaluru has also commended the efforts being taken in Andhra Pradesh to check vector-borne diseases.

The AP government has attributed the success to its pilot sanitation drive, 'Manam Mana Parisubhratha'. Months of hard work resulted in a drastic decline in the number of cases pertaining to vector-borne diseases like malaria, typhoid and dengue when compared to last year for the same period (June to August), the state government

The dengue cases have seen a drastic fall in Andhra Pradesh as in the past 5,286, 4,011, 4,925 and 3,417 cases were reported in 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016

claimed. The Commissioner, Panchayati Raj & Rural Development, Girija Shankar, said, "We picked villages from all 13 districts. Our first step was to create awareness and make sure that people learn to segregate wet and dry waste within their homes. "We conducted meetings, spoke to people and successfully made 5.5 lakh households follow this rule. The next step was to allot one 'green ambassador', who was a sanitation worker and a local from the village, to pick up waste from the houses and dispose of them at the waste processing units," he said.

'Naidu playing Hindutva card, behind temple incidents'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Accusing N Chandrababu Naidu of trying to play the 'Hindutva card' to divert the attention of the people from the Amaravati land scam, E n d o w m e n t s Minister Vellampalli Srinivas on Wednesday stated that he suspected a well-planned conspiracy by the TDP behind the series of incidents taking place in temples across the State.

Referring to the silver idols missing from the Kanakadurga temple in Vijayawada, the Minister clarified that the chariot was not in use since the YSRCP came to power and theft of the lions might have taken place during the previous govern-

ment.

In the wake of the Antardevi incident, in an inspection drive at Indrakeeladri, it was found the three lion idols were missing from the chariot. "Following the discovery, a committee has been constituted to investigate and action would be taken against those involved," Srinivas promised, adding that all measures were being taken for the protection of chariots in temples.

He also accused Naidu of trying to politicise the issue with the aim of creating unease among the people.

Recalling the incidents like tantrik ritual, theft of Goddess Durga sarees and jewellery that took place during TDP regime, Srinivas alleged that

TDP leaders exploited and ruined the sanctity of temples and even went to the extent of demolishing temples across the State.

He said that the State government was closely monitoring the situation in temples and also taking quick action on the accused.

The Minister said that TDP leaders were intentionally creating a controversy over the issue to divert the public from Amaravati land scam. "Naidu is using Hindu religion to bond with BJP leaders and save himself from legal cases. TDP does not have any respect for Hindu religion, as Naidu even performed pooja and rituals wearing shoes on multiple occasions," Srinivas said.

Chinese troops

Continued from Page 1

"In response to China's actions, our armed forces have also made appropriate counter deployments in these areas to ensure that India's security interests are fully protected," he added.

Meanwhile, both sides are yet to firm up a date for the sixth round of Corps commander-level talks.

Tension in eastern Ladakh increased manifold following the Galwan Valley clashes on June 15 in which 20 Indian Army soldiers were killed. The Chinese side too suffered casualties, but it is yet to give out the details.

The situation deteriorated again after China unsuccessfully attempted to occupy Indian territory in the southern bank of Pangong lake on the intervening night of August 29 and 30.

India occupied a number of strategic heights on the southern bank of Pangong lake and strengthened its presence in Finger 2 and Finger 3 areas in the region to thwart any Chinese actions.

China has been occupying the areas between Finger 4 and Finger 8. The mountain spurs in the area is called Fingers. China has strongly objected to India's move. However, India has maintained that the heights are on its side of the LAC.

India has also rushed in additional troops and weapons to the sensitive region following China's transgression attempts.

Following China's fresh attempts to change the status quo in the southern bank of Pangong lake, India has further bolstered its military presence in the region.

Three lion statues go missing.....

Continued from Page 1

The state government has ordered a CBI probe into the incident.

However, no police case had been registered so far over the missing lion statues, the sources said.

The Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy varla Devasthanam Executive Officer Mohan Rao maintained that the silver-plated chariot was kept parked inside the M a l l i k a r j u n a Mahamantapam for the past 18 months.

TDP MLC Budda Venkanna alleged that the lion statues of the chariot were stolen and anti-social elements were running riot.

Tirupati MP Durgaprasad..

Continued from Page 1

"He was an intellectual and strove for the uplift of people. Balli Durgaprasad Rao has left an indelible mark on Tirupati. I offer my deepest condolences to his family," said Bhumana.

Srikalahasti MLA B Madhusoodana Reddy said that the sudden death of Balli Durgaprasad Rao had left him in shock. He wished that Durgaprasad Rao's soul may rest in peace and expressed profound sympathy to his family.

Satyavedu MLA Koneti Adimul expressed deep shock over Durgaprasad's death.

Sarvepalli MLA Kakani Govardhan Reddy said that with the demise of Durgaprasad Rao, the district has lost a great leader.

HC stays SIT probe into Amaravati...

Continued from Page 1

The report of a Cabinet Sub-Committee on the 'procedural, legal and financial irregularities and fraudulent transactions concerned with various projects, including the issues related to land in the CRDA region will form the basis for the SIT probe, General Administration Principal Secretary Praveen Prakash had said in an order issued then.

The SIT had since been conducting a probe into various aspects, particularly the land deals in Amaravati region even as the state government wrote to the Centre, seeking an investigation by the CBI.

China may ready Covid vaccine...

Continued from Page 1

The process of inoculation did not cause any localised pain," she said. At least five vaccine candidates developed by China have reached the crucial phase-3 stage, while Russia last month approved a Covid-19 vaccine before the completion of Phase-3 trials.

Wu said that she was hope-

ful about the efficacy and safety of the vaccine candidates developed by China.

"We expect them to remain effective for one to three years a (but) the results will need to be observed for a longer time," she said. China's military received approval for using a vaccine jointly developed by its research unit and CanSino Biologics Inc. in June itself.

Devotees still offer demonetised notes at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirupati temple is awash with Rs 50 crore demonetised cash offerings, which it continued to receive from devotees, but could not utilise. "Though the Central government had demonetised Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes on November 8, 2016, devotees continued to offer demonetised notes," said a TTD official.

As a result, the temple has received 1.8 lakh notes of Rs 1,000, amounting to Rs 18 crore, and 6.34 lakh notes of Rs 500, amounting to Rs 31.7 crore. All the offered demonetised notes amounted to a total of around Rs 50 crore. Though replete with old cash, Tirupati, one of the richest temples in the world, could not make use of it as scrapped notes have stopped being a legal tender for four years already.

Unable to monetise the



huge amount of delegitimised cash, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman YV Subba Reddy has requested Union Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitaraman to enable the temple to deposit the old money with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), or any other commercial one

to monetise that amount. "Once monetised, TTD will use it to fund several spiritual and welfare activities," the official said. Regarding the old

notes, TTD had already written to the Union Finance Ministry and the RBI in 2017 but did not receive a favourable response.

"As this issue is linked to the faith and sentiments of the devotees, Reddy requested Sitaraman for a favourable outcome, enabling the temple to deposit the money with the RBI, or any other bank," the official said. Reddy has asked the Finance Minister for favourable instructions in that direction. The TTD chairman said that the temple could not stop the devotees from offering old notes as it is linked with their faith and religious sentiments. TTD is a conglomeration of 12 temples and their sub-shrines. It employs 14,000 people. Spread over 16.2 acres, the main Tirumala temple is dedicated to Lord Sri Venkateswara, also known as Srinivasa, Balaji and Venkatachalapati.

Test for Village, Ward Secretariat posts on Sept 20

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has brought the Village Secretariat system to ensure that all government schemes are delivered directly to the doorstep of people on time, said Minister for Panchayat Raj Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy.

He held a video conference with District Collectors and SPs on Wednesday on the recruitment of Village and Ward Secretariat posts. He gave a few suggestions to the authorities on the occasion and told that special care should be taken in the recruitment of secretariat posts.

He said as many as 10,56,931 people applied for 16,208 Ward Secretariat posts



and the exam will commence from September 20. The minister said that 14 types of tests will be conducted and isolation rooms are set up for candidates suffering from Coronavirus.

He said the state has gained recognition in the country due to the Secretariat system. Each Secretariat has 12 to 14 employees available with the recruitment of 1.10 lakh can-

didate in the last year. "There are vacancies in 14,062 Village Secretariats and 2,166 Ward Secretariats, we are conducting tests to fill those vacancies where 10 lakh have downloaded hall tickets so far," he said. He said that he had spoken to the RTC for facilitating transport to the candidates. On the other hand, it is learnt that some candidates are worried that the hall tickets have not downloaded to which the minister said that hall tickets will be given only to those who have the required qualifications. Panchayat Raj Principal Secretary Gopala Krishna Dwivedi, PR Commissioner Girija Shankar, Municipal Administration Commissioner Vijay Kumar and others participated in the video conference.



KCR condoles M Sudarshan Rao's demise

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu has expressed his deep shock over the death of TRS founder member M Sudarshan Rao due to cardiac arrest. The Chief Minister has conveyed his condolences to members of the bereaved family. The Chief Minister said Sudarshan Rao in the initial stage of the Telangana Statehood movement had worked wonderfully. The CM said it was unfortunate that Sudarshan Rao died at a young age. Sudarshan Rao, 62, who contested as the TRS candidate from Kukatapally in 2009, died due to cardiac arrest at AIG Hospital Gachibowli on Wednesday. Sudarshan Rao was under Covid treatment for the past several days.

Unaware of lurking danger, many in city take off masks

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Though the Covid pandemic is still around, many people in Hyderabad have taken off their masks, unaware of the lurking danger around them in the form of micro-droplets.

From 100 per cent compliance to the compulsory mask rule during the lockdown and in the subsequent period, one now finds about 50 per cent people in public places without masks.

A drive around the busy thoroughfares in this city reveals a worrying trend. From people walking on roads to motorists and from shopkeepers to the customers at eateries, many are not at all bothered about face covering to protect themselves.

Though not wearing a mask is punishable in Telangana, due to lack of strict implementation of the rule, people are not taking it seriously. Even among those wearing the mask, a large number are not covering their nose and mouth.

Citizens are seen wearing masks at places where it is mandatory for entrance but at other times, they are openly flouting the rule. The compliance is more in places like hospitals, offices, supermarkets,



shopping malls and metro stations. With 800-900 new Covid cases per day in July, the situation in Hyderabad was a matter of concern. The numbers have now come down by 50 per cent and people have apparently become complacent after the number of cases dropped over the last one month. Health authorities have claimed that the situation in the state capital is now under control. They, however, cautioned people against complacency or negligence.

Health experts have also been cautioning people against negligence, saying unless a vaccine is found, they will have to continue following the precautions like wearing

masks, maintaining social distance and washing hands frequently. They describe masks as the first line of defence against the virus.

It was in April that the Telangana government made wearing masks compulsory for people when they are out of their house. A month later, the government announced that a Rs 1,000 fine will be imposed on those not complying with the rule. Negligence, lack of awareness and "nothing will happen to me" attitude are the reasons for people not wearing masks. This is despite the warning by health authorities that the number of cases among 20-40 age group is increasing.

"A common sentiment is if I am not personally at high risk for Covid-19, why should I wear a mask? It is important to understand that the virus that causes Covid-19 can be spread even before symptoms appear, by such things as coughing, sneezing, or even speaking at close range," said Dr Rahul Agarwal, Senior Consultant - Internal Medicine, Medicovert Hospitals, Hyderabad.

"People should often wear masks to protect themselves and also to protect others from respiratory droplets. This approach is important because of possible asymptomatic transmissions of Covid-19. Social distancing and frequent hand-washing or use of hand sanitiser, will be important in limiting the spread of Covid-19 as we return to our usual activities," he said.

According to Dr E Bhavani, Consultant Microbiologist, Continental Hospitals, masks have become mandatory in today's life as Covid-19 spreads through micro droplets released while talking and sneezing. "As we cannot maintain social distance of six feet at all times, the only way we can stop Covid-19 spread is through wearing masks," she said.

Covid forces early end to State Assembly session

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The COVID-19 pandemic forced an early end to the Telangana Assembly session as both the Houses were adjourned sine die on Wednesday, 12 days before the scheduled time.

Both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council were originally scheduled to have the session till September 28 but a sudden spurt in COVID cases among the staff on duty is believed to have forced the presiding officers to cut short the session.

Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy and Council Chairman G. Sukhender Reddy adjourned the Houses sine die after completing the day's agenda.

The decision was taken after a member of Assembly and over 50 others including policemen and legislature staff on duty reportedly tested positive.



While adjourning the Council sine die, the chairman said the mood of the house at large was that there is a possibility of spread of the pandemic. Sukhender Reddy said as 1,200 people including legislators, police, media and others were attending the session there is general apprehension about the spread of COVID.

Srinivas Reddy held a meeting with leaders of various political parties and discussed the issue after it was brought to his notice that some members of legislature staff, police

personnel and journalists tested positive. He reportedly conveyed the decision to cut short the session due to fears of virus spreading among legislators and Assembly staff on duty.

The speaker had directed all legislators, legislature staff, policemen, media persons covering the session to undergo test again before the session.

All of them had undergone the test before the session began on September 7. Finance Minister T. Harish Rao had tested positive a day before the start of the session.

'My biggest mistake was joining politics'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tollywood actor Murali Mohan on Wednesday said that he regrets joining the TDP, saying that his health deteriorated, his time was wasted and that he had to divert the funds he meant to invest in the trust run by him for politics instead of furthering its activities.

"It was because of these reasons that I expressed my inability to contest the 2019 elections to TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and to continue in active politics," the actor-politician said. Murali Mohan also ruled out any more part in active politics as he turned 80.

The actor had tasted defeat at the hands of Congress MP



Vundavalli Arun Kumar from Rajahmundry in the 2009 elections but made a stunning political comeback in 2014, winning from the same constituency handsomely.

He kept himself away from electoral politics in 2019 and also quit the TDP.

Describing his tryst with politics as the "biggest mistake" in his career, he said that Naidu convinced him to join the party, much against his wishes. "I lost so much in that decade. Others made me feel politics is disgusting," Murali Mohan remarked.

Because of his over 10-year stint in politics, people regarded him as only a politician, Murali Mohan said.

Because of his stint as TDP MP for five years, film producers were afraid to approach him, as they assumed he would always be in Delhi or at Amaravati. "In spite of my assurance to film producers that I would give up politics and dedicate my time to films, no producer evinced an interest to approach me," Murali Mohan said.

Many are of the view that he was still involved in politics, Murali Mohan said, emphasising that phase of life was his past now and he wanted to involve himself in cinema again.

Cop tests positive after celebrating b'day, suspended

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A constable from Keesara police station, who organised his birthday party against the instructions of his superiors and subsequently ended up being infected with Covid-19, was placed under suspension by Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat on Wednesday.

Shiva Kumar had celebrated his birthday with a liquor party with his colleagues and friends at the Tourism Department guest house at Keesaragutta on Tuesday. He and two other constables tested positive later.

Congress condemns early end of Assembly session

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister & ex-Leader of Opposition Mohammed Ali Shabbir has strongly condemned the early end of monsoon session of Assembly.

Shabbir Ali said that the monsoon session, which began on September 7, was originally planned to be held till September 28. However, CM K Chandrababtu Naidu forced Speaker P Srinivas Reddy to adjourn the session 'sine die' on Wednesday.

"KCR is ridiculing the democratic institutions like the Legislative Assembly by reducing its functioning to a formality. It seems that the state government had convened the session only to pass 12 Bills," he said and pointed out that only nine sessions of Assembly were held in the first term of CM KCR from 2014-2018 and the House functioned for a total of 126 days. He said the longest session of Telangana



Legislative Assembly was of only 19 days which was held from 5 November-29 November, 2014. "The Assembly functioned for only 25 days in a year in the first tenure of TRS regime," he said adding that CM KCR continued the same trend in his second tenure and so far only six sessions of Assembly were held in the last two years and the cumulative number of working days was just 35. Of six sessions, the longest session was of just 10 days (9th-22nd September, 2019) in the current tenure.

KCR changing colours like a chameleon: Bandi Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharatiya Janata Party has criticised Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababtu Naidu for opposing the Central proposal on power reforms even before it was introduced in the Parliament. The State was reeling under severe power crisis and lakhs of crore rupees was pending with electricity discoms as the government was in bankruptcy.

Addressing a press teleconference on Wednesday from New Delhi, BJP State President and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar criticized Chief Minister KCR over his remarks on the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government's proposal to bring reforms in the power sector. He said State power distribution companies were facing a severe financial crisis as the State government did not pay the arrears which



were pending since long. The Central government has sanctioned Rs 9,000 crore with which the State has paid arrears to the Discoms to some extent. Without having proper knowledge of the Central power reforms, KCR was making false allegations against the Modi government. Bandi Sanjay said the Modi government had resolved the issues in the LPG distribution and every customer was getting subsidies into their bank account without any hassle. The Central

Government was planning to bring similar reforms in the power sector too, but Telangana CM was sending wrong signals in the minds of the people.

The Karimnagar MP asked KCR why he was unable to pay the arrears to the Discoms as a result of the delay in payments, they were in financial doldrums. About 18,000 villages in Telangana had lived in darkness and with the initiative of the Central government, now the State was able to provide uninterrupted power supply and CM KCR should remind it, he said, adding that he was always telling and propagating lies against the Centre. How would the State lose jobs with power reforms? How would he spread lies in the Assembly that the power reforms would be detrimental to the interests of the State, the BJP chief asked.

SUPPORT SYSTEM



Taking all precautionary measures, GHMC Deputy Mayor Baba Fasiuddin visits the residences of Covid patients and donated home isolation kits to the patients in Borabanda. The kit consists of sanitizer, fruits, masks, soaps and vitamin tablets.

Preparedness for future pandemics still main focus

One in three were not sufficiently prepared for the impact of Coronavirus pandemic

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Intelligent automation will play a critical role in shaping a new, technologically-enabled, post-pandemic future of work, according to new research. The study surveyed over 3,000 global senior managers and frontline IT staff for their thoughts on technology's future role in a significantly altered business landscape.

The research found that preparedness for future pandemics or similar disruptions was still the main focus for many, with an overwhelming majority of respondents identifying it as a high priority - an unsurprising figure when you consider that nearly one in three said they were either totally unprepared or 'not very prepared' for the impact of Covid. It also found



that intelligent automation has emerged as one of the key technologies used to future-proof

businesses against disruptive events. Seventy-six per cent of respondents said the pandemic

will cause them to increase their intelligent automation investment. Meanwhile, 74 per

cent of participants agree that further external shocks that temporarily remove people from the workplace will result in more intelligent automation and artificial intelligence investment, while 76 per cent also say that unpredictable mass illness or self-isolation will drive increased business demand for intelligent automation. Over half of respondents also said they would increase investment in AI and cloud solutions to guard against business impact of pandemics.

More broadly, the study found that technology will have a profound effect on the way we work in the future, with 86 per cent of respondents expecting technology to significantly change 'in the way people in their organization work over the next five years.'

Congress demands action against TRS Corporator for assaulting girl

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy demanded stern action against TRS Corporator from Serilingampally Ragam Nagender Yadav who allegedly assaulted a young girl in Lingampalli.

Narayana Reddy on Wednesday, said that the ruling party corporator, Nagender Yadav, assaulted the girl, Ananya Kurikala, when she objected to wrong parking by the corporator.

"It is clearly evident from the video, which has gone viral on social video, that the TRS Corporator used offensive language and threatened her using his official position. He even



assaulted her in full public view. This is nothing but utter misuse of power and wrong display of arrogance. He openly intimidated a young girl of dire consequences with criminal intent just because she opposed a wrong doing by the TRS corporator," he said demanding action against him.

Narayana Reddy also questioned the silence of IT Minister KT Rama Rao on the 'rowdy-like' behaviour of TRS corporators. "KTR Tweets about almost everything beneath the sky. He also plants many fabricated stories through his Tweets to highlight himself as a leader who is truly concerned about common man.

But KTR never reacts to the developments which exposes the true face of TRS leaders. Why is he not reacting to the video of TRS Corporator Nagender Yadav attacking an innocent girl? Why is he still silent on open rowdism by the leaders of the same party which he heads as Working President?" he asked.

SHORT READS

Govt: Terror incidents reduced in JK since Article 370 scrapped

New Delhi: As many as 71 civilians and 74 security personnel were killed in terror attacks and ceasefire violations by Pakistan since the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution a year ago, the Rajya Sabha was informed on Wednesday. Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy also said that terrorist incidents have come down since August 5, 2019 when the Article 370 was scrapped. A total of 45 civilians and 49 security personnel were killed due to terrorist incidents from August 5, 2019 to September 10, 2020 in Jammu and Kashmir and 26 civilians and 25 security personnel were killed due to ceasefire violation by Pakistani forces along the border in the same period. Prior to the abrogation of Article 370 -- from June 29, 2018 to August 4, 2019, (total 402 days), there were 455 terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir while from August 5, 2019 to September 9, 2020 (402 days), there were 211 terror incidents in the Union Territory.

1st phase of Census postponed due to pandemic: Govt

New Delhi: The first phase of the Census operations, which was supposed to be held from April 1 to September 30, has been postponed due to the coronavirus outbreak, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai also said a multiple-layered security approach has been adopted for the security and safety of the Census data. The first phase of the Census operations (Census 2021) and other related field activities have been postponed due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, he said. The minister said a multiple-layered security approach has been adopted for the security and safety of the Census data and the data collection will be done on registered devices of the enumerators appointed by the states and UTs.

Is PM Swasth scheme some kind of jumla of govt? asks SP leader

New Delhi: Sep 16 (PTI) Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav on Wednesday asked the government from where will it arrange Rs 65,560.98 crore for the proposed Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana, and wondered whether it was a kind of 'jumla'. Participating in a debate on a bill related to ayurveda institute in Rajya Sabha, Yadav said at a time when the entire Health Ministry's budget allocation was only about Rs 65,000 crore for the 2020-21 fiscal, how will it arrange funds for the scheme. In the 2020-21 budget, only about Rs 65,000 crore was allocated, 35 per cent lower than the ministry's demand of Rs 1,17,000 crore, he said in the Upper House. He asked the Health Minister to tell when the people will benefit from the scheme. On the opening day of the Monsoon session, Health Minister had said in Lok Sabha that the government is launching the Pradhan Mantri Atmanirbhar Swasth Bharat Yojana with an allocation of Rs 65,561 crore for proactively identifying gaps in dealing with challenges posed by COVID-19-like pandemics in future.

28.32 lakh domestic air passengers in Aug, 76% lower than in Aug 2019: DGCA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 28.32 lakh domestic passengers travelled by air in August this year, 76 per cent lower than the corresponding period last year, aviation regulator DGCA said on Wednesday. While IndiGo carried 16.82 lakh passengers, a 59.4 per cent share of the total domestic market, SpiceJet flew 3.91 lakh passengers, which is 13.8 per cent share of the total market, the DGCA data noted.

These two airlines were followed by Air India, AirAsia India, Vistara and GoAir at 2.78 lakh, 1.92 lakh, 1.42 lakh and 1.33 lakh passengers respectively in August, the data showed. As many as 21.07 lakh people travelled by air

domestically this July, the regulator had said last month.

The occupancy rate or load factor for five out of six major Indian airlines was between 58 and 69 per cent in August, it said Wednesday.

"The passenger load factor in the month of Aug 2020 has shown some recovery due to increased demand after the opening of lockdown," said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

The occupancy rate in SpiceJet was 76 per cent in August, the regulator noted.

However, the occupancy rate for other major airlines Vistara, IndiGo, AirAsia India, GoAir and Air India stood at 68.3 per cent, 65.6 per cent, 64.4 per cent, 61 per cent and 58.6 per cent, respectively, according



to the DGCA.

India resumed domestic passenger flights on May 25 after a gap of two months due to the coronavirus pandemic. Indian airlines are allowed to operate a maximum of 60 per cent of their pre-COVID domestic flights.

A total of 19.84 lakh passengers travelled domestically in June this year. Between May 25 and May 31, 2.81 lakh air passengers had travelled domestically, the DGCA noted.

The DGCA data mentioned that in August, IndiGo had the best on-time performance of

98.5 per cent at four metro airports - Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

AirAsia India and Vistara were at number two and three at these four airports with 97.6 per cent and 95.9 per cent on-time performance, respectively, the regulator said.

Vistara and Air India cancelled 14.99 per cent and 12.05 per cent of their flights in August, the DGCA mentioned.

The aviation sector has been significantly impacted due to the travel restrictions imposed in India and other countries in view of the coronavirus pandemic. All airlines in India have taken cost-cutting measures such as pay cuts, leave without pay and firings of employees in order to conserve the cash flow.



‘Farm sector bills will boost agri production’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The three bills related to agriculture introduced by the Modi government in Parliament will boost production and help farmers get better prices for the produce, BJP president J P Nadda said on Wednesday.

Underlining that farmers are at the core of the government's policies, Nadda, addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters, said all three farm sector bills are far-sighted and will boost agriculture production.

When asked about the minimum support price (MSP), the BJP leader asserted that it would continue to stay.

The government on Monday introduced 'The Farmers Produce Trade And Commerce (Promotion And Facilitation) Bill', 'The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on

Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill', and 'The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill' to replace the ordinances promulgated earlier.

These bills will help farmers get better price for their produce through a transparent system, Nadda said.

Taking on the Congress, he said the party's opposition to the bills was nothing but politics. The BJP is doing what the opposition party had promised in its manifesto, Nadda added.

Lok Sabha passed the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 on Tuesday via a voice vote.

On the issue of the Akali Dal, an ally of the BJP, opposing the bill, Nadda said, "We have spoken to Akali Dal and have addressed its concerns."

Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Badal had voted against the bill.

Naxals block road in Gadchiroli ahead of ‘foundation week’

PNS ■ GADCHIROLI

Naxals have blocked a road in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district and put up banners there asking people to observe the foundation week of the outlawed movement, police said on Wednesday.

The CPI(Maoist) observes

its foundation week from September 21 to 27.

The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) and People's War Group (PWG) merged to form CPI(Maoist) on September 21, 2004, and since then it has been observing the foundation week every year during this period.

NCB probe team member tests +ve

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A member of the NCB team probing drugs angle in actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday following which questioning of the actors former manager Shruti Modi was postponed, an official said.

Modi reached the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) office in south Mumbai around 10 am for questioning by the SIT.

But, before the probe team could start recording her statement, the NCB received report



followed.

"Accordingly, we sent back Shruti Modi who had joined the investigation in the morning," he said.

The NCB on Tuesday asked Shruti Modi and Rajput's talent manager Jaya Saha to join its investigation to get a clear picture on some aspects of the case.

Saha will now be called later, the official said.

So far, the apex drug law enforcement agency has arrested 18 people, including Rajput's girlfriend actress Rhea Chakraborty and her brother Showik Chakraborty.

Centre favours quick trial of cases against lawmakers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre favoured expeditious disposal of pending cases against former and sitting lawmakers before the SC and said these matters "must reach their logical conclusion" within a time frame.

A bench of Justices N V Ramana, Surya Kanta and Hrishikesh Roy was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, that he has no problems with the suggestions made for speedy disposal of case by senior advocate Vijay Hansaria, appointed as amicus curiae in the matter.

Mehta said that if proceedings of any of these cases against lawmakers are stayed by the high court, then the top court may direct the it to decide the matter in a time bound manner.

He told the bench that these cases "must reach their logical conclusion within a time bound manner" and if any central agency is not proceeding with the matter despite there being no stay then he would take up the issue at another level.

82,961 recoveries in a day, a quarter from Maha; recovery rate 78.53%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A record 82,961 new COVID-19 recoveries were reported on Wednesday, almost a quarter of them from Maharashtra alone, pushing the overall figures close to 39.5 lakh and the recovery rate to 78.53 per cent, Health Ministry data showed.

In its figures updated at 8 am Wednesday, the ministry said the number of active cases stands at 9,95,933 (or 19.84 per cent of the total caseload), while the number of recovered patients is 39,42,360.

It said that nearly 59 per cent of the new recoveries came from five states -- 23.41 per cent from Maharashtra (19, 423 recoveries); and a cumulative 35.5 per cent from Andhra Pradesh (9,628 recoveries), Karnataka (7,406), Uttar Pradesh (6,680) and Tamil Nadu (5,735)



A record 82,961 patients recovered and were discharged from home/facility isolation and hospitals in a day, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am.

"The number of recovered patients so far exceeds that of the active cases by nearly four times (3.96), or in absolute terms by 29,46,427 cases, the ministry said.

"The 7-day moving average of the recoveries shows a consistent increase," the ministry said.

Twenty-seven states and

union territories are reporting recovery rates of more than 70 per cent, the ministry highlighted.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu compose close to 60 per cent of the active cases," the ministry said. With more than 20,000 new cases in a span of 24 hours, Maharashtra is also leading the cases tally, followed by Andhra Pradesh (8,846) and Karnataka (7,576).

India's tally of COVID-19 cases galloped past 50 lakh Wednesday, just 11 days after it crossed 40 lakh, with 90,123 infections reported in a day.

The total coronavirus cases mounted to 50,20,359, while the death toll climbed to 82,066 with a record 1,290 people succumbing to the disease in a span of 24 hours, the updated data showed.

‘Bleeding Heart’ was to replace Hurriyat Conference

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

After tightening of terror funds by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Pakistan had approved a proposal by Irfan Shafi Mir, who was arrested along with Deputy SP Davender Singh, to set up a new outfit called 'Bleeding Heart' as it had realised in 2018 that Hurriyat Conference, the separatist conglomerate created by ISI, won't be able to deliver any more.

Mir, who has emerged as a 'double agent', made frequent visits to Pakistan during which he came in contact with ISI officials as well as top terror leadership that had complained that separatist groups in the Kashmir valley had become defunct after the



NIA cracked its whip on their anti-national activities in 2017 following registering of a terror funding case.

During a visit to Pakistan in 2018, Mir held an extensive discussion with ISI officials as well as terrorist top brass to set up a non-governmental organisation (NGO) by the name 'Bleeding Heart' which would replace the role of Hurriyat Conference, says the NIA chargesheet filed in a designated court of Jammu.

Manmohan, Chidambaram seek leave

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and former Finance Minister P Chidambaram are among over a dozen Rajya Sabha MPs who have sought leave of absence from the current monsoon session on medical grounds, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said on Wednesday.

Besides Singh and Chidambaram, the others who have sought leave of absence include PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss, senior Congress leader Oscar Fernandes, A Navaneethakrishnan of AIADMK and YSR Congress leader and billionaire Mukesh Ambani's aide Parimal Nathwani.

Schools told to observe ‘dry day’ once a week to prevent mosquito breeding

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has directed all schools in the national capital to observe 'dry day' once a week during which coolers, flower pots, bird pots, water containers, stagnant water and other possible sites be checked thoroughly to prevent mosquito breeding.

The move is part of the awareness campaign for school students against vector-borne diseases like dengue, malaria and chikungunya.

"The rainy season is most conducive for vector-borne diseases like dengue, chikungunya and malaria which spread during this time every year. These are all mosquito generated diseases and they

sometimes gain epidemic proportions if preventive measures are not taken. "Prevention is the best method to control any disease. In order to control and prevent the outbreak, it is essential to prevent breeding of mosquitoes and students should be made aware of this," the Directorate of Education (DoE) said in a letter to school principals.

Centre approved anti-viral medicines to treat patients: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court said there was an approval by the Central government on use of Remdesivir and Favipiravir as medicines to treat COVID-19.

The top court was hearing a plea seeking registration of an FIR by the CBI against ten Indian pharmaceutical firms for manufacturing and selling these two medicines for treating Covid patients allegedly without valid licences.

Remdesivir and Favipiravir are antiviral drugs and their efficacy in treating COVID-19 patients have been a matter of debate among medical experts. A bench comprising Chief

Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian referred to the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2018 and said these medicines have been permitted by the government for using in treatment of novel coronavirus patients.

"You have not noticed this rule (New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules) and filed this petition. We are adjourning this matter, you see the rules and then come back," the bench told lawyer M Sharma who has filed the PIL.

Adjourning the hearing by two weeks, the bench said, "There is approval by the Government of India for



Remdesivir and Favipiravir".

Seeking CBI probe, Sharma had filed the PIL alleging that these two medicines have been wrongly manufactured and

sold for treating COVID-19 patients without any valid licences from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.

"That respondent no.3 to 10 are Indian pharmaceutical company who have signed partnership agreements with foreign companies that are Gilead Science Inc -USA and Fujifilm Japan, to manufacture and sale impugned drug, Remdesivir and Avagin (Favipiravir) in India. Without having a licence, the are manufacturing and selling impugned drugs as a medicine for corona in India," the PIL alleged.

Sharma has sought prosecution of the Indian companies for offences of cheating and criminal conspiracy besides under the provisions of the Drug Act, 1940.

The PIL said that these medicines have not been certified as medicines for Covid-19 till date by any country.

"They are under trial and no country, including India, have issued licence to manufacture and sale them in the country..." it said.

The companies are manufacturing and selling them at very high rates in India and people are paying that "due to the fear of COVID-19 infection" and are dying, it said.

More than 300 doctors have died in hospitals where these two medicines have been supplied and it amounted to "exploitation of public" due to the fear of death.

3 arrested for attack on Raina's relatives

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab Police on Wednesday said three members of a gang have been arrested in connection with the attack on former cricketer Suresh Raina's relatives in which his uncle and a cousin were killed.

Those arrested are members of an inter-state gang of robber-criminals, they added.

Raina, meanwhile, arrived in Pathankot during the day to be with the family.

The attack had taken place in Pathankot's Tharyal village on the intervening night

of August 19 and 20.

Eleven other accused are yet to be arrested, Director General of Police Dinkar Gupta said here.

Raina's uncle, Ashok Kumar, a contractor, had died on the spot, while Kumar's son, Kausal, succumbed to injuries on August 31.

Kumar's wife, Asha Rani, is in hospital in a critical condition. Two others injured in the attack had been discharged.

The cricketer had described the attack as "beyond horrible" and had urged Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to look into this incident.

Pak renews map war

Despite Russia’s protests, it circulates fictitious map showing parts of India at SCO. Is China behind this adventurism?



Pakistan is playing a dangerous geo-political game, needling India from the other end as China’s serf State, without realising that all of it could boomerang on itself. Having failed to internationalise the Kashmir issue despite the abrogation of Article 370, it has now taken its territorial aggression to redrawing its maps and appropriating what it fancifully feels is owed to it. So in August it released a new map, incorporating Kashmir, parts of Ladakh and Junagadh in Gujarat. India had rightly called this vacuous and unilateral declaration, which is not backed by any credible reasoning, support groups, historical reasoning or legal validity, as a “political absurdity.” So Pakistan, in a bid to legitimise its claims, circulated this map at a virtual meeting of the national security advisors of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member countries, despite host Russia’s resistance. India rightly walked out of the meeting, saying Pakistan’s move violated SCO norms, which mandated that no bilateral issue would be discussed and that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member-states would be respected. The Russia-India-China axis dominates the SCO, which, as a counterweight to the US-dominated NATO, has emerged as one of the largest trans-regional international organisations accounting for almost 44 per cent of the world population, stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Indian Ocean and from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea. China is seeking to use it in its global domination against the US and while it has sufficiently debt-trapped Central Asian republics and other regional players to do its bidding, it is trying to neutralise Russia by becoming its biggest investor and is now needling India. Considering that India is intransigent on yielding to China’s terms on the Ladakh standoff, regardless of the meetings of the Foreign and Defence Ministers of both nations on the sidelines of the SCO, it just wanted to embarrass India, making it look like an “occupier” at a public forum. And for this it used its proxy, Pakistan. China has also been trying to convince Russia to scale down its defence deals with India following the border stand-off and the map fiasco, which undoubtedly has left Moscow red-faced, was about strong-arming it as well. True, Russia is pragmatic enough about keeping both China and India on its side to establish its relevance in a multi-polar world and even front India to counter Chinese heft. But China certainly doesn’t want India, which has won brownie points at international fora for being decorous and respecting the rule of law, to prevail at SCO. In fact, it was what Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said recently that shows this cartographic offensive to be a part of a larger pattern and not just Pakistan’s independent move. “The new map shows Kashmir shares a clear border with China,” a clear indication that like Nepal, this attempt to redraw boundaries was made at China’s behest and underlines our eastern neighbour’s desire for strategic contiguity in the region than Pakistan’s any real concern for Kashmir. While India is firm on Chinese withdrawal from eastern Ladakh that seems to have driven a wedge in their greater plan to control the Karakoram by squeezing us with salami-slicing, Pakistan’s map claims are clearly intended to warn us of a two-front offensive. Pakistan is heating up the Line of Control (LoC), having moved almost 20,000 soldiers recently to match Chinese deployment on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Its ceasefire violations and infiltration bids have gone up by about 60 per cent this year, something which didn’t happen even after the Balakot airstrikes. If recent reports are to be believed, then the Chinese are no longer shadow-boxing. Just like in Nepal, their officials have had a series of meetings with their Pakistani counterparts in Gilgit-Baltistan and have been aiding them clandestinely to revive old terror networks against India. Debt-trapped by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with its economy in the doldrums and heavily dependent on borrowings and bailouts, Pakistan is but a pawn in China’s gameplan.

Yet Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan forgets that such unilateralism will beget unilateralism from the Indian side as well. And hurt its interests. The new map is nothing but an adventurist version of its 1947-48 map and in one blow scythes through all bilateral agreements that came after it, primarily the 1972 Shimla Agreement. If Khan wants to negate the understanding that bilateral disputes will be resolved bilaterally, is he also prepared for the negation of all other bilateral treaties we have regarding water-sharing? And if he has taken the liberty of depicting territories under Indian control as Pakistani territory, then how would he counter other valid land claims from our side? In that sense, Pakistan’s latest offensive is nothing short of playing with fire. Realising that the US is now more an ally of India and is humouring it, Pakistan is desperately coopting the Kashmir issue under the banner of pan-Islamism. So it is involving Turkey, which wants to be a leader of the neo-Islamic world, in its criticism of India and seeking Chinese endorsement. Only Pakistan doesn’t realise that its Kashmir strategy is still not quite exportable. And that China, while using it for posturing, will continue to engage with India for geo-strategic reasons.

Life on Venus

There’s proof of life in the unlikeliest of planets, also known for being one of the least explored



that have roamed its surface. We actually have a greater grasp of the surface of Mars than we do of the bottom of our oceans. Even now, the aim for mankind, both in real and reel life, is to make Mars the first step on our eventual voyage to the stars.

Venus, the second rock from the Sun, is, however, given as an example of where global warming will take us. A planet benign on the outside but one where every probe sent since the start of space exploration has been dissolved in acid in the atmosphere or fried by the extreme heat that the greenhouse effect has caused. Even though the Soviet Venera programme did land several probes on Venus and many survived a few hours, there was a succession of lens cap failures. As a result, Venus is one of the least explored planets of the solar system, lacking the romanticism of Mars and the grandeur of Jupiter and Saturn, which have both seen billion-dollar spacecraft visit them in the past decade. Yet, the discovery of phosphine in the Venusian atmosphere is an intriguing prospect because the only way for this gas, with three hydrogen molecules attached to one phosphorus molecule, to occur naturally is as a byproduct of biological processes. While the gas can be made industrially by man, that isn’t clearly a possibility on Venus. So, have we been barking up the wrong tree for decades? After all, as the old adage goes, “Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus” and as we all know, women have all the answers. Maybe some strange process creates phosphine on Venus that we are unaware of and we should send a probe or two to the planet we never thought could harbour life. But as we know from Earth herself, life can survive in some really extreme conditions. This time though, let us make sure that the lens caps work.

Teachers too must learn

The NEP expects every teacher to develop a comprehensive perspective on life and living and follow an application-based module



JS RAJPUT

For over six decades, one has never witnessed such a strong projection of the national resolve to implement a policy. This rare privilege goes to the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. The President of India addresses the nation, the Prime Minister addresses twice within a week, the Union Education Minister and his team seem busy 24x7, conducting and guiding national-level webinars on specific topics that would require new initiatives and action at the implementation stage. It’s evident that the nation has realised that for equitable growth, progress and development, it has to be “education, education, and education.” India is now determined to create a pool of teachers who would not only be degree-holders but possess “personalities.” These would be people imbued with a comprehensive multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional perspective.

In fact, the new approach to teacher preparation would expect every instructor to develop a comprehensive perspective on life and living. They would internalise the higher goals of education. The focus, henceforth, would be on them believing in *Sarva Bhut Hite Ratah*. And as was the ancient tradition, they would be life-long learners, *yavadjeevait adhiyate viprah*. It is, in a sense, a revolutionary recommendation that by 2030 all teachers would be prepared in multi-faculty colleges and universities through four-year integrated programmes. As one goes through the various sections of the NEP, this expectation becomes evident to everyone.

The objective of achieving *scharyatwa* would require a strong support system that must emerge from the establishment and society. There are clear indications to ensure that: “In order to improve and reach the levels of integrity and credibility required to restore the prestige of the teaching profession, the regulatory system shall be empowered to take stringent action against sub-standard and dysfunctional Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) that do not meet the basic educational criterion, after giving one year for the remedy of breaches. By 2030, only educationally sound, multi-disciplinary and integrated teacher education programmes shall be in force.” This objective of restoring the credibili-



ty of TEIs is achievable. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) had, during 1998-99, successfully exercised this authority, and certain well-known but sub-standard teacher preparation programmes were closed down. Once teacher educators accept this responsibility, they could transform the entire system. Let them never forget that the recommendations on teacher education arise from the expectations and aspirations of the young. But somewhere besides these is also the hidden pain and anguish which was recorded – with a heavy heart – by late Justice JS Verma: “A majority of stand-alone TEIs – over 10,000 in number – are not even attempting serious teacher education but are essentially selling degrees for a price.” One could mention it only with immense pain, as the first chairperson of the NCTE said, that all these 10,000 institutions selling degrees were certified by senior teachers, teacher educators, professors and other academics. The policy has done its part, no more stand-alone colleges. Now it is the responsibility of teachers, teacher educators and professionals in the field to ensure that in future regulatory mechanisms are not trivialised.

This policy suggests alternative regulatory structures, which would transform the manner in which future multi-disciplinary

teacher preparations institutions and universities would emerge. The responsibility of teachers at every stage would grow multi-fold as autonomy would be the in-thing.

When one goes through the various general recommendations in the policy, one finds serious concern for drastic change in teacher education in content and pedagogy, and the need to achieve an attitudinal transformation among aspiring teachers. It is now learning, examining and more learning. Examinations shall no more be days of nationwide anxiety and widespread tension. The focus of assessment in schools shifts to application of knowledge gained and internalised.

The present pattern of examinations was transplanted in this country by alien rulers. It had been discarded in Britain much earlier but we still adhere to it in India. Teachers, and teacher educators, have a tremendous task ahead in implementing curriculum load reduction, to ensure that textbooks and textual materials are neither deficient on new knowledge nor too overloaded with obsolete content.

Teaching and learning shall become more interactive, and much would transpire outside the closed classroom. Skill development and bringing in vocational education elements early in

schools would require TEIs absorbing them in their own curricula. Those who know the story of Richard Feynman would find it much easier to visualise its great transformative and inspiring impact on the system as a whole. It would be possible only when the promises to ensure the assured recruitment process are put to practice, and the assurances on the professionally acceptable teacher-student ratio is implemented without any aberrations. One must not ignore considerable dilution in the quality of education and decline in the acceptability and credibility of schools funded by the public. The policy realises this.

The ancient Indian tradition of knowledge quest spreads over four stages: *adhyayan*, *manan*, *chintan* and *upayog*. And its relevance is eternal. It is the essence of the process of transfer of knowledge to generations ahead. Every teacher, henceforth, would be expected to comprehend the essence of Indian philosophy of education that finds reflection throughout this policy.

Let me recall three sentences of Sri Aurobindo; first being that the process must begin with “from near, to far”; and hence the mother tongue medium and other aspects. His second principle was that “nothing can be taught.” Every active, alert and vibrant teacher shall

have to grasp its essence. It is “learning the treasure within.” It is the perfection within that the child is discovering, and teachers are assisting, supporting, guiding, and much more.

When Sri Aurobindo states that the “mind must be consulted in its growth,” he is emphasising how pertinent it is to “know the child.” It is the comprehension of these basic principles that has led to the restricting of the school education system to 5+3+3+4. The most significant is the addition of initial three years, after the age of 3. India would need very specialised teachers for this age group.

A couple of years ago, India had anticipated the importance of open and distance learning. That experience comes very handy as the global attention diverts to online learning. Creation of digital platforms and e-content had already begun in full swing and has come handy during the corona crisis, as children are confined to their homes. The pedagogy is undergoing unprecedented change, teachers associated with schools will have to gear up to learn new skills. While tools and techniques shall change – sometimes beyond recognition – the pedagogical principles would remain the same.

(The writer works in education and social cohesion)

SOUND BITE

I call on the Palestinian leadership to recognise reality and show responsibility as did the UAE leaders, by returning to negotiating table.

Israeli Minister
—Gabi Ashkenazi



Security Council reform is very important, not only for the member states but also to the United Nations as a whole.

Turkish diplomat
—Volkan Bozkir



We will be taking action to counter the unjust tariffs put on Canadian aluminum by the United States. We will always be there to defend Canadian workers, defend our aluminum sector.

Canadian PM
—Justin Trudeau



If J&K UT government is of the view that it has no concern and duty for the feelings of Kashmir’s masses, then it must take that position, categorically.

Former Union Minister
—Saifuddin Soz



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Medical education

Sir — The Tamil Nadu Assembly has unanimously passed a Bill to provide 7.5 per cent horizontal reservation in medical admissions for State Government students who clear the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). The provisions of the new law are applicable to all government and private medical, dental, Indian medicine and homeopathy streams. The reservation will benefit 300 underprivileged scholars annually and will be implemented from this year onwards.

Amit Singh Kushwaha
Madhya Pradesh

No arrest warrant

Sir — The Uttar Pradesh Government has issued a notification for setting up a Special Security Force (SSF). It will be given responsibility of important Government buildings, industrial establishments, major sites, airports, metros and other important places. Empowered to make “arrests” and conduct “searches” without any prior

MPLADS should be permanently scrapped

In the wake of the Coronavirus outbreak, the Government has decided to reallocate the funds from the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS). Amounting to ₹5 crore a year per Member of Parliament (MP), the money will now be allocated by the Centre for relief packages. Rather than just suspending the scheme, it should be permanently scrapped.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Parliament and Planning Commission termed MPLADS useless and as encouraging corruption. A sting operation caught few parliamentarians accepting bribes to approve schemes to be funded through MPLADS. The then Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee had argued for scrapping the scheme. Many members of Parliament and the Legislative Assembly have been over-generous by funding their favourite organisations through this scheme even though such funding may have had nothing to do with public welfare. It may be recalled that trusts floated by the then Chief Election Commissioner



Navin Chawla were generously funded by parliamentarians cutting across party-lines from MPLADS. Already, the Bihar government has abolished such a programme. All such suggested reforms should be implemented both at the Centre and in States.

Madhu Agrawal
Chandni Chowk

Inflation a concern

Sir — Inflation is primarily driven by food prices, which account for 39 per cent of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket, and a sharp spiral in prices of transport and communication services, which amount

to 8.6 per cent. The sub category of petrol and diesel for vehicles and telephone charges for mobiles account for around 50 per cent of transport and communication charges, which have been growing in double digits in July and August. Prices of basic food items such as pulses, vegetables, edible oil, meat, fish and

eggs have doubled. Even fruits are extremely costly. While the CPI in August is lower than that of July by 0.04 per cent, it is still higher than the upper limit of the RBI’s comfort level of six per cent for the fifth consecutive month. The data is not at all encouraging.

CK Ramanathan
Ghaziabad

A proud moment

Sir — India got elected as Member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global body focussed on gender equality and women empowerment, beating China in a hotly-contested election. India garnered 38 votes of the 54 ballots cast.

India and Afghanistan will join Argentina, Austria, Dominican Republic, Israel, Latvia, Nigeria, Turkey and Zambia, which were elected by acclamation, to the Commission on the Status of Women for a four-year term between 2021 and 2025. This is a proud moment for us indeed.

Vihaan Gupta
Ujjain

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Mitigate data intrusion worries

Instead of thinking of security as a prevention tool, firms must incorporate it into product design from the start so that the architect systems are impenetrable



RIPU **BAJWA**

In the new digital era, where data is growing at an unprecedented rate by the second and where organisations are quickly becoming data-first, one thing has become crystal clear. That the “this is good enough” approach by businesses, across the globe and in India, is no more acceptable when it comes to safeguarding the most precious capital, i.e. data, from an external intrusion. Ever since businesses have become increasingly dependent on their data to fuel innovation, drive new revenue streams and so on, Information Technology decision-makers have not just been evaluating their current data protection preparedness but have also been ramping up their investments in this regard.

However, over the past few months, since organisations have been fixated on quickly transitioning towards remote working due to the Coronavirus pandemic, they might have missed out on something vital that they should have been focussing on and that is the threats that come along with this work culture. As a result, the world and India with it, has been witnessing a steady uptick in the instances of cyber attacks.

For example, as per a recent report, India witnessed a 37 per cent increase in cyber attacks in the first quarter of this year as compared to the last quarter of 2019. The data also show that India now ranks 27th globally in the number of web-threats detected in the first quarter of this year as compared to when it ranked on the 32nd position globally in the fourth quarter of 2019. India also ranks 11th worldwide in the number of attacks caused by servers that were hosted in the country, which accounts for 22,99,682 incidents in the first quarter of this year as compared to 8,54,782 incidents detected in the fourth quarter of 2019, says the Kaspersky Security Network report.

Another report claims that data of over 21,000 Indian students, including their Aadhaar cards, photos and so on, have been put on sale on the Dark Web. Another instance of data being leaked on the Dark Web came to light in June, with a massive data packet — nearly 100 gigabytes in size — being put up for sale. The data comprises scanned identity documents of over one lakh Indians, including passports, PAN cards, Aadhaar cards, voter IDs and driver’s licences. Thus, given the rising data security concerns and incidents, chief technology officers (CTOs) need to look for a holistic approach towards data protection and management. Now, they need to be cognisant about how to respond, recover and learn in case a cyber intrusion occurs. Here are a few tips for CTOs that will help them redefine their data protection strategy.

Drift away from security to resilience: With the evolving nature of cyber attacks, it’s time for businesses to stop reacting and start anticipating. Loss of critical data has the power to not just cripple a company in no time but also damage its reputation for the long-term. Hence, instead of relying on traditional methods of data security i.e. identify, protect, detect, respond and then recover, organisations must imbibe state-of-the-art resilience strategies i.e. learn, respond, monitor and anticipate.

Adopt a security strategy ingrained in product mindset: Businesses must not only think about making security intrinsic to technology infrastructure but also aim at enabling security professionals become intrinsic to future product development. They need to transform into a data-first and product-first mindset organisation in order to be able to remain competitive in the future. Thus, instead of thinking of security as a prevention tool, the need of the hour is to incorporate it into the product design from the beginning so that it will make the architect systems and processes impenetrable.

The key to a winning strike is the right digital partner: In the past, businesses have been using a hit and trial method with regard to choosing their digital partner and this approach has brought in more vulnerability to their sensitive data assets. As per a report by Vanson Bourne, organisations in the Asia Pacific and Japan, which were relying on more than one data protection solution provider, were almost four times more vulnerable to a cyber incident that prevents access to their data. Hence, in order to combat the external threats, businesses must choose a single technology partner that delivers multi-platform security.

While it is critical to invest in the right technologies, it has also become utmost important for businesses to ramp up their education and awareness levels to stay abreast with new security threats. Therefore, to end the constant tussle between finding the right data protection architecture and keeping up with the modern security approaches, CTOs must focus on strategies that redefine their data protection ecosystems from time to time.

(The writer is Director and General Manager, Data Protection Solutions, Dell Technologies)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE WANT TO WORK WITH YOU TO REALLY RECOGNISE THE CHANGE IN CLIMATE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR OUR FORESTS. WE CAN’T BURY OUR HEAD IN THE SAND. —CALIFORNIA SECRETARY FOR NATURAL RESOURCES WADE CROWFOOT



IT WILL ALL START GETTING COOLER SOON, YOU JUST WATCH. I DON’T THINK SCIENCE KNOWS, ACTUALLY —US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

The pleasures of victimhood

If impersonating was Jessica Krug’s way of legitimising herself as an academic, mobilising the disenfranchised and then representing them as perpetual victims is another



JYOTIRMAYA **TRIPATHY**

The recent confession of Professor Jessica Krug about her true identity may have outraged many. However, it offers an opportunity to re-evaluate what academics given to consciousness-raising often do. Krug, a historian teaching African history at George Washington University, admitted in a blog that she is a Jew born of White parents and has nothing to do with African-American Blackness, something which she had been claiming for a long time. She regretted that her action was “the very epitome of violence, of thievery and appropriation, of the myriad ways in which non-Black people continue to use and abuse Black identities and cultures.” In the same breath, Krug declared that she is no culture vulture but a culture leech. Her actions though have proved otherwise. Prior to her outing of herself in the blog, Krug had used a more African-sounding name (Jessica La Bombalera) in her activist avatar, and during a demonstration had questioned the gentrification of New York by calling out the “White New Yorkers” for having failed to spare a thought for Black and Brown New Yorkers. We don’t know what prompted her to come out as White though it is said that there were increasing murmurs about her identity that forced her to do so.

The knowledge market: On the face of it, a situation such as this is not representative of the academic environment in the US or India. This is where the present intervention marks its departure. Krug’s admission, no doubt, betrays her inability to fake it any longer, but more importantly, it reveals the malaise of contemporary academic knowledge production. The difference between usurping the voice of the weak (what academics do) and pretending to be the weak (what Krug did) is perhaps one of degree and not of kind. When Krug claimed to be a culture leech rather than a vulture, she was highlighting that subtle difference. We can be reasonably sure that Krug is not the first one and won’t be the last, at least until the academic market stops converting experience of marginality to elitist knowledge and suspends placing a premium on the dish of victimhood.

Those who see Krug’s problem as an individual transgression are either oblivious of what goes in the name of knowledge or are beneficiaries of such methods. Academic scholarship has often been obsessed with not just representing cultural difference but also in producing, controlling and owning it. Few questions are raised about the moral foundation of such knowledge. It is taken for granted that if cultural difference does not exist, it is to be invented and if academic knowledge has to sustain itself, “savage slots” are to be continuously filled. Krug took it one step further. Instead of being content with immersion or academic self-othering, or sponging on cultural difference of the Blacks like a leech, she chose to become indistinguishable from what she was writing about.

A few years ago, Harvard University had gone to the market advertising its culture of diversity by projecting Elizabeth Warren, a law professor who claimed to be a Cherokee Indian (and went on to have a thriving political career). The difference between birth identity and assumed identity may appear as academically adventurous and a cool way of moving beyond fixed identities, but in reality, and for the people whose identity is thus stolen, it is an act of violence. In a post-modern academic world, race is increasingly seen as a political invention rather



“KRUG CONVERTED THE BLACK EXPERIENCE TO SOME BARE CODES DEFINING BLACK AUTHENTICITY: ANGRY, VIOLENT, ABUSIVE. THAT IS WHAT SHE WAS DOING WHILE APPEARING AS JESSICA LA BOMBALERA, THE RESONANCE OF THIS MENTALITY IN INDIA IS NOT DIFFICULT TO FIND. DALITS AND MUSLIMS ARE OFTEN PROJECTED IN THE MEDIA AS ANGRY AND VIOLENT BECAUSE THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO BE WEAK AND A MINORITY. BEING HELPLESS AND BEING VIOLENT ARE THE EXPRESSIONS OF THE SAME AUTHENTIC CORE”

than a frozen identity, thus creating a pathway for becoming someone else, or belonging without believing. That way, what Krug did was chic because she was making herself a trans-individual. But we all understand that Blackness as knowledge and Blackness as experience (not just individual but collective and communal) are different things. One is of romanticisation, appropriation, exoticisation, even silencing, and the other of everyday-ness and its struggle.

Though living the marginal life involves costs in real life — humiliation, powerlessness, sub-human life and so on — the academic world knows the benefits of being Black or minority, at least in the latter’s potential for being objects of knowledge. In the market of scholarship, victimhood sells and is safely monetised: Black or Coloured in America and Muslim or Dalit in India. Cultural difference and victimhood are a minefield of fame and money.

That said, the demonstrations over the death of George Floyd or over atrocities against Dalits reveal a mindset of remembering the victim only when they can be used as a medium of accumulating symbolic capital. It is not just about dehumanising and instrumentalising them for advancing one’s career but also the belief that being a victim pays. The willingness to barter away one’s identity, as Krug did, springs from the conviction that academically benefit from such impersonation outweighs the losses.

Imaginary victims: What Krug did not acknowledge in her confession is that her violence was not only directed as genuine Black experience but also at White experience. While faking to be Black, she was creating a template in which Whiteness is antagonistic to Blackness and so was perpetuating a race binary. She was reducing her own race by making it appear inflexible, intolerant, exclusivist and the negation of Black experience. Her impersonation implied that sincere appreciation

of Black history is not possible while being White. She also pandered to those radical elements who believe that genuine understanding of the other is possible only by denying one’s own authenticity. Her pretension perpetuated the academic world of make-believe that being majority is a matter of shame and its disavowal or degradation is necessary to speak for the weak.

Krug converted the Black experience to some bare codes defining Black authenticity: Angry, violent, abusive. That is what she was doing while appearing as Jessica La Bombalera. The resonance of this mentality in India is not difficult to find. Dalits and Muslims are often projected in the media as angry and violent because that is the only way to be weak and a minority. Being helpless and being violent are the expressions of the same authentic core. Academics like Krug not only stereotype or steal identity, they also create norms which guide victimhood. As long as the Black man is anti-police or a Muslim is anti-State or a Dalit is anti-Brahmin, they are authentic; a republican African-American is beyond this template as is a nationalist Indian Muslim.

An academic from Hunter College named Yarimar Bonilla said something very revealing about Krug, that the latter not only fooled others about being a woman of colour, but also into thinking that they are actually inferior, intellectually and politically. Krug was denying them their being, their worth outside her own writings and activism. What it reveals is that being a victim of violence has more moral, academic and perhaps political worth than being normal and majority.

So behind minority identity, its production and circulation, there is a political economy of cultural difference and of diversity that can be a passport to capital — economic or symbolic. Becoming the other involves a life-time of dedication to live another life. Krug must have internalised the new identity. In the acknowl-

edgment section of her book *Fugitive Modernities*, she thanked her “ancestors, unknown, unnamed, who bled life into a future they had no reason to believe could or should exist. ... Those whose names I cannot say for their own safety, whether in my barrio, in Angola, or in Brazil.” It may be mentioned here that Krug had received financial assistance for writing this book from Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

It is not important to know whether being White or feigning Blackness is better for being a scholar of African history. What is important is the knowledge itself — of victims and minority. As long as we are getting ethnic food in Delhi *haat* (market), it does not matter if the cook is White or Brown. There may be many service providers but the good/service is the same.

Impersonation as passport: If impersonating was Krug’s way of legitimising herself as an academic, making common cause with a supposedly discriminating law or mobilising the disenfranchised and then representing them as perpetual victims is another. The latter is much more rampant and a fairly common practice governing funding agencies that guide research on minority cultures. Though such politically engaged research may appear as a fight for an inclusive polity, it also betrays the desire to be the source of all cultural politics.

That partly explains Brahmin academics monopolising Dalit experiences. At a poetry reading session, a very fair-skinned Brahmin poet advocated “our own” Dravidian cause and how her Dravidian skin will always be a marker of her identity. She spoke with a flair even as her complexion struggled to adjust itself to the political narrative. Playing around this politics of “we” and trying too hard to be someone else in order to be legitimised is an effort complementary to Krug’s.

(The writer is Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras and a cultural critic.)

Why the double standards on demolition of holy places?

Will the global Muslim community raise its voice for the restoration of the holiest of Islam’s revered sites that were destroyed by the Wahhabis?



HASAN **KHURSHID**

The five centuries-old Babri Masjid in Ayodhya was demolished on December 6, 1992 by a Hindu mob, mostly comprising diehard *Kar Sevaks* (volunteers) of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad led by Sangh Parivar leaders. Intellectuals across the globe, irrespective of caste, creed and religion condemned the demolition, as did the Supreme Court (SC). No sane person will justify the demolition of the Babri Masjid but the bigger heinous crimes of massacres, multiple demolitions and destruction of the holiest of religious and heritage sites, shrines, relics have taken place in Saudi Arabia. This was done at the behest of its Wahhabi/Salafi rulers of Zionist ancestry who, wearing the cloak of Islam, in the middle of the

18th century introduced a new and distorted version of the faith based on terrorism. The demolished and desecrated holiest of Islamic religious places included the birth place of Prophet Mohammad.

Wahhabism, the new, distorted version of Islam, aimed to capture worldwide political power using terrorism. The dreaded terrorist, Abu Bakr Baghdadi, is one such example of this diabolical plan. This negative ideology was created by one Sheikh Najdi ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, in association with a Bedouin tribal leader Muhammad-ibn-Saud. Wahhabi ideology should not be mistaken as Islam’s tenets, although its practitioners shrewdly camouflage their real identity under the cover of Sunni Islam and associate the names of their terror groups with typical Islamic names, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and so on.

Wahhabi ideology manifestly declares, “Follow my ideology, else get ready to be killed.” According to renowned British historian and writer Charles Allen, all dreaded terrorist organisations like the ISIS, the

Taliban, the Al-Qaeda, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Boko Haram, and so on, follow Wahhabi ideology. And, Abu Bakr Baghdadi’s ISIS, following the Wahhabi ideology alone, murdered more than 20 lakh people. A majority of them were Muslim youth in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

On December 6, 2019, the day marking the 27th anniversary of the demolition of Babri Masjid, several review petitions were filed in the SC by individuals who were party to the case. The pleas were supported by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. Earlier, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind had also filed a review petition against the order saying justice can be done only by ordering the Centre and the UP Government to build the mosque at the disputed site.

Surprisingly, the entire Muslim community across the globe, including the intellectuals, remained silent spectators when Saudi ruler Abd-al-Aziz, the son of Muhammad ibn Saud, who was also the son-in-law of Sheikh Muhammad Najdi ibn Abd-al-Wahab, the founder of Wahhabism, in 1802 attacked

Karbala in Iraq. He allowed the desecration of the shrine of Hazrat Imam Husain (grandson of Prophet Mohammad).

Giving the details of the attack, Charles Allen in his book, *God’s Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad*, has quoted Lieutenant Francis Warden who wrote, “They pillaged the whole of it and plundered the tomb of Hazrat Imam Husain, slaying in the course of the day, with circumstances of peculiar cruelty, about 5,000 of the inhabitants. A huge amount of booty was seized.”

In 1803, Abd-al-Aziz ibn Saud obtained a visit permit from the Sharief of Mecca on the pretext of performing Haj, whereupon his Wahhabi fighters laid waste Islam’s holiest shrine the *Kaaba*, wherein Muslims across the globe perform the ritual of Haj. Abd-al-Aziz ibn Saud followed in the footsteps of Yazid who had earlier desecrated *Kaaba* in 682 AD.

According to TE Ravenshaw, author of *A Memorandum on the Sect of Wahhabees*, “They robbed the splendid tombs of the Mahomedan

saints, who were interred there and their fanatical zeal did not even spare the Prophet’s Mosque (in Medina), which they robbed of the immense treasures and costly furniture to which each Mahomedan Prince of Europe, Asia and Africa had contributed his share.”

In 1804, a Wahhabi gang crossed the great desert in the Hijaz and destroyed tombs of Prophet Mohammad’s family members at Jannat-ul-Baqi, the ancient cemetery of Medina, and even despoiled the grave of the prophet. After this, the Wahhabi gang reached Mecca and demolished another heritage site, the cemetery of Jannat-ul-Mualla, where the ancestors and other close relatives of Prophet Mohammad are interred. Again on April 21, 1925, Wahhabis demolished the shrine of Prophet Mohammad’s daughter Hazrat Fatima Zehra as well as those of his grandsons, namely Imam Hasan, Imam Zain ul Abideen and Imam Mohammad Baqir. The shrines are still lying demolished and the Saudi Government does not repair them or allow pilgrims to offer prayers at the revered sites.

Again in 2014, a leading Saudi academic had proposed to destroy the tomb of the Prophet Mohammad in Medina with the mala fide intention of removing the remains of the Prophet from there and burying them anonymously in the Jannat-ul-Baqi cemetery. However, the nefarious plan to destroy the tomb under the custody of Saudi monarch Abdullah was exposed by another academic, hence it could not be executed. Had it been executed, the motionless Muslims would have remained calm as the perpetrators were Wahhabis in Muslim attire and not people from any other religion.

In India, those who demolished the Babri Masjid are still facing trial in the Special CBI Court at Lucknow, under various sections of the Indian Penal Code. In all, there are 32 accused and the apex court has directed the Special CBI Court to conclude the hearing by September 30 this year. Till now the CBI has presented 351 witnesses before the court.

What legal action has the Saudi Government or the groups of

Muslim countries taken against the perpetrators of mass destruction and demolition of heritage and revered sites and massacres committed by Wahhabis feasting on Saudi petrodollars and spreading terrorism in the name of Islam? There is a deafening silence on that account.

The cacophony created by the Muslim leadership and millions of their followers on the matter of Babri Masjid may be based on the presumption that its perpetrators were Hindu bigots and the thugs behind the demolition of the holiest of Islamic sites, like the Jannat-ul-Baqi in Medina and the Jannat-ul-Mualla in Mecca, were Muslims. It matters little to them that the perpetrators of the crimes against Islam are Muslims just in name.

Will the global Muslim community raise its voice and take a conscious decision for the restoration of the holiest of Islam’s revered sites of religious and heritage importance that were systematically destroyed by the Wahhabis? If they don’t it will smack of hypocrisy and bigotry.

(The writer is a legal journalist and author)



IndiGrid appoints Jyoti Kumar as CFO

New Delhi:Investment Managers Ltd acting in its capacity as Investment Manager of India Grid Trust (IndiGrid) has appointed Jyoti Kumar Agarwal as its chief financial officer from September 16, 2020," it said in a BSE filing. Agarwal comes with a vast experience of nearly 20 years, primarily in banking and infrastructure space where he has held senior-level positions across a variety of functions, the company said. A commerce graduate is also a qualified chartered accountant, CFA charter holder and MBA from IIM. He has experience in managing multi-dimensional responsibilities across corporate finance, strategy, M&A, treasury, accounting, tax, commercial, secretarial, legal & investor relation functions, IndiGrid said.



Gold slips Rs 137; silver too declines

New Delhi: Gold prices fell Rs 137 to Rs 53,030 per 10 gram in the national capital on Wednesday amid rupee appreciation, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had on Tuesday closed at Rs 53,167 per 10 gram. "Spot gold prices for 24 karat in Delhi were down by Rs 137 on rupee appreciation," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said. The rupee strengthened by 12 paise and settled at 73.52 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday supported by positive domestic equities and weak American currency. Silver also declined Rs 517 to Rs 70,553 per kg, from the previous close of Rs 71,070 per kg. In the international market, gold was trading with gains at USD 1,967.7 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 27.40 per ounce. "Gold prices (globally) fluctuated in the upper range ahead of key Federal Open Market Committee meeting," he added.



Sensex surges 258 points; Nifty reclaims 11,600

Mumbai:Domestic equity benchmark Sensex jumped 258 points on Wednesday following gains in HDFC Bank, Infosys and M&M amid sustained foreign fund inflows. The 30-share BSE index ended 258.50 points or 0.66 per cent higher at 39,302.85. The NSE Nifty rose 82.75 points or 0.72 per cent to 11,604.55. M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, climbing over 4 per cent, followed by Bajaj Auto, Sun Pharma, HDFC Bank, Infosys, L&T and UltraTech Cement. According to traders, stock-specific action and sustained foreign fund inflows drove domestic equities higher, despite mixed cues from global markets ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy outcome.

Okinawa partners with OTO Capital

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electric scooter maker Okinawa on Wednesday said it has partnered with OTO Capital to provide flexible and affordable leasing options to its customers.

The leasing model by OTO ensures 30 per cent savings every month with the flexibility to upgrade to any other model within 2-3 years, the company said in a statement. The partnership will also enable digital integration of their platform to make it easier for customers to choose their preferred model and book it through the website instead of visiting a dealer showroom, it added.

Revenues of RTCs to contract 40% in FY21 due to pandemic

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Revenues of road transport corporations will contract by 35-40 per cent in the current fiscal due to the coronavirus pandemic-induced challenges, rating agency ICRA said on Wednesday.

The complete shutdown of operations due to COVID-19 from March 23, 2020 and the subsequent extension of the lockdown across the country have resulted in significant financial losses for the Road Transport Corporations (RTCs), it said in a statement.

According to ICRA, the most significant challenge ahead for the RTCs after the lockdowns are fully lifted would be to increase passenger movement while containing the spread of the virus, through various measures like regular sanitisation of the buses and provision of protective gear for



the staff.

As per ICRA's estimates, measures, including buses operating with a cap of 50 per cent occupancy level and the perceived risk of travelling in a public bus by passengers at large, will lead to a revenue contraction of 35-40 per cent in FY2021 for the sector," the statement said.

Given the expected shortfall in revenues, the rating agency

said many RTCs would need financial support from the respective state governments till their operations ramp up fully after the lockdowns are completely lifted in order to meet the operational expenses, especially the high fixed costs.

The financial support typically provided by several state governments like the deferring of the Motor Vehicle Tax (MVT) and the reimburse-

ment of fixed costs like employee salaries to avoid any significant cash flow shortfall, emphasise the importance of the RTCs to the respective state governments, it said.

Jayanta Roy, Senior Vice-President & Group Head, Corporate Sector Ratings at ICRA said that even when the operations resumed from May 2020 onwards, passenger demand remained significantly low compared to the pre-COVID levels due to the various social distancing measures introduced by the state governments to curb the spread of the disease.

"If occupancy levels remain low during the coming quarters, meeting employee costs would be the biggest challenge for the sector, as such costs typically account for over 50 per cent of the total operating costs of a state RTC," Roy said.

Sebi plans to empanel securities market trainers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi is looking to rope in individuals or entities to support its investor awareness and education initiative.

Entities or individuals who are interested in working in the field of investor education pertaining to securities market are proposed to be empanelled as Securities Market Trainers (SMARTs), Sebi said in a notice on Wednesday.

The empanelled SMARTs will supplement the regulator's initiatives in the area of investor education and protection. The SMARTs are expected to conduct investors awareness programmes on behalf of the regulator under the aegis of Sebi Investor Protection and Education Fund (Sebi IPEF).

With regard to eligibility criteria, Sebi said an individual who is citizen as well as resident of India or an organisation working in the field related to law, commerce, management, economics, financial markets education and regis-



tered as a trust or company or society can apply for the role of SMARTs.

Among other criteria, an applicant should be graduate with at least 50 per cent marks from a recognised university and at least five years of experience of either working or teaching in the areas of law, commerce, management, economics or financial markets education.

In addition, securities markets certification is also required. With regard to an organization, Sebi said the

Total tax collection falls 22.5% till Sep 15: Source

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai, Sep 16 (PTI) Total tax collection of the Centre, including advance tax collection for the second quarter, fell 22.5 per cent to Rs 2,53,532.3 crore till September 15 of the current fiscal as compared to the year-ago period, according to an income tax department source.

The source shared some details about the provisional data. During the same period ended September 15, 2019, total tax collection stood at Rs 3,27,320.2 crore, the income tax department source from Mumbai zone told PTI over phone on Wednesday.

However, the source refused to share the advance tax numbers separately for the current quarter.

The numbers are provisional as banks will be able to update the final data by the end of the day, the source



said. During the first quarter ended June, gross tax collections fell 31 per cent driven down by a massive 76 per cent plunge in advance tax mop-up, as the country was in a full lockdown due to the pandemic.

Of the total collection till September 15, when taxpayers, both individuals and companies, are supposed to pay advance tax for the quarter, personal income tax at the national level stood at Rs

1,47,004.6 crore and corporation tax at Rs 99,126.2 crore, totalling the two major components of the tax revenue at Rs 2,46,130.8 crore, the source said. The megapolis still continues to be the most affected region by the pandemic.

Total collection from the nation's financial capital fell to Rs 74,789.6 crore, down 13.9 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y), the source said but refused to share advance tax numbers for the quarter.

ICICI introduces new home loan scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ICICI Home Finance on Wednesday said it has launched a new loan scheme 'Apna Ghar Dreamz', with credit amount in the range of Rs 2 lakh to 50 lakh, for skilled workers employed in the informal sector in Delhi.

The scheme is meant for skilled workers such as carpenters, plumbers, electricians, tailors, painters, welders, auto mechanics, manufacturing machine operators, computer mechanics, RO repair technicians, small and medium business owners and grocery store owners in the city, the company said in a release.

The loan scheme is targeted at the informal segment of the population who wish to purchase their own home, but may not have all documents that a formal financial institution would require, ICICI Home Finance said.

Customers seeking to avail the special 20-year tenure loan would need to provide docu-

ments such as PAN and Aadhaar details, and bank statement of past six months. The customers should have a minimum account balance of Rs 1,500 for loan up to 5 lakh and Rs 3,000 for loan above 5 lakh.

At ICICI Home Finance, we aim to offer loans to the hard-working professionals in the informal sector of the economy and local business people to fulfil their dream of owning their 'Apna Ghar'.

"Since our branch employees are local residents with an understanding of the regional economy, our in-house legal and technical experts assist in processing home loans applications in a quick and hassle-free manner with minimal documentation," said Anirudh Kamani, MD and CEO, ICICI Home Finance Company Limited.

Customers can also avail all the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) which is a CLSS for EWS/LIG and MIG, the company said.

RBI battle ready to support growth: Das

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday said economic recovery is still not well entrenched and that the central bank is "battle ready" to take appropriate measures to support growth.

Addressing a virtual conference organised by industry body Ficci, Das said that GDP data released by the government was a "reflection of the ravages of the COVID-19".

The economy contracted 23.9 per cent during the April-June quarter on account of the strict lockdown imposed by the government towards end of March to check the spread of coronavirus infections." Nevertheless, high frequency indicators of agricultural activity, the purchasing managers' index that is PMI for manufacturing and certain private estimates on unemployment point to some stabilisation of economic activity in the second quarter of the current year,



while of course contractions in several other sectors are also simultaneously easing," he said. However, Das said that the economic recovery was not yet fully entrenched and also that the recovery is likely to be gradual.

The recovery is, however, not yet fully entrenched and moreover, in some sectors, the uptick, which was noticed in June and July they appear to have levelled off. By all indications the recovery is likely to be gradual as efforts towards the

reopening of the economy are confronted with rising infections," he said. At the same time, Das assured the industry that the RBI stands "battle ready" and whatever measures are required will be taken to support liquidity, growth and control price rise.

According to him, the immediate policy response to COVID-19 in the country has been to prioritise the stabilisation of the economy and support quick recovery policies for durable and sustainable high

growth in the medium term post the coronavirus.

The Governor also said financial market conditions in India have eased significantly across segments in response to the front-loaded cuts in the policy repo rate and large system-wide as well as targeted infusion of liquidity by the central bank.

"We are also very carefully monitoring the markets. As and when required further measures will be taken. I even said it earlier during my statements that the RBI stands fully prepared... I had used the terminology that the RBI stands battle ready and whatever measures are required will be taken up by the RBI," he said.

Despite substantial increase in the borrowing programme of the government, Das said that persistently large surplus liquidity conditions have ensured non-disruptive mobilisation of resources at the lowest borrowing costs in a decade.

World shares mixed, US futures gain ahead of Fed statement

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

World markets were mixed ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy announcement on Wednesday while US futures edged higher. Benchmarks rose modestly in Frankfurt and Tokyo but slipped in London and Hong Kong.

Investors are awaiting the outcome of the US Federal Reserve policy meeting later Wednesday. It is expected to keep the benchmark rate at nearly zero for some time to help the economy recover from the pandemic downturn.

The US bank's statement might change some of the language around its existing pledge to buy bonds to support markets, economists say. Japan's central bank has begun a policy meeting that will wrap up Thursday but also is not expected to result in any major changes.

Germany's DAX was less than 0.1 per cent higher at 13,223.43 while the CAC 40 in France was flat, at 5,067.95. The FTSE 100 in Britain edged 0.1 per cent lower to 6,101.31. The futures for the S&P 500 and for the Dow industrials both gained 0.2 per cent.

Japan reported that its trade balance swung into surplus in August as a 15 per cent decline in exports from a year earlier was outpaced by a 21 per cent drop in imports.

Exports have been hampered by the coronavirus pandemic but the rate of decline has been narrowing over the past several months as shutdowns eased and the Chinese economy began to recover from a sharp downturn in early spring.

Japan's long-serving prime minister, Shinzo Abe, resigned as of Wednesday and was

replaced by his chief cabinet secretary, Yoshihide Suga. Suga has said he intends to push ahead with Abe's policies and little change is expected for the world's third-largest economy. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 edged 0.1 per cent higher to 23,475.53 while the Hang Seng in Hong Kong was almost unchanged at 24,725.63.

South Korea's Kospi gave up 0.3 per cent to 2,435.92 and the S&P/ASX 200 in Sydney jumped 1 per cent to 5,956.10. The Shanghai Composite index slipped 0.4 per cent to 3,283.92.

India's Sensex edged 0.4 per cent higher to 39,182.12 even as the number of the country's confirmed coronavirus cases jumped to nearly 5 million, second only to the US case count of 6.6 million, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Auto industry needs road map for localisation push

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exports and a focus on the domestic market offer major potential opportunity areas for the Indian auto industry but the sector needs a road map for localisation, according to a report by consultancy firm EY. As per the report, 'Atma Nirbhar- The Roadmap to Increase Localisation and Harnessing Export Potential of the Indian Auto Industry', the industry generated business worth over Rs 30,000 crore annually through import substitution and local manufacturing through initiatives such as 'Make in India'.

A major potential for import substitution for the industry lies in availability of raw material and technology/capabilities constraints for certain high precision components and

economies of scale," it said. In the past, the Indian auto industry has worked on initiatives taken by the government such as 'Make in India' to improve localisation such as achieving up to 95 per cent localisation in the passenger vehicle category of less than Rs 10 lakh.

However, the report cautioned that "recent technological advancement and government legislations such as emission norms, enhanced safety norms and adoption of cleaner fuels could lead to increase in imports due to unavailability of certain raw materials, technology and capability constraints and economies of scale challenges".

EY India Partner and Automotive Sector Leader Vinay Raghunath said, "With the rapidly evolving mobility



ecosystem, stringent emission norms, higher focus on safety and vehicle connectivity and the push towards e-mobility, the import gap is likely to further increase in the short term."

He, however, added that with concerted efforts from all ecosystem players, strong foundations can be laid to offset this in the future. Stressing the need for a road map for localisation,

the EY report said imports of raw material and components by Indian auto component manufacturers amounted to USD 15.4 billion in 2019-20.

"Even local raw material suppliers of steel, copper, engineered plastics, etc, have an import component in the form of their manufacturing input due to constraints such as unavailability, inadequate qual-

ity, and dependence on other industries," it said.

Different component categories have different challenges which lead to import. For example, processors for automotive electronics are almost 100 per cent imported due to lack of wafer fabrication centres in India which require high capital investment (around USD 5 billion), the report said. "The need of the hour is to identify challenges faced by the industry and develop a short-, mid- and long-term road map for each stakeholder to tackle those challenges," it added. EY India Partner (Automotive) Som Kapoor said, "In order to re-align and mitigate the risks of global supply-chain fluctuations, additional reinforcements and incentives should be considered by the government."

BHEL, SwissRapid to bring Maglev trains

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-run engineering firm BHEL on Wednesday announced its tie up with SwissRapid AG to bring Maglev trains (magnetic levitation) to India.

Aimed at expanding its footprint in the urban transportation sector as part of its diversification initiatives, BHEL has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SwissRapid AG for Maglev Train projects in India, a company statement said.

The Maglev Rail system hovers in the air instead of rolling, due to magnetic levitation, thus the vehicles have no physical contact with the

guideway. This enables the system to be highly energy efficient, allows operating speeds of easily up to 500 km/h and significantly reduces the total cost of system ownership.

The MoU was signed by S V Srinivasan, GM & Head (Transportation Business Group), BHEL and Niklaus H Koenig, President and CEO, SwissRapid AG.

The agreement has been signed in the backdrop of the Prime Minister's 'Make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives, and will enable BHEL to bring the latest, world-class technology to India and manufacture state-of-the-art Maglev trains indigenously.



ALL FOR A DEFINITE CAUSE

A living embodiment of the quote, “A life without a Cause is a life without an Effect”, Street Cause, is an organisation formed by students of different ambitions and aspirations, and colleges across Hyderabad, who come together and drive each other to be more than passive spectators to the inequities in our society. *The Pioneer's* RACHEL DAMMALA talks to students of the organisation who're working hard amid the pandemic, to keep people going and sane



With an active workforce of 5,000+ students today, and a history of 8,500+ projects, Street Cause was originally founded in Sreenidhi Institute of Science and Technology in the year 2009 and has been growing ever since. The organisation is the realisation of Akhilesh Jukareddy's vision of service to humanity, the founder of the present-day largest student-run NGO in the state!



Realising the power of students when they unite and making the best of these emotions and energy by channeling them towards the betterment of the society, Street Cause does just what its name says — work towards, and strive for, the causes of the common man.

Ramya G, the current President of Street Cause, explains what exactly their job is. “We have different wings that work for different causes. One called PAW — People for Animal Welfare, one called Pride — for the welfare of the LGBTQ+ community, E force — for the conservation of the environment, and more. We, the students from 45+ academic

institutions of varied disciplines across Hyderabad work towards one goal — making the city, a better place to live in.”

In 11 years of service, they have organised numerous fundraisers such as Howzzzat, Parinama, Goal-Addict, Dunk it and the Run For a Cause series, to meet their objective of implementing large scale development projects such as the renovation of schools, orphanages, and old age homes, furnishing them with the requisite infrastructure, provision of water filters and water tanks, construction or renovation of washrooms, repairing faulty electrical circuitry and damaged pipelines, catering to special needs of the differently-abled and installation of solar street lights in the remote tribal villages of Telangana, among others.

Students have been working harder, fighting all odds, to help the poor and needy amid the Coronavirus pandemic. “We have been distributing basic survival kits to those living the slums and some migrants too, who weren't able to avail the help being provided by the government for various reasons. Our kit includes rice, dal, salt, chilli powder, masks, sanitisers, etc., which have been distributed to over 260 families last month. We hope to do the same this month too,” Ramya informs. Asked how they're funded, she answers that it's from the students' donations and the fundraisers they organise regularly.

The organisation also hosts the Hyderabad Youth Assembly, which is a premier permanent project that recruits students from colleges after rigorous scrutiny of group discussions and personal interviews. “Each

member is required to express their novel ideas in achieving the chosen sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the assembly. The motions put forward are discussed, deliberated, and voted upon during their designated time slots, following the rules of procedure set by the UN assembly. The motions passed are there on implemented by the members after a series of surveys in villages destitute of the very basic amenities,” informs Ramya. A novel yet promising idea, the Hyderabad Youth Assembly is conducted in two phases, each phase having four goals.

Lalit Aditya, former president of the organisation and current HYA honorary chair, currently heads the Street Cause Pride unit. “Volunteers of this unit work towards breaking stereotypes and busting myths and other notions about the LGBTQ+ community. We aim to raise awareness about who the people of this community are and sensitise people about their issues. It is hard to break these notions that films and pop culture portray about the community,” Aditya laments. He adds that they have been hosting online awareness programmes on various subjects related to the community and that the response to these, have been amazing.

Street Cause looks forward to expanding its work beyond the state of Telangana soon. They have several projects planned, including adopting transgender families, food distribution, donating TVs to orphanages for online education, systems, projectors, and subscriptions to apps like Byjus, Zoom, etc., for these children.

Street Cause sure has radi-



“We have different wings that work for different causes. One called PAW — People for Animal Welfare, one called Pride — for the welfare of the LGBTQ+ community, E force — for the conservation of the environment, and more. We, the students from 45+ academic institutions of varied disciplines across Hyderabad work towards one goal — making the city, a better place to live in.” — RAMYA G

cally grown from being a local guild of adherents, with the objective of helping the underprivileged and the destitute in any and every way possible, to being an internationally renowned organisation now. If you're a student burning with the same passion to do your bit for society, consider joining them via streetcause@gmail.com.

No More Tracksuits Please!

On Sunday, the New York Fashion Week kicked off with Jason Wu's presentation — who has dressed former US First Lady, Michelle Obama more than once. The Taiwanese born designer often infuses “Old World” femininity in many of his designs and chose to have a physical show with a very limited audience. The collection was filled with contemporary and easygoing silhouettes inspired by the Caribbean coastline town of Tulum, Wu's home away from home. They had a feeling of escapism yet could be worn at home or easily transition into eveningwear. They are clothes that work for the times we are living in —

and there was not one tracksuit!

Work from Home, seems to have become an excuse for dressing like a ragamuffin. Of course we do want to wear starched shirts and confining tailored jackets (and nor do we live in a place where the weather “suits” such attire); but does that mean we need to live in clothes that were meant to be worn in the gym or on a sports field?

The term athleisure was first used back in the late 1970s, a time when the American inspired sports look was becoming global but it still had a feel of elegance — think Polo Ralph Lauren. High fashion borrowing ideas from sports is not a new concept, and you could say Coco Chanel was proba-

bly the first athleisure designer — she used jersey to make day suits for women back in the 1920s. I have a feeling if she were alive today she would be horrified to see how women are dressing right now.

“We have become trapped in a cycle of fashion lethargy,” says celebrity stylist Mohit Rai. “What most people do not realise is that a growing routine is not about how you look but how you feel. A system that puts life into an overall perspective and retains sanity.”

As someone who has been a freelancer for the last couple of years, work from home is a way of life for me. And it's my dressing routine that has kept me in check — I wake up, gym, shower, finish my

morning prayers and then change into something easy but still elegant — it could be a kaftan dress, jeans and a shirt or shorts and boxy top, add on some accessories and finish with some undereye concealer a wand of mascara and lip gloss. It makes me ready for the day.

As a fashion writer — it would be strange not to enjoy and understand the value of dressing-up. I wonder if when we look back to the current tracksuit trend, it will be with the same disdain we have for the Juicy Couture (remember those velour tracksuits) phase of fashion of the early 2000s. (I am happy to say I never participated in this trend).

You don't need a reason or an occasion to dress —

and sometimes we just do it well because you feel like it because it acts as that pick me up”. Anjali Patel Mehta, founder of the Studio Verandah, a resort brand says, “Athleisure is here to stay, but even if that's your choice, choose the clothes that make you feel good. I haven't been to a salon in over 6 months, nor cut my hair but what I've done is to make the most from my surroundings and dressing can help you lift your spirits.”

Which is why as we try and learn to co-exist with the virus, we need to get out of our tracksuits and embrace our own personal style — yes, that could be sporty but it does need to have a feel of being dressed. And tracksuit

bottoms don't cut it. Even with ‘Vogue’ supremo, Anna Wintour wearing them in April.

Hopefully Jason Wu's show proves that we are moving away from tracksuits to a chicer yet comfortable style of dressing. The whole point of fashion is to bring joy and a feeling of escapism to our lives don't we need that more now than ever. In fact there is no surprise that many of the recent collections we are seeing seem to have taken inspiration from resort fashion instead of athleisure — so let's get out of those tracksuits, please!

(The writer Sujata Assomull is the author of “100 Iconic Bollywood Costumes” and was the Founding Editor in Chief of Harper's Bazaar, India)



Nawazuddin Siddiqui-starrer 'Serious Men' to hit Netflix on Oct 2

Filmmaker Sudhir Mishra's upcoming feature *Serious Men*, headlined by Nawazuddin Siddiqui, will premiere on Netflix on October 2.

Written by Bhavesh Mandalia, the movie film is based on a 2010 novel of

the same name by Manu Joseph. Siddiqui said *Serious Men* brings to end his long wait to collaborate with Mishra.

"I am excited about this film as I waited almost 20 years to work with Sudhir Mishra. It's a dream come true. I can't wait for the

audience to watch *Serious Men* and join this journey with me, this Gandhi Jayanti," the actor said in a statement.

The film chronicles the story of an ambitious underachiever who capitalises on his son's newfound fame as a boy-genius to improve his family's for-

tunes.

Produced by Bombay Fables and Cine Raas, *Serious Men* also stars Aakshath Das, Shweta Basu Prasad, Nassar, and introduces actor Indira Tiwari.

Siddiqui was last seen in Netflix's crime-thriller *Raat Akeli Hai*, directed by Honey Trehan.



Sonakshi Sinha: I'm not worried about when work will start

Actress Sonakshi Sinha says she is not fretting about getting back to work, or how the industry will change in the Covid era.

The actress shared that she is loving the lockdown life for now.

"I am just going to admit that I am loving lockdown life. In the last 10 years, I haven't gotten a break for so long, where I have been able to spend time with myself, understand what I want from life, do the things I like to do and just be one with yourself, sort your head out, contemplate and understand what's important and what's not important in life. I'm really loving it," Sonakshi said.

"I am not worried about when work will start, and how it will be. I know it's going to be difficult going back to the set, with 'what you are touching', 'don't touch your face', and with

people in PPE kits. I did one photoshoot and it was so strange being around people who are covered up head to toe and you are the only one open. You are like 'keep your hands to yourself and don't touch your face', sanitise every five minutes. It's really weird," she added.

The actress is "keeping that worry aside and doing what makes me happy at the moment", she said, explaining it refers to "my art and painting, endless conversations with friends and spending time with family".

"Right now, everybody is in the same boat. It will start when it has to start and we will move on with this and get over it," she added.

Talking about her binge-watch list, Sonakshi said, "I watched so many things that I am fed up of watching anything now".

"I watched 'Talaash' again because I am doing a show with Reema Katgi and I love that film. I want to read but I don't have the patience to sit down with a book. When I do my cardio, I need to have something in front of me to watch otherwise I hate doing cardio. I wish we had finished Reema's web show. It was such an exciting role for me. I can't wait to get back," she said in an episode of the show *Zoom Happy Space With Rudrani*.

BIG B REVEALS HE WORKS FOR 12 TO 14 HRS EACH DAY, PENS A POEM FOR KBC

Amitabh Bachchan has penned a special poem for his quiz show *Kaun Banega Crorepati* which is set to return to the television screens with an all new season. The actor wrote about the work he does and how he is grateful for the respect and affection he receives from his fans.

He wrote in Hindi, "*Ji haan huzoor main kaam karta hoon, main tarah tarah ke kaam karta hoon, main kism kism ke kaam karta hoon. Kujh kaam kiye the maine masti main, kujh kiye praaraat jabardasti mein. Ye KBC ki lat lagi hai logo ko, santush karu bas yahi apaksha Sony ko. Shuruat hui hai, abhi to din kujh baki hain, sneh aadar pyaar mile, to hum aabhari hain - ab. Hum apna kaam karein, tum apna kaam karo.*" (Yes sir I work, I do different kinds of things, I do a variety of work. I had done some things in fun, some I had done

through day and night. People are addicted to KBC, Sony expects me to satisfy their expectations. It has just started, more days are yet to come, If I receive affection and respect, I will be grateful. - ab.. We do our work, you do your work).

He added that he was inspired from poet Bhavani Prasad Mishra while writing the poem. He shared the same poem on Twitter along with a picture of himself all dressed up to host the show in a blue three-piece suit, a picture of the KBC set with a contestant on the hot seat and one of the empty set.

Talking about shooting for the show, he wrote on his blog around midnight, "Work at early hours .. in the speed of completion .. and then some more .. 12 to 14 hours each day .. on the over the wonder what

lies ahead .. work with the crew and support is an adhesive .. it remains glued for the duration after .."

He went on to talk about how nothing is impossible in today's times. He wrote, "... many watch the 'dilemma' of the populist domain .. it frightens the present most and the future even more .. discovery and experimentation were never more pre-dominant than they are today .. they think absurd and prove its virtues .. anything and everything is the possibility preached .. we live in the times of the times when the impossible is garbaged in the bags of incommunicable junk ...

each hour and minute reverberates with invention .. and the touch of experimentation is obsolete now .. the touch of inform and proforma dominates the Universe .. unknown is unknown .. and may it ever be so .."



FUN

ARCHIE



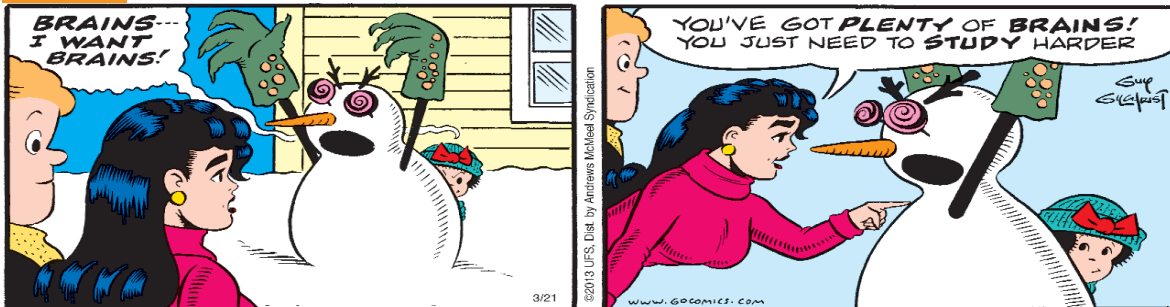
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



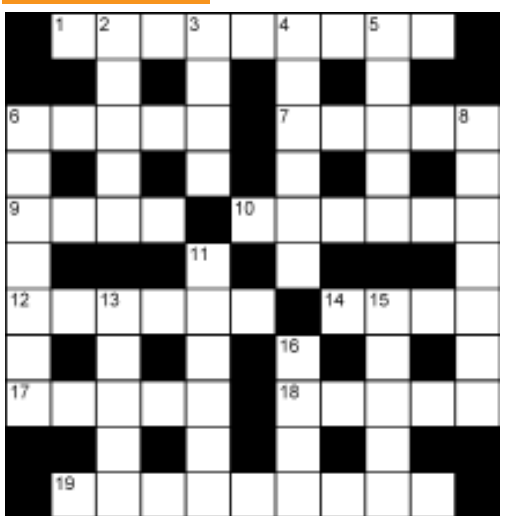
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Little by little
- 6 Court case
- 7 Country of the Spanish
- 9 Second-hand
- 10 A citrus fruit
- 12 A health professional
- 14 Grow plants in this
- 17 A horse rider's straps
- 18 Unlocks
- 19 Joy

DOWN

- 2 Lift up
- 3 A toy person for playing with
- 4 Soak up
- 5 Memorise

- 6 This comes after lightning
- 8 Use these when knitting
- 11 Talk a lot about other people's business
- 13 Porcelain things
- 15 Follows orders
- 16 Connect together



SUDOKU

3	7	8	4		
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Yesterday's solution								
2	6	9	7	8	3	5	1	4
1	5	3	4	2	9	8	7	6
4	7	8	5	1	6	9	3	2
5	1	4	6	3	8	2	9	7
3	2	7	9	4	5	6	8	1
8	9	6	2	7	1	3	4	5
7	8	5	3	6	4	1	2	9
9	3	2	1	5	7	4	6	8
6	4	1	8	9	2	7	5	3

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.

Eng nose ahead in series decider

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Jonny Bairstow struck 112 and under-pinned another innings rebuild with Sam Billings as England recovered from losing two wickets from the first two balls to set Australia a target of 303 in the deciding one-day international on Wednesday.

Mitchell Starc removed Jason Roy and Joe Root off successive deliveries to leave England in early turmoil on a glorious afternoon at Old Trafford, and both Eoin Morgan (23) and Jos Buttler (8) also departed cheaply.

From 96-4, Bairstow and Billings (57) put on 114 runs for the fifth wicket to bring England right back into the match — just as they did in the first ODI on Friday when sharing a stand of 113 in defeat.

Bairstow reached his 10th ODI century before some lusty hits by Chris Woakes (53 off 39 balls) lifted the hosts to 302-7, leaving Australia needing a record run chase at the Manchester venue. Fifty-three runs came from the last five overs.

The series is tied at 1-1.

England is looking to preserve its five-year unbeaten record in bilateral ODI series, and finish its international summer — during which all of its games have been played without fans — unbeaten in all formats against the West Indies, Ireland, Pakistan and Australia.

It is Australia's final match of its white-ball tour, with the team having already lost the Twenty20 series 2-1.

Steve Smith was again missing for the Australians after failing to fully recover from being hit on the head from a throwdown in the nets before the first match of the series.

Australia captain Aaron Finch said Smith had a hit in the nets on Tuesday but "just did not pull up well" and felt "a bit groggy."

Boult's inclusion gives edge to MI: Gambhir



New Delhi: Former India opener Gautam Gambhir feels New Zealand pacer Trent Boult forms a formidable pair with Jasprit Bumrah, giving Mumbai Indians an edge over Chennai Super Kings in this IPL.

With Mumbai Indians taking on Chennai Super Kings in the tournament opener on Saturday in Abu Dhabi, Gambhir said he is waiting to see how Boult and Bumrah go about their business.

"I am really excited to watch how Trent Boult and Jasprit Bumrah will bowl with the new ball, because we all know Bumrah and Boult are world class bowlers, and in the T20 format both are wicket-taking options," Gambhir said on *Star Sports show Cricket Connected*.

"A left-arm seamer, who will bring the ball inside for a right hand batsman while Jasprit Bumrah believes in an unorthodox style of bowling."

A vital cog in CSK's wheel, Raina had pulled out of the IPL due to "personal reasons" and Gambhir feels it will be a challenge for CSK without him at number 3.

"There will be a challenge

for Chennai Super Kings considering they do not have Suresh Raina batting at No 3. Shane Watson has not played international cricket for a long time, so we would want to know who will open with him and how will these batsmen face these bowlers," the former Kolkata Knight Riders skipper said.

Gambhir, a two-time IPL-winning skipper, believes four-time champions Mumbai Indians will be favourites against Chennai considering the overall team balance and depth after the addition of Boult.

"I am skewed more towards Mumbai Indians for the opening match because if we notice the team balance and the depth of the squad while not forgetting the addition of Trent Boult in the squad can prove to be an excellent option," he said.

"Every team wants a bowler who will take wickets with a new ball and use Jasprit Bumrah in an experimental way. I would want to see how these two bowlers perform with the new ball not only in the first match but throughout the tournament." PTI

Novak remains perfect

Djokovic extends unbeaten run on court, behaves better in 1st match since US Open default

AP ■ ROME

Novak Djokovic expressed his relief there was no "mental or emotional blockages or drama" as he swept past Italian wild card entry Salvatore Caruso into the Italian Open third round on Wednesday in his first match since his US Open default.

"I was actually looking forward to get the official match as soon as possible after what happened in New York," said the world No 1.

The Serb was on his best behaviour after his dramatic last 16 disqualification on September 6 after he accidentally struck a line judge with a ball hit in frustration.

"I didn't feel that I had any mental or emotional blockages or any dramas playing a match today," he said.

Djokovic, who had said he had learned a "big lesson" from his first ever disqualification, was keen to move on in Rome.

The 33-year-old playfully greeted an imaginary crowd in an empty Central Court at the Foro Italico because of strict coronavirus measures.

Only some noisy workers managed to unnerve the 17-time Grand Slam winner after missing break points.

"It was very, very quiet, which is very unusual to what we are used to here in Rome, which has one of the loudest and most energetic crowd atmospheres on the tour.

Djokovic continued where he left off before his US Open exit, having won the Cincinnati Masters on the same Flushing Meadows courts.

"It was a very good test for me. I'm very pleased with the way I handled myself in important moments," said Djokovic, who was unbeaten in 2020 before his US Open default.

"I was in control of the match."

Djokovic, who has played nine finals



Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Salvatore Caruso, at the Italian Open tourney in Rome on Wednesday

in Rome, and won four titles, will meet either 29th-ranked compatriot Filip Krajinovic or Italian qualifier Marco Cecchinato, ranked 113th, for a place in the quarter-finals.

Nine-time Rome winner Rafael Nadal will make his return to competi-

tion later on Wednesday after a six-month hiatus linked to the coronavirus pandemic.

The number two seed plays fellow Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta, a recent semi-finalist at the US Open, for a place in the third round.



US Open champion Naomi Osaka took a direct swipe at critics of her recent activism saying the people who told her that sportspeople should stay out of politics inspired her to win her third Grand Slam title

Third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas fell to Italian teenager Jannik Sinner 6-1, 6-7 (9/11), 6-2, with sixth seeded Belgian David Goffin also exiting 6-2, 6-2 to Croatia's Marin Cilic.

HALEP, AZARENKA ADVANCE

Top women's seed Simona Halep returned a month after winning in Prague to ease past 99th-ranked Italian Jasmine Paolini 6-3, 6-4.

"It was a little bit difficult to get the rhythm and to get relaxed," said the 28-year-old Romanian, who skipped the US Open but is warming up for a bid for a second French Open title later this month.

The world No 2, a two-time Rome finalist, next meets either American Amanda Anisimova or Dayana Yastremska of Ukraine.

US Open finalist Victoria Azarenka shrugged off the move from hard court to the clay surface to beat American Venus Williams 7-6 (9/7), 6-2, in their first round match.

Belarusian Azarenka will play third seeded American Sofia Kenin, the reigning Australian Open champion, for a place in the third round.

Swiss sixth seed Belinda Bencic fell 6-3, 6-1 in her second round match to Montenegro's 86th-ranked Danka Kovinic.

Hardik looking to make strong comeback

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Back from a lengthy injury layoff, Mumbai Indians' star all-rounder Hardik Pandya said the setback motivated him to work harder and he is now in good shape both physically and mentally for the IPL.

Pandya's form will be crucial for defending champions Mumbai Indians, who will take on Chennai Super Kings in the lung-opener of the cash-rich T20 league on September 19.

"The way I'm hitting the ball right now, the shape I'm in, the men-



tal space I'm in, it is just a matter of time that I go and spend some time on the ground and I think things will come out pretty well," Pandya said in a video posted by Mumbai Indians' official Twitter handle.

"No matter how far I go from the game, no matter how long I stay out, when I come back, it has to be worth it. I have prepared very well and I think, great things are coming ahead," the 26-year-old flamboyant all-rounder added.

Last year in November, Pandya had undergone a back surgery in London. He came back in the DY

Patil T20 tournament held in early March.

He was even selected for the ODI series against South Africa, but the Covid-19 pandemic, which forced the rubber to be abandoned, delayed his return. He is now looking forward to the IPL.

"IPL is something that I have enjoyed a lot and I would like to make a comeback very strong and I'm just looking forward to it," said Pandya. He also conceded that injuries would be a part of his crick-

This year's IPL will be extra special: Sehwa

New Delhi: Former Indian opener Virender Sehwa expects this year's IPL to be "extra special" and a major reason for that is Mahendra Singh Dhoni getting back on the pitch after announcing his international retirement following a year-long sabbatical from the game.

"I think this tournament will be extra special for everyone — the players as well as the audience...Watching Dhoni back on the pitch is sure to be a delight. There's so much in store, need I say more?" Sehwa, who will be co-hosting a show *Power Play with Champions* on *Fliptart Video*, said.

Sehwa said cricket is an integral part of an Indian's life and the fans have waited long for the sport to return.

"I've spent a lot of my time during the lockdown watching old matches. Cricket forms an important part of our DNA as Indians and we've waited with bated breath for it to return" he said. PNS

'Russell currently is world's best all-rounder'



PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Kolkata Knight Riders batsman Rinku Singh feels no one can match the big-hitting prowess of explosive all-rounder Andre Russell and he remains the World's best all-rounder at the moment.

The Jamaican allrounder, who joined KKR in 2014, has been in sensational form in the last two seasons and remains

the talk of the town ahead of the 13th edition which will get underway on Saturday.

"There is no one who can hit the ball better than him. He has a lot of life and strength in him," Singh said in an interview in KKR's website.

"His sixes are massive and I just don't see any batsman as a competition to him. He is the best all-rounder in the world at this moment," Singh added.

Will have better idea of conditions once IPL starts, says Amit

Dubai: The pitches in UAE are expected to aid spinners but Delhi Capitals leg-spinner Amit Mishra feels it is too early to predict that as the conditions have been "neutral" so far.

The 36-year-old India spinner said UAE pitches suiting batsmen or bowlers more can only be ascertained only once the tournament progresses.

"The conditions so far have

Adjusting to UAE heat biggest challenge: ABD

PTI ■ DUBAI

South African star AB de Villiers believes the biggest challenge for all teams in the upcoming Indian Premier League will be adjusting to the prevailing hot and humid conditions in the UAE.

Most games will be played in the night but the conditions would still be challenging.

"I am not really used to these kind of conditions to be honest. It's very hot, it reminds



me of a Test match we played in July in Chennai once where Viru (Virender Sehwa) scored 300. It was one of the hottest weather conditions I have experience in my life," he said in an interview posted on RCB's Twitter handle.

"The humidity is similar to that, even at 10 at night.

When I arrived here I checked the weather conditions of a few months and it seems to be getting better. It is definitely going to play a part and you have to make sure you have the energy for the backend of the innings or last 5 overs of your bowling spell."

De Villiers said he would also miss playing in front of packed crowds in India with the event to be played behind closed doors in UAE due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I think obviously all are used to playing in front of crowds in big stage, there is certainly an amount of adrenaline that pumped into you when it gets really loud, especially in Chinnaswamy when the RCB crowd gets going, it's difficult to stop the RCB team. So, well miss that there is no doubt about it."

"But I won't say I am not used to it, I have played a lot of cricket in empty stadiums. I grew up like that. It's only in my international career that I have played in front of crowd," he said.

Bale close to Spurs return

AFP ■ LONDON

Gareth Bale's agent says the Real Madrid forward is "close" to a move back to Tottenham but admitted it is a complicated deal to thrash out.

The Wales international has been frozen out by Real manager Zinedine Zidane and said earlier this month that he was open to returning to the Premier League.

It has been reported that Spurs and Manchester United are interested in signing Bale but Jose Mourinho appears to be leading the race to land the 31-year-old.

"It's close but not done," Bale's agent Jonathan Barnett told AFP. "It's a complicated



deal."

Bale has two years left on a contract that pays him a reported salary of about £600,000 (\$775,000) a week at

Real.

It has been reported the Spanish club would be willing to pay some of that salary to finally move on from their troubled relationship with the forward.

Bale left Tottenham for Real in 2013 for a then world-record fee of £85 million.

He has won four Champions League titles and two La Liga crowns during his time in Spain, but his turbulent relationship with Zidane has left him a peripheral player.

The winger still has an emotional attachment to Tottenham after joining the club from Southampton as a teenager and developing into one of the world's most exciting forwards.

Brazilian Govt backs Neymar in racism row

AFP ■ SAO PAULO

Brazil's Government sent its support to Neymar on Tuesday after he was red-carded for a fight in a Ligue 1 match in France, condemning the "racism" that triggered the brawl.

The Paris Saint-Germain star is facing punishment by the French league's disciplinary commission after slapping defender Alvaro Gonzalez near the end of PSG's 1-0 loss to Marseille, accusing the Spaniard of calling him a "monkey."

Gonzalez denies the accusation. But in Neymar's native Brazil, the ministry responsible for human rights issues said it stood behind the world's most expensive foot-



Neymar reacts after receiving red card

baller.

"In the face of yet another case of racism that has

come to the surface in sport, the ministry of women, the family and human rights publicly voices its solidarity with the player Neymar Jr," the ministry said in a statement.

"Racism is a crime."

The statement came after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro on Monday retweeted Neymar's own version of events.

The Brazilian striker slapped Gonzalez on the back of the head near the end of Sunday's match, sparking a mass brawl that ended with five players sent off, including Neymar.

He now faces a potential multi-match suspension, as does Gonzalez, if league officials find Neymar's accusation is true.

Emiliano Martinez joins Aston Villa

London: Aston Villa announced the signing of Arsenal goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez on Wednesday for a reported fee of £20 million (\$26 million).

The 28-year-old Argentine, who has signed a four-year deal, helped Arsenal to FA Cup victory last season and Community Shield glory last month but faced playing second fiddle to Bernd Leno.

Villa boss Dean Smith said: "We are really pleased with the signing of our new goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez."

"We know how highly Arsenal rated him and we watched his outstanding performances last season in a trophy-



winning top side.

"We moved for Emi when we saw the opportunity, as it is rare to be able to buy a top-class goalkeeper who hasn't yet reached their peak age and who can therefore be a key player for our club for the long term."



Nivetha Pethuraj BOARDS CHANDOO'S COMEDY DRAMA

Nivetha Pethuraj will be headlining the women-centric drama in the film, a situational comedy, while the likes of Brahmaji, Ajay and Kireeti will round off the supporting cast, finds NAGARAJ GOUD



The Pioneer was the first to report (on Sept 1) about director Chandoo Mondeti's plans of wrapping up a web film at a fast clip before he embarks on the ambitious journey of calling the shots for *Karthikeya 2*. "It's a situational comedy and the humour emanates from the characteristics of the roles. I've been developing it for the past 45 days and it's in the final stages. The casting will be finalised in the next couple of weeks," he had told us about the comedy drama that marks his digital debut, with People Media Factory attached to produce it.

Now, we hear that he has finalised the cast and even began shooting. Nivetha Pethuraj, who impressed

one and all with her turns in films like *Mental Madhilo* and *Brochevarevarura*, will be headlining the women-centric drama, while the likes of Brahmaji, Ajay and Kireeti will round off the supporting cast. "The filming has commenced on Tuesday at Ramoji Film City, Hyderabad and will go on there for another four days, before moving to other cities like Visakhapatnam and Mumbai," a source close to the development confirms to *The Pioneer*.

The source adds that cast and crew are strictly complying with COVID-19 guidelines, while going about their job. "Chandoo is planning to wrap up the shoot in a start-to-finish schedule of 30-35 days and it is the reason why the unit members have been asked not to visit their houses after pack-up for the

day. They will be staying in the accommodation offered by the production house until the shoot ends. The crew is not exceeding 50. The production house is spending Rs 35,000 to follow safety protocols daily," the source informs.

The source further adds that Chandoo has assembled a strong technical team in place to help his vision come alive. Karthik Ghattamaneni, with whom Chandoo worked on films like *Karthikeya* and *Premam*, has been signed on as the cinematographer, while talks are on with hotshot composer Kaala Bhairava to score the music. "No streamer is attached to the project as of now. People Media Factory will decide about selling the digital rights once the film draws to a close," the source ends.



Nagababu tests positive for coronavirus

Actor Naga Babu is the latest tinsel town celebrity to have tested coronavirus positive. Presently under home quarantine at his residence in Hyderabad, he took to social media to share the news, adding that he sees it as an opportunity to help others by becoming a plasma donor.

He wrote on Instagram, "An infection doesn't always have to be a suffering, you can always transform it into an opportunity to help the fellow beings. Tested Covid-19 +ve. Will scuffle & strife through this and

will be a plasma donor. #covid warrior #plasma-donor (sic)."

After his admission, messages for his speedy recovery poured in hundreds. Actor Kalyaan Dhev, Chiranjeevi's son-in-law, took to the comment thread and wrote, "Speedy recovery, Nagababu (sic)." Naga Babu replied to him, "@kalyaan_dhev Speed is a sign of Love, Thanks for yours @kalyaan_dhev."

Naga Babu, who is busy juggling between films and TV, participated in a web interview with his daughter Niharika four days back.

RGV 3-part biopic rolls on

Announced last month, the three-part biopic on filmmaker Ram Gopal Varma, produced by Bommaku Murali, has flagged-off at a college in Hyderabad on Wednesday. While the filmmaker doesn't believe in *muhurats*, this film, however, followed the customary rituals, with his mother Suryavathi switching on the camera for the first shot. His sister Vijaya sounded the clapperboard. Dorasai Teja, who will man the director's chair for the

all the three parts, is interestingly acting as younger Varma in the first part. "DORASAI TEJA apart from acting as me in my college days is also directing the film. He is just 20 years old #RgvBiopic (sic)," Varma posted on Twitter.

Titled *Ramu - The beginning of Ram Gopal Varma* — the first part will narrate about the famed director's college days, his first loves and his involvement in the gang fights of Vijayawada. It will also detail the tactics he employed to land his maiden film, *Shiva*. To feature fairly new

faces in other roles, the shooting of the first part will go in Hyderabad for another 15 days.

The third part, titled *The Intelligent Idiot* will lay focus on Varma's failures, controversies, his beliefs on God, sex, society and also his influence on various people. It will also throw light on his relationships in Mumbai and his infamous Taj Hotel visit along with Riteish Deshmukh and then Maharashtra CM Vilasrao Deshmukh in the aftermath of the Mumbai terror attacks in December 2008.



Meghamsh 'excited' to be directed by Satish Vegesna



After an impressive debut with *Rajdooth* last year, actor Meghamsh Srihari has signed his next, Kothi Kommachi, with director Satish Vegesna. The young actor tells us that he is "really excited" to team up with Vegesna, who is known for his national-award winning film *Shatamanam Bhavathi*. "*Rajdooth* producer MLV Satyanarayana rang me sometime back and spoken about the project, taking me by surprise. I've later heard the narration and it was an instant yes from my end," Meghamsh says.

Distancing himself from the family genre, Vegesna is making Kothi Kommachi as a youthful entertainer, while introducing his son Sameer as another lead. A confusion comedy between two couples, the first half, set in Visakhapatnam, will have a

lot of young at heart flavor, while the second half, to unfold in a picturesque village, will focus on family ties and emotions. The film will be launched on Dasara next month, followed by principal shooting. Vegesna is planning to wrap it up in 50-55 working days. "The film has entertainment all throughout its running time. It will give people the laughs they need after the pandemic," Meghamsh, who will be seen as a rich youngster in the film, points out. He maintains that he had no apprehensions as such to share screen space with another actor who will share equal screen time to that of him in the film. "The script needed two actors," he states, adding that his interactions with Vegesna have been excellent so far about the script. "A workshop of 10-15 days starts soon before we go in front of the cameras." — NG

Ashwini Dutt joins Twitter

A day after he celebrated his birthday, leading producer Ashwini Dutt, who has been producing films for almost five decades, officially joined Twitter on Wednesday. He will be tweeting from the handle, @AshwiniDuttCh. Some of his first tweets include responding to his well-wishers like K Raghavendra Rao, Suresh Productions, Sridevi Movies, Dulquer Salmaan and Nara Rohith who greeted him on his birthday.

"Thank you to all our custodians and collaborators of cinema. Your good wishes and constant support are the reason for our success. I loved hearing from each and every one of you! (Sic)," he posted on Wednesday.

After his 2011 release *Shakti* sank without a trace at the box office, Dutt stopped producing movies under his prestigious production house Vyjayanthi Movies. However, with the success of *Mahanati* (2018), which was pro-



duced by his daughters Swapna and Priyanka, he returned to the production fold with renewed energy and was associated with films like *Devadas* and *Maharshi*. He is set to produce Prabhas' film with Nag Ashwin next up. To be made on a mammoth budget, the untitled film is touted to be a futuristic scientific-thriller set against the backdrop of an imaginary third world war. It will roll next year.

Shraddha Kapoor joins Green India Challenge

After being nominated by her co-star Prabhas sometime back, shraddha kapoor took up the green India challenge and planted a few saplings in her Mumbai residence on Wednesday. Taking to her Facebook handle, the actress shared a picture of herself with the plant and wrote "Thank you Prabhas for nominating me for #GreenIndiaChallenge. I have planted few saplings. Special thanks to MP Santosh Kumar sir for this initiative. #HaraHaiTohBharHai"