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HIS GAME

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THE FLAWS
OF FEEDBACK

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DRAGS DC TO 157/8

VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 21, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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TAMIL ACTRESS TANYA
RAVI CHANDRAN
CAST OPPOSITE
KARTHIKEYA

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BALU STILL ON LIFE SUPPORT AFTER TESTING NEGATIVE FOR COVID

Singer S P Balasubrahmanyam, who recently tested negative for COVID-19 but is still being treated at a Chennai hospital, "has started oral food intake and has been practicing physiotherapy," said his son, producer-director S P Charan, in a video message on Saturday. However, the 74-year-old singer is still on ventilator. S P Balasubrahmanyam was admitted to Chennai's MGM Healthcare hospital on August 5 after he tested positive for the virus. He had mild symptoms when he was taken to hospital but after his condition worsened, he was moved to the Intensive Care Unit or ICU and placed on life support. Sharing details about his father's health, S P Charan said in a clip: 'Appa continues to be stable. He continues to be on ventilator.'

**INDIA EXTENDS USD 250 MILLION IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO MALDIVES**

India has provided financial assistance of USD 250 million to the Maldives to help it mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian embassy here said on Sunday. The grant, provided under the most favourable terms possible, was in response to the request made by President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to overcome the difficult economic situation in the Maldives. A handover ceremony was held on Sunday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Maldives to mark the occasion in the presence of Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid, Finance Minister Ibrahim Ameer, High Commissioner Sunjay Sudhir and CEO, SBI, Male Bharat Mishra, the embassy said in a statement.

**MALALA SAYS 20 MN MORE GIRLS MAY NOT RETURN TO SCHOOLS EVEN AFTER COVID**

Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, has said that as many as 20 million more girls may not return to schools even after the COVID crisis is over. Speaking on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on Friday, the Pakistani Nobel laureate acknowledged that COVID had been a striking setback to our collective goals, such as educating women, Dawn newspaper reported. On education alone, 20 million more girls may never go back to the classroom when this crisis ends (and) the global education funding gap has already increased to 200 billion dollars per year. Malala, 23, who once took a bullet from a Pakistani Taliban militant for campaigning for girls' education in Pakistan, said.

**LS PASSES BILL TO AMEND FACTORING REGULATION ACT**

Lok Sabha on Sunday passed a bill to amend the Factoring Regulation Act that seeks to help micro, small and medium enterprises by providing additional avenues for getting credit facility. The Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill, which was introduced on September 14, was passed by voice vote after a brief discussion. The Factoring Regulation Act, 2011 was enacted to provide for regulating the assignment of receivables to factors, registration of factors carrying on factoring business and the rights and obligations of parties to the contract for assignment of receivables.

**World Alzheimer's Month: Remember those who cannot remember**

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**Watershed moment for agri, will ensure transformation: PM**

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**Trump backs TikTok deal involving Oracle and Walmart**

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TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi: 02:26 am, (Next Day)

Nakshatram: Swati: 10:51 pm

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

Rahukalam: 04:40 pm - 06:10 am

Yamagandam: 12:09 pm - 01:39 pm

Varjyam: 06:21 am - 07:47 pm

Gulika: 03:09 pm - 04:40 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 02:58 pm - 04:24 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:45 am - 12:33 pm

VUJAYAWADA

WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly cloudy

Temp: 31/26

Humidity: 89%

Sunrise: 06:04 am

Sunset: 06:13 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated September 19, 2020 5:00 PM

Farm Bills cleared amid high drama in Parliament

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two of the three big ticket farm bills of the government were passed in Rajya Sabha by voice vote today amid unprecedented uproar and protests. The opposition claimed the government did not have the numbers and to cover it up, all rules were violated. "This does not end here," said Trinamool Congress's Derek O'Brien, terming it a "murder of democracy". All the opposition MPs are sitting in protest inside the house, hampering the sanitization operations before the Lok Sabha session which begins at 3 pm.

"They cheated. They broke every rule in Parliament. It was a historic day. In the worst sense of the word. They cut RSTV feed so the country couldn't see. They censored

RSTV. Don't spread propaganda. We have evidence," Derek O'Brien tweeted.

The opposition, which lacked the numbers to block the bills, had demanded that the bills be sent to a select committee for further discussion.

The trouble started as the Deputy Chairman said the opposition resolution was negated and moved to pass the bills by voice vote. The opposition demanded a physical voting, pointing out that they were sitting in parliament. When the Chair refused, they rushed to the Well of the House, tore up the rule book and tried to snatch off the Deputy Chairman's microphone.

"Mahabharat has broken out inside parliament," Congress's Ghulam Nabi Azad said. Opposition MPs could be seen



recording the moment on cell-phones, drawing repeated rebuke from the chair.

Insisting that the rules were not being followed, Mr O'Brien, whose point of order was not accepted, said "This is a brutal murder of the Parliamentary democratic sys-

tem". The house was adjourned immediately for 10 minutes and after it resumed, the voice vote took place amid repeated opposition slogans from the opposition who again parked themselves in the Well of the House.

In a video statement, Mr O'Brien who could earlier be seen waving the rule book, later said the Rajya Sabha TV was "cut off" and censored". "The members of the opposition asked for a vote. We were denied it... It is a historic day, in the worst sense".

Schools to reopen in state from today

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

After much dilly-dallying, the Central government has accorded permission for the reopening of schools from Monday onwards and directed them to follow the Covid norms strictly.

School students have the choice to attend classes in person, or online from Monday, as the State government has allowed schools to reopen for students from IX to XII standard. "Schools will reopen starting Monday, students from IX to XII standards may attend regular classes according to their wish, or connect online," said an offi-

■ Though students are allowed to take a call on attending the classes in person or listen to them online, their decision should be endorsed by their parents, or guardians in writing



cial. As part of Unlock 4.0, the Central government has accorded permission for schools to start classes from Monday for classes IX and above.

Though the students are allowed to take a call on attending the classes in person or listen to them online, their decision should be endorsed by their parents, or guardians

in writing. Meanwhile, students, teachers and schools have been instructed to adhere to all the Coronavirus guidelines for operation in a safe environment.

4 boys meet watery grave

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Two boys met a watery grave in a pond in Yetapaka mandal of East Godavari district on Sunday. Four boys from Palamadugu village in Yetapaka mandal of East Godavari district had gone to a pond on the outskirts of the village for swimming and fishing. Irapa Mahesh (10) and Sonde Sai Kiran accidentally drowned in the tank.

Two other boys rushed to the village, which is half

Continued on Page 3

5 lakh appear for Village Sectt exam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As many as 3,40,386 candidates attended in the forenoon and 1,65,922 candidates in the afternoon session for the Village and Ward Secretariats recruitment exam held at various exam centres on Sunday. As many as 2,221 centres were allocated for the candidates during the forenoon session and 1,059 exam centres were allocated in the afternoon to write the exam across the state organised by the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development department.

According to the Commissioner of Panchayat

Covid recoveries on the rise in state

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a positive sign, the State has recorded the highest number of recoveries in the last two weeks than fresh Covid-19 cases. Consequently, this has led to a gradual and significant drop in the number of active cases in the state.

The state's Coronavirus tally touched 6.25 lakh on Sunday as the state has completed a total of 51.04 lakh sample tests, returning an overall positivity rate of 12.26 per cent.

In 24 hours ending 9 am on

Sunday, 7,738 fresh cases were reported in the state while 10,608 patients recovered from the virus. A total of 5.41 lakh recoveries, the number of active cases reduced further to 78,836 cases.

Although, the state has the second-highest Covid-19 cases in the country, Andhra Pradesh has fewer detection of new cases compared to two weeks before. In the past week, fresh cases remained below 10,000. When new detections are lesser than number

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For ICU beds; connections, graft matter

DURGAPRASAD SUNKU

■ HYDERABAD

Amidst bewildering reports of 'mounting' Covid-19 deaths, 'falling' fatalities and 'increasing' recoveries, what is galling for gasping corona patients and their anxious kin is the sickening fact that ICU beds are available only if they have 'connections' and are willing to line pockets, because the severity of the patient's complications is typically relegated to the background.

In a nationwide survey conducted on the

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Govt to seek Centre's aid

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Secretary for Energy Srikant Nagulapalli will meet Union Minister for Power and New and Renewable Energy RK Singh in New Delhi on Monday and request him for financial support to 10 MW solar project, which would be set up to provide free power to farmers. He will apprise him of the implementation of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme for free agriculture power scheme in the state.

The Secretary will tell the Union Minister over the mea-

sures taken by the State government to improve the power sector, especially strengthening of DISCOMS, procuring low cost power, some of the proposed and ongoing projects.

According to officials, the Centre is keen on the steps being taken by the State government to implement DBT scheme in the state as Andhra Pradesh is the first state in the country that is implementing the scheme.

"The efforts of State government to implementing

Continued on Page 3

Agra optician's claim threatens nation's banks

PNS ■ AGRA

When business evaporated at Gajendra Sharma's eyeglass shop a couple of miles from the Taj Mahal during India's strict COVID-19 lockdown, he was relieved to hear about a pandemic debt moratorium that would give him breathing room on his home loan.

Now, however, the 53-year-old optician's \$13,500 debt risks destabilising India's banks, authorities warn.

That is because a complaint he brought challenging the

loan relief plan, grouped with those of other borrowers and now before the Supreme Court, could mean a \$27 billion hit to lenders - more than half their annual profits - that could shake the nation's financial system, the industry and regulators fear.

The battle, launched from Sharma's small shop in the northern city of Agra and now involving more than 120 lawyers, has the central bank and government struggling to defend what was meant to be a helping hand.



The problem, as the other borrowers see it, is that they must pay additional interest on their skipped repayments during the moratorium, which they

call "interest-on-interest."

The borrowers - including a leading real estate industry group, power utilities, shopping malls and small businesses - says the scheme unfairly hits them even as many have been financially devastated by the pandemic, that the banks must forgive the interest and compound interest that accrued while their payments were suspended.

Sharma, a voluble man with a thick moustache and a crop of dark hair, says the six-month reprieve, which ended

on Aug. 31, increased his debt load because of the extra interest. He is also paying monthly instalments on a \$21,700 business loan, for which he did not seek a moratorium.

"I realized this scheme was not to give us relief, but to give us more grief," he told Reuters in his shop, where idols of Hindu deities compete for space with Ray Ban and Prada sunglasses displays.

After Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government imposed the world's

Continued on Page 3

Monday Mirchi

The saga of a transfer

The much-talked-about transfer of Special Chief Secretary JSV Prasad from the Endowments Department to the 'famous' AP Human Resources Development Institute at Bapatla has not seen the light of day. It was no midnight coup. The reasons were clear at least to discerning babus. What beats circles that contrived the shift is that even after 15 days of the transfer, the man they cannot stand is still sitting in his chair and doing his work as usual in the Endowments Department. Now Prasad's well-meaning colleagues in the AP administration are doubting whether the transfer was real, or a stratagem intended to send across a message to officers who dare to raise objections on files forwarded to them. How else can they interpret a situation, in which, despite the good offices of an influential seer and a very powerful officer, the transfer is just simply not happening? When we posed this query of the quarter over a quarter bottle in the right quarters, a little bird told us that Prasad recently met the Chief Minister, explained the 'forces' that ejected him, and placed before the ultimate authority the truth as he saw it, while citing the reasons for not giving his assent to a land alienation file that caused the whole trouble in the first place. Implying that powers that be would find him to be a hard nut to crack, Prasad coolly recounted the 'hardships' he had faced during the TDP regime for not kowtowing to it. Sources shared hearsay among CMO hangers-on that the Chief Minister, after giving Prasad a patient hearing, assured him of 'justice'. Now administrative circles are wondering what this variant of 'justice' means: retaining him in the present post or giving him anything other than the one at Bapatla?

Blooming amid Covid-19

Who in this world is not fearing Covid-19? Even eminent doctors are dead serious about it and do not take the minutest chances. Politicians mouth big words about learning to live with the virus and building herd immunity as a long-term strategy. Still, none of the netas are venturing out to meet people at work and do their part to keep the wheels of administration well-oiled. Although babus love to follow such bindaas netas in letter and spirit, at least one officer in 'Telangana' is an exception with an exceptional track record. He is not only coming to office regularly, but also meeting people, hitting the roads every day to personally inspect works relating to flyovers, bridges, parks and so on without an iota of fear. That is Aravind Kumar, chief of the Municipal Administration Department in Telangana. Taking advantage of Covid-induced lockdown, he ensured completion of the most complicated road-widening works in Hyderabad much ahead of the schedule. No wonder, his political bosses tout or tweet with thrill the completion of so and so bridge, flyover and what not among the stunning new civic adornments. Aravind's absolute fearlessness, reflected by his mask-on and hands-on approach, is causing consternation among his colleagues, most of whom have chosen to work from home ever since the virus forced lockdown starting March this year. The unlock phases have not changed their adaptive workstyle, but Aravind, taking Covid-19 in his stride with due precautions,

is interacting with construction workers and attending a series of meetings to clear files so that the remaining key works are completed ahead of the schedule. An observant officer quipped: "Biharis are hard workers but Aravind proved they are also fearless". Another perceptive colleague added: "A lotus," they say, "blooms in mud." It is not a coincidence that Aravind means lotus.

Imbalanced to a single digit

A no-frills or a zero-balance bank account sounds good on paper. Nobody can afford to take it seriously for long because bank authorities bombard us with messages to maintain minimum balance and force us to cough up some penalty if we fail to adhere to their rules in fine print. Now, what happens if a state government fails to follow such a rule with the nation's central bank? No idea, only RBI can answer this question. Even RBI was at a loss for words when the AP government fell short of the bare minimum balance in its accounts with the central bank, with the state exchequer registering a single-digit figure as 'balance' for some time on a particular day recently. Everyone knows the reason for this shocking (im)balance. The government is struggling to maintain its fiscal parameters in shape as the CM while picking promises made in the election manifesto of his party one after the other, is bent on extending new welfare schemes every month, costing hundreds of crores of rupees to the exchequer. Due to the Corona-induced crisis, revenues have been badly hit; so, the AP government sent an SOS to the Centre seeking release of all pending payments due to the state. Understandably, the government could not help dipping into its accounts to the last Rs 10 note.

Unending wait for CCLA

Telangana CM has brought the new revenue Bill citing rampant corruption in the department as one of the main reasons. No one bothered to question anyone who counts why such a crucial department has been left without a full-time head for years. Another possibility is that this government believes in bottom-up approach and hence it wanted the structure to be in proper shape before finding the right 'head'. Call the approach top-down or bottom-up, the department has suffered a lot due to lack of clear lines of authority and responsibility. The Chief Secretary has been holding additional charge of CCLA. The rudderless department has been awaiting a full-time CCLA for an agonizingly long time now. A talkative parrot, in the know of things, told us that 1999 batch IAS officer V Sheshadri has been tipped for the post as the Chief Minister wants to implement the new revenue act without any delay. Sheshadri, who has worked in PMO as joint secretary, has returned to his parent cadre, Telangana. Insiders are skeptical about his posting as CCLA since the Telangana government apparently never wanted a strong officer in the revenue department. The long-unoccupied room at the top reflects its undeclared choice. But there are conflicting signals too. Sheshadri's wife, who works with the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, also got transferred to Hyderabad as director of PIB. She will lead PIB in Telangana. So, push and pull, both factors are at work now.

—Yours truly

YOUTH DROWNED IN A SWIMMING POOL

Resorts violate Covid-19 norms

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Death of a youngster in a swimming pool in a resort in Vizag raises several questions as the government is yet to allow swimming pools to be opened. A day after the suspicious death of a youngster G Pavan Sai at a resort near Kondakarla Ava under Atchutapuram police station limits in Vizag district, police said that the over-consumption of the liquor was the primary reason for the death of Pavan Sai, who reportedly entered the swimming pool at the resort in an inebriated condition and drowned in the pool.

However, police are planning to register a case against the management of the resort for violating the Covid-19 norms that led to the death of Pavan Sai. It is learnt that some of the resorts have thrown the swimming pool open for guests.

The 19-year-old youth from Gajuwaka area in Vizag city, along with his friends, attended a birthday party of one of his

■ A day after the suspicious death of a youngster G Pavan Sai at a resort near Kondakarla Ava under Atchutapuram police station limits in Vizag district, police said that over-consumption of liquor was the primary reason for the death of Pavan Sai, who reportedly entered the swimming pool at the resort

■ As per Covid-19 norms, swimming pools are supposed to be closed. But the management of the resort violated the norm and opened the pool. "We will register a case against the management and also examine the permission. If the management is found guilty, we will seize the resort," Sub-Inspector of Atchutapuram



friends at GVEH resort near Kondakarla Ava (a freshwater lake) under Atchutapuram police station limits in Vizag district on Friday night where he and others had food and consumed alcohol. A few of them entered the swimming pool in an inebriated condition but Pavan Sai drowned in the pool.

Though he was shifted to a private hospital at Gajuwaka area in the city on Friday, he was declared brought dead by

the doctors. Pavan Sai's friends took the body to his uncle's house and told his kin that he dead and left the place on Saturday morning. Expressing doubts over his death, his uncle G Kanna, lodged a complaint with the Atchutapuram police requesting them to ascertain the exact reasons behind the death of Pavan Sai and take action against the guilty citing that they have noticed some injuries on his body. Sub-Inspector of

Atchutapuram G Lakshmana Rao said that their preliminary investigation has revealed that Pavan Sai and others consumed a huge quantity of liquor on Friday and they entered the pool. He lost his consciousness and drowned in the pool while his friends didn't notice at the time of the drowning. The body has been handed over to the relatives of Pavan Sai after the post-mortem, he added. As per the Covid-19 norms,

swimming pools are supposed to be closed. But the management of the resort violated the norm and opened the pool. "We will register a case against the management and also examine the permission. If the management was found guilty, we will seize the resorts," Lakshmana Rao added. The locals said that Pavan Sai's parents died a decade ago in tragic accidents and now Pavan Sai also died in a tragic manner.

Kisan Rail chugs off for Delhi with fruits

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Eleven days after the virtual flagging off of the first South Indian Kisan Rail from Anantapur, the second one chugged off on Sunday morning from the state, laden with tomatoes and fruits to Nagpur and New Delhi.

"Second rake of Kisan Rail has started from Anantapur station in the early hours of Sunday to reach Adarsh Nagar in New Delhi," said a South Central Railway (SCR) zone official. Loaded with 262 tonnes of agricultural produce, the Kisan train is ferrying 239 tonnes of tomatoes and 23 tonnes of fruits such as papaya and others.



Expected to reach the national capital on Monday, the 12-parcel van train will unload three vans carrying 67 tonnes of tomatoes in Nagpur in Maharashtra, en route to Delhi. Nagpur is 882 km north of Anantapur while New Delhi is roughly 2,000 km north of the Rayalseema town.

Kisan Rail is Indian Railways' bid to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of doubling farmers' income in the country."

An announcement was made in the Union Budget 2020-21 about the operation of Kisan trains and accordingly Kisan Rails were started," he said.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amidst the prevailing uncertainty due to China's strategic moves in South Asia, including India, coupled with North Korean dictator's latest experiment of nuclear missiles, the international market of precious metals, including gold, silver, platinum and palladium, remained divergent during the week ended Saturday. Consequently, New York gold increased and finally closed at US\$ 1,948.90 (per ounce), while silver closed at \$ 26.72 (per ounce). Platinum increased and closed at \$ 923 (per ounce) and Palladium appreciated and closed at \$ 2,244 (per ounce). Other economic parameters remained moderate. Brent closed at US\$ 43.15 (per barrel), while

Precious metals remain divergent

Crude MCX oil was quoted at Rs.2,993 (per barrel). While Gold MCX stood at Rs.51,715 (per 10 gms), MCX Silver appreciated and closed at Rs.67,877 (per kg), Copper MCX closed at Rs.536.85 (per kg), Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 38845.82 and 11504.95 points.

Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were, US \$: Rs.73.61, British Pound: Rs.95.08, Euro: Rs.87.15, Singapore \$: Rs.54.16, Swiss Franc: Rs.80.76, Australian \$: Rs.53.67, Saudi Riyal: Rs.19.63, New

Zealand Dollar: Rs.49.77, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.241.04, Omani Rial: Rs.191.21 and UAE Dirham: Rs.20.04, Japanese Yen: Rs.0.70, Hong Kong Dollar: Rs.9.50.

In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) appreciated by Rs.420 and closed at Rs.53,860 (per 10 g m s). Ornamental gold too followed suit and was quoted in the range of Rs.49,280 - 49,380 on the closing day. Silver (\$0.999) remained steady and closed at Rs.67,900

(per kg).

COMMODITIES

The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities turned moderate due to parting rain showers of the current monsoon season. Rythu Bazar and the various commodity markets located in Begum Bazar, Kishangunj, Mukthyargunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir Alam Mandi, Dilukhnagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally, General Bazar registered moderate trading.

During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and commodities like chillies and garlic remained unchanged at

their respective last week's closing levels, while staple foodgrains and common edible recorded a negligible decline.

Common vegetables such as cabbage, cauliflower, ribbed gourd, snake gourd, lady's finger, cucumber, potatoes, onions, tomatoes and French beans, along with leafy vegetables, flared up still further in the range of 22% to 40%.

The NECC wholesale price of egg in Hyderabad decreased by Rs.13 and closed at Rs.488 (per 100). The highest price of Rs.553 was recorded at Pune, while Hospet recorded the lowest of Rs.470.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On a tip-off, three persons were arrested by the Machavaram police for organising online cricket betting. The Machavaram police led by circle inspector G Vinay Mohan and team nabbed the culprits for organising the online cricket betting at Acharya Play School in Municipal Employees' Colony of Moghalrajapuram.

The three culprits were identified as A Ranjith Kumar from Bhimavaram in West Godavari district, D Srinadh and P Naga Venkat Sivaprasad from Vijayawada. The master mind in the online cricket betting Naveen is at large.

Speaking to the media persons here on Sunday, the DCP



Harshavardhan Raju said that on receiving information that an online cricket betting was being organised at Acharya Play School in Moghalrajapuram, the police team led by the Moghalrajapuram CI nabbed the culprits and seized the equipment used for conduct-

ing cricket betting. The culprits were organising online betting by using Avatar app.

He said that they have seized equipment that include line box with 30 receivers, 25 cell phones, a recorder, a laptop, a television and two head set speakers from the culprits. They disclosed that they collected Rs 12.50 lakh online from various people who participated. Police are on the search to nab Naveen and others, who were involved in online betting.

The DCP appealed to the people of Vijayawada not to indulge in any illegal activity as the police are leaving no scope for any illegal activity to happen in the city. He said that stern action will be taken against the accused.

Supreme Court watching progress of cases against tainted lawmakers

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

The most contentious and widely-debated issue of public representatives such as Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assemblies with criminal background once again caught the attention of the apex court on September 16. The Supreme Court has asked the Chief Justices of the High Courts to formulate an action plan to rationalise the disposal of criminal cases pending against MPs, MLAs, and MLCs. The court also suggested that the action plan should cover the vital aspects such as total number of pending cases in each district, number of special courts presently available and more required, number of judges and categories of the cases, tenure of the judges to be designated, and the number of cases to be assigned to each judge.

A bench comprising Justice N.V.Ramana, Justice Surya Kant

and Hrishikesh Roy passed these directions in a PIL plea filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay.

The court also asked the High Courts to furnish details such as expected time for disposal of the cases, distance of the courts to be designated and adequacy of infrastructure. The apex court also asked the Chief Justices of the High Courts to designate a Special Bench to be headed by themselves and other judges in order to monitor the progress of these trials.

The seriousness of the Supreme Court on this subject is evident from the fact that besides forming the action plan, the Chief Justices are required to give their comments and suggestions to the apex court, preferably within a week. The apex court's concern was revealed in its direction to

the High Courts that all stay-ordered cases should be reviewed and, if a stay is considered necessary, the court should hear the matter on a day-to-day basis and dispose of the same, preferably within 2 months.

Indeed, this is a very sincere and honest effort by the highest court of the land as it aims to cleanse the body politic.

When our august houses like Parliament and Assemblies have criminal elements, nothing good could be expected from them. The rightful place for the criminals, whether masquerading as politicians, businessmen, industrialists, artists or simply as social workers, is the jail and not the sacred temples of democracy.

It is indeed a sad that we have not come up to the expectations of our great freedom fighters. Today all-important spheres of life have been engulfed in corruption, violence and intoler-

The CBI court at Jodhpur (Rajasthan) has asked the CBI to file cases against former Union Minister Arun Shourie and former Disinvestment Secretary Pradip Bajjal over the sale of an ITDC Hotel, allegedly at a loss of Rs 244 crore to the exchequer

ance. The legislatures have become the wrestling-rings where vested interests challenge each other to settle political scores rather than using these citadels for the good of the common man. The divisive and anti-national forces within country often tend to misuse the public platforms with the oblique motives of capturing power and authority by all foul means.

Today, when we are celebrating 150th birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, we should not forget that he always insisted on having fair means to achieve fair ends if India as a

nation has to survive and prosper constantly, we will have to rise above petty politics and myopic views of lofty ideals and goals.

VALIDITY OF CUSTOMARY LAW U/S 29 OF HMA

"A plea of customary divorce is a valid defence in departmental proceedings initiated for misconduct of bigamy under Service Rules/Conduct Rules", the Madras High Court has ruled. The bench noted that it is well-established by long chain of authorities that prevalence of customary divorce in the community to which parties belong,

contrary to general law of divorce, must be specifically pleaded and established by the person propounding such custom.

"The core question that is to be decided in this case is that whether the plea of customary divorce is a valid defence in the departmental proceedings initiated for an action of bigamy as defined in Section 3(b) of the Tamil Nadu Police Rules. In other words, Personal Law concerning the petitioner on the point of dissolution of marriage under customary practice of dissolution of marriage viz-a-viz misconduct of offence of bigamy under the Service Rules governing the police personnel", the court iterated.

Court orders FIR against Arun Shourie

The CBI court at Jodhpur (Rajasthan) has asked the CBI to file cases against former Union Minister Arun Shourie and former Disinvestment Secretary Pradip Bajjal over the sale of an

ITDC Hotel, allegedly at a loss of Rs 244 crore to the exchequer.

The court also directed the CBI to file cases against three others associated with the sale of Lakshmi Vilas Palace Hotel in Udaypur some two decades back.

LAWMAKERS AGREE TO REDUCE THEIR EMOLUMENTS

In a rare gesture, the members of Rajya Sabha passed the Salary, Allowances & Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 2020 and The Salaries and Allowances of Ministers (Amendment) Bill, 2020 by voice vote. The Bill, which has been already passed by the Lok Sabha, seeks to reduce the salaries of MPs and Ministers by 30% for one year. It also seeks to reduce constituency allowance and office expenses allowance of MPs. The Bills aim at supplementing the financial resources of the Centre to combat the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

SC ON EXTREME PENALTY FOR DEFICIENT DUTY

A bench of the apex court comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan, MR Shah and R. Subash Reddy held that the penalty of ten times prescribed under section 40 (1) (b) of the Indian Stamp Act cannot be mechanically imposed.

Dwelling with section 40 and other provisions of the Stamp Duty Act, the court observed that whenever statute transfers discretion to an authority, the discretion is to be exercised in furtherance of objects of the enactment. Neither imposition of penalty of ten times under section 40 (1) (b) is automatic nor can it be mechanically imposed, the court added. The purpose of penalty generally is a deterrence and not retribution, the court observed, and added "when a discretion is given to a public authority, such public authority should exercise such discretion reasonably and not in oppressive manner".

YSRCP MP COMPLAINS AGAINST REBEL MP RAJU

VIJAYAWADA: YSRCP MP from Bapatla constituency Nandigam Suresh on Sunday lodged a complaint with Keshapagula Ramulu, member National Commission for Scheduled Castes, claiming that YSRCP rebel MP K Raghu Ramakrishnam Raju has passed a derogative remarks against him without referring his name on a TV channel on September 17. He alleged that the MP intentionally passed such comments. "Hence, I request you to take action against K Raghu Rama Krishnam Raju and the TV channel."

4 BOYS MEET...

Continued from Page 1 a km away and informed the villagers. By the time villagers arrived, two boys drank the water and died. In Vizag, two children drowned in Mangamaripeta beach under Bheemili police station limits on Sunday evening. The deceased were identified as T Ajith Kumar (15) and V Yashwanth (14). Both belonged to the Mangamaripeta area. The police said that a group of six youngsters had gone to the beach for a splash. While they were enjoying the waters, two of them drowned when they were caught by a strong current. Police fished out the bodies from the waters. A case has been registered and investigation is on.

FOR ICU BEDS; CONNECTIONS...

Continued from Page 1

availability of ICU beds for Covid-19 patients, it was revealed that 78% had to use connections and clout to secure Covid ICU beds and only 4% patients got ICU beds through the routine process in both government and private hospitals. The survey was conducted by LocalCircles, an online social community platform, following complaints from citizens across the country regarding their family friends or associates not being able to find an ICU bed at a Government or private hospital. As part of the survey, over 17,000 responses from citizens located in over 211 districts of the country were collected.

Miscreants submit forged CMRF cheques to withdraw Rs 117 cr

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a shocking incident, some miscreants made a bid to withdraw crores of rupees by submitting the forged CMRF cheques in SBI branches of three Karnataka, West Bengal and Delhi.

Assistant secretary (revenue department)

P Murali Krishna Rao lodged a complaint with Thullur police on Sunday against submission of three forgery cheques for trying to draw CMRF funds. He said that the alerted bank officials suspecting a foul play had conducted an inquiry and found them as forged, hence, they stopped payments.



Thullur deputy superintendent of police Y Srinivasa Reddy registered a case based on a complaint lodged by the assistant secretary to the government on Sunday.

The Revenue (CMRF)

department meant for issuing the cheques to the poor for medical reimbursement and financial assistance. The authorities concerned received the information from the banks that three cheques submitted

from different states mention a huge amount of Rs 117.15 crore.

The first cheque bearing No. 694499 of Rs 52.65 crore was submitted to pay in favour of Advaita VK Hallow Blocks and Interlock at Mangalore in Karnataka on September 9.

Another cheque bearing No 792896 of Rs 39.40 crore submitted by Sharma Forging in Delhi on September 7, and third cheque bearing No 792893 of Rs 24.65 crore submitted by Mallabpur People Rural Development Society in Magyahat of West Bengal state on September 14.

Murali Krishna Rao said that originally these cheques 694499 issued in favour of K

Rataiah to pay Rs 16,000 on November 8, 2019, the second cheque 792896 of Rs 45,000 in favour of K Hymavati of Reddygudem, third cheque issued in favour of P Ramya Sri of Ibrahimpatnam on June 29, 2020 as per the records. Some unknown miscreants prepared fake cheques with the same numbers and forged huge amounts, including his official seal, and signature. The miscreants further tried to withdraw huge amounts of cash from the banks. Thullur DSP Y Srinivasa Reddy said that police registered a case under 170, 419, 420, 465, 467, 471 IPC and started investigation to nab the culprits forming special teams.



TDP slams reversal of TTD rule on faith declaration

- TDP state president K Kala Venkat Rao demanded that the TTD Chairman stop such misinformation and the long held traditions of the temple shall not be changed for the sake of one single non-believer
- He claimed that Subba Reddy's statements were sending a message that anybody could come to Seven Hills and carry out their religious propaganda

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy was spreading a false campaign that non-Hindu visitors never gave their declarations at the Tirumala temple in the past, alleged TDP state president K Kala Venkat Rao. He accused the TTD Chairman of undermining the Hindu religious traditions by deliberately telling lies about the practices at the Seven Hills.

He strongly objected to the TTD decision that non-believers need not give declaration at Tirumala temple since such instances never took place in the past. He demanded that the TTD Chairman stop such misinformation and the long held traditions of the temple shall not be changed for the sake of one single non-believer. He claimed that Subba Reddy's statements were sending a message that anybody could come to Seven Hills and carry out their religious propaganda.

He lamented that the YSRCP leaders were not hesitating to disrespect 'Kaliyuga Daivam' Sri Venkateswara Swamy to carry out their narrow political designs. He termed it as unfortunate that the TTD has taken a decision, which was hurting the sentiments of devotees all over the world. He objected that it was not acceptable that the Sri Vari funds were being diverted and invested in the government bonds, which were against the rules.

He said that the government was not at all bothered even though attacks were taking place on temples on a daily basis across the State.

He ridiculed that there was not much talk about decentralised development under Jaagan's regime but there were decentralised attacks on temples in every nook and corner of the state. He alleged that the idols were being demolished, sacred chariots were being set ablaze, temple funds were being looted and valuable statues were missing.

TDP chief provoking people: Rebel MLA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP rebel MLA Maddali Giridhar alleged that TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu was trying to create disturbances in the state by provoking the public in the name of caste, religion and alleged that Naidu is a non-believer as he had no faith in God.

Addressing a press meet in Guntur on Sunday, he said that TDP MLC Buddha Venkanna levelled baseless allegations against the Minister for Endowments Velampalli Srinivas Rao.

Giridhar claimed that the TDP leaders were indulging in mud-slinging against Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and Endowments Minister wherever incidents take place.

He objected to the comments made by MLC Venkanna that three silver lion idols of silver chariot were hidden in the house of Minister Srinivas Rao and refuted the allegations.

He recalled that the TDP government had demolished 41 temples in Vijayawada and did not pay either compensation or land allotment for the reconstruction of those temples.

He alleged that but nobody questioned the incidents during the TDP's regime, including Venkanna, who was living very near to the demolished temples. He stated that these ruthless leaders are criticising though the government has taken measures to nab culprits involved in the stealing of three silver lions.

Govt to seek Centre's aid

Continued from Page 1

its own model of DBT scheme attracted the attention of Union Ministry of Power. Officials will explain the objective of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to make the DBT scheme a role model to the country by offering protection to farmers. The State government is providing about Rs 85,00 crore as subsidy for free power scheme for the year 2020-21."

They will also explain to the Union Minister about the 10,000 MW solar power project for which the government has invited tenders recently. The solar

project is aimed at ensuring free power supply to agriculture sector for the next 30 years.

"Andhra Pradesh may emerge as one of the major states in the country in large scale development of renewable energy projects. The government has also decided to facilitate lease of five lakh acres of land for renewable energy export developers. This is one of the major steps taken by the State government for industrial promotion ensuring true reforms to low cost starting of industries in the State and that can contribute to the economic development and job creation.

5 lakh appear for...

Continued from Page 1

exam in an isolation room. The present percentage on the first day was 74.48 and the absent percentage was 25.52.

According to the information disclosed by officials during the afternoon session, 1,65,922 candidates were present for the exam out of 2,24,667 candidates, who applied for the examina-

tion. As many as 58,745 candidates were absent for the exam during the afternoon session. The present percentage is 73.85 and the absent percentage is 26.15 percentage.

About 200 candidates, who are Covid positive, attended the exam and were allowed to write the exam in the isolated room.

KCR, Jagan take...

Continued from Page 1

While major regional parties TRS, Trinamool Congress, Shiv Sena, NCP, BJD, AAP, DMK, Samajwadi party held a joint protest at the Parliament against the Centre's GST compensation payout options to States, the YSRCP MPs, along with legislators from BJP-ruled States, supported the NDA government and accepted 'options' offered by the Centre on GST compensation payout.

Jagan quickly accepted one of the two options suggested by the Centre to go in for additional borrowings to offset GST compensation, but KCR rejected both the options, saying they are detrimental to the interests of the state.

Similarly, when all major regional parties as well as Congress strongly opposed power sector reforms proposed under the Electricity Amendment Bill, the YSRCP, along with NDA partners, supported reforms and even took a decision to install meters for all agriculture

pumpsets as mandated in the new Bill.

Jagan has agreed to follow the Centre's condition of fixing meters to the agriculture power connections and direct cash transfer to farmers towards subsidy, but KCR described the condition as draconian and declared that he would never implement the decision.

Jagan has pledged his complete support to the Atma Nirbhar Bharat package announced by the Centre, but KCR has strongly resisted the same.

Jagan's YSR Congress Party openly supported the NDA government candidate Hariyansh Narayan Singh in the elections to the post of Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman, but the TRS MPs boycotted the polls.

And in the latest instance, the Jagan government and his party wholeheartedly supported the Modi government's controversial bills on agriculture that have been strongly resisted by the farmers across the country.

Agra optician's claim ...

Continued from Page 1

strictest COVID-19 lockdown in March, Sharma saw no customers for months, though he had to keep paying his \$2,700 in monthly recurring costs.

Across this nation of 1.3 billion people, companies say they are struggling to keep up with their loans as the lockdown has choked business and consumer spending. The economy collapsed a record 23.9% in the April-June quarter from a year earlier.

Now, even with the moratorium, "the interest-on-interest will result in winding up various real estate and other companies," said Utsav Trivedi, a lawyer representing one group of Sharma's fellow complainants.

In a typical case, a homeowner with 15 years remaining on a roughly \$40,000 loan would pay an additional \$6,000 in interest due to the moratorium, an extra 16 months' worth, explains SBI, India's top state-run bank.

Citing Sharma's case, the finance ministry last week ordered a panel to analyse the impact of withdrawing interest and the compounding levy.

The Supreme Court appears sympathetic to the borrowers on the extra interest. During the most recent hearing on Sept. 10, Justice Ashok Bhushan said the court was "inclined to pass an order" that banks forgive the additional levies.

India's banks, too, are reeling from the pandemic, and the industry fears a major judicial

setback, given that the court has previously overturned government decisions in ways that hit sectors from coal mining and telecommunications.

Banks already have bad loans of over \$120 billion, much of it on the books of state-run lenders, which dominate India's banking landscape, and the non-performing debt is set to surge in coming months. Any deterioration in their books would force the government, itself deeply indebted, to set aside billions of dollars to recapitalise the banks.

Combined annual profits at private banks and state-owned banks is some 3.2 trillion rupees (\$43 billion), "so a waiver of interest will be totally destabilising," said analyst Anil Gupta at credit rating agency ICRA.

Covid recoveries on the rise in state

Continued from Page 1

of recoveries, it is usually a positive sign, because it largely indicates that the infection rate is slowing down.

Not just that, lesser active cases also lower the burden on hospitals and health care staff. However, the trend needs to be closely monitored as Delhi had a similar story. In Delhi, recoveries were higher than active cases for more than a month and it seemed that the Covid-19 pandemic was in control but the trend reversed after a month and Delhi is experiencing a resurgence of the virus.

World Alzheimer's Month is the month-long worldwide campaign conducted by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) since 2012 to increase awareness about Dementia. Every year, September 21 is commemorated as World Alzheimer's Day. The theme for this year's Alzheimer's Day is 'Let's talk about Dementia'

like apathy, social withdrawal, agitation and wandering are common in the moderate to late stages.

Studies reveal that 62 per cent of health care providers worldwide think that Dementia is part of normal ageing. Nearly 35 per cent of caregivers across the world said that they had hidden the diagnosis of Dementia of a family member because of the anticipated stigma. Over 50 per cent caregivers admitted that their health had suffered as a result of their caring responsibilities to those with dementia even whilst expressing positive sentiments about their role. Alzheimer's is age related non-communicable ailment.

Higher education, use of estrogen by women, use of anti-inflammatory agents, leisure activities like reading or playing musical instruments, healthy diet and regular exercise is known to decrease the risk of Alzheimer's. A worldwide quest is underway to find appropriate therapy to prevent slowdown or arrest the progression of the disease. A few US-FDA approved drugs are reported to be effective in improving the memory and thinking challenges. However, these medications do not treat the underlying cause of the disease or slow its progression.

On an average, people with Alzheimer's disease could live up to twenty years after diag-



Dr MANI TOLETY
Palliative and Geriatric Care Professional

nosis with different degrees of cognitive and behavioural impairment. Though Alzheimer's disease is unlikely to cause death by itself, other related complications including increased propensity to infections, aspiration pneumonia resulting from difficulty in swallowing, may contribute to early death.

Caring for a loved one with dementia poses many challenges to the family members, especially those who are called upon to care for them, referred

to as caregivers. No one is born with or taught skills to communicate with a person having dementia. However, these skills are essential and have to be learnt by the caregivers. Improving one's communication skills can help make caregiving less stressful and is likely to improve the quality of relationship with the dementia patient.

People with dementia retain their social skills and are delighted to laugh with others. Our attitude and body language have to communicate our feelings and thoughts more genuinely than our words. Therefore, getting the dementia person's attention by addressing her by her name, and helping the person identify the caregiver by name and relationship, while using non-verbal cues and physical touch, are essential ingredients of efficient caregiving. Communication must be simple and clear. Simple words spoken slowly, distinctly and in a reassuring tone and repeating the message until the patient captures the attention

are key. Visual prompts and cues help clarify the question and guide the response. One has to listen with one's ears, eyes and heart, always striving to convey the essence of the feelings that underlie the words. Tasks must be broken down into a series of simple steps that makes the tasks manageable. If the communication does not elicit response, connect with the patient with affection and reassurance. Holding hands, touching, hugging, and praise will get the person to respond, when all else fails.

Remembering the good old days and happy moments of the past often have soothing and affirming responses. Some of the greatest challenges of caring for loved one with dementia are the personality and behaviour changes that often occur in the caregiver. One can meet these challenges by using creativity, flexibility, patience and compassion. It helps to not take things personally and maintain one's sense of humour despite all the odds: Let 'Them Be'.

Considering the increased life expectancy, increased proportion of population living beyond 65 years of age, and increasing burden of dementia, the national and state governments must assign special priority to the prevention and management of dementia / Alzheimer's disease in their public health programmes. Given the nature of the disease, which requires sustained long-term tender loving care more, counselling, and supportive measures rather than hospitalisation or medication, the governments must encourage civil society institutions to establish training centres for both patients and caregivers.

Dementia can affect any of us before we realise the reality. This requires every one of us to be aware of the symptomatology of dementia / Alzheimer's disease and take responsibility for ourselves, our loved ones at the earliest signs of dementia. With love and affection, we can triumph over any adversity, including dementia.

Focus on water use efficiency is imperative. The proposed revision of National Water Policy is a step in the right direction. The National Bureau of Water Use Efficiency (NBWUE), envisaged as a central body with overall responsibility of improving water use efficiency across sectors, should therefore be carefully constituted, keeping in mind the socio-economic, geographic and sectoral diversity of the country.

In any given sector, the overarching framework of a policy sets out the intended direction. With the passage of time, even policies have to be reformulated periodically for grappling with new and emerging issues such as those identified in the water sector.

The revision of National Water Policy has been envisaged to address certain chal-

Reformulating National Water Policy

lenges in the water sector. A drafting committee was constituted on 5th November, 2019 to revise the National Water Policy within a term of six months. The term has since been extended up to 31st October, 2020. The committee's report is expected to help determine the contours of the policy. The one thing that has been disclosed is the emphasis on improving water use efficiency across the sectors.

Minister of State for Jal Shakti & Social Justice and Empowerment Rattan Lal Kataria, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, stated that the broad focus of the proposed policy is going to be on water use efficiency.

Straight away, it reminds us about the National Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), which plays an important role in promoting energy-efficient devices, energy audit, assigning star ratings to various items of electrical equipment, and facilitating an implementation mechanism along with requisite expertise

A Bureau is expected to be assigned this task. The proposed National Bureau of Water Use Efficiency (NBWUE) will have the overall responsibility of improving water use efficiency across various sectors, namely irrigation, drinking water supply, power generation, industries,

cities and in all other areas where water is used.

Straight away, it reminds us about the National Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), which plays an important role in promoting energy-efficient devices, energy audit, assigning star ratings to various items of electrical equipment,



SHAILENDRA KUMAR JOSHI
FORMER CHIEF SECRETARY
OF TELANGANA
ADVISOR OF TELANGANA
GOVERNMENT.

and facilitating an implementation mechanism along with requisite expertise. Similarly,

there is the Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA), which has been largely addressing consumer behaviour for various conservation practices in the petroleum sector. PCRA also deals with issues concerning efficiencies.

The NBWUE has to be a hybrid of BEE and PCRA. It means essentially three things. First, set up efficiency standards for water user agencies, after research and due diligence. Second, encourage production and usage of water-efficient equipment and practices. Third, and the most important, create awareness and modification of behavioural pattern of various user groups. The task cut out for

NBWUE is multi-disciplinary, spread across various sectors. Thus, experts and professionals from the disciplines concerned should be an integral part of NBWUE.

As irrigation accounts for about 80 per cent of water use in India, maximum volumetric returns due to efficiency improvements are expected in this area.

This could be achieved by paying attention to each of the three broad components: Storage and extraction efficiency, Water distribution efficiency from source to farmers' fields, and On-farm water use efficiency.

As per available studies, overall water use efficiency in the irrigation sector is about

32%. It means that if one TMC of water is released at the source, only 0.32 TMC water is used by crops with 'distribution efficiency between 50 to 70%' and 'on-farm water use efficiency of about 50 to 60%' in an open canal irrigation system. Higher water use efficiency is possible by opting for piped, micro and drip irrigation. On the behavioural side, it gets translated into change in cropping pattern and farming practices.

In so far as industrial and domestic use of water is concerned, after setting up efficiency standards (different from the present consumptive scales), a policy of carrot and stick (incentives and disincentives in terms of economics) has to be followed for promoting the trinity of reduce, reuse and recycle.

(With Rhea Joshi)

Rural areas bearing brunt of Covid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The rural areas in Telangana are bearing the brunt of Covid-19 even as the number of cases has considerably dropped in the state capital. Districts outside GHMC limits account for 80-85 per cent of the 2,200-2,300 new cases added to the state tally every day.



Till the first half of July, it was the state capital which was at the receiving end. With 700-800 cases every day, GHMC was accounting for 80-85 per cent of the daily infections at one point in time. Thirty-two districts, excluding Hyderabad, accounted for 137 cases or 13.45 per cent of the 1,018 cases reported on July 1. The ratio of the districts jumped to 50.15 per cent on July 15 (801 out of total 1,597 cases).

An analysis of the current situation shows that the daily jump in cases has come down over the last two-three weeks but the numbers are dropping to below 2,000 only on week-ends when fewer tests are conducted.

Reports from the districts show that even small villages have over 100 positive cases. For instance, in Govindapur village of Karimnagar, 73 out of 90 families were affected. Buoyed by the improvement in the situation in Hyderabad,

Director of Public Health G Srinivas Rao exuded confidence on August 25 that the situation will be under control in the remaining districts by September-end. He was confident that the cases will be brought down to minimum.

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar told Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba during a video-conference on Saturday that the number of positive cases has started declining in Telangana.

"The government is keeping a close watch on the situation and fully geared up to handle the pandemic," he said. Explaining various measures taken by the state, the Chief Secretary said that testing has been ramped up. RT-PCR testing is being done on every person found symptomatic person detected through

rapid antigen test. The government has formulated a strategy to make all hospital beds equipped with oxygen facilities. He also said that special focus is laid on managing the situation in the districts.

On August 25, the state reported a jump of 2,579 cases, taking Telangana's total tally to 1,08,760. Nine deaths had pushed the cumulative death toll to 770. Since then, the state added over 60,409 cases till September 19 at an average of 2,400 cases per day. The state also witnessed 255 deaths during the period.

Officials said by ramping up testing and health infrastructure, they brought down the COVID-19 fatality rate and improved the recovery rate as well as tests per million population ratio.

State sees 2,173 new cases, tally over 1.7L

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's Covid tally crossed 1.70-lakh mark as the state reported 2,173 more cases on Sunday, while eight more patients succumbed to the virus. The new cases pushed the state's tally to 1,71,306 while the death toll went up to 1,033.

Telangana's fatality rate now stands at 0.60 per cent as against the national average of 1.60 per cent. More people recovered from COVID-19 than new cases detected during the last 24 hours. As many as 2,192 patients recovered, taking the total recoveries so far to 1,39,700. The recovery rate improved further to 81.54 per cent as against average of 79.64 per cent.

According to a media bulletin issued by the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare, 70 per cent of all positive cases reported so far in the state are asymptomatic.

As many as 65.23 per cent of positive cases were in the age group of 21-50 while

21.82 were above 51. The positive cases include 12.95 per cent who were below 20 years. Officials said 64.83 per cent of positive cases were males and the remaining 38.17 per cent females.

The number of active cases total 30,573, including 24,019 in home or institutional isolation. During the last 24 hours ending 8 pm on Saturday, authorities conducted 53,811 tests. These include 23,676 primary and 6,457 secondary contacts. The total samples tested so far increased to 24,88,220. A total of 17 government and 43 private laboratories and 1,076 rapid antigen test centres are conducting the tests.

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) reported 322 new cases during the last 24 hours while neighbouring districts of Rangareddy and Medchal Malkajgiri reported 182 and 146 cases respectively. Sangareddy, another district bordering the state capital, recorded 65 cases.

Talasanani takes a dig at Bhatti over 2BHK scheme

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Animal Husbandry Minister Talasanani Srinivas Yadav on Sunday launched a scathing attack on Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka for allegedly making baseless allegations on state government's 2BHK scheme.

"I kept the assurance made to the opposition in the Assembly that I would take Congress leaders to see the double bedroom houses constructed in GHMC limits. Double bedroom houses are being constructed in various locations. Without visiting even five or six locations, opposition leaders started their criticism for political gains," he said. "Being a responsible government, we took the opposition leaders to the localities where houses were constructed. Opposition must appreciate the efforts of the government. Instead of that, the opposition is trying to politicise the issue," he further added.

No ruling party leaders visited the residence of Opposition leader and accepted the challenge, said Talasanani. Calling the CLP leader as 'useless', Talasanani said, "I don't have



to answer Bhatti. He is not in a position to digest the facts. I will give the list of double bed room houses and where they are being constructed and how the construction works are going on in some places by conducting a press meet," he said.

Later, taking on the Centre, Talasanani likened BJP-led government with Tughlaq regime. "The Centre didn't release Rs 20 lakh crore to the states in regard to Corona pandemic. It didn't even issue even guidelines. TRS MPs, along with some link-minded MPs, will Corner the Central government in the Parliament," he said. The Minister questioned the Telangana BJP Chief and

Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar to reveal as to what he was doing for the last one and half year as an MP. "Bandi Sanjay did nothing to his constituency except for addressing press meets in Hyderabad," he alleged.

He challenged Bandi Sanjay Kumar to sanction money to the state from Centre. Talasanani said that the BJP leaders are criticising the TRS government with jealousy as the latter is moving forward with various welfare schemes and projects. He questioned the BJP leaders to reveal whether schemes like Mission Bhagiratha and 2BHK scheme are replicated in any other state across the nation.

TS irrigation projects receive heavy inflows

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the three main barrages of Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS) receiving heavy inflows from the catchment areas and almost reaching the Full Reservoir Level (FRL), project engineers have lifted gates and are discharging water down the stream. Similar situation is prevailing at all major reservoirs elsewhere in the State.



At Lakshmi (Medigadda) barrage, the inflow is 2,60,000 cusecs and the same quantity has been discharged by lifting 46 gates out of 85 gates. The quantum of water available in the barrage is 3.3 tmc and the project has 94 meters of water out of an FRL of 100 meters. At Saraswathi (Annaram) barrage the inflow and outflows were 1,60,000 cusecs and 30 gates out of 66 gates have been lifted to let the flood water out. The quantum of water available is 7.6 tmc and the water level is 117.5 meters against an FRL of 119 meters.

At Parvathi (Sundilla) the inflow and outflows were 2,00,000 cusecs, the number of gates lifted were 60 out of

74. Quantum of water in store was 6.8 tmc and level of water was 128.5 meters out of an FRL of 130 meters.

On other projects on Godavari and its tributaries, Sri Ram Sagar Project was receiving 1,46,874 cusecs and discharging 1,25,000 cusecs. Sripada Yellampally was receiving 2,04,400 cusecs, and the same quantity has been released. Lower Manair Dam was receiving 55,377 cusecs and the same amount has been discharged. Inflow into Singur was 23,974 and out flow was only 123 cusecs.

On Krishna, Priyadarshini Jurala continued to receive huge inflows of 2,01,800 cusecs, and outflow was 1,95,539 cusecs. Over 21,000 cusecs has been utilized by the power generation station. Inflows into Srisailem were 2,60,365 cusecs and outflows were 4,13,017 cusecs.

TRS govt 'anti-farmer': Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday stated that the Congress would abolish all anti-people and anti-farmer GOs issued by the TRS government. Stating that the Congress government would win in next elections, Bhatti questioned Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao to reveal whether he is a Chief Minister or 'Land Broker'.



Bhatti alleged that underground water will be polluted with Pharma City as it has the capacity of polluting water around 100-km radius. He said that the Congress has accorded Telangana state for the sake of unemployed youth, poor and landless poor

Addressing the farmers of Pharma City land victims at Kurumidda village in Yacharam mandal in Rangareddy district on Sunday along with MLC T Jeevan Reddy, Seethakka, M Kodanda Reddy, Mahreddy Rangareddy, Challa Narasimha Reddy, Sunketa Anvesh Reddy, Bhatti said that the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi distributed lands to the poor, however, KCR is selling the lands to the corporate companies and behaving like a 'broker'.

"We will not lose anything except clutches of slavery if we wage fight against KCR. Human beings have an emotional relation with the land

and Congress will not keep quiet if they take the lands from the poor. Congress will not keep quiet if the TRS government gives away farmers lands to Pharma City," he warned. Bhatti alleged that Krishna River and under-

ground water will be polluted with Pharma City as it has the capacity of polluting water around 100-km radius. He said that the Congress has accorded Telangana state for the sake of unemployed youth, poor and landless poor.

Congress will win next Assembly polls: Tagore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore took potshots at Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao and said that only Kalvakuntla family got benefitted from separate Telangana. Participating in a video conference with former MLAs and corporation chairmen, Tagore exuded confidence that Congress will come to power in next Assembly elections. "Congress will win next Assembly elections even if TRS misuses power and spends huge money. Power is not new to Congress and the support of people is with Congress only," Tagore said.

"There is nothing to worry for Congress. We will win next elections even if TRS leaders spend huge money. The leaders and cadre have to work with discipline and the party should follow social importance. However, the party gives priority in identifying the needs of the people rather than power and hence it accorded separate Telangana state in tune with the aspirations of the people. The leaders should ensure the victory in the next elections and give the same as a gift to the AICC Chief Sonia Gandhi. Leaders should wage movements unitedly to ensure the victory of the party," he said.

Cannt Board vice-president quits TRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The differences among Secunderabad Cantonment Board members reached its peak on Sunday with Board's vice-president Ramakrishna resigning to TRS party membership.

It is said that the differences with Board members was the reason behind Ramakrishna's resignation. Ramakrishna sent his resignation letter to KTR. However, the Board members demanded Ramakrishna to tender his resignation even to Board's vice-president position. Ramakrishna said that he tendered his resignation with the discontent of his own party members though he was an active member.

MMTS extension plan gathering dust

PNS ■ YADADRI

The much-awaited Ghatkesar-Raigir multi-modal transport system (MMTS) rail link has been gathering dust for the past four years. The link is expected to boost connectivity of 33-km from the city to Raigir, the nearest railroad to the temple town of Yadadri.



It may be recalled that the extension of the MMTS trains up to Raigir was proposed four years ago, but nothing could materialise so far. The train service has been proposed for the benefit of people living in Hyderabad reaching Yadadri without any hiccups.

At the request of the State Government, the railway board

got the proposals prepared. Currently, the MMTS second phase has been extended up to Ghatkesar. It was proposed to double the railway track and electrify it up to Raigir, which is 33 km away from here, at a cost of Rs 380 crore.

The proposals were readied in 2016. The same year, the SCR invited bids with the participation of some construction companies. Because of the time over run, now the project cost escalated to Rs 414 crore. The state should provide land

and meet 59 per cent of the project cost while the department of railways bears the 41 per cent of the project cost. The tender process has been cancelled as the SCR had written to the Centre for approval of the cost over run. So far, there was no response for it till 2019. Therefore the SCR had to cancel the tenders.

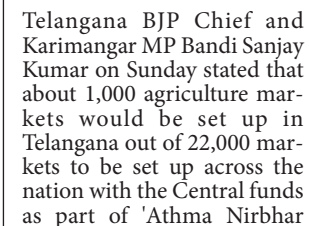
The Centre has approved the revised cost of the project, but the SCR has been treading carefully. The railway officials have been exploring possibility of inviting bids once again. The Centre has allocated Rs 50 crore. The railways wants to forge ahead on the project if the state government allocates some funds.

Tahsildars to be sensitised on Revenue Act

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government has prepared an action plan to train over 590 tahsildars in batches from September 23 or in the last week of September for about five days on the implementation of new Revenue Act, which will come into force from next month.

In case, tahsildars proceed on leave or not able to attend office due to various reasons, the deputy tahsildars will also be given training to enable them to step into the shoes of tahsildars in the latter's absence.



Telangana BJP Chief and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday stated that about 1,000 agriculture markets would be set up in Telangana out of 22,000 markets to be set up across the nation with the Central funds as part of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat'.

Finding fault with the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao for opposing the new Agriculture Bill, Sanjay asked the Chief Minister to reveal whether these 1,000 new markets would help Telangana farmers or not. "KCR should reveal whether there is no role of CM's Committee and their recommendations or not in preparing the bill," he alleged.

Bandi addressed a letter to the Chief Minister in this regard on Sunday. In his letter, Sanjay said that the Modi gov-



ernment is firm on development of villages and upliftment of poor farmers. "It is meaningless on part of Chief Minister to criticise the Centre's Farm Bill.

"I strongly condemn the language used by Chief Minister of Telangana K Chandrasekhara Rao against the bill. His language exposes his culture and is meant to divert the attention of the people from his misrule. The Chief Minister of Telangana cheated the farmers of Telangana promising to buy all the crops during the last sea-

son but he failed. In a majority of the IKP centers in Telangana farm produce especially paddy got damaged due to hailstorm but the Chief Minister didn't bother to rescue farmers. Due to lockdown, vegetable and fruit farmers incurred heavy loss and the government of Telangana hasn't helped them at all," he said.

He said that Centre, as part of Atmanirbar Barat stimuli, has lifted all restrictions over agri-product transportation to empower farmers to sell their product at their price and their choice of location. The Government introduced a bill in the parliament in the name and style 'Farmers produce Trade and Commerce Bill' and the Farmers' (empowerment and protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill 2020, which both the houses of Parliament passed today.

SHORT READS



Watershed moment for agri, will ensure transformation: PM

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday described the passage of two farm sector bills as a "watershed moment" in the history of Indian agriculture, asserting that they will ensure a complete transformation of the farm sector and empower crores of farmers. In a series of tweets, Modi said these proposed laws will liberate farmers from numerous adversities as he noted that peasants were for decades bound by various constraints and bullied by middlemen. He again assured farmers that the existing government support system for them will continue. Farmers in states like Punjab and Haryana have been protesting against these bills, with their leaders alleging that the legislations will dismantle the existing system and leave them to the mercy of corporate interests.

It is a landmark day: Rajnath on passage of farm bills in RS

New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hailed the passage of two big ticket farm bills by Rajya Sabha on Sunday, calling it a "landmark day" for India's agriculture sector and farmers. While major opposition parties are against the bills, the government has been maintaining that the proposed legislations will help small and marginal farmers secure competitive prices for their produce. "With the passing of two landmark agriculture Bills in Rajya Sabha today, India has cemented the strong foundation for 'Atmanirbhar Agriculture'," the defence minister tweeted. "This is the result of endless dedication and determination of the Govt under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi," he said.

No data on number of plasma banks in country: Govt

NEW DELHI: Convalescent plasma therapy has not been recommended by the Ministry of Health as a mainstay of COVID-19 therapy and there is no proposal under consideration to set up plasma banks, Rajya Sabha was informed. In a written reply, Minister of State for Health Ashwini Choubey said states have taken initiative to establish such banks to provide plasma therapy to COVID-19 patients but no central database of such banks is maintained. He was responding to a question on the total number of plasma banks running at present to provide plasma therapy to the Corona patients. Convalescent Plasma therapy has been included in the Clinical Management Protocol for COVID-19 as an investigational therapy for use in a defined subgroup of patients only, Choubey underlined. "Convalescent plasma therapy has not been recommended by the Ministry of Health as a mainstay of therapy and there is no proposal under consideration of Ministry of Health to set up plasma banks for providing COVID-19 therapy. "States, however, with a view to ensure availability of plasma, in case needed, have taken initiative to establish such banks in certain banks. No central database of such banks is maintained," he clarified.

BJP hails passage of farm bills

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president J P Nadda hailed Parliament's nod to two farm sector reform bills on Sunday, saying they will give farmers freedom in selling their produce and rid them of middlemen.

He also hit out at the opposition parties over the ruckus in the Rajya Sabha after the Chair proceeded to take up the bills for passage as he termed the behaviour "highly irresponsible" and an attack on democracy, and hoped that the House chairman will take note of that.

Opposition members also violated COVID-19 protocols



by storming the Well of the House, he told reporters.

Amid massive uproar by opposition members, the Rajya Sabha on Sunday passed Farmer's Produce Trade and

Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020. They were

passed by the Lok Sabha on Thursday.

Nadda asserted that the minimum support price (MSP) and Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMC) will continue even as farmers will get more and better options under these bills, which will become laws after being notified.

"Showing foresight, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken these steps for a better future for farmers. They will play an important role in doubling their income," he said.

The Modi government has taken a number of steps for farmers' welfare, including implementing the

Swaminathan Commission report and announcing over Rs 1 lakh package for the agriculture sector, he said.

Attacking the Congress, the BJP president said the opposition party had promised abolishing APMC in its 2019 general election manifesto while this will continue under the Modi government.

The Congress and its leader Rahul Gandhi do not want to see farmers empowered, he said.

The Congress did nothing to undertake any reform to empower farmers and this is an old habit of the party to do politics by misleading the poor and farmers, Nadda alleged.

5 states account for 60% new recoveries

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With 94,612 people recuperating from COVID-19 in a span of 24 hours, the total number of recoveries in the country has surged to 43,03,043, taking the national recovery rate to 79.68 per cent, the health ministry said on Sunday.

As many as 60 per cent of the new recoveries were reported from five states -- Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu -- which also accounted for 52 per cent of the new cases, the ministry highlighted.

Maharashtra continued to top the chart with more than 23,000 new recoveries, while both Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh accounted for over 10,000 single-day recoveries, it said.

The country has reported more than 94,000 recoveries for two successive days, the ministry said.

A total of 92,605 fresh COVID-19 cases have been reported in the country in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of such cases to 54,00,619.



"Also, 52 per cent of the new cases are concentrated in five states. These are also the states contributing maximum to the new recoveries," the ministry underlined.

Maharashtra accounted for over 20,000 (22.16 per cent) of the new cases. Both Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka accounted for more than 8,000 cases, it said.

A total of 1,133 deaths due to COVID-19 were registered in a span of 24 hours, pushing the death toll to 86,752, the ministry said, adding that 425 or 37 per cent of the fatalities reported on Saturday were from Maharashtra, followed by Karnataka (114) and Uttar Pradesh (84).

Global plastic production up by 60 MMT in 5 years: Researcher

PNS ■ PANAJI

Global plastic production has gone up from 300 million metric tonnes to 360 million metric tonnes in the last five years, claims a scientist from the

Goa-based National Institute of Oceanography.

Also, microplastics pose a serious threat to the environment as they get into the bodies of marine animals like fish, turtles, shrimps, sea birds, and then enter the food chain,

affecting humans as well, scientist Mahua Saha said.

She was addressing a webinar organised by a Mumbai-based NGO in collaboration with the National Centre for Coastal Research on Thursday, ahead of the International Coastal Cleanup Day which was observed on Saturday.

Plastics less than five millimetres in length are called 'microplastics' and the relatively larger particles, of more than 5 mm, are classified as 'macroplastics'.

Speaking on Microplastics: An emerging threat to marine environment and biodiversity, Saha said, "Plastic production has been constantly increasing. In just five years, the global plastic production increased from 300 million metric tonnes to 360 million metric tonnes."

Out of this, 50 per cent is single use plastic and only nine per cent is reusable, where is the rest going? Is it accumulating on the shoreline and coast column? she said.

Govt set to amend FCRA; Aadhaar to be mandatory

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) is all set to be amended, under which providing the Aadhaar numbers of the office-bearers of any NGO will be mandatory for registration and public servants will be barred from receiving funds from abroad.

The Foreign Contribution Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2020, to be introduced in the Lok Sabha on Sunday, also proposes to enable the Centre to allow an NGO or association to surrender its FCRA



certificate.

The draft bill proposes that not more than 20 per cent of the total foreign funds received could be spent on administrative expenses. Presently, the limit is 50 per cent.

Govt forms committees for inspection of COVID hospitals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has formed expert committees for inspection of government and other Covid facilities following directions of the SC.

The expert committees constituted by the Ministry of Health have been tasked to inspect, supervise and guide government and other hospitals dedicated to Covid, Minister Ashwini Choubey told the Rajya Sabha.

3 months' posting at dist hosp mandatory for medical students

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All post-graduate students pursuing MD or MS in broad specialties in medical colleges across the country will have to undergo a compulsory residential rotation of three months in district hospitals as part of the course curriculum in the academic session 2020-21.

Such rotation shall take place in the 3rd, 4th or 5th semester of the postgraduate programme.

This rotation shall be termed as 'District Residency Programme' (DRP) and the postgraduate medical student undergoing training shall be termed as a 'District Resident', the notification issued by the board of governors in supers-

ession of the Medical Council of India (MCI) said.

According to the 'Post-graduate Medical Education (Amendment) Regulations, 2020', satisfactory completion of the district residency shall be an essential condition before the candidate is allowed to appear in the final examination of the respective postgraduate course.

'Handling of Covid key issue in Bihar polls'

ASIM KAMAL ■ NEW DELHI

With the Centre rolling out a slew of development projects for Bihar ahead of the Assembly polls, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Sunday said "grandiose PR exercises" are a poor substitute for governance, and the real issues in the elections would be unemployment, "corporatisation of agriculture" and handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In an interview to PTI,



Yadav also asserted that it is "undisputed and settled" that the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) is the "natural leader of the 'mahagathbandhan' (grand

alliance)" and seat sharing will be settled soon.

"These bills will strip farmers of their financial security net which has been safeguarded by provisions like public procurement and MSP (minimum support price)," Yadav said.

Why did a Union cabinet minister resign if the bills were not "anti-farmer", he asked referring to Shiromani Akali Dal leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal quitting the Cabinet last week over the farm bills issue.

The Opposition has been hitting out at the government over the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, alleging that they are anti-farmer, a claim the government has denied, stressing that they will be beneficial for the agriculture sector.

we are building the Ram Temple now," the 56-year-old actor said.

For years, starting with Ramanand Sagar's televised series "Ramayan", late actor Dara Singh portrayed the role of Hanuman. It was the unforgettable acting of Singh that made him immortal in the eyes of all Indians, Vindu said.

"I have played the role of Hanuman for some 20 years now on different platforms, my inspiration has always been my father. Even though I am inspired by him and try to walk in his shoes, those are honestly very big shoes to fill.

"Even now when people close their eyes to think of

Hanuman, Dara Singh's image comes to mind. The way he lived the character, nobody can ever match that. It used to feel as if Hanuman was on the stage when he played the role," Vindu added.

If it's about filling his father's shoes for Vindu Dara Singh, for Chandrakanta-fame actor Shahbaz Khan it's about portraying the biggest villain in the world -- Ravan. "It's a dream role for any actor, to play the biggest villain," Khan said.

The 54-year-old actor, who's known for his negative roles, added that all famous actors made it big by playing strong negative characters on screen and stage.

Mosque may not have 'traditional shape'

MUHAMMED MAZHAR SALEEM ■ LUCKNOW

The mosque to come up in Ayodhya pursuant to the Supreme Court verdict in the Ram Janmabhoomi case may have a shape that is different from the traditional shape of mosques and will not be named after any emperor or king.

Secretary and spokesperson of the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) Athar Hussain told PTI on Sunday,

"A mosque measuring 15,000 square feet will be built in Dhannipur village. It will be of the same size as that of the Babri mosque. The shape of the mosque may be completely different from that of other mosques. It may be square-shaped like the Kaaba Sharif in Mecca, as hinted by architect SM Akhtar."

To a question on whether the mosque at Dhannipur will



off with China, Alfred said back then, there was "no dearth of official information" about the border developments.

There was a clear communication from the government and a detailed statement was made in Parliament, he said.

"I covered several events with Nehru, including his visit to the Ahmednagar fort as prime minister. He excitedly showed me his cell and the places he was allowed to visit as a prisoner during the independence movement," he said.

The British had chosen the Ahmednagar fort to lodge

Disposal of PPE kits challenge during Covid pandemic: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Disposal of biomedical waste including PPE kits worn by healthcare professionals and public became a challenge during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Union Health Ministry told the Rajya Sabha on Sunday.

"As informed by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), disposal of bio-medical waste including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kit worn by healthcare professionals as well as general public became a challenge during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic," Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Ashwini Kumar Choubey said. The minister was responding to a query by BJP MP Mahesh Poddar in the Upper House over the disposal of biomedical waste during the coronavirus crisis in the country.

Ayodhya to stage Ramlila before Ram comes home

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The first 'Ramlila' in the historic city of Ayodhya since the stone-laying ceremony of the Ram Temple will witness renowned actors from across the country descend on the banks of Sarayu river and act out the greatest battle depicting the victory of good over evil.

In a show of valour, loyalty, and Hindu traditions, the epic of Ramayan will unfold at the Laxman Qila, less than two kilometers from the under-construction Ram Temple, from October 17-25.

TV actors Sonu Dagar will play Ram, while Kavita Joshi will play Sita.

With Delhi BJP MP and actor Manoj Tiwari playing the role of Angad (Ram's emissary), Gorakhpur BJP MP and actor Ravi Kishan playing Bharat (Ram's brother), and Vindu Dara Singh enacting the role of Hanuman, "Ayodhya ki Ramlila" will be a star-studded gala.

Actor Ritu Shivpuri will enact the role of Kaikeyi, Asarani will play Narad, Shahbaz Khan of Ravana, Rakesh Bedi of Vibhishan, Rakesh Puri of Nishadraj, Raza Murad of Ahiravana and Avatar Gill will play Janak.

Talking about the role of Hanuman, which became synonymous with his father Dara



Singh, Vindu told PTI that this year's Ramlila comes as a unique opportunity to play the role of Lord Ram's loyal servant in the city of his birth.

"This is the first time I have got a chance to go to Ayodhya and such an incredible opportunity it is that I am going to play the role of Hanuman in

Ayodhya," Vindu told PTI.

According to the legend, Hanuman was commanded by Ram to stay on earth till the end of time even after the latter departed.

"If Hanuman is still on earth, where else can he be found if not in Ayodhya. I believe he only has made it possible that

Clone trains will arrive before parent trains

ANANYA SENGUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

With the Railways rolling out 40 clone trains from Monday, waitlisted passengers on high traffic routes can hope to reach their destinations two-three hours before the corresponding parent train, a senior official said on Sunday.

These clone trains -- primarily higher speeds and a departure time before the parent train -- come as a boon for the passengers who have to travel in an emergency or have made last-minute plans,

the official said.

Their stoppages will be limited to operational halts or the Headquarters en-route, thereby reducing their journey time, the official said.

"These trains will reach their destinations two to three hours in advance. That's how they have been planned," a senior official told PTI.

"We are assuming that during these times, people will travel only in an emergency and we want to make sure that on the high traffic routes, we can accommodate all passengers who want to travel."

No people's vaccine

As rich nations corner more than half the doses, they must realise that vaccinated pockets don't lead to stable economies



Vaccine nationalism is rearing its ugly head again even as the Coronavirus pandemic rages on. The implications of manipulating access to essential drugs, particularly HIV-AIDS ones in developing countries, due to bulk purchasing power of richer nations and honouring of pharmaceutical patents, are already known. That crisis worsened. Sadly, the trend continues as the race to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 intensifies with five leading candidates currently in phase three clinical trials. Who gets hold of the vaccine and when determines which country stops the caseload from going up exponentially, saves lives, escapes the second and third wave predicted by experts and gets on the path of economic recovery faster. However, with the pharmaceutical industry being largely cartelised, it won't come as a surprise if developing countries are at the far end of the line. Remember the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic? Australia, which was the first country to come up with a vaccine at that time, blocked exports while some of the wealthiest countries entered into pre-purchase agreements with several pharmaceutical companies. The US alone obtained the right to buy 6,00,000 doses. It was only when the H1N1 pandemic began to recede that developed countries offered to donate vaccine doses to poorer economies. However, the damage at that time was not as severe as it will be this time round because the Coronavirus is far more infectious and deadlier than the H1N1 and has almost strangled the have-not nations. If a recent report released by Oxfam is to be believed, wealthy nations, accounting for just 13 per cent of the global population, have cornered a whopping 51 per cent of the promised vaccine doses. It is just what poorer nations and the World Health Organisation (WHO) had feared, that while they would be prime picks for vaccine trials, they would get to use doses the last. The inevitable result would be a deepening of the pandemic. Right now, many world leaders, like US President Donald Trump, who is facing a re-election in November, will not listen to the feeble voice of the poor or the WHO. A vaccine is his ticket to the White House, he needs it for his voters. This "vaccine nationalism" has also emerged at a time when global majors are trying to establish their political prowess while using their scientific superiority to validate the claim. Thus, whoever has the first access to the vaccine will end up on the top of the global pyramid of power, apart from reaping the enormous monetary benefits that come out of it.

One of the developers of the COVID vaccine is Moderna, which has received \$2.48 billion in committed taxpayers' money. It intends to profit from its vaccine and has sold supplies to rich nations at prices that range from \$12-16 per dose in the US to around \$35 per dose for other countries, leaving poorer nations out of the procurement loop entirely. However, according to reports, the company's production capacity is barely enough for 475 million people or six per cent of the world's population. Even if all five vaccine candidates succeed, which is rather unlikely, it is only by 2022 that two-thirds of the world's population will have access to them. Also, even if one country does get vaccinated, how will its policy on travelling restrictions change? Will the restriction be limited to those who are yet to get access to the vaccine or will they have vaccines for those entering their land? Remember it's a global pandemic and just like the WHO warned, creating vaccinated pockets will not be beneficial for long if one is aiming for a stable economy. This is why various organisations are calling for a "people's vaccine", free of the monopolistic control of the pharmaceutical companies over its sale and urging nations to share the needed information with others so that it is available to every single human being at affordable rates and can be distributed on a need-based rather than a paid-for basis.

If all the five vaccines work, Oxfam says that would amount to a combined production capacity at 5.94 billion doses, enough for 2.97 billion people, keeping in mind that the vaccines will most likely require two doses. The supply deals already agreed upon are for 5.303 billion doses, out of which 2.728 billion (51 per cent) have already been procured by developed countries including the UK, US, Australia, Hong Kong and Macau, Japan, Switzerland and Israel, as well as the European Union. The remaining 2.575 billion doses have either been bought by or promised to emerging countries, including India, Bangladesh, China, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico among others. This also includes the 300 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine pledged to the Covax Advanced Market Commitment (AMC), the vaccine pooling mechanism, promised to developing countries. It is essential for global powers to understand the gravity of the situation and on ethical grounds work in favour of public health and the global economy.

The IPL is back

The entire experience will be very different without crowds cheering on the teams



The Indian Premier League (IPL) has come back to our screens and by the time you read this, the first set of matches would have been played. Early favourites would have been determined, new heroes would be on the tips of everyone's tongues, old stars would find themselves rejuvenated and superstars could be down in the dumps. It is taking place six months after it was supposed to start and the entire tournament is taking place in the United Arab Emirates with matches being played in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. The return of the IPL will give many of us an indication that things are returning to normal. The additional consumption that the event will drive ahead of the festive season might give a major boost to the economy over the next six weeks and provide the much-needed succour for television viewers from hate-filled and spiteful content that masquerades as news on most channels.

Yet, part of the excitement of the IPL, and this is despite previous tournaments which have been played on foreign soil, are the crowds. Purists of regional and national identity-based cricket may not like the idea of franchise cricket, let alone the T20 format, but it does make for compelling entertainment and some strange bedfellows. Whoever thought that a boy from Ranchi could become the biggest superstar in Tamil Nadu or that a Delhiite could become a hero in Bengaluru and adored by the crowds? Of course, cricketers are used to playing Test and domestic cricket, where scant crowds are the order of the day, but not having crowds in the IPL defeats the purpose of such a spectacle for some. Then again, other professional leagues such as those in the US and professional football leagues in Europe have also restarted without crowds, although the former is now allowing in limited spectators. The Wuhan contagion has changed many aspects of modern life but it appears that professional sport has been the hardest hit of all. The return of the IPL might not take away from the fact that the number of cases continues to rise sharply but it could prove that things might return to normal sooner rather than later. And you know what, that is not a bad thing.

Pawns in his game

The sordid reality of the 21st century's portrayal of Indian female celebrities is that it defeats all that feminism has tried to achieve so far



RINKU GHOSH

As women have come into their own, do they realise that they continue to be objectified even in changed contexts for purposes of mass consumption? And are projected for the wrong reasons than the right ones? That they legitimise the male gaze as a uniform societal response by falling into a trap of imaging they believe empowers and acknowledges them? Further, if they happen to be celebrities with a fair sweep of popular culture, then they are prone to be more "sexualised" as it were as talking heads. So much so that they are now being itemised for politics instead of the big screen, used for advocacy rather than reason, prized for their appearance than their intelligence, made icons of causes that thousands of faceless women are struggling with and drawing accolades and likes that may not be earned or deserved. And should such unevolved but rapidly recognisable faces happen to represent binaries, then you have a catfight that has become the new prime-time fix. In the end, fighting women make a mockery of all that feminism has tried to achieve so far.

What else would explain the obsessive coverage of Kangana Ranaut, Rhea Chakraborty, Urmila Matondkar and their ping-pong exchanges by the media or their appropriation by political parties of the day to amplify their respective narratives? Let's begin with Kangana Ranaut. An actor par excellence, she has lived through sordid exploitation and displayed a rare grit to carve her space and more importantly, own it. There have been many outsiders in the film industry, co-opted or rebels, but she was neither. Instead, she challenged a system that was based on nepotism and dynastic privileges and insisted on a democracy that would enrich the creative space. She even did her bit, though not the only one, to push the envelope, choosing flesh and blood roles that made real women protagonists as much a revenue-earner for the film industry as its male stars. And there was a straight-forward honesty and boldness about her approach that endeared her to everybody. Most of all she appeared independently sensible and not just fashionably articulate. And much before #MeToo, she called out her male exploiters in the industry, not denying what she had been subjected to but was frank enough to admit that she spoke when she had equal power and respect.

She did carve out a new constituency among the chatterati and was conscious enough to use it to magnify her own appeal. She became a regular at media summits and talks, thereby developing another facet outside films that would lengthen her shelf life. The media, in turn, used her to grab eyeballs. As she became sure-footed, she sailed



with the prevailing political winds, beginning with nationalism and then professing her Right wing loyalties. Every citizen, including actors, is entitled to his/her ideological preferences but Kangana, who took years to craft her own disruptive brand, has been waylaid and absorbed this time around. Using her troll-worthy capacities and no holds barred verbal ammunition, the BJP has just made her a pawn in its grand design, whether it is lampooning the Nehru-Gandhis, taking on its arch enemy, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, or stoking fires in the mysterious death of Sushant Singh Rajput. And it is here that Kangana has faltered and given into the prevailing rant and sentiments of the day than calibrating them to her advantage. Undoubtedly, the Shiv Sena leaders are not known for their standards when they decide to shred somebody apart but for Kangana to liken Mumbai to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was not only politically immature but more hurtful to her own self than the Sena. Of course, the BJP benefitted from the scream fest without dirtying its fingers. And compared to the troublesome Anurag Thakur and Kapil Mishra, it has found a palatable public lobbyist of some repute. The fact that she is from the film industry would work both ways for it, as an asset if she got traction, maybe a liability at times and a salacious aberration at worst if she failed.

But it is in the process of cleansing the drug taint from the film industry that she has gone overboard, attacking women colleagues in the industry, unarmed with logic and defeating the very women's cause that she loves to represent. She locked horns with Jaya Bachchan, actor and Rajya Sabha MP of the Samajwadi

Party, an industry veteran and an active parliamentarian who has spoken out on societal issues. Rightfully, she decided to argue for an industry that was being vilified over a few bad apples and drug abuse, generalised as a sin city than the enormous talent it nurtures and made to look like a villain of all societal ills when fact is, it supported jobs and created opportunities. This, she said, despite the "non-support of the Government." Kangana's rebuttal for the sake of one not only lacked refinement, it undid the work of several women actors who made it possible for her to make her current space and be heard. Taking a potshot at Jaya's remark that actors were ungrateful to the industry that fed them, Kangana retorted, "Got one *thaali* which included two minutes of fame in item numbers and one romantic scene with the hero, that too after sleeping with him. I have taught feminism to the film industry." Reality check? Jaya Bachchan has been a bigger path-breaker than her because she etched powerful women characters despite a hostile climate set by the movie mafia, the single-hero domination and a less than encouraging commercial logic where strong women onscreen were considered artsy and NFDC material. Jaya tried to mainstream that discourse. Kangana perhaps also forgot her own sensuous numbers on screen before she called actor and now Congress member Urmila Matondkar a "soft porn" star. Apart from a pervert television audience that sees news as entertainment, this discourse did nothing but perpetuate the stereotype that "women are their own worst enemy." Something that Jaya's peer and BJP MP Hema Malini realised as she supported Jaya's speech instead of

mindlessly toeing what her party propagandists would have wanted her to do.

Kangana may get a BJP ticket to contest elections in the future but she would again not earn it by her own rules but by conforming to the misogynistic mindset that sees women stars as a whiff of fresh air in the dry world of politics. She should have taken lessons from the late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalitha, whom she is portraying onscreen. Jayalalitha became the respected leader she was by mastering all the rules of the political game, working the ground, breaking out of the shadows of her mentor MGR and battling the authoritarianism that had already been established by her male counterparts on equal terms. Kangana, sadly, is in danger of looking like a stooge. Does she realise that for all her headline grabbing acts on social and visual media, she is being used to divert attention from the nation's more pressing problems like the pandemic mismanagement, the Ladakh incursions or the tanking economy? That she is fuelling exactly what the ruling dispensation wants her to do, namely create a cloud of inconsequential nothingness?

At the other end is starlet Rhea Chakraborty, who is on everybody's search engine, not because of her films or work but as an exploitative girlfriend of late actor Sushant Singh Rajput. No doubt he was a talent snuffed out too early, but the mysterious circumstances of his death, his troubled history with drugs and mental health, his Bihari identity and his "outsider" status in the film industry have far too many elements to be exploited by politicians and their new handmaiden, the broadcast media. The conspiracy theory that she might have pushed him to addic-

tion, swindled him, could have diverted funds and in the process pushed him over the edge by entrapping him in a world of debt and drug cartels, has become a credible story that the nation is devouring hungrily. Simply because legal evidence and cold facts of the actor's death are too dry to be juiced out for news cycles. Simply because a good-looking starlet allows the masses to project their sinful obsessions, aspirations and high crimes to her kind and claim moral righteousness by exclusion. So Rhea's going to jail becomes a visual that is more satisfying as a portrait of instant justice. Many film personalities have been involved in the drug racket. Yet Rhea's arrest, for possessing just 59 grams of weed, makes a seething urban sub-culture a sensational discovery. She, too, is aware of the fame that the unfortunate death of her boyfriend has given her. Flashing a victory sign and sporting T-shirts emblazoned with "down with patriarchy" slogans, she, too, could emerge out of this mess as a prime pick for advocacy of women's rights and the lynch mob trial she was subjected to. She may or may not be a success in films going forward but, like Sushant, has been appropriated as a political tool. If the BJP is fuelling the "justice for Sushant" campaign, the Congress has taken up the "justice for Rhea" crusade. Self-appointed activists shouted slogans opposing the "vilification campaign" against the "daughter of Bengal" and held up placards that said, "We will not stop till she gets justice." Bengal Congress chief Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury even invested her with casteist respectability, calling her a "Bengali Brahmin." What Rhea wouldn't appreciate, if she walks into this trap, is that she is hated mostly by women with a patriarchal mindset over tea and conversations, seen as a woman who made capital out of what is called "easy virtue." In this sense, both the newsmaker and the news recipient are defeated, simply because neither gets respect nor understanding. But they certainly perpetuate a male construct of how women are.

Sadly, women newsmakers from popular culture around the globe are being chased for their representational rather than their authentic selves. Their activism, therefore, appears to be more and more fake. And as they use social media to build intimate partnerships with their communities and followers, they are shaping a market economy of medievalism, where women are dependable worker bees but are actually living in a shell believing they are the queen bees.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer)

SOUNDBITE

Peru cannot come to a halt due to the content of some audios without any validity; the management of the pandemic and economic reactivation cannot be suspended.

Peruvian President
—Martin Vizcarra



All three ordinances of agriculture shall encourage middlemen and will promote the big industrialists. Also, black marketing will shoot up.

Rajasthan PCC Chief
—Govind Singh Dotasari



We will talk with Washington on all issues of interest solely on the basis of equality mutual benefit, and the search for a balance of interest.

Russia's Foreign Minister
—Sergey Lavrov



Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings are the two franchises that are most loved by the fans and that's how IPL has become special.

Cricketer
—Hardik Pandya



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

New farm Bills

Sir — The Lok Sabha passed three contentious agriculture Bills in the ongoing monsoon session amid strong protests by Opposition parties. The outcome of the proposed legislations can only be the corporatisation of the farming sector, leading to commercial exploitation of agricultural lands.

These reforms will re-introduce the *zamindari* system in a new insidious form. Forced to take to the streets due to the pandemic, the farmers need more than the ritual obeisance paid to them for being the backbone of society.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Ban cryptocurrencies

Sir — Reports of the Government pondering over a ban on cryptocurrencies is doing the rounds on social media. Earlier in April 2018, the Reserve Bank of India issued a circular, thwarting any exchange which facilitated the use of cryptocurrencies. However, later on, the Supreme Court quashed the RBI's circular. Now, the Government must take a call on how to regulate cryptocurren-

cies but only after thoroughly analysing its long-term effects.

Rahul Chouhan
Ujjain

Section 144 re-imposed

Sir — Section 144 was already imposed in Mumbai but its re-imposition has caused panic

among many. The section prohibits the gathering of four or more people in an area, effectively not changing anything. This extension will be applicable till September 30 as Mumbai is one of the worst pandemic-affected cities and the numbers of infected people continue to rise. It is high time for people to understand the gravity of the situation

Protect the farmers

The Centre may have rushed through farm reform legislations without confabulating with all parties and stakeholders concerned or creating a defined architecture for farmers to follow the new template on the ground. The Bills intend to create a viable alternative to Agricultural Market Produce Committees (APMCs) and facilitate contract farming to help small farmers discover fair prices for their farm produce. Truth be told, APMC haven't lived up to their promise due to cartelisation and small farmers continue to have problems transporting their produce to APMC market yards.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made a weighty promise to farmers, 86 per cent of whom are small and marginal farmers, to double their income by 2022. The status quo, including minimum support price (MSP), isn't helping enough farmers, unlike direct benefit transfers, besides distorting markets and cropping patterns.

The Centre has clarified that it isn't undermining APMC or MSPs but merely increasing competition by allowing agri-businesses, food processors, whole-



salers, exporters and big retailers to source directly from farmers. Even though the Opposition parties are joining the protests to reap political mileage, the Government must immediately ensure that the corporatisation implicit in these steps doesn't rob the farmer of his autonomy or replace one clique with another.

N Sadhasiva Reddy
Bengaluru

and remain indoors as the Government has assured that the supply of essential goods, services and medical emergencies will remain unaffected.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Fined for nothing

Sir — Advocate Saurabh Sharma

was issued a fine of ₹500 for not wearing a facemask while driving alone in his car. During the hearing, KC Mittal, appearing for Sharma, argued that the guidelines issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority merely stated that masks were to be worn in a public place or workplace, and not inside an empty vehicle. Sharma's *challan* must be quashed and the fined amount refunded. The advocate also deserves to be compensated for time wasted besides mental agony caused.

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Time to act

Sir — After Nepal's Parliament approved a new political map, showing three Indian territories (Limpiyadhura, Lipulekh and Kalapani) as part of Nepal, it has now introduced the same map in the school curriculum. It is high time India breaks its silence as it stands to lose its territory to both Nepal and China.

Devendra Khurana
Bhopal

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

Not such a big deal after all

The only thing that actually happened in DC was that the UAE and Bahrain went public on their previously covert ties with Israel, especially in the arms trade



GWYNNE DYER

US President Donald Trump declared “the dawn of a new Middle East” in Washington recently as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain signed public agreements with Israel for the first time. Not “peace agreements”, as President Trump claimed, since neither country has ever been at war with Israel. Just documents involving an exchange of ambassadors, trade deals and the like. And it was significant that while Trump and Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were there in person, the UAE and Bahraini rulers just sent their foreign ministers for the signing of the papers. The only thing that actually happened at the White House was that two of the Gulf’s most progressive States went public on their ties with Israel, especially in the arms trade. This had previously not been a secret, but at least their ties with Jerusalem had been discreet. Apart from that, it’s still the same old Middle East, as corrupt, violent, dysfunctional and ironically as ambitious, glittering and fashionable as ever. The last time Israel fought an actual war against any of its Arab neighbours was in 1982, a full-scale invasion of Lebanon that ended in a prolonged Israeli military occupation of the southern part of the country. That’s long over now, although Lebanon remains a ghastly mess, but all the region’s other wars trundle on uninterrupted. The second Libyan civil war continues into its sixth year, with a cast of foreign participants and supporters that now includes Russia, Turkey, France, Egypt and the UAE. The atrocious foreign military intervention in Yemen, led by Saudi Arabia but involving most of the autocratic Arab States and their Western arms suppliers, is only one year younger and still killing around 5,000 a month.

The Syrian civil war is in its ninth year. It has killed at least half a million people and driven almost half the population from their homes. It may be creeping towards an end now, with only one province still in rebel hands, but the rebels have Turkish military support and the Russian air force fights for the Assad regime. Iraq is enjoying only its second year of relative peace since the US invasion of 2003, but the signs are multiplying that Islamic State is going to launch a major comeback bid there. The collapse of the oil price has left much of the population destitute. Urban youth are in open revolt, with hundreds shot by the police this year. And when something genuinely new does crop up in the endless churn that distinguishes the region’s politics, it is often unwelcome. Saudi Arabia, once the stable, conservative linchpin of inter-Arab politics, has turned into a loose cannon, starting unwinnable wars (like Yemen), tunnelling money and arms to jihadi extremists (in Syria), and commissioning the cold-blooded killing of critics of the regime (as in the murder and dismemberment of journalist Jamal Khashoggi).



Overshadowing all these wars, and actually driving some of them, is the religious and strategic confrontation between revolutionary Shia Iran and the conservative Sunni monarchies and dictatorships of the eastern Arab world. That’s what those huge Arab arms purchases are for, not for fighting Israel. Indeed, Jerusalem is a silent partner in this region-wide Cold War between the Sunni Arab States and Iran; that’s what made the little ceremony at the White House possible. There is no Arab-Israeli conflict. The major Arab players are already undeclared Israeli allies, and the Israeli army refers to its sporadic punitive strikes against the Palestinians as “mowing the lawn.”

Real change in this region happens with glacial slowness, if at all, but that does not mean that it is stable. On the contrary, it could tip suddenly into a radically different state. It almost did so in 2010-12, the years of the aborted ‘Arab spring’, and the forces that drove that uprising are even stronger now. Half the population in Middle Eastern and North African countries is under 25. As populations have soared (Iraq’s has doubled to 40 million since the first Gulf War in 1990), economies have not kept pace and living standards have fallen almost everywhere. A huge, mostly jobless young population living close to despair is now the Arab norm.

The oil-rich Gulf States used to be the exception to this rule, but no longer. The oil-price crash this time is not temporary: Demand is falling and will continue to fall as the climate crisis and cheaper new “clean energy” sources eat into oil’s traditional markets. The recent pantomime at the White House was about tidying up a few of the loose ends of an old conflict. It would have a certain relevance if the future was going to be just more of the present, but that is not the case. The timing is uncertain but the destination is clear: Big changes are coming that will sweep away many of the existing regimes and reshape the politics of the region. Happy endings are not inevitable, but different endings are practically guaranteed.

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE CENTRE’S BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO UTTAR PRADESH FOR MINORITY WELFARE WAS REDUCED BY 50 PER CENT OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS.
—BSP MP
KUNWAR DANISH ALI

ATTEMPTS ARE MADE TO DISCREDIT THE BJP BY CITING STATISTICS. EVERYONE KNOWS HOW MUSLIMS HAD BEEN REDUCED TO A MERE VOTE BANK IN THE PAST.
—UP BJP SECRETARY
CHANDRAMOHAN

The flaws of feedback

Competition in education and research brought through the evaluation system may drive all in the same direction at the cost of diversity



INDRANIL DE

SUSHANTA SARMA

Feedback is a very important tool to nudge people and organisations to adopt desirable behaviour. Nobel laureate Richard H Thaler and his co-author Cass R Sunstein, in their international bestseller *Nudge*, suggest feedback as one of the strategies to motivate agents to adopt responsive behaviour. It is against the idea of command and control policies of governments or paternalism of any institution. Nudging human behaviour in a desirable direction without any command and control is what they call “libertarian paternalism.” A nudge in the right direction may be as simple as the lap-top warning the users to plug in the charger when the battery is about to die out, or the display screen of a car suggesting that the driver change gears when the gear applied and the speed of the car mismatch. These feedback mechanisms are alarms which nudge people to take corrective measures.

Education, being delivered by organisations, Government or private, benefits from feedback to spearhead in the intended direction. It may be feedback on the course, faculty or educational institute. It helps enhance performance and improve the delivery of education service through the voluntary adoption of corrective measures. In higher academics, the ranking of journals, again based on the feedback on the quality of research work published, is an important mechanism to improve research and publication. Feedback, when made public, increases competition among peers. Then comment works as a mechanism to remove the asymmetry of information in the market. The potential customers or beneficiaries become aware of the quality of goods or services offered. Different agents or stakeholders give comments for all elements of education and research. On the course and faculty, it is students who provide the feedback. It is meant to improve the course content and delivery of the faculty. Educational institutes are given ratings by different agencies, including the Government, national and international bodies and media about their infrastructure, processes and quality of education. The assessment of research journals is obtained by the number of citations of research articles published in them over a stipulated period. In all this, the moot question is how far does the feedback mechanism serve the purpose of delivery of education services in the desired direction?

If we consider that the feedback on the course and faculty is given by the students, then it may be counterproductive. The desired pattern of delivery may not be best determined by students as they are not competent enough to assess. Nevertheless, many renowned educational institutes use their feedback to evaluate faculty performance. It is even considered for promotions. However, there are exceptions. Harvard Business School does not take student response on any course or faculty. When asked about it, one tenured professor replied that “we do not take feedback from amateurs.” If they have to assess a course or faculty, some experts of the area attend the class and appraise the course delivery.

Research is an extremely complicated output which is determined by the methodology, results and overall interest on a particular topic. The citation of the articles may depend on all these factors. The journals in the area of social sciences and management at times may prefer publishing certain types of results. Journals may aim at increasing citation and hence prefer the articles which deal with subjects that are likely to have enough research fund-

“EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES ARE GIVEN RATINGS BY DIFFERENT AGENCIES, INCLUDING THE GOVERNMENT, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND MEDIA ABOUT THEIR INFRASTRUCTURE, PROCESSES AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION. THE FEEDBACK FOR RESEARCH JOURNALS IS OBTAINED BY THE NUMBER OF CITATIONS OF RESEARCH ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THEM OVER A STIPULATED PERIOD. IN ALL THIS, THE MOOT QUESTION IS HOW FAR DOES THE FEEDBACK MECHANISM SERVE THE PURPOSE OF DELIVERY OF EDUCATION SERVICES IN THE DESIRED DIRECTION?”



ing in future. New ideas or results which contradict some existing dominant idea may not receive enough funding and attention. Thus, it creates an endogenous system which encourages a dominant idea and is detrimental to newer, provocative ideas.

This problem is more severe for lesser-known institutes from developing countries. Each research article goes through a peer-review process conducted by the journals. The editors take a decision on publication after taking into account the reviewers’ comments. Nevertheless, the reviewers’ performance is not predictable. In a 2007 study on 306 experienced reviewers, published in *PLOS Medicine*, researchers found that there is no scientifically-established predictor of reviewer performance. Hence it is not possible to systematically improve the selection of reviewers and implement a routine review rating system.

Sadly, journals do take reviewer ratings from the editors. Furthermore, journal editors may find articles with a very new or provocative idea or result contrary to dominant ideas unacceptable, more so when the researchers are affiliated to renowned institutes, or they themselves are well-known. Hence, the feedback process in research may not always encourage path-breaking discoveries, especially for developing nations.

Ranking or rating of educational institutions is considered as a way of giving feedback on the performance of the institute on certain predetermined indicators. Over the years, ranking and accreditation have gained strength and momentum globally, including in India. Ranking is perceived as an indicator of quality of services offered by educational institutions. There seems to be a growing consensus that ranking influences the perception of stakeholders (students, recruiters and investors) about the prospect of educational institutions. While there is no denying that ranking has made institutes look at the quality of services, it also introduced new practices within the sector. From the viewpoint of organisational research, ranking has offered a new template to educational institutions and codified them in different categories. Post the ranking announcement of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), it has been observed that many of the educational institutes have showcased their positions on their websites to demonstrate their skills, achievements and desirability to stakeholders.

The organisational template propagated through ranking carries its own characteristics. For example, under the NIRF, the template is assessed through five parameters focussing on teaching, publications, consultancy, employability and overall perception. Institutes are measured along these parameters to identify the “best” ones scoring the highest marks/points across these parameters. Going forward, these institutes would become a role model and irrespective of their individual values, purpose and origin, all would be in a race to adopt a codified organisational template. This would have a detrimental impact on institutions striving to pursue a niche domain. The codified organisational template would often fail to recognise the unique features of educational institutions by virtue of their values and origin. As a result, such institutes would often fall behind in the so-called performance indicators, creating a poor impression about the quality of education imparted by them. This, in turn, would have a detrimental impact on their ability to attract resources and eventually lead to quivering of the very existence of individuality among organisations.

As the ranking is made public, this feedback mechanism ignites fierce competition among the educational institutes.

Face the bitter truth of the past, not bury it

A repressed history that is not fully understood eventually re-emerges as an unresolved entity



NADEEM PARACHA

In his book *Blood and Rage*, British historian Michael Burleigh writes that as soon as Nazi Germany lost World War-II in 1945, there was a concentrated effort by the new German Government and polity to completely erase the country’s Nazi past. On May 9, 1945, at 11.01 pm, the Allied Forces ceased their attacks on the already destroyed Berlin and this, to Germans, came to be known as “*Stunde Null*” or Hour Zero.

From this point in time, Germany was to begin anew. Burleigh writes that this also meant a collective effort by “new Germany” to repress all memory of anything that had to do with the dramatic rise of Nazism in Germany, the collective euphoria that had accompanied its consolidation and the many

atrocities that Nazism had encouraged and justified as an ideology. Indeed, there were thousands of Germans who had directly participated in the many physical and psychological acts of violence in the name of racial superiority. But millions of Germans who were not necessarily members of the Nazi party and its affiliates, had stood aside, choosing to ignore increasing evidence of their State’s violent conduct against those it believed were racially inferior or enemies of the “national body.”

The German State and governments that replaced the fallen Nazis, and German society as a whole, began to vigorously exorcise memories related to Germany’s Nazi past. The British documentary filmmaker, Adam Curtis, in his 1995 documentary *The Living Dead*, demonstrates that this exorcism was encouraged by the US and Britain once Germany became an ally and rebounded as an economic powerhouse within a decade after the war. Because, even though a number of former Nazis who had survived the defeat were tried and executed or given long jail sentences, many, who were

bureaucrats and scientists, were eventually allowed to integrate into the new German State and society to aid the country’s revival.

In the first few years after Germany’s defeat, Nazism was rightly demonised but, according to Curtis, the cause of its rise was never fully investigated. The memory of it was then completely repressed. German professors, teachers, politicians and parents simply stopped talking about it, as if there was never a Nazi Germany.

According to both Burleigh and Curtis, an inconvenient past, when repressed without being fully understood, eventually re-emerges as an unresolved entity. In the late 1960s, German youth, who were born just before the war or immediately afterwards, began to question their leaders, teachers and parents, not only about their country’s unspoken Nazi past but also about their role in it. Violence soon followed as German youth outfits accused their elders and State of being former Nazis. This commotion did produce some studies investigating the reasons behind the rise of a hateful ideology, and the support it had received

from millions of Germans. But according to Curtis, such efforts were hampered by the ideological tendencies and violence of the youth, many of who became as myopic and totalitarian in their acts and beliefs as the past that they were now raging against. By 1977, the lid was once again placed on it.

It blew off again after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War in 1991. The unresolved, repressed fascist past, not only in Germany but in the rest of Europe too, returned. A brutal civil war between ethnic groups in what was once Yugoslavia, and the rise of violent expressions of ethno-nationalism in Europe and the former Soviet states proved that the “victory of democracies” during World War II did not treat the conditions that trigger fascist/nationalist hatred and chauvinism. Instead, this victory had simply placed a lid on these conditions. It keeps blowing off. Dread and violence has been spewing out from this hole ever since.

As a student of history, I spent almost a decade studying the silence

that one comes across Pakistan’s varying segments of the intelligentsia, educational and cultural products between 1971 and the early 1990s, on what is often referred to as the 1971 “East Pakistan debacle.” In 2018, I was able to further this study by accessing Washington DC’s Library of Congress, the largest library in the world. I went through 177 newspapers, magazines, journals (both English and Urdu) published in Pakistan between 1972 and 1992, plus 27 Urdu films released during this period. After 1974, there was almost no mention of the 1971 civil war in the former East Pakistan which had dismembered the country. Articles and editorials did emerge across 1972, but only a handful tried to explore the reasons behind the “debacle.”

An investigation was launched (The Humoodur Rahman Inquiry Commission) by the Government, but its findings were never made public until 29 years later. Instead, and especially from 1973 onwards, the emphasis was put on demonising ethno-nationalist politics and then on explaining what remained of the country as its “natural” state (along the River

Indus). There was then a systematic effort to forgo a past before 1971, by first admonishing it for failing to make Islam central to Pakistan’s national body and then treating this past as an almost alien occurrence, whose memory had no place in the “new Pakistan.”

There is hardly any mention of a region that was once called East Pakistan in Pakistani films and TV plays made after 1972. By the mid-1980s, its memory and the memory of a Pakistan before the “debacle” had been successfully repressed. Even parents wouldn’t talk about it as such. But it was an unresolved memory that kept re-emerging, sometimes violently, in the shape of ethnic riots.

In the mid-1990s, some journalists began to once again speak of the Humoodur Rahman Report. I was a senior reporter and saw rookie journalists having no idea what that was. Finally, parts of the report began to emerge from 2000 onwards. In 2003, while watching a TV talk show on the report, an elderly relative of mine exhibited a most painful expression and sighed, “what’s the use of talking

about this?” A painful memory that had been repressed (but never resolved) had returned to haunt him. He was in East Pakistan during the civil war as a Government employee.

Conditions that lead to painful episodes cannot be made to go away by just repressing the memories of the episodes. On a collective level, these keep coming back in various shapes, because the conditions that led to the pain were not treated. After watching Nazi atrocities, a Scottish psychiatrist, Donald Ewen Cameron, theorised that if “bad memories” could be wiped away from a person’s mind, s/he can avoid mental illnesses and also the impulse to commit atrocious acts.

Dr Cameron devised a method he called “psychic driving” that used a combination of electric shock therapy and powerful sleep-inducing drugs on mentally disturbed patients, to eliminate painful memories. He was largely successful. But what resulted were individuals with no memories, beyond basic instincts. And some regressed into a vegetative state. Not the ideally blissful state to be in.

(Courtesy: Dawn)

CAPSULE



Karnataka's industrial policy to push mobile production in state
New Delhi: The new industrial policy of Karnataka is expected to push mobile production in value terms in the state to Rs 30,000 crore and create 1.2 lakh jobs by 2023, mobile handset and electronics body ICEA said on Sunday. In August, Karnataka announced NIP 2020-25. The ICEA, whose members include Apple, Winstron, Lava, among others, said specific policy incentives such as production linked incentive of 1 per cent of annual turnover during the policy period for five years is a welcome and bold step by the state government. "We are confident that such initiatives will help the ESDM sector to grow. Currently the state's share in the country is 1-1.5 per cent (Rs 2,500 crore) of mobile production, which is expected to cross 7 per cent or Rs 30,000 crore by 2023," ICEA Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo said.



India Inc's business sentiment recovers in Jul-Sep: Survey
New Delhi: India Inc's business sentiment has improved during July-September quarter as the government gradually unlocked the economy and business activity resumed, according to the CII's business outlook survey. The latest CII Business Confidence Index has surged to the level of 50.3 in July-September 2020, bouncing back from its lowest reading of 41.0 recorded in April-June 2020, the industry chamber said in a statement. "The stellar recovery in the index has been supported by the remarkable increase in the EI, which rose 46 per cent quarter-on-quarter, to the level of 55.2, as lockdown restrictions were lifted and businesses gradually began to reopen during the July-September quarter," it added. CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee said while a recovery is underway, it could be expedited through continued government support and handholding of businesses during this crisis. The survey was conducted during August-September 2020 and saw participation of over 150 firms across different sectors.

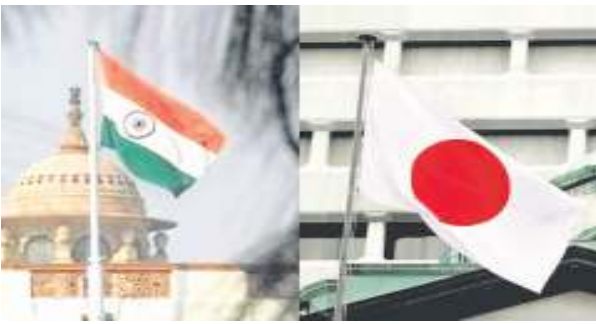


5 pc import duty on open cell used in TV manufacturing
New Delhi: A 5 per cent customs duty will be reimposed on the import of open cell for TVs from October 1 following the end of one year exemption period, a finance ministry source said. The government had last year exempted customs duty on open cell, a key component of TV, for a year till September 30 as the domestic industry had sought time to build capacity. With the exemption coming to an end, 5 per cent duty would be reimposed on open cell from October 1, a source said. The source further said that this move is elemental to the PMP of television and its components to bring the industry out of mere television assembling while being totally dependent on imports for all its parts. "Manufacturing in India cannot survive on support of import forever," the source said. Till last year televisions worth Rs 7,000 crore were being imported. The government has supported the television industry through custom duty structure. A customs duty of 20 per cent has been imposed on imports of television since December 2017.

Covid provides opportunity to India, Japan to strengthen ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to both India and Japan to further strengthen economic ties by enhancing cooperation in areas like software development, modern technology, infrastructure and manufacturing, according to a report. The report, prepared by Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas and FICCI, also said that Japan has always treated India as a preferred partner in terms of economics, trade and commerce. COVID-19 pandemic has provided great opportunities for the two nations and its businesses to join hands and forge a new alliance in terms of harvesting the fruits of demographic dividend that India provides, and push India towards becoming a major global manufacturing hub amidst the changing economic atmosphere," it said. The Japanese business community is upbeat about its



investments and ventures in India, it said adding Japan continues to be the fourth largest investor in India. It suggested that policy reforms are required in India to bring in greater synergies and reap the benefits of the de-risking activities being undertaken by Japanese companies to move their supply chains out of China to countries like India, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar. Shardul S Shroff, Executive Chairman and National Practice Head - Insolvency

and Bankruptcy, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co, said, "We need to look at the pandemic as an opportunity to bring India and Japan's economic relationship closer". He said that the Indian economy holds the potential to bounce back quickly on the back of a slew of fiscal and economic measures undertaken by the government such as reduction in corporate tax rates, further reforms in the GST regime, revamping labour laws, taking measures to ensure ease of doing business, to attract foreign investment.

Thermal, coking coal imports dip

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hit by coronavirus-related disruptions, both thermal and coking coal imports at India's 12 major ports dipped 27.93 per cent to 45.77 million tonnes (MT) in April-August 2020 over the same period a year ago, according to the apex ports' body IPA. Thermal coal imports dropped 25.42 per cent to 28.93 MT and coking coal shipments fell 31.87 per cent to 16.84 MT during this period. Coal volumes at these 12 major ports under the control of the Centre declined for the fifth straight month in August 2020, as per the Indian Ports Association (IPA). These ports had handled 38.79 MT of thermal coal and 24.72 MT of coking coal in the April-August period of the previous financial year. The IPA, which maintains cargo data handled by these ports, in its latest report said "percentage variation from the previous year" in thermal coal and coking coal handling was 25.42 per cent and



31.87 per cent, respectively. Together, thermal and coking coal handling saw a decline of 30.83 per cent at these ports in the April-July period at 36.7 MT. Thermal coal is the mainstay of India's energy programme as 70 per cent of power generation is dependent on the dry fuel, while coking coal is used mainly for steel making. India is the third-largest producer of coal after China and the US, and has 299 billion tonnes of resources and 123 billion tonnes of proven reserves, which may last for over 100 years. In the wake of the Covid outbreak, sharp declines were also witnessed in handling of containers, coal and POL (petroleum, oil and lubricant) among other commodities.

Global trends, F&O expiry to move stocks this week

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With no major macroeconomic domestic data to be announced this week, global trends, geo-political worries and F&O expiry on Thursday are likely to move stock markets this week, analysts said. Markets may witness volatility amid derivatives expiry on Thursday, they said. Benchmark index Sensex pared gains to close almost flat last week as the US Federal Reserve's guidance triggered a rout in global equities. The US Fed did not unveil any additional stimulus measures at its policy meet, even though it hinted at the key interest rate staying close to zero at least through 2023. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell also said the economic outlook is "highly uncertain", stoking fears of more pain in store for businesses. "Markets have been trading with uncertainty and the clear lack of direction to either side was visible in the last week's trades. Due to lack of any fresh triggers for the market, the



current uncertainty is expected to continue. But any news with regards to the border tension with China, or global events can impact the markets on the downside," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Investors would also closely monitor domestic and global coronavirus cases. Going forward, market would continue with its cautiousness with positive bias as investors would keep a close eye on the US and its response to the further stimulus demand to deal with the pandemic. Some of the other key data that would be released this week would be PMI for the US, the UK, Eurozone. On the domes-

Trump backs Tik Tok deal involving Oracle and Walmart

PNS ■ WASHINGTON/BEIJING

US President Donald Trump has announced a proposed deal on TikTok involving two American companies - Oracle and Walmart - that would allow the US operations of the Chinese video sharing application, which was placed on a ban list due to security concerns. The deal mandates the creation of a new American company -- incorporated in Texas -- and the prospect of 25,000 new jobs. Further, TikTok will give USD 5 billion to fund the education of American youths. The US on Friday issued orders to ban popular Chinese social media apps - TikTok and WeChat - from Sunday to safeguard national security. The ban on downloading TikTok, originally scheduled to take effect on Sunday, was postponed to September 27, according to the US Department of Commerce. Last month, President Trump signed an executive order to ban TikTok and WeChat by September 15 unless the ownership of the two Chinese companies



changed to American. "TikTok is moving along. We're dealing with Oracle, which you know of, in combination with Walmart, another great American company. The security will be 100 per cent. They'll be using separate clouds (data) and a lot of very, very powerful security," Trump told reporters at the White House on Saturday. "They'll (TikTok) be making about a USD 5 billion contribution towards education. We're going to be setting up a very large fund for the education of American youths, and that will be great. I've been asking for this (education fund)," Trump said.

"They'll be hiring at least 25,000 people. It will most likely be incorporated in Texas. It'll be a brand new company. It will have nothing to do with any outside land, any outside country. It will have nothing to do with China. It will be totally secure," Trump said. "I think it's going to be a fantastic deal. The technology is superior to anything in the world, and we like that. Again, a lot of jobs, a lot of money for our country. Billions of dollars of taxes will be paid every year. Hundreds of millions of users, and they'll be happy. Everybody will be happy," he said.

Over Rs 70K cr loans sanctioned to discoms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

New Delhi, Sep 20 (PTI) As much as Rs 70,590 crore worth of credit has been sanctioned to discoms under the liquidity package for payment of dues by these utilities, Parliament was informed on Sunday. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in May this year had announced a Rs 90,000 crore liquidity infusion into cash-strapped discoms for clearing their outstanding dues till March 2020. Now, the government is in the process of enhancing this package to Rs 1.2 lakh crore factoring in discoms outstanding dues till June this year. Some states had urged the central government to hike this liquidity package by factoring in outstanding dues of April and May as well. "As against Rs 90,000 crore of liquidity infusion package announced by the government, Rs 70,590 crore worth of loans have been sanctioned and Rs 24,742 crore has already been disbursed/released till September 16, 2020," said Power Minister R K Singh

in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha. The government is infusing liquidity in the power sector through Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC Ltd to enable the sector to maintain power supplies as cash flows had plummeted during lockdown imposed to contain the spread of COVID-19. Under this intervention, the REC and PFC are extending special long term transition loans of up to 10 years to discoms for liquidating their outstanding dues of Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) Generation (Genco) & Transmission Companies (Transcos), Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and Renewable Energy (RE) generators. In separate reply to the House, the minister stated that power demand would increase from 1,399.91 billion units (BU) in 2019-20 to 2,047.43 BU in 2026-27. He also told the House that the peak power demand would increase to 298.77GW in 2026-27 from 200.69GW in 2019-20.

PSBs report frauds worth Rs 19k cr in Apr-Jun: RBI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Public sector banks (PSBs) reported frauds worth over Rs 19,964 crore in total 2,867 cases during the April-June quarter of the ongoing fiscal year, according to a reply to an RTI query. The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) saw the highest number of fraud cases; however, Bank of India was the worst hit in terms of value, as per a reply from the Reserve Bank of India on frauds reported by these lenders to RTI activist Chandra Shekhar Gaur. Of the 12 PSBs, SBI reported the maximum 2,050 fraud cases involving Rs 2,325.88 crore during April-June 2020. Bank of India took the



biggest hit in terms of valuation at Rs 5,124.87 crore in 47 cases, followed by Canara Bank Rs 3,885.26 crore in 33 cases, Bank of Baroda Rs 2,842.94 crore in 60 cases, Indian Bank Rs 1,469.79 crore in 45 cases, Indian Overseas Bank Rs 1,207.65 crore in 37 cases and Bank of Maharashtra Rs 1,140.37 crore in 9 cases. As compared to these, the second largest public sector

lender PNB reported much less amount of fraud at Rs 270.65 crore, even as the number of cases stood at 240. Among others, UCO Bank had Rs 831.35 crore as fraud reporting in 130 cases, Central Bank of India Rs 655.84 crore in 149 cases, Punjab and Sind Bank Rs 163.3 crore in 18 cases and Union Bank of India reported the lowest amount of fraud at Rs 46.52 crore in 49 cases.

GST reduction will act as tailwind for two-wheeler industry: HMSI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) has supported calls from various industry quarters for reduction in GST on two-wheelers, saying the move would act as a 'tailwind' for reviving the sector which has been facing challenging business environment. In an interview to PTI, a senior official of the Japanese two-wheeler major said the sector has been currently facing various headwinds due to economic slowdown that has hampered the growth of the sector. We are also confident that any such move that will increase affordability for the buyer and which adds to their savings, why not (bring it),"



HMSI Director Sales and Marketing Yadvinder Singh Guleria said. He was replying to a query whether the reduction in GST on two-wheeler segment would be helpful in reviving the sector. It will definitely help and act as a tailwind for the industry

against what we are seeing today, the headwinds from multiple sides," Guleria noted. Elaborating on the situation, he said that people want to preserve cash these days due to economic slowdown related uncertainties. Despite that people are still willing to take personal mobil-

ity options due to COVID-19 situation and in that case it will help if affordability of owning a two-wheeler improves, Guleria said. The two-wheeler industry has been demanding for long reduction in GST on two-wheelers from 28 per cent to 18 per cent. They argue that a two-wheeler is basic necessity for transportation of millions of medium income group households in the country. Last month, even Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman contended that the segment merits a GST rate revision. When asked about start of production from newly constructed assembly line in Gujarat-based facility, Guleria said the infrastructure is ready but units won't roll out soon.

Stock trading via mobiles grow during lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As more and more retail investors flocked to equity markets, trading in stocks through mobile phones surged during the coronavirus-induced lockdown, brokerage houses said. Going forward, the trend of trading via smartphones is going to further pick up as mobile medium enables customers to have real-time access to key developments related to trading and investments, they added. The lockdown witnessed a remarkable shift in trading activity from desktop to mobile devices, as the need for ease-of-convenience increased when



multi-tasking at home," FYERS CEO and co-founder Tejas Khoday said. The growing demand for mobile-based trading is majorly among millennials, who are also first-time investors, he added. Jaideep Arora, CEO of Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, said there has been a visible

increase in usage of mobile app for trading. Online trading activity has seen a 47 per cent increase in number of customers during January-July 2020 as compared with the year-ago period. There has been a 91 per cent jump in the number of orders placed via the Sharekhan app, he added.

Ravi Kumar, co-founder and CEO, Upstox said modern technology has made mobile apps extremely intuitive and user-friendly, driving the surge in mobile trading. From analysing market to viewing charts and placing trades, everything can be done with a few taps on a smartphone, making it easier to trade on the go, he added. Currently, over 85 per cent of Upstox customers carry out daily trades on smartphones. Around 75 per cent of its customer base, amounting to more than 1.6 million people as of August 2020, is in the 18-35 age group, which is extremely tech-savvy, he said.

In April-August period, 83 per cent of orders placed through Upstox mobile app were from tier-2 and tier-3 cities like Nashik, Surat, Nagpur, Kolhapur, Ernakulam, Malappuram, and Jaipur. Prakash Gagdani, CEO of 5paisa.com, said, "We always have been a mobile first company and have 70-75 per cent of our turnover through mobile." "We see this trend only increasing going forward, as people have become highly adaptable to evolving technological advancements and would want to make the most of affordable data plans, convenience and ease that mobile trading offers," he added.

Dues of 4 airlines to AAI doubled

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Dues of four major domestic airlines -- IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir and AirAsia India -- to the Airports Authority of India (AAI) have more than doubled between February and July amid the coronavirus pandemic, senior officials said. The national carrier's dues to the AAI increased by 2.75 per cent to Rs 2,258.27 crore in this period, the officials noted. An airline has to pay various charges like air navigation, landing, parking etc to the AAI to use facilities at any of

its more than 100 airports. Both Air India and the AAI work under the Civil Aviation Ministry. India has six major domestic carriers, IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir, AirAsia India, Air India and Vistara, which owed to the AAI a total of Rs 2562.04 crore as on August 1 and this was around 10 per cent more than on February 1, the officials told PTI. They said India's largest airline IndiGo's dues stood at 41.62 crore on February 1, which increased by 130.6 per cent to Rs 95.99 crore in the subsequent six-month period.

‘Online trolling is a part & parcel of social media’

The actress speaks about fake calls, activating her Doosra number, a 10-digit, SIM-free mobile number, dealing with online trolls and more...



For a celebrity, it's not uncommon to receive fan calls and messages, which can be quick to spam.

Southern star Samantha Akkineni says that over the years, she has stopped speaking over phone due to unwanted calls, and even her friends and family have to message her. "I'm not comfortable with picking up calls because every second or third call is somebody I don't know, who has my number, who shouldn't," she told *IANSLife*.

"Even for the food delivery agents, if you want your food delivered and if you don't want to go hungry that night, you have to give your phone number. And I got so many calls, after my food was delivered, I got follow-up calls like 'are you really Samantha? Is this Samantha's number?' Then the next day seven others call because he would have shared the number with his friends,

because it's fun to talk about. So it spreads and I can't even count the number of times I had to change my phone number because of this. But, then again what option do you have?" the Telugu and Tamil star shared in a video interview.

Samantha reveals that she recently activated her Doosra number, which is a 10-digit, SIM-free mobile number, which users can share at any place where they are compelled to share their personal mobile number including on digital platforms. All incoming calls to the Doosra number are either automatically blocked or sent to voicemail or let through depending on the User's settings and preferences on Doosra app. All the incoming messages are silently placed in the Messages folder on the app and can be reviewed at leisure. This helps users protect their number from endless spam calls and messages, continuous attempts of scam, phishing, fraud, non-stop harassment by strangers, and constant violation of privacy by brands.

"This is something that is needed for the hour. With our numbers going every-

where, our personal information goes everywhere, it thankfully now one feels that you are protected and whoever you want to give your number to i.e. your friends and your family, are the only ones to have access to you."

She ties it to feeling safer and secure as a woman. "Suddenly, you feel a lot more protected as a woman."

Samantha added, "sometimes I get messages on my phone saying someone is trying to type your password. It's all because my number is out there, it's exposed. My number is connected to all my social media accounts. And I remember this time where I got this message just before I was taking off in a flight and the flight was like three hours and for those three hours I was petrified because I didn't have the time to go and change the password or tell my agent or do anything. I was there and I had to switch off the phone and I was thinking what photos are going to go out, what are they going to do with my account? That's all I was thinking about for three hours and that's nerve

wrecking."

The actress also crosses 12 million followers on Instagram this week. This is what she has to say about online trolling, "There are gods and then there are demons. It's a part and parcel of social media. They need somebody to love and they need someone to hate."

Doosra Founder and CEO, Aditya Vuchi, shared what prompted the idea to come into being. "I went to a sporting goods store, bought my products, went to the billing counter and said that I'd like to pay with my credit card or cash. They said we need your mobile number. I was like, why do you need my mobile number? I am buying a product and I am giving you the money. The transaction has ended. But no, they said unless we have your mobile number, we cannot generate a bill. I thought, this is not the way it needs to be."

Doosra is a virtual mobile number that can be shared anywhere and with anyone, instead of a personal mobile number to avoid spam, unknown callers, circulation, and theft of personal information.



Fame that comes with responsibility

Madan Gowri, a well-known household name in the South, is a YouTuber with over 3.6 million subscribers and most viral videos to his credit on YouTube. With more than 550 million views on his channel, Madan's ability to win the audience with his flair for explaining complex subjects in simpler ways has gained him a strong following. Madan, who makes videos on topics that range from current trends in science, philosophy, politics, humanitarian issues history, opens up with *The Pioneer's* SHIKHA DUGGAL about his journey, handling fame, and the trending YouTube culture, and more



Born in a modest household, Madan was raised in humble circumstances for the most part of his life. It was the infamous Swathi Murder Case that made him raise a voice and turn to YouTube fulltime a few years back. Madan recalls having heard the case about an Infosys employee being murdered in broad daylight and reflects the uneasiness he felt on hearing the news and being unable to respond in any way while he pursued his education in the U.S. His emotional video on the same garnered over 50K+ views within just 24 hours of release. Soon after he graduated, Madan knew exactly what he needed to do. He declined a job offer there and came back for the love of his motherland.

On being asked how he makes salient use of the YouTube platform, he says, "I make videos on issues that usually tend to be disregarded. The recent intimidation by the police leading to the custodial killings of Jayaraj and Bennix forced me to make a video, despite knowing that it won't fetch me any monetary gains. What mattered to me the most was drawing people's attention to it."

Bearing the brunt of redundancy during the lockdown, Madan believes locations aren't a big problem for content creation, and that you can still make the most viral videos in the comfort of your drawing room. On more people turning to YouTube for entertainment, to stay informed, and to guide them through lifestyle changes and navigate through this

unprecedented situation, Madan says, "As creators, we have the opportunity to create new content and meet this demand. We can help by using our platforms to share helpful information in our own niches — we can also build an audience for the future, even if revenue is down now. Being a sensation is quite different from being a successful YouTuber. Every entertainer dreams of becoming a viral sensation nowadays but competing with the millions of other videos on the ever-growing behemoth that is YouTube is the challenge."

Roasting is back in the news! The format made popular by the TV channel Comedy Central was made famous in India by AIB's Knockout roast. In this format, performers and audiences are temporarily allowed

to be cheeky. When asked about this trending roast culture on YouTube, the YouTube sensation shares, "I have friends on YouTube who can roast someone without getting personal or unpleasant. I also know of people who are cyberbullies hiding under the word called 'roast'. The onus lies on a creator now and audiences are the best judges."

Madan recalls having failed to upload a video one particular day and receiving comments from his audience about them missing his voice. Ever since, there has hardly been a day where he missed out on uploading a video. He is now known to be single-handedly producing quality content on his channel and strongly insists on the contribution of his viewers in improving his content over the years.

OTTs line up interesting shows for festive season and beyond

From epic comebacks to new thrilling journeys to flashback into real life incidents, streaming services are all set to add new chapters to their content library as the festive season comes up and cinema halls continue to remain shut.

Amid the ongoing Covid crisis, people are opting to get their dose of entertainment from the OTTs, making the platforms go the extra mile to keep pace with the never-ending demand.

We lists few shows that should create the buzz:

MIRZAPUR 2

It's finally time for the second season to unfold. Starring Pankaj Tripathi, Ali Fazal, Rasika Duggal and Shweta Tripathi, the second season is expected to be more bloodsoaked and vengeful. It will be interesting to see how the story unfolds after the death of Vikrant Massey's character, Bablu. The show drops on Amazon Prime Video, October 23.

CRACKDOWN

The espionage thriller marks the digital debut of director Apoorva Lakshia and features Saqib Saleem, Iqbal Khan, Shriya Pilgaonkar, Waluscha De Sousa, Rajesh Tailang and Ankur Bhatia. The show is about a covert operations wing that investigates smaller decoys to expose a grand conspiracy that threatens national security. The series will premiere on Voot Select, September 23.

THE FAMILY MAN 2

Manoj Bajpayee returns in the second chapter, and joining the cast this time is southern star Samantha Akkineni. While Bajpayee impressed with his role in season one of the show, Samantha grabbed attention with her role in the digitally-released Tamil film *Super Deluxe*. Season two of *The Family Man* streams on



Amazon Prime Video, the release date is yet to be officially announced.

TANDAV

Saif made an impressive OTT debut with *Sacred Games*. He now returns to the medium in *Tiger Zinda Hai* director Ali Abbas Zafar's show *Tandav*, which is about the dark edges of Indian politics. The show also stars Sunil Grover, Mohammad Zeeshan Ayub and Sarah Jane Dias. It will stream on Amazon Prime Video, release date yet to be announced.

SCAM 1992 THE HARSHAD MEHTA STORY

Filmmaker Hansal Mehta's series will tell the story of one of the biggest financial scams in the Indian stock market. The financial thriller is based on Debashis Basu and Sucheta Dalal's book *The Scam*. It drops on SonyLiv and the official release date is yet to be confirmed.

A SUITABLE BOY

Mira Nair's screen adaptation of the Vikram Seth novel *A Suitable Boy* features Tabu, Ishaan Khatter and newcomer Tanya Manikata. It is a story of two young lovers who dare to break tradition and stereotypes in newly independent India. The limited series has already won applause upon its international release on BBC One. For Indian viewers, it will stream on Netflix soon. Date yet to be confirmed.

BOMBAY BEGUNS

Bombay Beguns follows the journey of five women in contemporary urban India, who wrestle with desire, ethics, personal crises and vulnerabilities and ambition. Directed by Alankrita Shrivastava and

MUMBAI DIARIES 26/11

The series, starring Konkona Sen Sharma and Mohit Raina, is expected to be a fictionalised account of the terror attack that took place at Cama Hospital, among other venues, on November 26, 2008. Directed by Nikkhil Advani, it will stream on Amazon Prime Video. Date yet to be confirmed.

GORMINT

The political satire features Amol Palekar and Manav Kaul with Shikha Talsania and Girish Kulkarni. Plot details and release date announcement of the Amazon Prime show are awaited.

B-TOWN STARS WHO TURNED LOCKDOWN BEAUTY EXPERTS

The Covid-19 lockdown has helped many explore skills beyond what they usually do. While most have been cooking, baking, kitchen gardening and even cutting hair, some Bollywood actresses turned beauty experts for fans, with skin and haircare solutions and make-up tutorials on social media. Here are a few of the Bollywood celeb set, who shared their tips and tricks to look good without stepping out.



A NUSHKA SHARMA
Actress and mum-to-be Anushka shared the importance of dental hygiene on Instagram. The actress-producer spotlighted the necessity of regularly practicing the ancient Ayurvedic method of oil pulling. She shared a string of pictures on Instagram where she is seen performing the "morning ritual".
"My morning ritual of Oil pulling in the company of my sweet-smooth-doggo Dude! Oil pulling is an ancient Ayurvedic practice known as 'kavala' or 'gundusha', a dental technique that involves swishing little oil in your mouth on an empty stomach for few minutes and then spitting it out. This action is excellent for dental hygiene and health and also draws out toxins in the body. As we are all using this time to take better care of our health and improve our immunity I thought of sharing this. Hopefully, it will be as beneficial to you too," she wrote.

RAVEENA TANDON
Raveena shared the ancient remedies to prevent hairfall. She shared a video on Instagram, where she talked about the benefits of "amla" or gooseberries.
In the video, she said in Hindi, "Stress and chemicals in water are a reason for hairfall", adding, "There's no better solution for hair fall than amla."
For thin or falling hair, she suggests eating a couple of amlas everyday. She also shared the recipe of creating a hair mask to control hairfall.
She captioned the video, "#itsawednesday! Bringing to you the ancient remedy to strengthen your hair and prevent hair fall! Do try this! #beautytalkieswithravz."

BHUMI PEDNEKAR
Bhumi treated her followers

with a tutorial on how she does her make-up. In the video, the actress gave a step-by-step demonstration on how to put make-up on.
"Just for fun!" she captioned her effort.

MALAIKA ARORA
Dancing diva Malaika Arora posted a video talking about the benefits of aloe vera, and shared that she uses it on herself because she has sensitive skin.
Alongside the video, Malaika wrote, "Skin issue is something that almost everyone in the world resonates with irrespective of their age or gender. Some have dry skin, some have oily, some have acne prone skin and some have extremely sensitive skin like I do. I have to be extremely careful of what I put in my skin cos any wrong product can do more damage than benefit."
Malaika said she swears by fresh aloe vera gel. "A natural ingredient that I swear by for my skin is fresh Aloe vera gel right from my very own home garden. Fresh Aloe vera agrees with most of the skin types so anyone can try it. Just cut one piece, slice it open and scoop up the gooey goodness from within and apply it evenly on ur face like a cooling mask. Rinse it with cold water after sometime and voila! Your skin will feel fresh and smooth all day long."

KIRTI KULHARI
Kirti shared that having natural juices is her secret of energy. She posted a picture drinking a glass of vegetable juice.
Alongside the image, she wrote, "Juice is the secret of my energy... I love juices... This is a mixed vegetable juice... Contains lauki, beetroot, palak, pudina, adrak, tomatoes, cucumber, nimbu and some sendha namak (salt) pretty much my whole fridge contents."

FUN

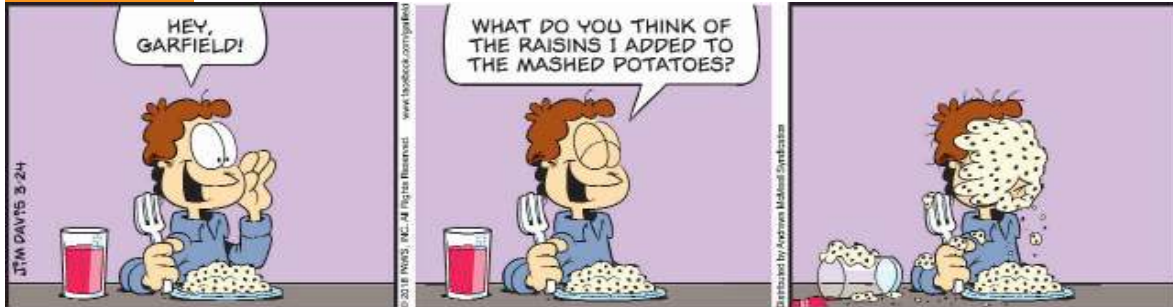
ARCHIE



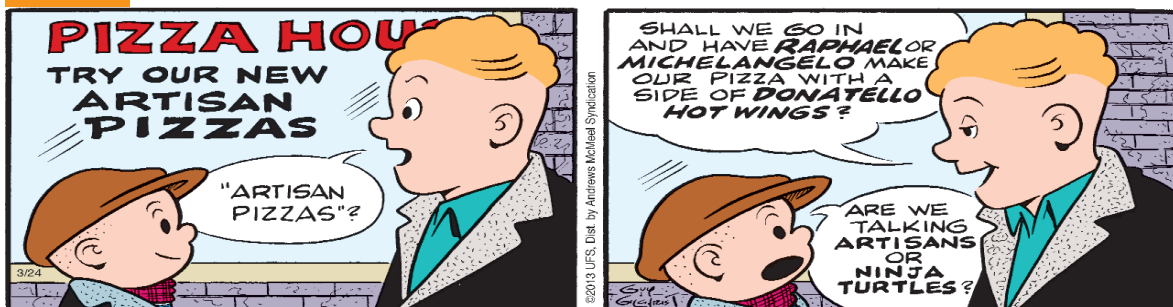
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



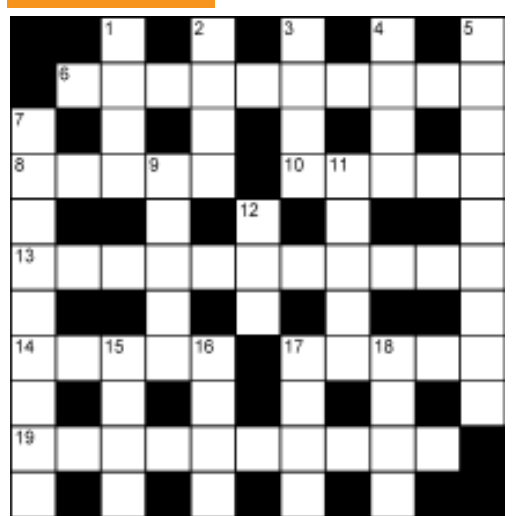
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 6 An old record-player
- 8 Set fire to
- 10 Has a conversation
- 13 A very rich person
- 14 Someone who cares for the sick and injured
- 17 Part of a flower
- 19 Not willing to be friends

DOWN

- 1 Boast
- 2 Leave out
- 3 Small mark
- 4 This covers a sheep
- 5 Find these on a beach
- 7 A light metal
- 9 Raised land smaller than mountains

- 11 Not asleep
- 12 Say "yes" with your head
- 15 A flat squarish thing used like a boat
- 16 Wicked
- 17 Mix red and white to make this colour
- 18 Story



SUDOKU



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

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.

RENU set for her acting comeback

Actress-film-maker Renu Desai is set to don the greasepaint again. After her proposed project, a biopic on notorious thief of Stuartpuram, Tiger Nageswara Rao with *Dongata* director Vamsi Krishna — where she was to play Hemalatha Lavanam, a social reformer and a writer who protested against untouchability and the caste system — failed to take off due to reasons best guarded, the actress is now going with the trend, as she has green-lit a web series.

Directed by MR Kirshna Mamidala, the project, a joint production venture between DS Rao and Rajanikanth S under Sai Krishna Productions, will see Renu playing a determined woman who is in search of the truth. "And back to being in front of the camera... Super happy and excited to announce that I have signed a beautiful web series to act in and we will begin shooting next month. I will post more details about it in a few days (sic)," she wrote on her Instagram page on Sunday, adding that she is "super excited" to be in front of the camera again.

Interestingly, Renu last week met Goreti Venkanna for the lyrics of her directorial project on farmers. It remains to be seen whether it took a backset for her acting gig.



IT'S COURT TIME FOR VAKEEL SAAB

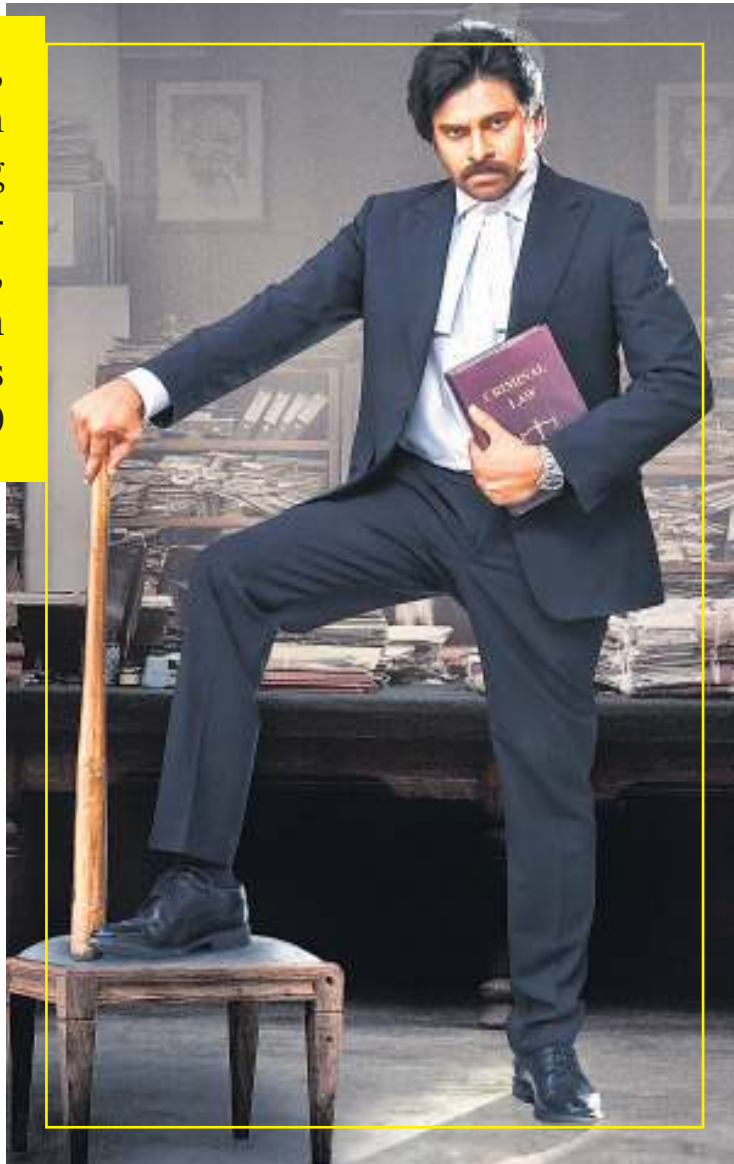
After a six-month hiatus, director Venu Sreeram will be recommencing filming on the highly-anticipated *Vakeel Saab*, toplined by Pawan Kalyan, from today, finds NAGARAJ GOUD

The COVID pandemic threw a spanner in the works of producer Dil Raju who wanted to slot Power star Pawan Kalyan's comeback film *Vakeel Saab*, a remake of Hindi hit *Pink*, as a summer release, a season which the actor favoured for long in his career. The film's shoot was progressing smoothly when the lockdown forced the unit to take a break, which has now extended into sixth months. With Tollywood getting back on its feet slowly, we've understood that Raju has asked the crew to get on with the shooting.

Contrary to some reports, the film is not resuming on Wednesday. A source says the unit will swing back into action from today in Hyderabad. Safety has been given utmost preference and as is the case with most Telugu films which have resumed in the last 20 days, the production house is testing everyone before they proceed with the shoot. "Director Venu

Sreeram is resuming the shoot by filming portions that don't involve the lead cast, including that of Pawan Kalyan. Nivetha Thomas, Anjali and Ananya will join the ongoing schedule as the week progresses, while Pawan's return is expected a little late — mostly after he completes his Chaturmasya vrata deeksha. The film will be wrapped in another 28-30 working days," adds the source.

In the courtroom drama set in Hyderabad, Pawan will be seen as an eccentric lawyer who defends three women from trumped-up charges of assault and prostitution, while using his legal acumen to make a larger comment about consent and violence. The women are paying the price for complaining against a crime of sexual assault committed by an influential and entitled young man and his friends. The Telugu remake, a joint production venture between Raju and Boney Kapoor, has musical notes by Thaman.



SUSHANTH BACK TO WORK

Observing his grandfather Akkineni Nageswara Rao's 97th birth anniversary on Sunday, actor Sushanth revealed that he will be resuming work on *Ichhata Vahanamulu Nilaparadu*, directed by debutant S Darshan, from next week. "March is long gone and September is here... Switch gears & roll!!! #IVNR #NoParking (sic)," the actor wrote on Twitter.

A concept-driven thriller, the film, launched in January-end earlier this year, was close to 80 percent wrapped up when the filming was suspended due to COVID-19 outbreak. Femina Miss India 2018 1st runner up, Meenakshi Chaudhary is making her Telugu debut with the film, a joint production venture between Ravi Shankar Shastri, Ekta Shastri and actor Harish

Koyalagundla. Darshan earlier said the story is inspired from a real incident which happened to his friend in Chennai in 2010 and that he was a part of it as well. "I was compelled to make it into a full-fledged script in 2013," the director, who assisted Sreenivass Redde in the past, had said.

Venkat, Vennela Kishore, Priyadarshi, Abhinav Gomatam, Ravi Varma, Aishwarya and Krishna Chaitanya are playing supporting roles in the film, a Praveen Lakkaraju musical.

FEMINA MISS INDIA 2018 1ST RUNNER UP, MEENAKSHI CHAUDHARY IS MAKING HER TELUGU DEBUT WITH THE FILM

tollywood

Tamil actress Tanya Ravichandran cast opposite Karthikeya

The Pioneer has earlier reported that Karthikeya will be teaming up with another debutant director Sri Saripalli for a gritty realistic drama with commercial bells and whistles. To this end, the latest is that the project, produced by Ramareddy, was announced officially on Sunday to coincide with Karthikeya's 28th birthday today. Tamil actress Tanya Ravichandran, who is the granddaughter of Malaysian Tamil actor Ravichandran, will be making her Telugu debut with the flick. She was seen in Vijay Sethupathi-starrer flick *Karuppan* (2017).

Sri stated that Karthikeya will be seen as an NIA officer and that he approved the story after the first narration itself. While he didn't divulge more details, a significant part of the film was shot before the lockdown was first enforced.

The likes of Tanikella Bharani, Sudhakar Komakula, Pasupathi and Harsh Vardhan will be seen in supporting roles in the untitled film, a Prashanth Vihari musical.

Release-wise though, Karthikeya's other film with



GA2 Pictures, *Chaavu Kaburu Challaga* will take precedence. The actor desperately needs a hit to get back into winning ways, as his subsequent solo ventures, *Hippi* and *90 ML*, after *RX100*, crash-landed at the turn-



Gopi Sunder's tunes for Raj Tarun

In the development for over a year, Raj Tarun's next with good friend writer-director Srinivas Gavireddy had a low-key *muhurat* at Annapurna Studios, Hyderabad on Sunday. Surpiya, Naga Susheela, Raj Tarun, Gavireddy and his crew were among a few who attended the *muhurat*.

A production venture of Annapurna Studios, the film, an out-and-out entertaining drama with family emotions, will roll in the third week of October in Hyderabad, a source tells us. "The idea is to wrap up the filming in two

months. All COVID-19 safety protocols will be observed on the sets and Annapurna is strict about it. The second schedule of a month will be shot in Bhimavaram where the story is set. Gavireddy has designed a unique characterisation for Raj Tarun and he is confident that he has a winner of script at hand," the source says.

The source further adds that the makers are in talks with a new girl to be cast opposite Raj Tarun. Technically though, Gopi Sunder has been signed on as the tunesmith and the music sessions with him have already begun.

— NG



Talluri to release Bogan in Telugu

2017 Tamil super hit *Bogan*, which starred Jayam Ravi, Arvind Swamy and Hansika Motwani, is getting dubbed into Telugu. Made on a modest budget, the

original went on to mint more than Rs 25 crore at the Tamil box office. Ram Talluri of SRT Entertainments is releasing the film in Telugu.

He said the film's Telugu dubbing work has been completed and that the trailer

will release on September 26.

An action-thriller, the original told the story of a cop Vikram (played by Ravi) who is hot on the trail of villain named Aditya (Swamy) while investigating a bank robbery case.

