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TO RELENT?

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TECH MAHINDRA SUBSIDIARY SELLS
STAKE TO RAKUTEN FOR \$45 M

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BY 49 RUNS

VIJAYAWADA, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 24, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer



ADAH PREFERS HER
TERRACE TO GYM
FOR WORKOUT

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MINISTER OF STATE (RAILWAYS) SURESH ANGADI DIES OF COVID

Minister of State for Railways Suresh Angadi passed away Wednesday at AIIMS in New Delhi. Angadi was undergoing treatment for Covid-19. He was 65. Angadi had tested positive for novel coronavirus on September 14 ahead of the commencement of the Monsoon Session of the Parliament. Angadi represented Belagavi constituency in the Lok Sabha as a member of the BJP. Born in 1955, the BJP leader from Belgaum district in Karnataka has held several positions in the party in his long political career. He started as BJP vice president in Belgaum in 1996, and worked his way up.



KKR TO INVEST \$755 MILLION IN RETAIL ARM OF RELIANCE

Private equity firm KKR & Co Inc will invest \$755 million in the retail unit of Reliance Industries Ltd, the Indian conglomerate said on Wednesday, bringing the total funding in Reliance Retail to \$1.78 billion within a month. The Mumbai-headquartered Reliance has approached investors in Jio Platforms about buying stakes in its retail arm. Reuters had reported. While Silver Lake, another one of Jio Platforms' backers, said earlier this month it will invest \$1.02 billion in Reliance Retail.



MODI, SHAHEEN BAGH DADI ON TIME'S 'MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE' LIST

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an 82-year-old woman who became the face of the Shaheen Bagh protests in Delhi and actor Aishwarya Khurrana are among those on TIME magazine's list of 100 'Most Influential People of 2020'. The annual list features pioneers, artists, titans, leaders and icons from around the world who have had the most impact this year. While Modi is listed in the 'Leaders' category, Bilkeesha, a.k.a 'Dadi of Shaheen Bagh', has been featured under 'Icons'. Modi, who turned 70 this year, was last featured on the annual TIME magazine list in 2017.



SAUDI ARABIA BANS FLIGHTS TO, FROM INDIA OVER COVID SURGE

Saudi Arabia has banned flights to and from India amid a surge in coronavirus cases, according to an official document. In a circular issued on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) said it was "suspending travel to and from the following countries: (India, Brazil and Argentina) including any person who has been in any of the mentioned countries above in the last 14 days prior to their arrival to the Kingdom". However, it excluded "passengers who have official government invitations".



**Pvt equity inflow
in realty down 85
pc in Jan-August**

8

**FIR against
Anurag Kashyap
after actress
alleges rape**

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**Is the Hyd Metro
Rail project in
financial trouble?**

4

CM asks Centre to release Rs 17,060cr due to State

Jagan takes up dire financial position of AP with Central government

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday submitted a memorandum to the Centre requesting that it immediately release a sum of Rs 17,060.94 crore that was due to the state under various heads.

During his two-day trip to New Delhi, the Chief Minister conferred with Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday night and again on Wednesday morning.

A release from the Chief Ministers Office here said Jagan raised various state issues with Shah and sought the latter's support "to continue to respond effectively to the evolving Covid-19 crisis."

"The fiscal stress has aggravated manifold on account of the drying up of revenues due to the inevitable lockdown measures, the reduced quantum of transfer of Central taxes in this fiscal and the increase in expenditure necessitated by the need to contain the Covid-19 pandemic," Jagan told the Home Minister.

The Chief Minister present-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviews the Covid situation with Chief Ministers of the worst-hit states via videoconference on Wednesday.

ed a list of grants pending to the state from the Centre and requested that they be released forthwith.

The grants include Rs 2,253.52 crore for Rural and Urban Local Bodies (14th Finance Commission), Rs 3,622.07 crore GST compensation, Rs 700 crore development assistance to backward districts, Rs 1,000 crore for capital city development, Rs 1,600 crore rice subsidy, Rs 138.39 crore revenue deficit grant and Rs 3,740.53 crore under MGNREGS, the release

said. Besides, Rs 4,006.43 crore has to be reimbursed for the Polavaram irrigation project works.

Referring to the revenue deficit grant that has been a point of conflict between the Centre and the State, the Chief Minister pleaded that release of the balance amount of Rs 18,830.87 crore, as approved by the CAG and claimed by the state government, may also be considered sympathetically.

Blessed to have darshan via VC: Modi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The videoconference on Covid-19 control measures on Wednesday had an interesting interlude between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

"I feel delighted that I had a darshan of Lord Venkateswara through this videoconference today," the Prime Minister remarked as he glanced at a portrait of the 'Kaliyuga Daivam' behind Jagan, who attended the event from Tirumala Hills.

"Its commendable that you are taking part in this VC, having come to Tirumala to take part in the Lords annual Brahmotsavams," Modi reportedly told Jagan.

The PM also appreciated the village and ward secretariat system being implemented in AP and hoped other states would emulate it.

2nd Jagan-Shah meet sets off rumours

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and discussed issues related to the state's development, official sources said.

The second meeting between the two leaders in as many days is being seen as evidence of the YSRCP drawing ever closer to the BJP. As reported in these columns, there are hectic negotiations taking place behind the scenes for the Jagan-led YSRCP formally joining the NDA government at the Centre.



**The second meeting
between the two leaders
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ever closer to the BJP**

Jagan also met Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on the second day of his visit to Delhi, and reportedly requested for a faster disbursement of funds for the completion of the Polavaram project. Work and funding of other projects per-

taining to the Krishna River also cropped up during the meeting between the two leaders.

Jagan's second meeting with Amit Shah lasted for about 45 minutes, while Tuesday's meeting lasted for around an hour, during which

the issue of Central funds was also discussed.

As per the laws enacted vis-a-vis bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, the state is eligible for Central funds.

Jagan is believed to have informed Amit Shah that AP has suffered immensely after its bifurcation -- which led to the birth of Telangana state -- whereas the Coronavirus pandemic had proved to be a double whammy.

He told the Home Minister that the state was suffering due to lack of funds and sought central assistance to tide over the crisis.



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is given prasadam during his visit to Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy as part of the Srivari Salakatta Brahmotsavams in Tirumala, on Wednesday.

Jagan worships, presents silk clothes to Lord at Tirumala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday evening presented the traditional silk robes to Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy as part of the Srivari Salakatta Brahmotsavams in Tirumala.

The Chief Minister, who was on a two-day visit to Delhi, landed at the Renigunta airport on Wednesday evening and headed straight to Tirumala.

Wearing a traditional white dhoti and sporting 'thirunamam' besides a turban, the Chief Minister took the long staircase to descend and enter

TDP insists on Jagan's declaration

Report on Page 3

the sanctum sanctorum for darshan and worship of the Lord.

With strict Covid-19 precautions, the Brahmotsavam is being conducted with no processions of the Lord.

Devotees too have been barred from participating in the fest, a first in the history of

the temple. However, a limited number of about 12,000 devotees are being allowed for worship into the shrine since it was reopened for public on June 11 following two and a half month long Covid-19 lockdown, a temple official said.

A TTD team comprising temple priests, TTD Trust Board Chairman YV Subba Reddy and EO Anil Kumar Singhal accorded the traditional welcome to Jagan before the Chief Minister and members of his entourage worshipped the presiding deity amid chanting of vedic mantras.

Two-year extension of GST cess levy likely

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council is likely to approve a two-year extension of compensation cess levy on goods and services to allow Centre to pay the entire shortfall in GST tax collection by states expected till June 2022.

Christian population in State fell by 55%

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Christian population in Andhra Pradesh has seen a sharp fall over the last 40 years -- from the 1971 census.

This fact came to the fore at a time politics in Andhra Pradesh are heated up YS Jaganmohan Reddy, a Christian, became the Chief Minister of the state, the alleged recent attacks on temples and doing away with the



'Declaration of Faith' at TTD. These events are adding fuel to the religious polarisation.

Nani targets AP BJP with barbs on Modi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Civil Supplies Minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao (Nani) launched a no-holds-barred attack on BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, merely hours after Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Delhi to get the maximum possible benefits for the State.

On Wednesday, Nani reached Tirupati along with Endowments Minister Velampalli Srinivas to receive Jagan who was arriving directly from Delhi to participate in the Brahmotsavams of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala. Perhaps hoping to showcase his loyalty to Jagan, Nani forgot to restrain himself from criticising the BJP and targeting even the Prime Minister.

Reacting to the demand of the BJP leaders that if Jagan should bring along his wife YS



Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao

Bharati Reddy to present silk clothes to the Lord had faith in the temple rituals, the Minister told them to first give advice to Modi.

"The Prime Minister goes alone to Ayodhya temple to lay the foundation stone and so does the UP Chief Minister. Why should Jagan bring his wife to the temple? First ask Modi to go to the Ram temple along with his wife to perform pujas," he said.

WHO chief unsure of Covid vaccine in development working

PNS ■ GENEVA

World Health Organisation (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said that the top health organisation has no guarantee whether any single Covid-19 vaccine presently in development will work.

Addressing a virtual press conference, the WHO chief said: "We have no guarantee that any single vaccine now in development will work."

"The more candidates we test, the higher the chance we will have of a safe and efficacious vaccine," he added.

As many as 134 cases of atrocities against women in Telangana and 104 in Andhra Pradesh were reported to the National Commission for Women over the past six months when the pandemic-induced lockdown was in place.

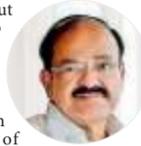
Venkaiah defends RS clearing Bills amid Opposition boycott

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday said it is "extremely unpalatable" when bills are passed amid a boycott of proceedings by some sections of

the House, but not taking up legislative work in such a situation may legitimise their action as an "instrument of blocking legislation".

He was speaking before adjourning the Upper House sine die, eight days ahead of schedule, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Hundreds of women suffered during lockdown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Confined home with an abusive partner due to Coronavirus-induced lockdown has led to increased atrocities on women.

As many as 134 cases of atrocities against women in Telangana and 104 in Andhra Pradesh were reported to the National Commission for Women over the past six months when the pandemic-induced lockdown was in place.

**134 cases of
atrocities against
women in TS and 104
in AP were reported
to the National
Commission for
Women (NCW)**



The abuse against women was high during June and July in both the states, and also the country as well. As per the data

provided by NCW, from March to September 20, a whopping 13,410 complaints were registered or received across the

country. Domestic violence is not just a consequence of restricted mobility, but of patriarchal mindsets, the data clearly shows.

The maximum number of complaints since the Covid-induced lockdown was implemented was related to the right to live with dignity, domestic violence, outraging the modesty of women / molestation, harassment of married women / dowry harassment, cyber

crime against women, the NCW data said. In Telangana, during the months of May, June and July, 20, 23 and 22 cases respectively were registered with NCW. Likewise with Andhra Pradesh, June, July, August saw a peak of cases with 15, 18 and 16 women each month reaching out to NCW. Across the country, May, June and July saw the highest number of complaints from women.

TODAY

ALMANAC
Month & Paksham:
Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam
Tithi: Ashvini: 07:01 pm
Nakshatram: Mula: 06:09 pm
Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start
any important work)
Rahukalam: 01:37 pm - 03:07 pm
Yamagandam: 06:08 am - 07:38 am
Varjyam: 04:34 pm - 06:09 pm,
12:00 am - 05:31 am
Gulika: 09:08 am - 10:38 am
Good Time: (to start any important work)
Amritakalam: 11:49 am - 01:24 am
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:43 am - 12:31 pm

**VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER**
Forecast: Fog
Temp: 34/26
Humidity: 90%
Sunrise: 06:05 am
Sunset: 06:10 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated September 23, 2020 5:00 PM

With a view to overhaul the erstwhile Hyderabad State's administrative machinery following the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, some outsiders were brought by Nizam on the plea that there was a lack of 'capable persons' within the state, thus heralding the era of exploitation of the insiders. What was intended to be a passing phase, became a permanent feature and the 'outsiders' from the erstwhile Madras Presidency, later in the form of 'Seemandhra' rulers with the formation of Visalandhra, continued until the formation of Telangana State in varying proportions and in various forms.

When I was a student at New Science College, I bought a book titled 'Whither Hyderabad', authored by Syed Hasan. The contents of the book were remarkably interesting when I read it and they are still fresh in my memory. The book highlighted some of the problems of the premier Indian State. It traces the role

Revisiting Syed Hasan's 'Whither Hyderabad'

of outsiders brought by Nizam. They were supposed to train the locals to undertake higher responsibilities. Instead, local talent was meticulously suppressed, besides creating fresh opportunities to import more and more outsiders of their choice. Neither the foreign-returned Osmania University graduates, nor the otherwise talented local youth were able to enter the state service. Outsiders occupying key positions favoured only a fellow outsider draining wealth from Hyderabad. This gave rise to the feeling that persons coming to Hyderabad either for jobs or for economic benefits, as a rule, should not settle down for ever. This realization gave birth to Mulki Movement.

Thus, the Mulki Movement was born out of discontent and self-respect in every 'Hyderabad' as far back as in

The Mulki movement was not just for service benefits; it also meant that local industries thrive and nothing that can be manufactured or provided locally should be imported. Demand for separate Telangana was likewise not merely for more development

1935 itself. Subsequently, a five-member group of well-meaning citizens of Hyderabad viz. Padmaja Naidu, Abdul Hasan Syed Ali, Burgula Ramkishan Rao, Bar-at-law SB Sharma and Syed Abid Hasan proposed to start an organization. Thus, 'The Nizam's Subjects League' was born at a critical juncture.

'Whither Hyderabad', published in 1935, gave an account of the prevalent problems of the Hyderabad State. In its preface, the Secretary of the League mentioned that the Mulki Movement was a self-

help and self-development movement without harming anybody or without being hostile or antagonistic to anybody. The 'doctrine' that the League prepared then categorically asserted the 'Rights and Privileges' of the sons of the soil. It said: 'The privileges of serving the state, profiting by the economic resources, shaping the administrative policies belong to Mulki'.

The doctrine called for a definite stoppage of outsiders being brought to the state. The League believed capable Mulki could be found and



VANAM JWALA NARASIMHA RAO
CHIEF PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER OF CHIEF MINISTER OF TELANGANA

ought to be found for every administrative and technical post. Even if they are found to be incompetent, they should be given a chance to benefit by their failures and to learn by experience, the League felt. They had a 'Right

to make mistakes' like any other human beings.

A few startling facts concerning the non-Mulki in Hyderabad were given in the book. As per the 1931 Census, the Telangana Region in the Nizam's Hyderabad, including urban and rural areas, consisted of a population of around 75 lakhs. Probably it would not have been more than four to five lakhs in Hyderabad -- the main potential for employment then. Among them, the Non-Mulki accounted for 2.5 lakhs and more than half of them were from the Madras Presidency (mostly people from the Telugu-English speaking coastal areas).

The Railways, general trade, educational institutions, Singareni Mines, irrigation projects under construction etc. mostly accounted for many Madras (from coastal areas). When it came to

exploitation, initially in those days, services were mostly manned by North Indians and they formed a clique with a view to keeping Mulki out from the administration. The Mulki therefore demanded that they should have the privilege to shape their own administrative policies and for that to happen the right type of Mulki were to be chosen. That was the crux of the Mulki Movement of 1935.

The League also pointed out that the Muslim outsiders from North India advocated that Hyderabad State was only for Muslims and Hindu outsiders from southern (mostly from Madras Presidency) advocated ousting Muslims. Between these two outside elements, the atmosphere of the state got polluted. Outsiders not only entered the administrative machinery, but also systematically crippled the

potential of cottage industries of Hyderabad and Telangana. There was a time when the state could boast of several cottage industries that flourished and provided employment to lakhs of Mulki. They included the paper industry (Karimnagar and Medak), dyeing and printing (Warangal, Karimnagar, Nagonda and Medak), gold thread (Hyderabad), Woollen carpet (Warangal), Arms and weapons (Hyderabad and Warangal), metal (Adilabad), toy-making (Adilabad), Silver filigree work (Karimnagar) and bangles (Hyderabad).

The Mulki movement was not just for service benefits. It also meant that Mulki industries should thrive and nothing that can be manufactured or provided locally should be imported from other areas. Likewise, the demand for separate Telangana was not merely for more development, but equally for self-respect and for self-rule. Creation of Telangana State was the only answer.

Hilly belt of Vizag Agency turning into ganja capital

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Even as the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) is busy interrogating the end-users of cannabis in Bollywood, the north eastern hilly belt of Andhra Pradesh, especially Vizag region, is reportedly witnessing an increase in ganja cultivation and its smuggling due to demand among users across the country.

Officials of the Prohibition and Excise department, with the support of the police, have been taking up efforts to unearth the links and also destroy the ganja plants using all available means at their disposal, even drones as the hilly areas are tough to access.

Paderu in Vizag is one of the mandals where cannabis cultivation has become a challenge for the state administration. The other mandals are Hukumpeta, G Madugula, Pedabayalu, Munchangiputtu, Dumbiriguda, Chinthapalli and GK Veedhi.

The Idukki in Kerala was once a hub of ganja cultivation and the produce was popular as Idukki Gold among ganja users in the country. Some



people from Idukki, who have years of experience in ganja cultivation, are said to have links with the ganja growers of Vizag Agency and also along the Andhra Odisha Border (AOB).

Cannabis grown in Vizag is considered second only to the Idukki Valley in Kerala in terms of quality in the national market.

Not only ganja smugglers and users, but also the officials of police and excise officials are of the opinion that there is huge demand for cannabis grown in Vizag. The cost of one kg of the cannabis grown in Vizag is around Rs 30,000 to Rs 50,000 in Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, and other metro

cities.

"Ganja cultivation has emerged a major source of income for inter-state smugglers (mostly from Tamil Nadu and Kerala) and also some tribal farmers in Vizag Agency. While the big sharks in the ganja trade have been managing to swim safely, it's the tribals that often end up getting caught and landing behind bars. It seems to be difficult to root out ganja cultivation in Vizag Agency as the inter-state smugglers have been investing and hiring experts for its cultivation in the tribal pockets by luring them with the prospect of good returns," said B Lokanadham of the CPM.

Deepika, Shradha, Sara summoned in drugs probe

New Delhi: Actors Deepika Padukone, Sara Ali Khan, Shradha Kapoor and Rakul Preet Singh have been summoned by the Narcotics Control Bureau in a stunning twist to the drugs probe linked to the Sushant Singh Rajput investigation. They have been asked to appear in the next three days.

These are the most high-profile names to come up in a widening probe into the link between drugs and the film industry, which emerged during the investigations into the death of Rajput on June 14. Deepika Padukone's manager Karishma Prakash had been questioned yesterday in a case that the NCB had filed on the basis of WhatsApp messages retrieved from Rhea Chakraborty's phone, which revealed conversations on procuring drugs. Investigators found messages on Prakash's phone revealed a conversation between one "D" and "K" on arranging drugs.

Two-year extension...

Continued from Page 1

Sources in the government said that with 21 states expressing their preference for the Option-1 proposed by the Centre to meet the GST compensation needs of states this year, the next course of action would extend the period of cess levy beyond five year GST transition period that ends in June 2022.

As the Council is likely to adopt the compensation formula suggested by the Centre in the difficult year of Covid-19 pandemic, sources said it may also decide how long compensation cess levy should be extended to clear all dues to states.

Jagan worships, presents ...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister earlier participated in the Garuda Seva, the most important ritual of the Srivari Brahmotsavams during which the processional deity is paraded in the four 'Maada Streets' on a palanquin. The Chief Minister unveiled on this occasion a calendar and a diary printed by the TTD.

Before darshan at the main temple, Jagan also paid a visit to the Bedi Anjaneya Swamy temple and offered prayers. The Chief Minister will be staying overnight at the Padmavati Guest House in Tirumala.

On Thursday morning, he will again have darshan of the Lord along with Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa. After gracing the Sundara Kanda rendition programme at Naada Neerajanam, the two Chief Ministers will lay the foundation stone for the proposed Karnataka Charities Cottages to be built at Tirumala at a cost of Rs 200 crore.

The Karnataka government is financing the construction, for the benefit of devotees visiting the Holy Hills from that state, he added.

Christian population...

Continued from Page 1

Of the 4.94 crore population, 6.82 lakh people belong to Christian community in Andhra, according to the 2011 census. Between 1971 and 2011, the number of Christians in Andhra Pradesh declined by more than half (55 percent), from 14.9 lakh to 6.8 lakh and their share in the population has declined from 5.37 percent to 1.38 percent.

According to the 2011 census, the majority of the population in AP is Hindu (90.87 percent), followed by Muslims (7.32 percent) and Christians (1.58 percent).

From 2004 to 2009, YS Rajasekhara Reddy, a Christian by faith, was Chief Minister of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

Venkaiah defends ...

Continued from Page 1

Rajya Sabha passed 15 bills in the last two sittings with opposition parties boycotting the proceedings to protest the suspension of eight members on Monday for their "unruly" behaviour in the House during the passage of two key farm bills.

"Though it is not the first time that some members are suspended and bills are passed when some sections of the House boycott the proceedings, I find it extremely unpalatable."

"This kind of situation needs to be avoided by all means," Naidu said in his remarks on the conclusion of the 252nd session of Rajya Sabha.

Expressing concern over the conduct of some of the members, he said it was "deeply painful" and all need

to "collectively ponder" over these issues.

Naidu, who has been associated with the Upper House for the last 22 years, said he gets anguished whenever bills are passed in the din.

Over the suspension on the eight members, Naidu said rules of the House do provide for such action when it becomes inevitable.

"If legislative work is not taken up during the boycott by some sections of the House, it may legitimise such boycott as an effective instrument of blocking legislation," he said.

Venkaiah Naidu said the House had to hold 18 sittings but it held only 10. "We have to conclude this session eight sittings ahead of the scheduled 18 sittings as the pandemic continues to challenge humankind across the globe even after nine months of its outbreak," he said.

CM asks Centre to release Rs 17,060cr due

Continued from Page 1

On Polavaram, he requested that appropriate steps be taken to approve the revised project cost and also authorise NABARD for raising the credit to Rs 18,000 crore in the current financial year.

The process of release may be streamlined by authorising NABARD to open a direct line of credit as Revolving Fund with the Polavaram Project Authority (PPA), as it is difficult for the state government to keep giving money in advance and claiming reim-

bursement, Jagan said. The Chief Minister also met Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on the Polavaram issue and made the same request.

Jagan said a sum of Rs 18,000 crore would be required by the end of March 2021 for completion of the Polavaram works, including rehabilitation and resettlement of the project displaced families.

Citing various rules, the Chief Minister wanted the Jal Shakti Minister to release funds for Polavaram upfront to reduce burden on the precarious finances of the state.

2nd Jagan-Shah meet ...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister also discussed the issues of women's protection initiative Disha, and abolition of the Legislative Council.

After winding his Delhi tour by Wednesday afternoon, Jagan reached Renigunta Airport near Tirupati to participate in the Brahmotsavams. He proceeded to Tirumala temple by road.

Earlier, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on September 15 said that the Central government is

working to release the funds related to Polavaram project to Andhra Pradesh at the earliest.

Responding to the issue during Zero Hour in Rajya Sabha, Sitharaman had said that a discussion is on with Andhra Pradesh Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath and she was also in touch with Central government officials for clearing the outstanding amount.

Sitharaman further stated that the Central Government has received the CAG audit report pertaining to the project.

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VISAKHAPATNAM	515
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More tests, lower positivity in 14 states, UTs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's total tests for detection of Covid-19 has reached over 6.6 crore and tests per million have risen to 48,028 as on date with the national cumulative positivity rate being recorded at 8.52 per cent, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday.

The country's testing capacity has surged to more than 12 lakh tests daily. Up to September 22, a total of 6,62,79,462 samples have been tested with 9,53,683 samples being tested on Tuesday.

Fourteen states and Union Territories, including Gujarat, Odisha, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Assam, Haryana and Tripura have demonstrated better Covid-19 response with high-



er tests per million and commensurate lower positivity rate than the national average, the ministry highlighted.

"A high level of testing leads to early identification of positive cases. As evidence has revealed, eventually the positivity rate will fall. The national

cumulative positivity rate is 8.52 per cent and tests per million stands at 48,028 today," it said.

A total of 83,347 new infections have been reported in 24 hours, the ministry said, underscoring that 74 per cent of the new cases are concen-

India's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 56,46,010 with 83,347 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 90,020

Karnataka with over 7,000 and 6,000 cases respectively, it said.

Also, 1,085 deaths due to Covid-19 have been registered in a day with 10 states and UTs -- Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Chhattisgarh -- accounting for 83 per cent of the new fatalities. Maharashtra reported 392 deaths followed by Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh with 83 and 77 deaths respectively.

India's Covid-19 caseload mounted to 56,46,010 with 83,347 infections being reported in a day, while the death toll climbed to 90,020 with 1,085 people succumbing to the disease in 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am on Wednesday showed.

Daily recoveries exceed Covid cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Daily Covid-19 recoveries have exceeded the new cases for the fifth consecutive day, the Union Health Ministry said Wednesday, as the total recoveries surged to 45,87,613 pushing the national recovery rate to 81.25 per cent.

A total of 89,746 recoveries have been registered against 83,347 new coronavirus cases in a span of 24 hours, the Health Ministry data said.

With its focussed strategies and coordinated and proactive measures, India is reporting a steep increase in recoveries, the ministry said.

"New recoveries in India

have exceeded the new cases for the fifth consecutive day," it said, adding, "India has the highest recovered cases in the world. It contributes 19.5 per cent to the global recoveries."

Seventeen states and UTs have more new recoveries than new cases and 75 per cent of the new recovered cases are being reported from 10 states and UTs - Maharashtra, Karnataka, AP, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Delhi, Kerala, West Bengal and Haryana.

Maharashtra continues to lead with more than 20,000 new recovered patients and AP contributed over 10,000 to the single-day recoveries.

CAPSULE

Jagan express grief at Angadi demise

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Wednesday expressed his profound grief over the sudden and untimely demise of Union Minister of State for Railways Suresh Angadi. The Chief Minister recalled his recent video conference during the flagging off of Kisan Rail from Anantapur and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members. The infection that has spread worldwide has also claimed the lives of former President Pranab Mukherjee and three sitting MPs.



169 families get house site pattas

Vijayawada: The long-cherished dream of 169 families belongs to Lambadi, Chenchu and Yerukala castes to own a house site finally fulfilled on Wednesday as they received the house site pattas from district collector A Md. Imtiaz. The district administration allocated the house sites at Nunna village to the families. These families have been fighting for the house sites for more than two decades. Finally, their dream came true after they received the house site pattas. Speaking on the occasion, the beneficiaries said they had got a chance to get house site pattas two decades ago at Vemavaram village but it did not materialise due to administrative reasons. They thanked Imtiaz, joint collectors K Madhavi Latha, K Mohan Kumar, sub-collector HM Dhyana Chandra and others. These families had been eking out livelihood by growing pigg and doing other professions. Lambadi women attired in the traditional dresses attended the event to receive the house site pattas and expressed their happiness performing traditional dance on the occasion.

Sign declaration to enter Balaji temple, TDP leaders tell Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Activists of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), along with devotees, on Wednesday staged a protest at various places demanding Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy sign the declaration of faith in Lord Balaji before entering the Tirumala temple.

The TDP activists demanded the Chief Minister uphold the traditions of the temple by declaring his faith in the presiding deity. They reminded that former President APJ Abdul Kalam also signed the declaration when he visited the temple. There were many instances of non-Hindu visitors having signed the declaration before taking darshan at TTD temple, the protesters said. The TDP activists blamed



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is given prasadam during his visit to Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy as part of the Srivari Saikakalla Brahmotsavams in Tirumala temple.

the Government, accusing it of negligence for the burning of the chariots at Antarvedi and Konda Bitragunta, and mysterious disappearance of the three lions from the chariot of the Kanakadurga temple at Vijayawada. "Scores of attacks

took place on the temples in the past 100 days but the Government remained a silent spectator," the TDP activists. Though the police made preventive arrests in Chittoor district and in Tirupati town, the TDP activists came out and

registered their protest against the YSRCP for asking for removal of 'declaration'. Former Minister N Amaranath Reddy and other leaders were placed under house arrest during the day.

Former Minister Kalva Srinivasulu and former MLA Prabhakar Chowdary wrote to the TTD Executive Officer, urging him to take the declaration of faith from the Chief Minister in accordance with the temple rules.

Holding placards and raising slogans, the TDP leaders and activists staged a protest in front of the Varadarajula Swamy temple in Tirupati. They demanded that the CM should come along with his spouse to present the sacred silken robes to the Tirumala deity.

At a protest at Rajahmundry, the TDP protesters asserted that if Jagan would not like to give his declaration, he should not come for the darshan. Some other Minister having faith in the deity may be deputed to take part in the Brahmotsavam celebrations, they said.

The protests were organised in Tirupati town, Visakhapatnam, Nandigama, Nellimarla, Rajahmundry and other places in the State.

Telugu Mahila President V Anitha said that the Chief Minister should demonstrate his respect for the temple by signing the 'declaration' before entry into the premises. The CM should set an ideal example for others to preserve and uphold the long standing conventions at the temples.

Jagan's Delhi trip a waste of time: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Alleging that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and YSRCP MPs had visited New Delhi for their personal works, TDP former minister Nakka Anand Babu said that development of Andhra Pradesh was the last thing on the minds of the YSRCP leaders.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, Anand Babu alleged that the Chief Minister and his MPs were not making the required efforts in Delhi to get a better deal for the people in respect of projects and development.

Reacting to the Farmers Bills passed in Parliament recently, the TDP leader observed that even the parties considered to be allies of the BJP were criticising the Centre for the Bills.

"But YSRCP MPs were praising them and giving all support," the former minister criticised. He called for con-



demnation of the YSRCP MPs for the attacks on judiciary and Constitutional institutions. "Though the ruling party has got 22 MPs in the Lok Sabha, it has failed to exert any pressure and get Special Category Status for AP. It is unable to force the Centre to implement promises mentioned in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act," Anand Babu alleged, criticising the YSRCP Government for fixing power meters on agricultural pump sets just for getting Rs 4,000 crore from the Centre.



Bajrang Dal activists shout slogans during their protest in front of Lotus Pond, the residence-cum-office of YSRCP president and AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

Bajrang Dal activists protest at YSRCP Hyderabad office

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bajrang Dal activists on Wednesday staged a protest at the office of the YSR Congress Party here against the alleged "anti-Hindu policies" of the party government in Andhra

Pradesh. Bajrang Dal activists, who arrived at the YSR Congress office at Lotus Pond in Banjara Hills here, were taken into preventive custody and released later, police said. A Bajrang Dal leader claimed that the protest, led

by Bajrang Dal and VHP, was against certain allegedly objectionable comments of a minister in AP and incidents that "hurt the sentiments of Hindus, including a chariot allegedly getting burnt at a temple.



Telugu States report rise in cancer cases

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

The number of cancer cases has been increasing year after year in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. While TS has added 3,335 cancer patients since 2016, AP added 4,512 patients over the past four years.

Going by data provided by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in 2019, 68,883 patients in AP and 46,464 patients in Telangana were suffering from cancer.

As per the National Cancer Registry Programme Report-2020 (NCRP), cancers related to lung, mouth, stomach and oesophagus were the most common cancers among men. Cancers of breast and cervix uteri were the most common among women. NCRP estimates that cancer cases in the country could increase to 15.6

lakh by 2025.

Across the country, while 12.6 lakh people were suffering from cancer in 2016, by 2019 this number rose to 13.58 lakh. However, the Ministry points out, the increase in the number of cases is reflected also by an increased coverage in terms of more number of Population Based Cancer Registries (PBCRs) or expansion of some existing PBCRs.

The information regarding estimated incidence of cancer cases in the country is based on the NCRP of Indian Council of Medical Research.

The Ministry, while sharing data with members in the Lok Sabha, said, "The latest report of NCRP is for the year 2020, which is based on data for the period 2012-16, as compared to earlier report of 2016, which was based on data for the period 2012-14".

Press Academy plans sessions to train journalists on fake news

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Press Academy Chairman Devireddy Srinath Reddy on Wednesday said the state government was committed to the welfare of journalists.

Addressing media persons here, Srinath Reddy said that the Press Academy will train journalists on how to be useful to the public; this training would be imparted to both rural and desk journalists.

He said that journalists are facing a lot of problems in many ways during Covid crisis and help will be extended to the journalists who fall victim to the deadly virus.

Srinath Reddy said that the Press Academy was in consultation with the government and Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was very positive to extend support to



the journalist fraternity.

He said for the training journalists was a continuous process and currently they are depending on various platforms.

Srinath Reddy said that all information of various departments and welfare schemes will be available on a website for the convenience of the journalists. He said that the

Press Academy has decided to train online daily for three hours that will commence from Visakhapatnam first.

"We focus exclusively on electronic media training, the Press Academy works for the welfare of journalists. We are entering into agreements with universities for their training. All journalists should take advantage of this training," he said.

"Fake news is being spread through social media in minutes and training will be given on how to be alert on such fake news. We also take responsibility for making welfare schemes accessible to the people. The Press Academy supports working journalists who want to do a course in journalism. One should remember that there is a Press Academy behind every journalist to support them," Srinath Reddy said.

Vijayawada Division organises clean drive

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Division on Wednesday observed Swachh Parisar as part of its ongoing Swachhata Pakhwara 2020, the fortnight (September 16 to 30) cleanliness drive campaign. Activities taken up during the drive are intensive cleaning in railway colonies, running rooms, rest houses, waiting halls, dormitories and crew lobbies with the help of NGOs.

Awareness was conducted regarding strict action against 'single use plastic/disposable' items. At field units/offices discouraging the use of plastic products including artificial flowers, banners, flower pots, PET water bottles, plastic folders, trays, etc. promote and practice source segregation. The Divisional headquar-

ters also conducted a webinar on 'Stress Management during Corona Pandemic' by guest speaker, Dr Rama Reddy Karri, MVS Rama Raju, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Infrastructure) Vijayawada Division was the chief guest, while G Sumana, Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Operations) Vijayawada Division was the guest of honour Ram Chandra Sahoo, Senior Divisional Environmental and Housekeeping Manager, Vijayawada Division.

Dr Rama Reddy Karri, M.D., (Psychological Medicine) made a PowerPoint presentation on the various kinds of stress, the root cause of stress for different kinds of people. He said that in today's times the most common stress cause is the accumulated stress and it drives people to take



Cong to set up grassroots panels in AP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress would set up committees at the grassroots level in Andhra Pradesh as part of efforts to strengthen it in the state, AICC general secretary Omman Chandy said on Wednesday.

Chandy, in-charge of Congress affairs, held meetings with state Congress leaders and discussed various issues and measures to strengthen the party in Andhra Pradesh, where it has been decimated following the decision to carve out Telangana in 2014.

Recalling that Special Category Status was promised to Andhra Pradesh, he said the NDA government has not delivered on the assurances made even six years after the bifurcation.

Chandy, a former Kerala Chief Minister, criticised the NDA government for alleged failure to address issues of farmers in the country.

Vijayawada police arrest two, seize 800 kg ganja

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Task Force police on Wednesday arrested two persons and seized 800 kg ganja being transported in a truck from the Agency area of East Godavari to Tamil Nadu.

Acting on a tip-off, the Task Force stopped the vehicle under the Gannavaram police station limits and searched it.

They found 800 kg ganja hidden under bags of maize flour in the 12 tyre truck. The police arrested truck

driver Bhagavat Sekhar and cleaner Prabhakaran Lakshman of Teni district, Tamil Nadu and seized the vehicle and the contraband.

The duo was charged with loading the maize flour near Samalkot and later loading the

ganja bags near Narsipatnam in East Godavari while on their way to Vijayawada.

They booked the maize flour load to Chennai and were caught red-handed near Vijayawada while smuggling the ganja.



Under the guidance of the Task Force ADCP K Srinivasa Rao, the inspectors and other staff checked the vehicle and seized the ganja.

ACB nets greedy officer red-handed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

ACB sleuths on Wednesday nabbed Kosi Surya Chandram Dora, a technical officer working in the office of the executive engineer, Panchayat Raj division, Jangareddygudem in West Godavari District caught red-handed while he was accepting a bribe of Rs 11,000.

The ACB team laid a trap following a written complaint lodged by T Ratna Raju, a resident

Chopparamannagudem village in Koyalagudem mandal of the district against Surya Chandram stating that the EE had demanded the bribe for doing an official favour to handover class-5 contract licence certificate.

On receiving the complaint the ACB team laid a trap on Wednesday and caught him red-handed. The chemical test conducted on fingers of the right hand and the surface of the right side drawer of the

User charges on garbage collection stink, say citizens

C PRADEEP KUMAR ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) is likely to impose user charges on garbage collection from the people under the corporation limits.

The authorities are making all efforts to collect user charges from the public as part of the Central government's urban reforms.

As per the urban reforms for all capital expenditures, user charges shall be borne by the customers. The Central

Government has been exerting pressure on the state government to implement these reforms to obtain additional loans.

Civil society leaders and the people in Vijayawada are quite against the implementation of the new user charges that are likely to be imposed by the VMC. On one side, the state government is imposing user charges for garbage collection in cities, towns and in a few panchayats in the state, while it is failing to implement development, they say. The authorities are all set to



collect user charges for garbage collection from the customers, despite the people paying property/water/drainage taxes, they

say. They point out that the citizens are forced to pay additional charges in some or the other way.

VMC commissioner Prasanna Venkatesh to cancel the proposal of user charges," Anjaneyulu said.

D Sriramulu, a private employee and a house owner, says that the proposal of collecting user charges for garbage collection is a burden on the people. "Despite paying all kinds of taxes to the departments imposing these hidden charges would be an extra burden, especially during the Covid crisis. The government should rethink the issue before imposing the user charges," he said.

Though the lockdown has been partially lifted and the Hyderabad Metro Rail has started chugging once again, its fate may have been sealed permanently.

This is because the Metro Rail has incurred losses of nearly Rs 300 crore for the five-and-a-half months that it did not operate. Additionally, it is running much below capacity since the period the Metro Rail has again began operations earlier this month.

From four lakh a day before the lockdown, the Metro Rail is now transporting only around 45,000 - 50,000 passengers per day presently. This would mean that the Metro Rail will still make losses with such a low passenger load.

The passenger numbers have not recovered because of multiple reasons. Firstly, passengers are still very chary of

Is the Hyd Metro Rail project in financial trouble?

patronising Metro Rail services because of the scare that Covid infection would spread rapidly in the Metro Rail compartments.

Secondly, the fact that major offices are still closed and so are educational institutions have kept passenger traffic low.

Though company officials are mum, the annual report of the Metro Rail for 2019-20, (that was released in the first half of August), had revealed that the company could seek extension of the 'concession' period by invoking the force majeure clause. The force majeure clause relates to the losses made by the company due to unexpected events.

The extension would allow the Hyderabad Metro Rail

Sources suggest that the Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited is yet to invoke the force majeure clause but is mulling seriously overwriting to the state government for 'financial aid' to cover the losses.

Limited company to make up for the losses made for the period that it was not operating.

Sources suggest that the Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited is yet to invoke the force majeure clause but is mulling seriously overwriting to the state government for 'financial aid' to cover the losses.

Analysts said that the state government is itself faced with a difficult financial posi-

tion and probably does not have resources to provide 'financial aid.' Therefore a request to that effect is hardly likely to get a positive response. Since the Metro Rail is in a bad way, analysts feel that the state government should take over its operations and run it as a state government enterprise.

Otherwise, it will languish without full patronage of the state government that has powers to put things right.



KINGSHUK NAG

The project for the Metro Rail was first awarded in August 2008 to a consortium led by Maytas Infra- that was promoted by Ramalinga Raju of Satyam fame. However with the Satyam scam coming

to the fore, the project went to cold storage and was withdrawn from the group. After fresh tendering, the project was awarded to Larsen & Toubro (L&T) which was very keen at that point to participate in a project in the state. Earlier, the company had been keen to take over Satyam which however was given to the Mahindras. However at that time, many analysts had felt that Hyderabad did not require a Metro Rail and it was just a fad that was promoted by the private sector looking for profitable opportunities.

Major cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru landed with Metro Rail and even smaller urban conglomerates like Ahmedabad and Kochi are ready with similar propos-

als. "Once Satyam collapsed, better sense should have prevailed upon the government and it should have withdrawn the project. But the Chief Ministers then - K Rosaiah and the then Union Urban Development Minister S Jaipal Reddy were under the mistaken impression that the Metro Rail was greatly needed by the city. It is due to their misplaced efforts and zealotness that the government restored the project in Hyderabad," an analyst said.

The Metro Rail project is now run by L&T but the state government is an equal partner in the project. The project was conceived in the earlier years of this century by the then chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu and after

a failed attempt by his predecessor YS Rajasekhara Reddy and finally took shape during the KCR regime.

Though in most cities - like Delhi- the Metro Rail is run partly underground and partly over the ground, this is not possible in Hyderabad. With its rocky terrain, the entire rail line in Hyderabad is over ground.

This has led to displacement of more people and a higher cost to build lines at an elevated level. There are three lines that run from Uppal and Miyapur and from Uppal to Hitec City.

The third line runs through the Old City and has been the subject of many controversies. Now the line to Hitec City is proposed to be extended to Gachibowli. Such a proposal had been mooted by experts a long time ago when land was freely available. But the proposal had fallen on deaf ears.

CONGRESS LEADERS TO HIT THE STREETS OVER NEW FARM BILLS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The opposition Congress party in Telangana will stage state-wide protests on September 25 against the farm bills passed by the Parliament. Protest demonstrations will be held in all district and Assembly constituencies to demand the Centre to withdraw the 'anti-farmer' legislation.

Ruling TRS and the Congress have common ground in opposing the farm bills. While the TRS protest is confined to the Parliament, leaders of the main opposition party are gearing up to hit the streets over the issue. Stating that the new laws would cause a huge loss to the farmers, state Congress chief Uttam Kumar Reddy said the party would organise massive protests.



Party leaders are working to mobilise large gatherings of workers for the protests. Uttam Kumar Reddy demanded the government should amend the law by inserting a clause to ensure that farmers get Minimum Support Price (MSP), whether they sell their produce in market yard or

which used to regulate prices and mandi fees will no longer be able to do so with the new enactments. "These bills are going to cause the collapse of the system of selling farm produce in market yards. Because of the interference of the centre, the states have to lose their constitutional right of agricultural markets which is under the state list," he said. "The BJP government should have named the bills as APMC market collapse bill, contract farming promotion bill and corporate hoarding of food commodities bill. The intention of the government in passing these bills is to benefit Adanis, Ambanis, Amazon, Walmart and push farmers into severe losses," he added. TRS leader in Rajya Sabha, K. Keshava Rao slammed the

BJP-led NDA government for not consulting the state governments and farmers before formulating the bills. "The cultural country, whose culture is agriculture, is now being sold to the corporate sector," he said in the Upper House.

While the TRS will not be staging protests, its leaders said the party will go to any extent to oppose the new laws. Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav said that if required, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao will lead a farmers' agitation at the national level. Claiming that a revolt is brewing against the BJP-led government across the country, the minister remarked that no government which played with the lives of farmers has ever survived their wrath.

'Economic empowerment of women need of the hour'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Wednesday exhorted women to strive to get economically empowered. Emphasising on the economic empowerment of women, she said that creation of wealth by women through entrepreneurship is crucial to tide over the Covid-19 induced economic instability.

The Governor was launching the 2-month long Atma Nirbhar self-employment training programme for Raj Bhavan parivar women at Raj Bhavan Community Hall, here. The training will be given by the Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of India, formerly known as the ALEAP.

Speaking on the occasion, Tamilisai said that when women earn money they judiciously use all that money for the family's welfare. "In these



testing times of pandemic, women need to learn new skills and start their own entrepreneurial ventures to create wealth and get economically strong and empowered," she added.

She stated that Atma Nirbhar Bharat programme launched by Prime Minister was the inspiration to launch this training programme for

women to prepare them as the future-entrepreneurs by ensuring loans and marketing facilities for their products.

She cautioned the participants to strictly adhere to the Covid-19 prevention norms, while undergoing the training and added that 'wearing of mask is the only available immunization as of now to prevent Covid-19 spread.'

MAKING VOICES HEARD



TRS MPs staging protest by holding placards against the new farm laws, at Parliament in New Delhi on Wednesday

Cong demands SEC to hold all-party meet

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress Party Elections Coordination Committee chairman Marri Sasidhar Reddy on Wednesday appealed to the State Election Commission to convene an all-party meeting on conduct of the GHMC polls. Addressing a virtual press meet at Gandhi Bhavan, Sasidhar Reddy said that a virtual meeting of the coordination committee with the participation of GHMC leaders of the Congress participated.

The meeting discussed the party's preparedness for the GHMC polls. The state government should specify whether it would increase the number of wards in the GHMC or not. Reorganisation of the wards, whenever it is done, should be done on the basis of 2011 Census whenever it is held, he said.

He alleged that there was history of effecting changes in quota for various communities in the GHMC polls without taking into consideration the Census. In 2016, the quota for various communities was announced a few hours before the issue of notification for the GHMC polls, he said demanding the authorities to announce the quota for the SCs and STs much in advance. He suggested the government to give at least 15 days for

resolving objections. On one hand the SEC sent letters asking political parties to give their option on the mode of polling: ballot or EVMs and on the other, it is making arrangements to hold the polls through ballot paper system, he alleged quoting information reaching him. Therefore, he said that he would meet the GHMC election commissioner and new SEC on the issue.

The SEC should send information available with him to all political outfits explaining the difficulties being faced by it in holding the elections on account of the Covid-19, he said reiterating his demand for holding an all-party meeting.

He appealed to the SEC to set up polling booths to ensure that the number of voters under each poll booth does not exceed 500. The toll-free number of the SEC is not at all functioning, he lamented. Earlier, many Muslim voters crept into the voters' list in areas of Hindu majority areas. Therefore, he suggested the identification of voters should take place only on the basis of the house number. As the Opposition parties pointed out an accusing finger over large scale deletion of voters names from the voters' list in 2015, Somesh Kumar was removed from the post the GHMC commissioner, he pointed out.

12.97L appeared for exams conducted by TSPSC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Nearly 12.97 lakh people appeared for the exams conducted by TSPSC in 2018-19. As per the annual report of the commission, 18 job notifications were issued and about 45 exams were conducted.

Nearly 3,276 vacancies were notified in the year 2018-19. While 19.9 lakh people applied for the exams, only 12.97 lakh appeared. Nearly 3,436 appeared for interviews. TSPSC selected 15,995 persons for various jobs last year.

While for Departmental exams in May 2018, 26,157 people appeared, the number increased to 28,470 for departmental exams in November 2018. Of the 484 court cases, nearly 256 were disposed. Of the 107 disciplinary cases, 100 were resolved. About 4 cases of deviations were reported.

On Wednesday, TSPSC chairman Prof. Ghanta Chakrapani and members of the Commission submitted the TSPSC's annual report 2018-19 to Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan through a video conference. Prof. Chakrapani apprised her of the progress of various recruitments and implementation of reforms in TSPSC.

With 2,296 new cases, TS Covid tally over 1.77L



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana continued to log over 2,000 daily Covid cases as the state's tally crossed the 1.77 lakh-mark on Wednesday. With 2,296 new cases during the last 24 hours, the cumulative numbers mounted to 1,77,070. The period also saw 10 fatalities, pushing the death toll to 1,062.

The fatality rate in the state stands 0.59 per cent against the national average of 1.59 per cent. A total of 2,062 people recovered from the virus during the last 24 hours ending Tuesday 8 p.m. With this the cumulative recoveries in the state climbed to 1,46,135. The recovery rate has gone up to 82.52 per cent against the national average of 81.23 per cent.

The number of active cases in the state stands at 29,873 including 23,527 in home/institutional isolation. Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) reported

321 new cases while neighbouring Rangareddy and Medchal Malkajgiri districts recorded 217 and 173 cases respectively. Nalgonda district saw a big spike with 155 new cases, followed by Karimnagar (136), Warangal Urban (99), Siddipet (92), Nizamabad (82) and Sangareddy (81).

According to a media bulletin released from the office of the director of public health and family welfare, 55,992 tests were conducted during the last 24 hours.

With this the state has so far tested 26,28,897 samples. The samples tested per million population improved further to 70,809. Officials say this is much higher than the daily testing target of 5,600 per day as per the World Health Organisation (WHO) benchmark of 140 per million per day. A total of 17 government-run laboratories, 43 private laboratories and 1,076 rapid antigen test centres are conducting the tests.

Ryots rally to support Revenue Act

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Farmers on Wednesday took out tractor rallies in towns and villages across erstwhile Nalgonda district supporting the revenue reforms taken up by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. The rallies reverberated with "Jai Ho KCR" slogans.

In Suryapet, the farmers took out tractors rally on the main road of the town, from bus stand area to Jangon crossroads, in which thousands of farmers from Penpahad, Chivvela and Atmakur(S) mandal participated in their



tractors. They fixed flexi banners of the Chief Minister on the tractors thanking him for introducing the revenue reforms. Hundreds of farmers took

out a rally in 3,000 tractors in Miryalaguda and Nalgonda towns. Before the commencement of the rally, the farmers performed ksheerabhishekam to the portrait of KCR.

Sky is the limit for this Ramagundam youth!

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

North Indian states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and others are home to adventure sports like paragliding. But, a youth from Telangana, who nursed an ambition to take part in adventure sports, conducted a trail run of the power para glider, which he assembled procuring equipment from Italy and the USA by spending Rs 15 lakh, at the Genco Echo grounds to the delight of onlookers.

Efforts of the youth were appreciated from all sections of society. He was identified as

Arjun, who nursed an ambition to take part in adventure sports, conducts trail run of the power paragliding

Adepu Arjun, who graduated in commerce. His father was a retired employee of the SCCL. Being the youngest in the family, Arjun developed a pen-



chant for adventure sports. He along with his friends went to Himachal Pradesh and acquired necessary skills in

adventure sports. He also got membership in the WhatsApp group belonging to retired Army officials, pilots,

and sportspersons and paragliders and kept himself posted about the latest information about paragliders. He has been working hard to make a paraglider for the past three years. At last he made a paraglider procuring equipment from Italy and the USA. On Monday, he glided in air for about 20 minutes with the help of his innovation and performed feats in air.

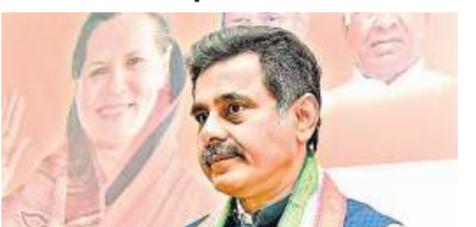
Elated over the success of the trial run, he urged the state government for a chance to conduct a para gliding event in Hyderabad with the participation of para gliders from other states.

Reject TRS in MLC polls: Konda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former MP Konda Visweshwar Reddy on Wednesday called upon legislative council voters of graduates' constituencies to puncture the ego of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao by rejecting the TRS candidates in the polls to the Upper House.

"Can't they see how a private security guard committed suicide by immolating himself in front of the State Legislative Assembly? The 54-year-old man took the extreme step as he could not get justice in



Telangana," he said. How can leader of the TRS, which failed to deliver justice to the people, face electorate in the Upper House elections, he questioned.

The former MP said the

TRS has money power. Therefore, he exhorted the voters of graduates' constituencies to stand by Congress and give their support to the party that granted statehood to Telangana.

SHORT READS



C'garh: Naxal camp busted in Bijapur; jawan injured

Raipur, : A jawan from the District Reserve Guard (DRG) was injured while defusing an IED recovered at a Maoist camp busted by the security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Wednesday, police said. A joint patrolling team of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and DRG busted a naxal camp in a forest of Mariwada-Gongla villages under Gangaloor police station area, inspector general of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P told. On sensing the presence of the patrolling team, ultras managed to escape into the dense forest abandoning their camp, he said. Maoist uniforms, an improvised explosive device (IED), IED switches, torch, iron pellets, Maoist literature, tents, bags, medicines and materials of daily use were recovered from the camp, the official said.



Traders in MP agri markets to go on strike from today

Indore : Agriculture traders in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday announced indefinite strike in about 270 markets beginning Thursday for reduction in the mandi fee on the purchase of agricultural commodities. A top officer-bearer of a traders' body said they are not opposing the farm bills passed recently by Parliament, but wanted the state government to protect their "business interest" by slashing the mandi duty. "The state government should immediately reduce the mandi fee that is charged from traders on the purchase of agriculture produce to 0.5 per cent from the current 1.5 per cent," said Gopaldas Agrawal, president, Madhya Pradesh Sakal Anaj Dalhan Tilhan Mahasangh Samiti. He said trading of commodities in about 270 small and big mandis in the state will remain shut until the government accepts demands of the Samiti.

Naxals kill man on suspicion of being police informer

Sukma : A 22-year-old man was killed by naxals on suspicion of being a police informer in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district, the police said on Wednesday. The incident took place in Jagargunda police station area, considered to be a Maoist-stronghold. The body of Uika Hunga, kidnapped by naxals last week, was found between Misiguda and Kundedvillages by some local persons on Wednesday morning, a senior police official said. As per the preliminary information, the ultras killed Hunga, a native of Kunded, on Tuesday evening, the official said, adding that the exact cause of the death will be known after autopsy. A handwritten Maoist leaflet found at the spot accused Hunga of being a police informer, and stated that Jagargunda area committee of the rebels took responsibility for the killing. The police denied that Hunga was associated with them.

Rajya Sabha returns two Appropriation Bills

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha on Wednesday returned the Appropriation (No 3) Bill, 2020 and the Appropriation (No 4) Bill, 2020, authorising payment of certain sums from the Consolidated Fund of India for the current financial year.

The bills, which were passed by Lok Sabha on September 19, were cleared in the Upper House with a voice vote and without any discussion.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman moved the Bills for consideration and passing.

The Appropriation (No 4) Bill, 2020 authorises payment and appropriation of certain further sums out of the Consolidated Fund of India for



services of the financial year 2020-2021, while the Appropriation (No 3) Bill, 2020 provides for authorisation of appropriation of money out of the Consolidated Fund of India to meet the amounts spent on certain services during the

financial year ended on March 31, 2017, in excess of the amounts granted for those services and for that year.

An Appropriation Bill is a money bill that allows the government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of

The bills, which were passed by Lok Sabha on September 19, were cleared in the Upper House with a voice vote and without any discussion

India to meet its expenses during the course of a financial year.

As per Article 114 of the Constitution, the government can withdraw money from it only after receiving approval from Parliament.



Cops use water cannon to foil Congress rally

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Haryana police on Wednesday used water cannons in Panipat to stop a Haryana Youth Congress-led rally from proceeding to Delhi to protest against Centre's farm reform bills.

Youth Congress president Srinivas B V also participated in the "tractor rally" which was stopped by the police at a barricade in Panipat district.

Humour mills go on overdrive after late night boom

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

It's a sonic boom! It's a pressure cooker bursting! It's a quake!

And yes, the late night boom that reverberated across the city and several parts of south Kashmir on Tuesday was indeed a quake, seismologists later confirmed. But before that, social media humour and rumour mills were already on overdrive with messages facetious, flippant and sometimes funny.

The National Centre for Seismology (NCS) confirmed that a 3.6 magnitude earthquake was recorded around 9.40 pm at a shallow depth of 5 km. No one was quite sure till



then what caused the loud noise and sudden shaking of houses in Srinagar - this was followed by another after 10 minutes.

Twitterati was unstoppable by then, using references from popular culture and current events for a series of posts.

One post blamed 'Rashi', a character from the 2,184-episode Hindi TV soap "Saath

Nibhana Saathiya" which ran on Star Plus for seven years. She put an empty pressure cooker on the gas stove and it eventually burst, it said, provoking mirth all around.

Amid continued tensions along the Sino-India border, another said it was "a missed call by China" and attached a string of smileys.

"Friends, we in #Kashmir are now in the era of municipality-limited earthquakes. 2-second tremor in 15 wards, with epicentre under galli no. 420," said a tweet amid confusion over whether it was an earthquake or an aircraft breaking the sonic boom barrier.

Tigress captured in Maha after killing of woman

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A tigress, which recently killed a woman in the Pandharkawda forest division in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra, was captured alive on Wednesday, an official statement said.

The tigress had "spread terror" in the forest division by attacking local people and cattle over the past two months, it said.

The big cat had killed a 60-year-old woman in Andharwadi village in the forest division on September 19. The tigress has now been shifted to a treatment centre in Nagpur, the statement said.



"The tigress which spread terror in the Pandharkawda forest division has been captured alive by the forest department officials. CM has praised officials and staffers concerned," the statement said.

CBI books ex-VC of VBU for corruption

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered an FIR against former Visva Bharati University vice-chancellor Sushanta Duttagupta for alleged corrupt activities during his tenure at the historic university, officials said on Wednesday.

The action comes after a two-year-long PE into the allegations levelled against him during 2012 and 2013.

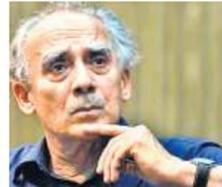
It is alleged that during his tenure as the VC he hid the fact that he was also getting pension from the Jawaharlal Nehru varsity, thus receiving excess payment of over Rs 13 lakh, the officials said.

Rajasthan HC stays arrest warrant against Arun Shourie

PNS ■ JODHPUR

The Rajasthan High Court on Wednesday stayed the arrest warrant against former union minister Arun Shourie in a case involving the sale of an Udaipur hotel at an alleged loss of Rs 244 crore to the exchequer.

The court told Shourie to appear before it and furnish a personal bond and surety on October 15, the next date of hearing in the case. The case pertains to the sale of public sector Indian Tourism



Development Corporation's Laxmi Vilas Palace Hotel to a private firm around two decades ago. The property was sold to Bharat Hotels Ltd for Rs 7.52 crore when Shourie was

the minister in charge of divestment in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre.

On Tuesday, the High Court court had stayed the arrest of former disinvestment secretary Pradip Bajjal and two others-MD of Lazard India Limited Ashish Guha and MD of Bharat Hotels Limited Jyotsana Suri.

The fifth accused in the case is Kantilal Karamsey, whose firm was involved in the valuation of the hotel.

Parliament passes J&K Official Lang Bill, 2020

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament on Wednesday passed a Bill for inclusion of Kashmiri, Dogri and Hindi in the list of official languages in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, in addition to the existing Urdu and English. The Jammu and Kashmir Official Languages Bill, 2020 was passed by Rajya Sabha through voice vote. Lok Sabha had cleared the legislation on Tuesday.

Remdesivir batch withdrawn due to inferior quality: Maha govt

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A batch of Remdesivir for treatment of COVID-19 patients has been withdrawn in view of "sub-standard quality" of the medicine, Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh Tope said on Wednesday. He told reporters that the move caused a short-term shortage of the drug in the state.

"A batch of Remdesivir medicine was found to be (of) substandard (quality) and has been withdrawn, resulting into a short term shortage in its supply," he said. Seeking to



allay concerns over shortage of Remdesivir, the minister said the government held talks with pharma companies and ensured sufficient supply of the medicine for COVID-19 patients.

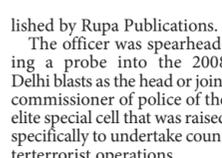
"I spoke to collectors of various districts in the state and asked them to place orders of the medicine (Remdesivir) as per their respective requirement. Its supply will soon increase and patients will get their routine dosages," the minister said. Tope further said NCP chief Sharad Pawar has stepped in and assured to arrange 1,000 injections of Remdesivir in his personal capacity for the treatment of people. Maharashtra had 2,72,410 active cases as on September 22 while the total caseload stood at 12,42,770.

'Fake news, rumours used to label 2008 Batla House encounter staged'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fake news and "street rumours" were picked up by a section of politicians, activists and media to paint the 2008 Batla House encounter of IM terrorists as staged, retired IPS officer and the then chief of the Delhi Police special cell Karnal Singh has said.

The 1984-batch officer of the Union Territories cadre has come out with a book -- Batla House: An Encounter that Shook the Nation -- on the police operation on September 19, 2008 at house number L-18 in the Batla House locality of Jamia Nagar in south Delhi. The book has been published by Rupa Publications.



The officer was spearheading a probe into the 2008 Delhi blasts as the head or joint commissioner of police of the elite special cell that was raised specifically to undertake counterterrorist operations. Leads from the blast probed the special cell to Batla House where Indian Mujahideen terrorists were holed-up. A gunbattle broke between the policemen, who went for a reconnaissance, and the terrorists in which special cell Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma lost his life, while two terrorists were eliminated. Singh, who retired in 2018 as the Director of the Enfor



cement Directorate, spoke to PTI on the operation, seen as one of the most politicised police encounters of the country. "There was a perception built around the Batla House encounter by disseminating fake news," Singh said. "Many politicians, activists and media houses picked up street

rumours without any fact-checking." "For example, some alleged that Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma died due to three bullets fired at his back by his teammates and they also alleged that the terrorist did not fire at all. The post-mortem report clearly stated that Mohan had got two bullet injuries from front and not back," he said.

Doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences conducted the post-mortem of the two terrorists also and collected their hand wash and sent it to the forensic science laboratory for dermal nitrate test to conclude if they had fired or not, Singh said.

From tracking SM for terror activity to planning ops

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Dubbed Cargo, the headquarters of Jammu and Kashmir's elite Special Operations Group buzzes with activity as various teams work 24x7 to track terrorist activity, suss out the ground situation in the Valley and plan operations.

With each team working on a dedicated task, the SOG is moving full steam ahead with its efforts to hit out at terrorists trying to make Srinagar their base, said senior officials anxious to recast the image of the force.

The idea, said Jammu and Kashmir Director General of Police Dilbagh Singh, is to

ensure that Cargo becomes a centre of excellence rather than a place that evokes fear.

"I wanted to ensure that Cargo, a name which sent chills down people's spines earlier, becomes a centre for excellence and I guess that dream has been realised now," Singh said on Tuesday after congratulating SOG personnel for successfully completing an operation.

The building -- which once housed Indian Airlines cargo, hence the name, and is usually out of bounds for journalists -- carries the tagline of the SOG, also known as Special Task Force (STF). The sign outside says 'CARGO: In pursuit



of excellence." "Hum awam ke dost hain (We are people friendly)," Singh said with Inspector General of Police Vijay Kumar by his side as the successful SOG squad saluted him.

The SOG commandos, dressed in black and wearing masks in view of the COVID-19 crisis, have adapted the slogan "How's the Josh" from the Bollywood film "Uri: The Surgical Strike".

This year, the SOG conducted seven operations within Srinagar city limits and eliminated 16 terrorists of various outfits, significantly higher than previous years

This year, the SOG conducted seven special operations within Srinagar city limits and eliminated 16 terrorists of various outfits, significantly higher than previous years.

Singh brushes off questions about controversies, including the alleged intimidation of journalists, saying it is not possible in this day and age with so many CCTVs present.

"Every one summoned here is shown charges and after hearing their side of the story they are escorted out with full respect. We are doing our job and that's all. I think the SOG is doing a good job," Singh told PTI.

A Cargo unit, headed by Superintendent of Police Tahir Ashraf, is using scientific methods during interrogation and has deployed dedicated teams for specified anti-terror activities, officials said.

DELHI RIOTS

No coercive action against Facebook V-P till Oct 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The SC on Wednesday directed a Delhi Legislative Assembly panel not to take coercive action against Facebook India VP and MD Ajit Mohan till October 15 in connection with a summons asking him to depose before it with regard to north east Delhi riots.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Aniruddha Bose and Krishna Murari issued notices to the secretary of the

Legislative Assembly; the ministries represented by the Secretary General, and Delhi Police, asking them to respond to the plea.

The apex court's order came on plea by Mohan and others challenging the September 10 and September 18 notices issued by Delhi Assembly's peace and harmony committee that sought his presence before the panel which is probing the Delhi riots in February and FB's role in spread of hate speech.

Opp conundrum

The unity in the House, for once, was admirable but without a sustained campaign on the ground, visuals are futile



In the end, a moral victory is inconsequential, simply because it doesn't change the facts on the ground. As noted American satirist HL Mencken said, "In human history, a moral victory is always a disaster, for it debauches and degrades both the victor and the vanquished." So though, for once, the Opposition seemed to have got its way in meeting the President over the farm Bills and was united against the Government's gross subversion of parliamentary procedures in rushing through them in the Rajya Sabha by a voice vote despite lacking the numbers, what stops the new laws? The President is not likely to withhold assent or send the Bills back except

granting an audience. Even if he were to do so hypothetically, they would be passed again, with or without any amendments, as the ruling BJP has an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha and has already set a precedent of passing debatable Bills by voice vote without discussion, deliberation or consensus. Besides, the President is not bound to act within a time-frame. And the way more Bills were passed even as the entire Opposition stayed away from the House in protest, it looks like the ruling party has no compunction in reducing an august institution to a stamping authority. So Opposition members can speak and cry hoarse all they want but cannot seek solace in parliamentary procedure or vetting by committees to stop motivated laws from being enacted. And when it comes to street fights, last year's general elections showed us how the members of the grand anti-BJP alliance frittered away their best intentions to their selfish, regional interests. Till that cohesiveness congeals as a single movement, there cannot be any hope for the Opposition.

Worryingly, the Upper House passed three key labour reform bills that ought to have been discussed and debated given their sensitive nature. The Government has enough numbers in the Lok Sabha to override dialogue and even if outnumbered in the Rajya Sabha, it knows it can hijack debate by provoking the Opposition enough and use a voice vote in the resultant din. Or simply take advantage of a boycott. The three Bills relate to new labour codes on industrial relations, social security and occupational safety, all in the name of easing business while diluting workers' rights. Nobody expects the Government to be unreasonably welfarist but in a post-pandemic economy that has witnessed record joblessness, it allows companies with up to 300 workers to fire staff without government permission. The Government, however, feels that this would actually encourage employers to hire more than the previous limit of 100 and, in fact, create jobs. But employers in stressed times are hardly expected to be altruistic and given that our unorganised labourers comprise a big chunk of the country's workforce, they continue to be exposed to vagaries of market forces. The Rajya Sabha also passed the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020, which ostensibly provides a framework under which organisations in India can receive and utilise grants from foreign sources. This is an umbrella watch on what is unsuitable to this Government the most, namely NGOs, research organisations, think tanks and civil society activists. And the carefully enunciated regulatory mechanism envisaged by the Bill, of course, remains vague about the conditions under which it can be used, lumping them as anything that is detrimental to "national interest." Nobody denies the need for greater transparency when it comes to activities sponsored by foreign sources but would that also be used to vet the PM CARES Fund, which is currently exempted under FCRA, or selectively be applied to "anti-national" NGOs? Or does the Government believe that NGOs shouldn't exist to point out gaps in its policies and implementation? Besides, most of these organisations have a high record of tax compliances over the years but by making Aadhar and SBI bank accounts mandatory for receipts, the Bill implies tighter controls and increased transaction costs, which are meant to create more impediments. This is just a way to stifle and discourage independent voices than a clean-up as is being proposed. It is the same kind of doublespeak that is latent in the farm Bills. On the face of it, they look reformist, dismantling the heavily cartelised Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and middlemen, and allowing farmers freedom of movement and trade. Question is some of them do not have the investable resources or the expertise for an outreach beyond their geographic limits and would have to depend on "traders" or the corporations. The smaller and marginal farmers are not literate or educated enough and would not be able to counter the heft of corporations in negotiations and price fixing. In that sense, they could still end up being exploited as before. The farmers fear that in an open, competitive market, they would not get the minimum support price (MSP) that the Government promises to continue and given the diversity and multiplicity of markets, the guaranteed official procurement would be hit over time. Besides, nowhere do the Bills insist on the MSP as a criterion of farm pick-ups by "traders" and "sponsors." They would, therefore, still be in crisis and at the mercy of the dictates of marketers. Besides, the proposed laws are still vague on defining the mechanisms that would replace the regulated economy. This kind of obfuscation has become so familiar that it is in danger of becoming the norm than the exception. And without Question Hour in Parliament, it's time the questions are asked on the streets. The farmers' ire may just be the beginning of the next electoral plank.

Facebook vs Delhi

The technology major is like a media company and should be subjected to similar laws



Facebook should be answerable to Governments as the technology giant can fundamentally alter the course of public discourse not just through its own network but through other assets like messaging application WhatsApp and photo-sharing application Instagram. These are all powerful tools to build organisation and opposition but can also be used to silence dissent or manufacture violence. The safe harbour provisions under which such technology companies have escaped sanction for many years cannot be allowed to continue unchallenged. The likes of Facebook and Google are not just technology companies, they are media companies, too, and should be subjected to similar laws. Technologies like deepfake videos, where even a few photographs can be used to manufacture a video showing a personality spouting opinions far from his/her real stand, can potentially alter the course of a democracy. Think of this as the new terrorist attack before an election. By the time any rectification takes place, often due to delays, the damage has been done.

We agree that it is impossible to keep a check on every single user at every single point of time. However, it is also true that technologies are being developed to be able to quickly find potential hateful content. That said, it is important to haul these companies under the Central Government and on that front, Facebook India does have a point in refusing to appear before the Delhi Government's Peace and Harmony Committee. The company is currently being hauled over the coals in a parliamentary committee, not just in India but in several countries across the world as Governments realise that its power needs to be kept in check for the growth of democracy. This includes the United Kingdom and the United States. Indeed, we wish the parliamentary committee hearings in India were streamed live for the public to observe and decide for themselves. Tech majors can do more themselves. For example, they should work a lot closer with traditional media companies as well as develop technologies that can easily detect videos that promote hate as well as those where users threaten self-harm. Facebook should not be allowed to escape with impunity but making it answerable to multiple agencies will serve little purpose either. Indeed that could actually delay meaningful reform.



BHOPINDER SINGH

The police ought to be the natural, visible and trusted representative of the Government to immediately address any concern or perceived danger by the citizenry. Personnel are expected to be accessible, unbiased and positively interventionist to address any crisis. Maintenance of "law and order" is their foremost function. In a wounded and increasingly polarised society like India, where the societal faultlines and suspicions run deep, it is only the supposedly apolitical and "independent" institutions like the police that can theoretically rein in violent tempers, passion and hatred unleashed by those who have vested interest in keeping the societal pot boiling. From controlling secessionist movements, insurgencies, civic/municipal riots, vandalism, traffic, mob control, theft, crime etc — the laundry list of policing duties is unforgivingly long. Many individuals from the policing forces across the country have distinguished themselves with supreme courage, conduct and dignity to uphold the lofty motto of *Satyameva Jayate* (Truth alone Triumphs). However, collectively the institutional image of the police in the public consciousness is far from the desired levels of probity, independence and empathic moorings.

Over the last few decades, the spectre of communal riots in 1984, 2002 or even the latest communal riots in February in Delhi, have raised serious questions about the institution's conduct. Almost always, the standard concerns of partisan preferences, apathetic behaviour, dilly-dallying and capitulation have dominated the post-mortem of each of these strifes with all ruling national and State parties guilty of complicity in the same, whenever in power. The convenience, lure and utility of a behemoth police force make for incalculable comfort for those in power, who ensure that the plethora of police reform committee reports over the years continues gathering dust. Various reform committees, led by Prakash Singh, Soli Sorabjee, VA Malimath, K Padmanabhaiah and JF Ribeiro, have attempted to professionalise and rescue the institution from the clutches of vested interests, but barring minor changes triggered by the Supreme Court's intervention, the essential narrative and outcome remain the same.

Worrisome optics

The virtual clean chit to one side of the protesters raises extremely dangerous and political portents for the policing institution and the nation



The recent 17,000-page chargesheet by the Delhi Police, that has named 15 people under the sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, of the Indian Penal Code and Arms Act, has re-ignited the debate of institutional credibility. The father of the "All-India Administrative Services" (of which the Indian Police Service is an integral part), Sardar Patel, famously said, "...these people are the instrument. Remove them and I see nothing, but a picture of chaos all over the country." While the policing institution was certainly not removed, it did not live up to the expectations as the larger picture of civic chaos, corruption and deteriorating law and order is attributable, to an extent, on its conduct.

Already the harsher insurgencies have been essentially outsourced by the State Police to the Indian Army or to the Central Armed Police Forces. The frequency at which the Army is requisitioned to conduct flag-marches, control civic disorder or handle natural disasters does not show the State Police forces in a glowing light.

The significance of Delhi in the national imagination, owing to its status as the capital of the nation, makes Delhi Police the cynosure of administrative efficacy. From the offices of the Central Government, Supreme Court, foreign embassies, multilateral organisations to the sprawling metropolis of 17 million residents — the responsibility

ALMOST ALWAYS, THE STANDARD CONCERNS OF PARTISAN PREFERENCES, APATHETIC BEHAVIOUR, DILLY-DALLYING AND CAPITULATION HAVE DOMINATED THE POST-MORTEM OF EACH OF THESE STRIFES WITH ALL RULING NATIONAL AND STATE PARTIES GUILTY OF COMPLICITY IN THE SAME, WHENEVER IN POWER

and privilege of maintaining *Shanti Sewa Nyaya* (Peace, Service, Justice) is on the largest metropolitan police service in the world. Despite over 80,000 personnel, Delhi Police is clearly overstretched with over 25 per cent of its staff committed to VIP duties and securing large-scale events that are typical to any capital city — leaving too few, to handle the restive city effectively. It has the unwanted distinction of having the maximum number of complaints registered against its own personnel. Frequent accusations of inaction, corruption and even collusion further mar the perception. The institutional rifts between and apparent from a very public and embarrassing siege of its headquarters by thousands of police personnel revolting and complaining against their own senior officers last year. The oddity of Delhi Police coming under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs, as opposed to the elected Delhi Government, has been a constant bone of contention for successive regimes. The implied concern is the plausible political influence exerted on the Delhi Police by the Central Government. While there are good functional reasons for this, as is done in major metropolitan police forces of global capitals, the concerns of undue political influence are increasingly hard to ignore.

Irrespective of the Government in power, the narrative has been disconcerting.

The Delhi High Court had noted about the 1984 riots, "Though we boast of being the world's largest democracy and Delhi being its national Capital, the sheer mention of the incidents of 1984 anti-Sikh riots in general and the role played by Delhi Police and state machinery in particular makes our heads hang in shame in the eyes of the world polity." It is that lingering sentiment of kowtowing to the powers-that-be that has again sullied the optics accompanying the chargesheet pertaining to the Delhi riots. Indeed, the perpetrators and instigators of such violence are rarely one-sided, but the posited optics of a virtual clean chit to one side of the protesters raises extremely dangerous and political portents for the policing institution, as also for the nation. Importantly, the Commissioner of Delhi Police has clarified that they, "had questioned persons without regard to their religion and party affiliation." Yet some hard data continues fanning concerns. Delhi Police's recent campaign of *Dil ki Police* (Police with Heart) — with a heart replacing the 'o' in Police — has to go beyond slick slogans and denials as the chargesheet could have reflected a more nuanced diversity of purported arsonists. Now, eyes are on Delhi Police to uphold *Shanti Sewa Nyaya*, "without regard to religion and party affiliation" as was confirmed by its Commissioner.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands)

SOUND BITE

We know Hockey India and the coaching staff have put together a plan for us to resume competitive hockey. Our intensity in the national camp will increase October onwards and we are moving in the right direction.



Field hockey player —Lalit Upadhyay

We need to ensure that the developing world does not fall into financial ruin, escalating poverty and debt crises.



UN Secretary-General —Antonio Guterres

We will distribute a vaccine, we will defeat the virus, we will end the pandemic, and we will enter a new era of unprecedented prosperity, cooperation and peace.



US President —Donald Trump

As to healthcare, just like in economy, we now need to remove, as many as possible, obstacles to partner relations.



Russian President —Vladimir Putin

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Change in guard

Sir — Japan welcomed its newly elected Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, replacing Shinzo Abe, who stepped down due to ill health after nearly eight years in office. India and Japan have had strong relations with the latter funding 80 per cent of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project through a soft loan of ₹ 79,000 crore at an interest rate of 0.1 per cent, with a tenure stretching over 50 years and a moratorium period of 15 years. Now the onus of continuing the relation lies on Suga. Only time will tell if he will be successful in continuing Abe's legacy.

Rahul Chouhan
Ujjain

Return farm Bills

Sir — Eighteen Opposition parties wrote to the President urging him not to sign the farm Bills passed in the Parliament. In the letter, the parties brought to his attention how the process was an "absolute and total murder of democracy, ironically in the most hallowed temple of democracy, Parliament." After the disappointing show of arrogance by

the Government, the President should return the Bills and uphold the sanctity of the constitution.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

Defuse LAC tension

Sir — India and China have agreed to stop sending more troops to their respective sides of

Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. The major decision taken during the sixth round of talks between the two countries came as a whiff of fresh air. However, various media houses have reported that China has doubled its total number of air bases near LAC, upgrading its military infrastructure. It is time for China to realise that escalating tension at the LAC would be

counter-productive. Can it let the US get more support from the region?

KV Seetharamaiah
Hassan

Ensure compensation

Sir — As per the data compiled by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, more than one crore migrant labourers returned

Geo-strategic significance of Gilgit-Baltistan

After using a territorially misleading map that includes parts of Kashmir, Junagadh and other Indian territories at the virtual meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation on September 15, it now seems that Pakistan is determined to elevate Gilgit-Baltistan to the status of a full-fledged province. India is categorical that the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, including the areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, are an integral part of India.

Pakistan's resolve to include Gilgit-Baltistan will have profound implications. First, it legalises the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This conduit connects Balochistan and Xinjiang, and is a part of the flagship project of China's multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India has expressed strong reservations against BRI as it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Second, Pakistan assumes that if the India-China conflict flares up, the Kashmir issue would get internationalised and when the UN steps in, Pakistan will get to keep Gilgit-Baltistan.



Islamabad has decided in principle to give constitutional rights to Gilgit-Baltistan but the move has been firmly rejected by India. Pakistan's resolve to upgrade Gilgit-Baltistan comes at a crucial time when India is facing multiple border challenges with both China and Nepal while reviving a flagging economy.

Venu GS
Kollam

to their home States on foot during March and June. This also includes those who travelled during the lockdown. As per provisional available information, 81,385 accidents occurred on the roads (including national highways) during the said period with 29,415 fatalities. Now that the Government has the data on the number of deaths, it should ensure compensation for the families of the deceased. It cannot say there is no data.

Najibullah
Mumbai

Boost handloom sales

Sir — As Indian garment exports face stiff competition from neighbouring countries, encouraging the handloom sector can help revive the industry. Showcasing products with unique designs and skills can attract considerable attention of the international buyers. The Government should make it compulsory for every licensed textile mill to set up a handloom unit in its compound.

Madhu Agrawal
Chandni Chowk

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A win-win situation for all

In these exceptional global conditions, cooperation — cooperation between competitors — will be vital as survival takes prominence over rivalry



HIMA BINDU KOTA

The contagion has changed how business is conducted the world over. Firms which are unable to adapt are perishing as remote-working has become a norm. The post-pandemic world could throw up a lot of challenges and businesses need to revise their strategies in numerous ways to acclimatise themselves to the disruptions. An open organisational culture towards innovation, structured horizon planning and most importantly exceptional value proposition for customers and stakeholders will help businesses survive in these difficult times. Flexibility has also become crucial during these testing times. For example, a number of companies like Ford, Coca-Cola, 3M, Honeywell have augmented their traditional business models and their usual products to produce PPE (personal protective equipment) to fight the outbreak. In these exceptional global conditions, cooperation — cooperation between competitors — will be vital in times to come as survival takes prominence over rivalry. According to Bengtsson and Kock, cooperation can be defined as a complex association between two business players, irrespective of their involvement, be it horizontal or vertical. A horizontal relationship would mean being business competitors or complementers in the same sector, producing similar products, whereas vertical business involves suppliers and customers. Research in this domain is unravelling tremendous benefits for competitors, who are forging mutually beneficial collaborations that are based on cooperation strategies where companies share resources such as equipment, funds and capabilities, like technical know-how, expertise and experience. These initiatives ensure mutually-beneficial outcomes by pursuing goals collaboratively that otherwise would be difficult to chase, which in turn improves their financial performance.

However, there is a catch here. Cooperation is not as easy as it seems, as rivals cannot suddenly collaborate, as this has to happen at all levels, top, middle and bottom. According to researchers, the degree of collaboration is inversely proportionate to the magnitude of rivalry or competition. In fact, it is a delicate balance between collaboration and rivalry. If businesses that complement each other work together, there is a potential for huge benefits. But if rivalry or competition is high, it could lead to adverse performance outcomes.

Several rival companies have taken advantage of collaboration and there are several motives to take this strategic route. First and foremost, the main motive is to effectively utilise scarce resources. Cooperation can effectively utilise scarce resources by integrating them to efficient production with lower risks. For example, in the electronics industry, Samsung Electronics and Sony worked together to develop the flat screen LED televisions by sharing R&D costs. This strategy is also used to increase the current market size or create a new market by introducing new products or services. Costs and risks are shared and companies can dominate their competitors. In the automobile industry, rivals Ford and Toyota teamed up to develop Atlas Ford F-150 hybrid pick-up truck, which went on to become the best-selling hybrid in this segment. The third motive is to augment the competitive position by increasing the market share. Protecting the current market share and increasing the same is one of the important strategies of firms. Giants like Google and Mozilla are working together with Google supporting and funding Firefox, Mozilla's web browser, to beat the web browsers of its rivals Apple and Microsoft.

There are several other examples to show how companies benefit through cooperation. EDX is a non-profit organisation, which was founded by rivals Harvard University and MIT to provide free online education worldwide. Similar cooperation can also be seen between Amazon (Kindle) and Apple (iPad). They entered into an agreement in 2007 to deliver Amazon e-books through an iPad Kindle App which enabled Amazon to access a wider market and made iPad a complete content provider. This type of cooperation is also seen in the airline industry where competitor airlines use each other's networks and ground staff for efficient services. One example is the Star Alliance network of competing airlines Thai Airways, Singapore Airlines, Lufthansa, Air India and many more. Its aim was to provide a seamless experience to travellers and also save on logistics, marketing and other costs. Fierce competitors in the beverage industry, Coca-Cola and Pepsi, along with Red Bull and Unilever have come together to set up a non-profit organisation to develop sustainable supply chain technologies, particularly in refrigeration, to fight global warming and ozone depletion. The phenomenon of cooperation gained popularity as a counter-intuitive strategy for a networked economy, leading to mutual benefits for both firms, like increasing their knowledge and expertise, sharing costs of new developments and R&D, improving market share and expanding into new markets. With the advent of technology, it is now easier for firms to reach out to competitors and other stakeholders. This strategy of cooperation among competitors and suppliers will be all the more useful in these exceptional times. (The writer is Associate Professor, Amity University, Noida)

STEPS TAKEN FOLLOWING THE ABOLITION OF THE SPECIAL STATUS OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR FURTHER COMPLICATED THE PROBLEM.
—TURKISH PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



THE REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OF TURKEY ON J&K ARE GROSS INTERFERENCE IN INDIA'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND ARE COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE.
—INDIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UN TS TRIMUMURTI

Can Jinping afford to relent?

The Chinese President has failed to meet economic targets and is facing a challenge to his authority. Any pullback by the PLA will be viewed as a defeat, negating his second goal of a stronger military



ANIL GUPTA

The 12-hour military commander-level meeting, the first after the five-point consensus at Moscow, has once again ended with all indicators pointing towards a stalemate. India, on its part, is buoyed by the brilliant preemptive tactical actions on August 29-30, leading to gaining control of dominating tactical features on our side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the southern bank of Pangong Tso. This was followed by readjustments of defences on the northern bank, gaining domination over the Fingers area where the Chinese have transgressed and are unwilling to restore *status quo antebellum*.

The manoeuvres of the Indian Army have empowered the Indian negotiators to hold parleys from a position of strength. However, China, through its mouthpiece, *Global Times*, and other State-owned and controlled media, remains in constant denial mode, blaming India instead for the current military stand-off. Despite the Chinese claims, Xi Jinping, the Chinese President and strongman, is acknowledged globally as the aggressor in pursuance of his cherished dream of becoming the strongest and the most powerful world leader.

The Indian stand so far has been determined, consistent and firm. India has outrightly rejected the Chinese suggestion of "meeting halfway." India rightly insists on its demand of "first-in, first-out," considering the fact that it was the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops who violated the established agreements and protocols and made multi-pronged transgressions into our territory in eastern Ladakh in early May. The PLA is also guilty of not adhering to the decisions arrived at during the first Corps Commanders meeting on June 5 for de-escalation and disengagement, leading to the ugly clashes at Galwan.

The Galwan clashes, resulting in fatalities on both sides, made India and the world realise that it was a well-planned cartographic aggression by the Chinese with the express consent of the Central Military Commission (CMC) led by Xi. The obstinate attitude displayed by the Chinese thereafter proves beyond doubt that the final decision will also be taken by none other than Xi whose "China dream" and personal ambition are stake.

Xi is a career politician, privileged to have been born with a "Red spoon" in his mouth. His father, Xi Zhongxun, was "Red royalty", a hero of the Communist revolution who later fell out with Mao Zedong, according to Ananth Krishnan, an acknowledged China-watcher. After the purging of his father, Xi was shifted to rural China from the privileged living in Central Beijing, the area earmarked for the then Chinese elite. Xi struggled thereafter to enter the youth wing of the Communist Party and the final acceptance into the party is well-documented and an example of focussed determination, perseverance and hardship. Despite being born into the "Red royalty," he was not parachuted to the top and had to struggle his way through at every stage. His initial background and subsequent struggle to rise to power had made him ambitious and adamant.

Xi took over the reins of the party when it was in a disarray. He, therefore, began to con-

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DESPITE THE PROPAGANDA UNLEASHED BY THE STATE-CONTROLLED MEDIA OF THE INVINCIBILITY OF THE PLA FORCES, XI IS UNCERTAIN OF AN ASSURED VICTORY. EVEN A STALEMATE WOULD BE VIEWED AS AN INDIAN VICTORY AND A CHINESE FAILURE. THERE IS NO DEARTH OF DISSENTERS AT HOME WAITING FOR HIS FAILURE AND ENSURE THAT HE DOESN'T GET A SECOND CHANCE. XI IS FACED WITH A DILEMMA OF RELENT OR RETREAT. KNOWING THE AMBITIOUS PERSONA OF XI, HE IS UNLIKELY TO YIELD GROUND TO HIS DISSIDENTS SO EASILY
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solidate his power and gradually became all-powerful through complete centralisation of authority. He brought to an end the "collective leadership" system in the Communist Party of China (CPC). He not only managed to gain hold of all the top three posts in China but also had a resolution passed for abolishing the President's term limit, enabling him to rule indefinitely. This act of his has not gone down well with the young and aspiring leaders within the CPC who see a dark future for them with bleak chances of rising to the top. Like all authoritarian leaders, Xi, too, has a fair number of dissidents and domestic opponents.

During his consolidation of power among other things, he has relied a lot upon emphasis on ideology and nationalism. Xi believes that the communist ideology must prevail upon everything else among the Chinese populace. The "3 W" strategy enunciated for the PLA is aimed at promoting and ensuring compliance of the ideology.

The PLA, as is well-known, is not a national army but the army of the CPC. Moreover, Xi's reliance on the indoctrinated cadre of the United Front Work Department over career diplomats, while appointing ambassadors to South Asian and other target countries, indicates his preference for ideology over diplomacy to carry forward his pet Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project. Xi has also given a new image of aggressiveness and assertiveness to the Chinese diplomacy through "wolf warrior" diplomats. He wants to be recognised as the most powerful Chinese leader by challenging the supremacy of the American President.

To fulfil his ambition and imbricate nationalism, Xi has announced his

roadmap in what is referred to as the "China Dream."

"President Xi's dream is of a stronger nation with a strong military," according to Liu Mingfu, a retired Chinese colonel and author. The underlying idea behind the "China Dream" is to restore the ex-Middle Kingdom's glory and regain the Chinese supremacy through expansionism. It is also aimed at minimising internal dissension through national unity. Xi's ambition is to make China not only stronger but assertive as well. This is a very critical year for Xi in his roadmap for realising the "China Dream" by 2049, the centenary year of the People's Republic of China. There are two intermediary goalposts in 2021 and 2025. This year is the launchpad for 2021, the 100th anniversary of the CPC. Xi had promised the nation that by 2020 he would ensure poverty relief by bringing all Chinese above the poverty line and strengthen national defence and the Chinese armed forces.

However, the Chinese economy had begun to show a downward trend in 2019 itself when China's growth dropped to its slowest pace in nearly three decades. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, Xi was certain that he would not be able to meet his promised economic targets in 2020. Despite the bold face being put up by China, it is certain that its economy is undergoing a crisis. The banking system is the worst-hit, with growing unemployment and disrupted global supply chains adding to the pressure.

The centralisation works well as long as the going is good. But in times of crisis, many dissenting voices are raised. Xi is now facing a similar situation at home. As is evident, nothing

moves in China without his approval or consent. Xi has obviously failed to meet his promised economic targets to remove poverty and is facing a huge challenge to his authority. Any pullback at this time by the PLA troops will be viewed as a defeat for China, thus negating his second goalpost as well of a stronger military.

Can Xi at this juncture afford to take this risk and relent? That is why the Chinese media is talking of a "long haul" through the winters. Xi's calculation is based on the premise that a prolonged deployment would affect the Indian economy more than the Chinese one. He is mistaken. India stands unyieldingly to safeguard its territorial integrity and would not yield till China vacates from the transgressed areas. On the other hand, he is faced with growing dissension at home.

Despite the propaganda unleashed by the State-controlled media of the invincibility of the PLA forces, Xi is uncertain of an assured victory. Even a stalemate would be viewed as an Indian victory and a Chinese failure. There is no dearth of dissenters at home waiting for his failure and ensure that he doesn't get a second chance. Xi is faced with a dilemma of relent or retreat. Knowing the ambitious persona of Xi, he is unlikely to yield ground to his dissenters so easily. Rather than being forced to resign, he would prefer to relent at an opportune time and order the PLA to vacate. How and when is a matter of negotiations and timing. Meanwhile, India should not dither under any circumstances.

(The author is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator and security and strategic analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Time to fight tobacco use with telemedicine

Unlike many other medical conditions, treating tobacco addiction and diagnosing its sequelae, like oral cancers, can often be done remotely



ROMITA SHAH

VIVIAN SHARAN

Few interventions are as conducive to piloting ambitious telemedicine in India than tobacco cessation and there are three reasons for this.

First, as the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World's India Report shows, tobacco use is widely prevalent in the country and its results are devastating. There are nearly 270 million adult users of tobacco in India. Experts estimate that tobacco use is responsible for nearly 10 per cent of all deaths in the country and the resulting economic burden amounts to more than one per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This figure rises when we consider the economic toll of tobacco-related disability and other indirect costs. Ultimately, the burden of tobacco use constrains healthcare, particularly for the poor.

Second, many of those most affected by tobacco use live in places with few specialists to provide cessation services. The shortage of healthcare providers is acute in these regions where brick-and-mortar clinics are few and far in between. India already suffers from a shortage of healthcare providers, with only one doctor for

every 1,400 people and only one hospital bed for every 2,000 people (well below the World Health Organisation's recommended norms).

Third, unlike many other medical conditions, treating tobacco addiction and diagnosing its sequelae, such as oral cancers, can often be done remotely. Tobacco cessation is predicated on counselling for behaviour, which can be effectively delivered via telemedicine platforms. India has more cases of oral cancer than anywhere else in the world due to the popularity of smokeless tobacco products in the country.

The scale of tobacco use and its resulting harms, its disproportionate toll on those in rural areas and the ability to effectively treat it and diagnose many of its sequelae make it a natural contender for telemedicine. However, some structural changes are required to successfully integrate telemedicine in the healthcare sector's arsenal. Specifically, the three "Ds" — doctors, diagnostics and data — require redoubled focus in this context. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's recently-notified Telemedicine Practice



Guidelines provide a scope for registered medical professionals (RMPs) to familiarise themselves with telemedicine. The guidelines include instructions for RMPs to maintain digital records of patients, including evaluation and management reports.

Doctors may still require guidance to select appropriate software and technology that can help streamline these tasks. Though specialised digital applications to facilitate cessation are available, doctor awareness is the key to unfetter their use-case. Additionally, issues of medical ethics and liabilities need to be addressed, to build patient trust.

The second critical area is investments in diagnostics. Recent experiments with tele-diagnostic services in Maharashtra have enabled the use of photos to detect early cases of oral cancer and identify at-risk patients. This ensures that RMPs can make clinical evaluations to identify early onset of diseases to reduce the time between diagnosis and treatment.

The country requires similar interventions that leverage the combination of widespread smartphone access and state-of-the-art diagnostics. But scale requires private sector investments, based on a profitable business model.

Diagnostics capabilities can likely be bolstered through hub-and-spoke telemedicine models to ensure access to larger markets at reduced rates of service distribution. Moreover, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to augment diagnostic capabilities of physicians can also reduce healthcare costs. Studies estimated that the use of this model to treat stroke patients can reduce costs by 10 per cent.

India's fragmented healthcare ecosystem has multiple public, private, and individual healthcare providers.

Therefore, it is often a challenge for healthcare professionals to maintain robust medical records. Even when they do, such records are not easily portable, and patients rarely get timely access. Digitisation of health records can help doctors administer appropriate treatment and create a knowledge bank that will help officials understand trends in public health, such as the burden of tobacco use.

It is important that such solutions are designed as open data ecosystems, subject to user audits and not as vulnerable single points of failure. Studies indicate that high, out-of-pocket expenditure on healthcare pushes around 32-39 million citizens below the poverty line every year.

Telemedicine services offer an opportunity to leapfrog traditional constraints to quality healthcare. The three "Ds" offer the means to unlock such potential and reduce the healthcare burden that is a consequence of widespread tobacco use.

(Shah is research manager at the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World and Sharan is partner, Koan Advisory Group. The views expressed are personal.)



FOREIGN EYE



A CRISIS MADE IN DOWNING STREET

The UK is facing a Covid calamity made in Downing Street. Infections and hospital admissions are rising rapidly. The epidemic is outpacing the rate at which the testing regime is expanding, meaning that it is not possible to properly track the spread of the disease. If nothing changes, the UK's chief scientific adviser, Patrick Vallance, warned there could be 200 deaths a day by mid-November. (The Guardian editorial)

SHORT READS



Food delivery sector showing stronger signs of recovery

New Delhi: The food delivery segment in India has shown stronger signs of recovery with the overall sector clocking over 85 per cent of the pre-COVID gross merchandise value (GMV). Zomato Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said on Wednesday. The key insight is that the food delivery sector has recovered and even grown beyond pre-COVID levels in a number of large pockets of the country, led by some of the most affluent residential areas in the country. Goyal said in a blogpost. Delhi and Mumbai are nearing full recovery at around 95 per cent of the pre-COVID levels, he added. Metros such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai are at around 80 per cent of pre-COVID sales. Some cities such as Kolkata, Patna, Jamshedpur, Ranchi, and Siliguri have recovered completely and have exceeded pre-COVID levels, he said.



Honda: Virtual showrooms to enhance ease of buying

New Delhi: Honda Cars India on Wednesday said it has launched virtual showrooms as part of its digital plans to move closer to customers. This platform will enable customers to discover and engage with Honda's entire model range in a seamless digital experience from the comfort of their homes, the Japanese automaker said in a statement. "With this initiative we have brought experience of a real Honda showroom in a virtual form to our customers so that they can digitally explore and experience the features of their favourite Honda cars on the go and also from the comfort of their homes in a convenient manner," Honda Cars India Senior Vice President and Director, Marketing & Sales, Rajesh Goel said.



Amazon India launches third FC in Ahmedabad

Bengaluru: Amazon India on Wednesday announced the launch of a new fulfilment centre (FC) in Ahmedabad, third in the city, ahead of the festive season. Spread over more than two lakh square feet area, the new FC will help sellers offer a wider selection within the region and neighbouring states, it said in a statement. With this infrastructure expansion, Amazon will now offer storage capacity of more than 1.5 million cubic feet across three FCs to its more than 80,000 sellers in Gujarat. The company launched a new sort centre and expanded the capacity of an existing sort centre for faster delivery of customer orders in Gujarat, it added.

Pvt equity inflow in realty down 85 pc in Jan-August

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Private equity investment in Indian real estate plunged 85 per cent during January-August period of this year at USD 866 million (around Rs 6,500 crore) as investors remained cautious due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Colliers International and FICCI report.

The private equity (PE) inflow stood at USD 5,795 million in the corresponding period of the previous year. Data centres segment attracted maximum investment so far this year at 46 per cent of the total inflows.

Office segment accounted for 24 per cent of the total PE investment at USD 207 million (around Rs 1,500 crore) till August of this calendar year. Industrial and warehousing share stood at 12 per cent, hospitality 9 per cent, housing 8 per cent and co-living one per cent.

"Investors, both foreign and domestic, are adopting a cautious approach to Indian real estate in the backdrop of the



ongoing pandemic," said the report 'Future India: Captivating Strategic and Private Equity Investments'.

"According to Colliers International, through August 2020, overall private equity inflows into Indian real estate stood at Rs 65 billion (USD 866 million), which is just 15 per cent of the corresponding period in 2019," it added.

The report said that newer asset classes such as data centres and rental housing gained prominence among investors. "During 2020 through August, the leading segments have been data centres, driven

by demand for cloud infrastructure, as well as offices as they tend to offer steady rental income. Robust domestic consumption also maintained investors' confidence in industrial and logistics assets," the report said.

During January-August 2019, office segment got 47 per cent of the total PE inflows that stood at USD 5,795 million. Industrial and warehousing had received 9 per cent funds, hospitality 12 per cent, housing 8 per cent, retail 18 per cent and mixed use development 6 per cent. Colliers International advised investors to focus on

The private equity (PE) inflow stood at USD 5,795 million in the corresponding period of the previous year

data centres in order to leverage growing demand for cloud computing. It recommended them to continue to focus on the office segment to capitalise on steady rental income as well as enhanced liquidity offered by the Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs.)

"In the backdrop of robust demand from e-commerce and other consumer-led occupiers, we recommend investors stay focused on the industrial and logistics segment in order to reap the benefits," the consultant said.

It suggested investors to consider equity investments in completed units of affordable and mid-segment residential projects.

IT workers, who returned to Bengal, given job offers

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Finance and IT Minister Amit Mitra said on Wednesday that 3,000 information technology professionals, who have returned to the state from other parts of the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have been given job offers through the 'Karmo Bhumi' initiative.

The job portal, launched on June 8, witnessed around 37,000 registrations, while more than 24,000 have been processed, he said. 'Karmo Bhumi' is an initiative of the state government to collaborate between job seekers and employers in the IT and ITeS sector.

"It was launched as a skill registration platform for those who have returned to West Bengal from other states on account of the pandemic.

"So far, 3,000 IT professionals have been selected for jobs under the scheme within three months from its launch," Mitra said addressing a webinar



organised by CII. He also urged the industry to take up space in the IT parks in tier-2 and tier-3 cities in the state.

"Small towns and cities were neglected in the past so the state government has set up 17 IT parks in these areas such as Siliguri, Kalyani and Durgapur. Five more such parks are in the process of completion.

"The idea is to bridge the digital divide and many renowned companies like Essar Information Technology have taken up space in one of them," Mitra said.

Speaking on the proposed Silicon Valley hub in New

Town, Mitra said Reliance had taken up 40 acres of land for setting up a data centre for Jio. TCS, which has already employed 45,000 IT professionals in the state, has taken another 20 acres of land in the hub to create an additional 15,000 jobs, he said.

Mitra said this would be the IT giant's biggest centre in terms of job creation in the country.

Reliance was given land in Digha in East Midnapore district for bringing an undersea cable from Singapore which will greatly benefit not only Jio but also IT companies operating in the state, he said.

"Another big IT company is coming up with a data centre in the state," Mitra said without divulging the details of the project.

He said the state government has also collaborated with Japan's Fujisoft to provide training in 3D designing to professionals of the MSME sector, for which it made an expenditure of Rs 34 crore.

Sensex ends 66 pts lower; Bharti Airtel crashes 8%

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Extending its losses for the fifth straight session, equity benchmark Sensex ended 66 points lower on Wednesday, tracking weakness in Bharti Airtel, TCS and Bajaj Finance despite largely positive cues from global markets. After opening on a positive note, the 30-share BSE index pared all intra-day gains to settle 65.66 points or 0.17 per cent down at 37,668.42. Similarly, the NSE Nifty fell 21.80 points or 0.20 per cent to close at 11,131.85. Bharti Airtel was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, tanking around 8 per cent, followed by Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Power Grid, and TCS. On the other hand, Axis Bank, HUL, Infosys, Nestle India and HDFC Bank were



Tech Mahindra subsidiary sells stake to Rakuten for \$45 M

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



IT services major Tech Mahindra on Wednesday said its subsidiary has divested over 18.5 million shares in AltioStar Networks for USD 45 million (about Rs 331 crore) to Rakuten USA, Inc.

Tech Mahindra (Americas) Inc - an 100 per cent subsidiary of Tech Mahindra Ltd - divested its holding of 18,518,518 C1 Preferred shares in AltioStar Networks," Tech Mahindra said in a regulatory filing.

Given that it is a minority investment, there is no contribution to turnover/ revenue/ income and net worth by AltioStar Networks, Inc during last financial year, it added.

"The buyer is Rakuten USA, Inc," the filing said, adding the consideration received from the sale is USD 45 million.

Rakuten Mobile and Tech Mahindra have also signed an agreement, where the Indian

tech firm will be a preferred partner and provide technologies as well as software capabilities to support the development and deployment of mobile networks for global customers of RCP (Rakuten Communications Platform).

Through the agreement, Tech Mahindra will also provide managed IT, security and network services to Rakuten Mobile, a statement said. There are also plans to designate Tech Mahindra as an official reseller of RCP, it added.

"This first of its kind collaboration with Rakuten Mobile not only strengthens our existing partnership with them but will also enable us to drive innovation in the telecom space, provide enhanced cus-

Rakuten Mobile and Tech Mahindra have also signed an agreement, where the Indian tech firm will be a preferred partner

tomers experience and lead the transformation in mobile network technology from the forefront," Tech Mahindra Managing Director and CEO C P Gurnani said.

Mickey Mikitani, Chairman, President and CEO of Rakuten Inc, said that with a common vision for digital transformation of the telecommunications industry, the company is very excited about the potential of the partnership with Tech Mahindra in bringing more agile, responsive and efficient services to customers around the world.

Dehradun Airport to be upgraded by Oct

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The first phase of AAI-run Dehradun Airport's upgradation work, including construction of a new domestic terminal building, is expected to be completed by next month, an official release said on Wednesday.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is investing Rs 353 crore for the airport's facelift to enhance its peak passenger handling capacity by eight-fold to 1,800 passengers, as per the release.

The first phase of development work includes the construction of a domestic terminal building along with utility block, car park, sewage treatment plant, rainwater harvesting structures and other ancillary structures, the AAI said.

Almost 80 per cent of the development work of the first phase is completed and the project is likely to be ready by October, it added.

With an area of 42,776 sq metre, the new terminal building will have a concourse, check-in area, security hold and arrival lounge at ground floor. It will also accommodate various offices

AAI is investing Rs 353 crore for the airport's facelift to enhance its peak passenger handling capacity eight-fold to 1,800 passengers

on the mezzanine floor. Equipped with 36 check-in counters and four aerobridges, the new terminal will have all the modern facilities like self-check-in kiosks and in-line baggage screening facility, the AAI said, adding ample retail space spread in an area of 6,465 sq metre is also planned to help accelerate the generation of revenue and employment.

The design height of the building is optimally done to reduce the cost of construction and operation, it said.

Likhitha Infra fixes band at Rs 117-120 per share

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil and gas pipeline infrastructure service provider Likhitha Infrastructure on Wednesday said it has fixed price band of Rs 117-120 per share for its IPO, which will open on September 29.

The initial public offer (IPO) consists of fresh issue of up to 51 lakh equity shares, representing 25.86 per cent of the post-issue shareholding, Likhitha Infrastructure said in a statement.

At the upper end of the price band, the company will raise Rs 61.2 crore through the IPO.

Proceeds of initial share sale will be utilised by the company towards its working capital requirements so as to capitalise on the growing demand from oil and gas sector, and for general corporate purposes. The Hyderabad-headquartered firm has over two decades of experience in laying pipeline networks along with construction of associated facilities, as well as providing operations and maintenance services to leading city gas distribution companies in India.

Toyota launches SUV Urban Cruiser with price starting at Rs 8.4 lakh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese auto major Toyota on Wednesday launched its compact SUV Urban Cruiser, which it has sourced from compatriot Suzuki, in India with price starting at Rs 8.4 lakh as it looks to use cross-badged products from the latter to draw more customers in the volume segment.

The Urban Cruiser is the second model to be launched in India under the global Toyota-Suzuki alliance after the premium hatchback, Glanza. It is the cross-badged ver-

sion of Maruti Suzuki's compact SUV Vitara Brezza.

The model is powered by K-Series 1.5 litre four-cylinder petrol engine and will be available in manual transmission and automatic transmission options in three variants of mid, high and premium priced between Rs 8.4-11.30 lakh.



Virata Brezza on the other hand is priced at Rs 7.34 lakh for the entry level variant and goes up to Rs 11.15 lakh for the top end (all prices ex-showroom Delhi).

"Globally, our collaboration with Suzuki is going very well, particularly in India. Once again Urban Cruiser will show us a much stronger relationship," TKM Managing Director Masakazu Yoshimura told PTI.

He said the cross-badged products from Suzuki will serve to draw more customers to the Toyota fold to develop a long-term relationship with the company. Citing the

example of Glanza, which Maruti Suzuki sells as Baleno, he said the company has so far sold 30,000 units and that is Toyota's first challenge into the B-segment targeting young millennial customers in India.

"Surprisingly, the product has been well accepted, and our aftersales marketing strategy is also well accepted," Yoshimura said adding even sales of Maruti Suzuki Baleno has increased.

"With Maruti Baleno and our Glanza, (together) as a motor industry we are welcoming old and new car buyers into that segment. Either from two-wheelers or second hand cars, many first-time customers are the majority of the buyers," he said.

Hexaware Technologies to offer Rs 475 per share for delisting

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



IT firm Hexaware Technologies on Wednesday said will offer Rs 475 per share as the final price for its delisting offer.

The company stated the offer was successful and 8.72 crore equity shares had been validly tendered.

The bid process for the delisting offer - where the promoters were offering a floor price of Rs 264.97 per share - had started on September 9 and closed on September 16.

"The acquirer (HT Global Holdings BV) and promoter (HT Global IT Solutions Holdings Ltd) have accepted the discovered price of Rs 475

per equity share as the final price for the delisting offer (exit price)," Hexaware said in the filing on Wednesday.

The company said, as per the rules, the delisting offer would be deemed successful only if a minimum number of 8,38,00,030 offer shares were tendered and acquired at or below the exit price.

"The acquirer shall acquire the 8,72,86,523 equity shares validly tendered at or below the

exit price in the reverse book building offer process. Post completion of the acquisition, the shareholding of the acquirer and promoter, along with other members of the promoter group, shall be 91.16 per cent of the fully paid up equity capital of the company," it added. This would exceed the minimum number of equity shares required for the delisting offer to be successful, as per delisting regulations.

The filing said all public shareholders, who have validly tendered their equity shares at or below the exit price, will be paid Rs 475 per share.

The last date for payment to public shareholders, whose bids have been accepted, will be September 30, it added.

TF formed to set up power equipment zones

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A task force has been formed to set up power equipment manufacturing zones in the country, Union minister R K Singh said on Wednesday while directing domestic manufacturers to stop imports from countries "which are of concern".

He also informed that the government is keeping a strict vigil on imports as the focus is to boost local manufacturing and reduce dependence on imports for power equipment. The Minister for Power, New and Renewable Energy was speaking at Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers Association (IEEMA) Annual Convention 2020.

"Our sector is very vulnerable to cyber attacks. We have



connected the whole country into one grid...you bring down one part and rest will collapse. Therefore we need to check all imports. (In fact) we are checking if some device is inserted in the imported item. So my advice to you is stop importing from countries from which we apprehend a risk or coun-

tries which are of concern," the minister said.

The government will continue to examine imported equipment with a "magnifying glass" for years, he said, indicating choice of importing may cause business losses as well.

Singh further said that there is a need of a government-

industry partnership in the sector. The whole world works on this pattern.

The government wants to make the industry 'Aatmanirbhar', he said adding manufacturing of equipment will create jobs in India. It will also avoid forex outgo.

"I have set up a task force and given them the target of setting up manufacturing zones (in the country). I am thinking of setting up at least three to four manufacturing zones where you will get land at very reasonable prices, power at very reasonable prices, and we will set up a common testing centre..." the minister said. Singh also said, "If we need to create jobs here then we need not to spend our money outside the country...in China or in other countries."

Covid-19: Govt permits ISO tank containers to carry liquid oxygen

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the Covid, the government has allowed the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) to grant permission to stakeholders for carrying liquid oxygen in tank containers in bulk.

According to an official statement issued on Wednesday, PESO has also devised a system to receive online applications from the stakeholders to expeditiously grant permission to transport liquid oxygen in ISO tank containers.

These containers are manufactured as per the ISO requirements. These are designed to carry liquids in bulk. One tank can carry 20



MT of liquid oxygen.

The statement said that due to the pandemic, an urgent need was felt to transport oxygen in sufficient quantities, at a short notice, from surplus areas to deficit ones.

Due to this, it was felt necessary to give permission to PESO for the purpose.

"The Department for Promotion of Industry and

Internal Trade (DPIIT) has given permission to PESO to introduce ISO tank containers for movement of liquid oxygen for domestic transport," it said.

Amid the pandemic, the movement of oxygen within the country through these containers shall greatly enhance the translocation of safe and fast movement of oxygen through road networks, the statement said.

It added that the permission has been given for one year initially to expeditiously deal with the emergent situation.

"Since they can carry a huge amount of oxygen at one go, ISO containers will help translocate sufficient oxygen to areas where required," it said.

CMA CGM adds 23K TEU LNG powered vessel to its fleet

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

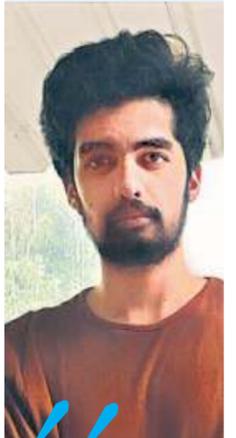
Shipping and logistics company CMA CGM Group on Wednesday said it has added 23,000 twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) container vessel to its fleet.

The liquefied natural gas-powered vessel has been named after the company's founder Jacques Saade, it said.

"The CMA CGM JACQUES SAADE has joined CMA CGM Group's fleet, thus becoming the largest LNG-powered container ship in the world," the company said in a statement.

YOUNG HYDERABADIS SPIRAL REVOLUTION, SHAKE CONSCIENCE

The Kondapochamma Sagar Reservoir has become a must-visit getaway for the people of Hyderabad, thanks to the selfies posted on Instagram and elsewhere by netizens. But what many missed, was the harsh reality behind its construction, brought to light by a youngster, whose video was shared by friends, followers, and even random people on the internet, widely. Hyderabad-based student Sai Aditya and his friends talk to *The Pioneer's* RACHEL DAMMALA about the plight of Kondapochamma Reservoir oustees, what needs to be done, the responsibility and privileges of an educated citizen living under a comfortable roof, and more



How could people sleep peacefully knowing there are families thrown out of their homes in the middle of the night and have very little hope of going back home or being given another comfortable place to say.

ADITYA

At a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has created panic amongst people, making them shut themselves indoors and hope for normalcy to set in as quickly as possible, the crisis brought to light some organisations, communities, and individuals who cared little for themselves, and were willing to go to lengths and shout at the top of their voices, for those that didn't have a voice. One such community is that made up of youngsters, made and brought together by random youth across cities and other barriers, with the aim and idea to bring people's attention to issues that hard-

ly hit headlines today. Nameless, faceless, but definitely not aimless. If you're a Hyderabadi, or from Telangana and are active on social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, you definitely will have come across the campaign to help the wronged oustees of the Kondapochamma Sagar. Yes, we're talking about Sai Aditya, who turned activist overnight and became restless once he found out about the injustice meted out to those who have been "rehabilitated" from the Kondapochamma Sagar area, which includes close to 25-30 families from three villages - Mamidyala, Biranpur,

and Tandempally. To the uninitiated, residents of these three villages have rehabilitated to RR Colony on the night of April 30 with the promise of rightful compensation to their houses and properties they had left behind in their villages. They were left to stay in sheds, not even a proper house with a proper roof, forget the 2-BHK they were promised. The villagers went to court to fight to get what they deserved, which only worsened their chances of getting them. It was this reality that Aditya uncovered and his friends shared and ensured Hyderabadis learn of the "beautiful" reservoir they

have visited or are yearning to visit. "How could people sleep peacefully knowing there are families thrown out of their homes in the middle of the night and have very little hope of going back home or being given another comfortable place to say," wondered 22-year-old Aditya in one of his videos that went viral. He has now taken it upon himself to help the oustees with food and emergency kits until they are given the homes they were promised. He has urged people to donate, and the response has been overwhelming, to his surprise. At the time of writing this article, he has received donations from

over people. This community of donors, most falling inside the bracket of "youth" hopes to be able to supply these families for the next few days with food, and other necessities until they are given proper food and homes to stay in. "It had been raining and the roof could give in any second. Water from the sheds wetted their groceries, leaving them nothing to eat, wear or even sleep," shares Aditya. Today, over lakhs of people know about their condition and, though a minuscule number, are willing to come forward to raise their voices against injustice. But it's not just an MBA student with a camera that

could've shaken the conscience of several youngsters in Hyderabad. He had his friends, a journalist, a senior from college with powerful influence, and other such young people that came forward to help Aditya unearth and boldly speak the truth. It was these people who cared for their fellow human beings, that has several netizens rallying for justice for the oustees today. "As an ordinary citizen, the biggest help one could offer is by raising awareness in our circle of friends and community. Sharing the news in our social media circles, talking to friends and family about the issue and highlighting the need for us

citizens to be aware of success issues go a long way. Many of us do not have the courage to do what people like Adi do, that too at the ground level. When one just like us could go and do something like what he did, we could simply say we fail as a society when we don't the least to share and spread awareness, if not directly help our fellow citizens," says Bilu, an entrepreneur, and one of Aditya's companions working with him for the campaign. Aditya believes people on social media can contribute by doing more than just sharing a video. "Take an initiative to follow up, actively look up information, ques-

tion things you think are unjust around you, raise your voice, not share someone else's voice alone," says Aditya and his associates second him. They hope more people that are aware and have a platform (social media) and voice will intentionally work towards such causes. The fundraiser ends this Sunday, on September 27. To help or contribute, you can pay them via Google Pay or Phone Pe on 8317643638. Surely Aditya and his companions, which he hopes will grow with time to be an even bigger community of people who care for each other, are making this world a better place to live in.

Starting out young, yet strong

Move over the old and the well-settled leading campaigns and bringing in change. Taking heed of and living and walking the saying "Be the change you wish to see in the world," is a 9th grader Mishkkaa. She talks to *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE on how she has been raising awareness and funds to feed the stray animals amid the pandemic



Children being aware of various important aspects of major social issues is something commendable. The thought of sharing what they know with a wider audience is what makes it inspiring. Mishkkaa, a 14-year-old Hyderabad-based youtuber, studying in class 9 started a YouTube channel with the title Mishkkaa — "The Billi of Hollywood" in 2016, with the support of her parents. From bullying, to 'playing outdoors vs using gadgets' to 'good touch bad touch', and LGBTQIA+ community, the teen discusses all such issues on her channel, while hosting talk shows as well. Mishkkaa, who has always been an animal lover, was heartbroken to see strays going hungry especially during the lockdown when all restaurants shut shop. In order to help and support the shelter-less animals, she raised funds of over Rs 38,000 during the lockdown to help feed these animals.

The 14-year-old tells us, "I always wanted to bring a puppy home, but because of my parents, couldn't get one. My heart always went out for the shelter-less animals on roads rampaging for food. Most of them looked malnourished. Especially during the lockdown, there were many dogs, that died of hunger with all restaurants closed. I was moved when our society's (apartment) security guard shoo away a stray dog to prevent it from entering the society. The poor puppy ran and came under a vehicle and lost its life. All these incidents pushed me to do something for these poor souls." "I got in contact with Zabi, a well-known animal activist from Hyderabad. Since I didn't know much about animals, I wanted someone's support, someone who would teach me about animals, their nature etc. I later approached a crowdfunding platform milaap.org where I raised over 38,000 rupees during the lockdown and used it to feed the



strays in the city," she explains. Mishkkaa's latest video is on the issues of stray dogs and why we should support these shelter-less animals. She explained in the video why dogs are barking, crying and wailing more during the COVID pandemic with an example from her gated community. While most people look at it

IN ORDER TO HELP AND FEED THE SHELTER-LESS ANIMALS, SHE RAISED FUNDS OF OVER RS 38,000 DURING THE LOCKDOWN

as an inconvenience or disturbance, Mishkkaa realised that the dogs are barking because they have no food. She emphasised on individuals not feeding dogs because of the fear of catching the virus. She also pointed out that since the restaurants are closed, it's difficult for stray dogs to get food. Apart from her online classes Mishkkaa is putting in her heart and soul to promote the fundraiser. She has also supported a fundraiser earlier to support the Kerala Flood victims and hopes this act of hers will benefit and inspire many.



Hello Zindagi

This weekly column by senior journalist Swati Sucharita, beginning tomorrow, seeks to highlight hope and optimism, in an increasingly gloomy, pandemic-struck post-Covid 19 world.

At 7, child prodigy honours literary legacy with first book

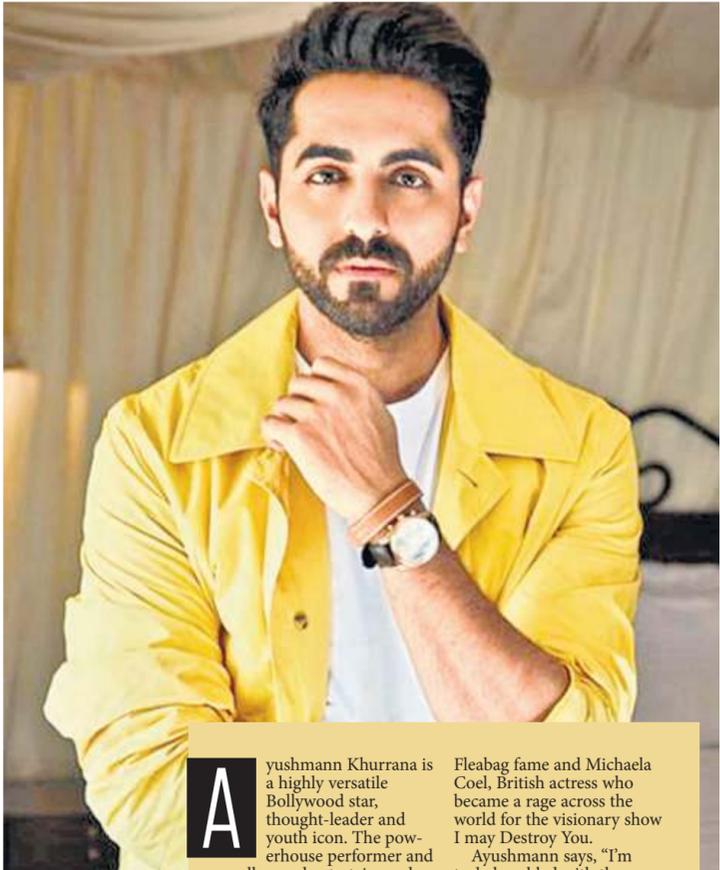
Padma Bhushan recipient Rashtrakavi Maithalisharan Gupts and Santkavi Siyaramsharan Gupt's great grand daughter Abhijita Gupta, who is all of seven years and a child prodigy, has penned her first collection of stories and poems. The book titled 'Happiness All Around', and was launched by Oxford Bookstores' children's wing, Oxford Junior in collaboration with Invincible Publishers. Seven-year-old Abhijita, taking after her family's literary legacy, had started writing at a very tender age of five years. "Abhijita is a student of class 2 and is a third generation writer, to poet duo Rashtrakavi Shri Maithalisharan Gupt and Santkavi Shri Siyaramsharan Gupt. She is avid reader and very expressive with her pen. She wrote her first story when she was a little over five years. By the grace of goddess Saraswati she is carrying forward the traits of her forefathers and we hope she extends the legacy of Sahitya Sadan Gharana," her parents Ashish Gupt and Anupriya Gupta told



LANSlife. They added that the title of the book, cover page and all the illustration are also a part of her creativity. "For her, every little thing around her matters: what she sees, she hears, she touches, she smells, she tastes and she feels — constantly soaking in the environment around her. And, her debut book proffers just that — the pure senses and humane values like an elixir." The collection is an attempt to give children something to read, written by someone of their own age. The book could prove equally useful for parents of young children, as it gives an insight into the mind of a six-seven-year-old and what thoughts and things interest her. The writings have been left untouched so that the innocence, mistakes included, of the child are not diluted.

what's brewing?

Hollywood star John Cusack on his interest in India, Kashmir



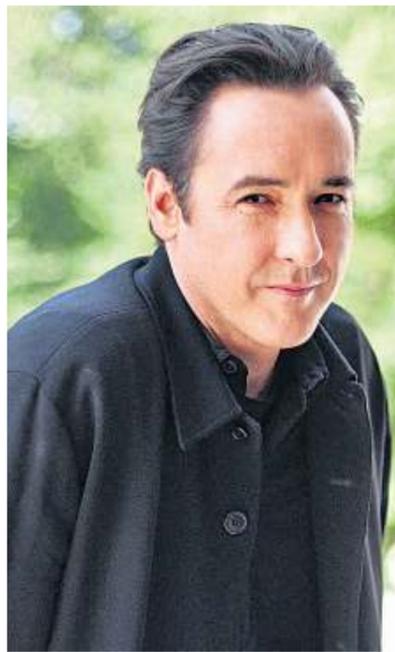
Ayushmann among five Indians in Time list of 100 Most Influential People

Ayushmann Khurrana is a highly versatile Bollywood star, thought-leader and youth icon. The powerhouse performer and an all-round entertainer who has delivered eight hits in a row, has etched his name in the history of Indian cinema with his progressive, social entertainers. Today, people refer to his brand of inspired and clutter-breaking cinema as 'The Ayushmann Khurrana Genre'.

His meteoric rise to stardom goes hand in hand with him becoming the poster boy of content cinema in India. Ayushmann's contribution as an actor to bring about social change through his films has been hailed by the most reputed global publication - the TIME Magazine. Ayushmann has been judged as one of the most influential people in the world by TIME, which has featured him in the most coveted and prestigious 'Time's 100 most influential people' list of 2020. Some of the other global artists to feature in this list are music sensations Selena Gomez and The Weeknd, the visionary director of Parasite Bong Joon Ho, Phoebe Waller-Bridge of Fleabag fame and Michaela Coel, British actress who became a rage across the world for the visionary show I may Destroy You.

Ayushmann says, "I'm truly humbled with the recognition that TIME has bestowed on me. As an artist, I have only looked to contribute towards bringing a positive change in society through cinema and this moment is a huge validation of my belief system and my journey. I have always believed that cinema has the power to bring about change by triggering the right conversations among people and society. Hopefully, through my content choices, I have been able to contribute towards my country and countrymen."

The National Award-winning Bollywood star is among five Indians who have made the prestigious list in 2020, along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Google CEO Sundar Pichai, London-based Indian origin doctor Ravindra Gupta who worked to find a cure for AIDS, and Bilkis Dadi, who was at the forefront of Shaheen Bagh protests in Delhi against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).



Hollywood star John Cusack says he got closer to knowing and understanding India during his pursuit to understand the world in a better way.

The actor has been vocal about the events, or turmoils, happening in India, and addressed them through social media.

Speaking about his understanding of India, Cusack said, "I've been there a few times and I have a great friendship with (author) Arundhati Roy."

"(We have done) some activist things (together) and we wrote some essays together about meeting Ed Snowden in Russia with Daniel Ellsberg and her. So I've gotten to know India by going there and through her eyes, which is quite extraordinary. So that's where my interest in India and Kashmir and all those issues came from. (I am) just trying to understand the world,"

added the actor, who is known for his strong opinions as well as his acting skills.

Cusack began acting in the eighties, and gained popularity for his roles in *Better Off Dead*, *Say Anything...*, *Bullets over Broadway*, *Grosse Pointe Blank*, *Being John Malkovich*, *High Fidelity*, *1408*, *Igor*, *2012*, *The Raven* and *Serendipity*.

Now, he is headed to the digital world with the conspiracy thriller series *Utopia*.

The eight-episode series is about saving the world, while trying to find your place in it. It is about a group of comic fans who meet online and bond over their obsession of a seemingly fictional comic called, *Utopia*.

Inspired by the British series of the same name. The American remake is written by *Gone Girl* author Gillian Flynn, who also serves as showrunner and executive producer.

Reflecting on why it took so long for him to make his digital debut, he said, "I hadn't really been offered anything that I thought was really good, or that I wanted to do."

"This was the first thing that came along, that had a great writer, and it was a terrific part. So, it was kind of easy and no brainer for me... Gillian sent me all eight episodes, and I started reading them and it was a real page turn. I think I read the entire eight episodes in one day because I wanted to see what happened next. It was very surprising and terrific writing, and it was nice to be asked by her to do it."

The show will premiere on Amazon Prime Video on September 25 in India. It also stars Ashleigh LaThrop, Rainn Wilson, Sasha Lane, Dan Byrd, Jessica Rothe, Desmin Borges, Javon Walton, Farrah Mackenzie, Christopher Denham, and Cory Michael Smith.

Manoj Bajpayee on turning singer: 'Nobody could think of rapping in Bhojpuri'

Actor Manoj Bajpayee is being praised for his rapping skills in the new single, *Bambai main ka ba*. The song has been very well received and the National Award-winning actor says the reason behind its success is because the track is in a native language and that it deals with the migrant issue.

Talking about the song becoming popular among all age groups, Manoj told *IANS*, "It's very unique rapping, because it's in a native language. Nobody could think of rapping in Bhojpuri and that too about something that is prevalent."

The actor, who joined hands with filmmaker Anubhav Sinha for the number, says the migrant



FUN

ARCHIE

THINGS SHOULD BE A LITTLE MORE ORDERLY NOW THAT I'VE BANNED THE USE OF CELLPHONES DURING SCHOOL HOURS!

WHAT THE ?!

COULD YOU REPEAT THAT, VERONICA? YOU'RE BREAKING UP!

CALVIN AND HOBBS

CALVIN THE ELEPHANT WANDERS THE AFRICAN PLAIN.

AT FIVE TONS, HE IS THE LARGEST LAND MAMMAL!

HIS DEAFENING CALL SHATTERS THE EARLY-MORNING TRANQUILITY!

GARFIELD

"DEAR ASK A DOG, WHAT'S WITH YOU DOGS ROOTING THROUGH THE GARBAGE ALL THE TIME?"

BARK! BARK! BARK! BARK! BARK! BARK!

YOUR DENIAL WOULD BE MORE BELIEVABLE IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE A BANANA PEEL ON YOUR HEAD

REALITY CHECK

OLD CHICKENS

WELL SHOOT! NOW WHY IN THE HECK DID I CROSS THE ROAD IN THE FIRST PLACE?

OLD CHICKEN? I PREFER RED BEEF

SPEED BUMP

YOU HAVE THAT FARAWAY LOOK IN YOUR EYES AGAIN, DEAR.

CROSSWORD

NANCY

OH BOY PARTY ST

COMICAL CHARACTER BALLOONS REG. \$3 TODAY: 25¢

NOW I SEE WHY THEY'RE ON SALE

ONLY SCARY ONES LEFT!

SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Keep live fish in this
- An archer fires this
- Very mean and unkind
- Sad because you are on your own
- Scheme
- A red gemstone
- Defeated
- Wearing nothing
- Stage dramas
- These are pushed around a supermarket

DOWN

- Wear this over clothes to keep them clean
- Sick
- Eat this grain cooked
- Normal
- A graceful dancer
- Loss of eyesight
- Humans
- A maker of bread
- Shed these when crying
- A worshipped statue

SOLUTION

I	C	E	B	E	R	O	S	
M	N	A	T	U				
P	O	D	S	T	H	R	U	S
R	E	G	E					
O	L	D	E	R	S	T	R	I
V	I	T	G					
W	I	N	N	E				
N	L	L	E	N				
G	A	R	A	G	E	T	A	X
S	S	A	C	O				
K	H	E	D	G	E	H	O	G



TODAY
KINGS XI PUNJAB VS RAJASTHAN ROYALS
Live from 7:30pm
STAR SPORTS 1 & 3



IPL 2020

Faf du Plessis | 130 runs
Sam Curran | 4 wickets

Josh Philippe is someone who has got so much talent. He can play a number of roles. We have seen how successful he can be at the top of the order (in Big Bash)

I've come in with some confidence through good performances this year, but also maybe putting less responsibility on myself than some other years

Malinga is like Pollard, has been a massive player for us. It was unfortunate that he couldn't make it due to personal reasons. That gives an opportunity to others

Samson takes the game head on and he hit some seriously good sixes. He has a positive intent and my role was to give him more strike. Fortunately it worked well



Sanju worked on fitness, power-hitting

Convinced that possessing an array of shots is a must to go with power-hitting, wicket-keeper batsman Sanju Samson says he worked on these aspects during the coronavirus enforced break. The work done by Samson was there to be seen when he pulverised the Chennai Super Kings on Tuesday night, setting up a Rajasthan Royals' win with his blistering 32-ball 74-run knock, studded with nine sixes and a boundary. That he is an impact player is a known fact but his clean and elegant hitting earned praise from one and all. "I think range-hitting is what the game demands in this generation. I had time to work out in these 5 months, and I think I've increased that ability," Samson said at the post-match presentation. "I've been working hard on my fitness, diet and training, and on my strength, because my game relies a lot on power hitting," he added. Samson, who was adjudged Man-of-the-Match, said his plan is to go and hit all the deliveries in his arc. "My game plan is stand and deliver. If it's in the arc I go for it, and it's very important to keep the intent to hit the ball if it's there to be hit."

MI beat KKR by 49 runs

MI 195/5 (20 overs) ■ KKR 146/9 (20 overs)

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Skipper Rohit Sharma pummeled the Kolkata Knight Riders bowling into submission and powered Mumbai Indians to an imposing 195 for five here on Wednesday. After Shivam Mavi (2/32) removed opener Quinton De Kock (1) cheaply, Rohit (80 off 54 balls; 3 fours, 6 sixes) and Suryakumar Yadav (47 off 28; 6 fours, 1 six) conjured 90 runs for the second wicket to pull the team out of trouble.

Rohit, who began with a maximum, displayed his languid grace and elegance as he took the Kolkata attack to the cleaners. Surya effortlessly smashed four boundaries off Sandeep Warrier (0/34), including a cover-drive and a flick, in the third over.

Rohit got going after smashing pacer Pat Cummins (0/49) for two maximums — both his trademark pull-short. With the two looking good and hitting sixes and fours at will, Mumbai raced to 94/1 after 10 overs.

Kolkata, however, cut short Surya's stay when he was run out. Rohit continued his brutal onslaught against chinaman Kuldeep Yadav (0-39), smashing him for two maximums.

Saurabh Tiwary (21), Hardik Pandya (18) played perfect second fiddle to Rohit, who literally bulldozed the opposition bowlers. Kolkata tried to pull things back by removing Rohit, Hardik in quick succession even as Mumbai added 48 runs in the last five overs.



Rohit Sharma chats with his Mumbai Indians teammate Suryakumar Yadav during Mumbai Indians' innings. IPL20.com

Pollard plays 150th game for Mumbai

New Delhi: At the 2010 IPL player auction, Mumbai Indians, Chennai Super Kings, Royal Challengers Bangalore and Kolkata Knight Riders were locked in a fierce bidding war for West Indies all-rounder Kieron Adrian Pollard. Eventually, Mumbai Indians grabbed him for a whopping \$2.2 million. Since then, the Trinidadian has been a MI loyalist, and on Wednesday, he played his 150th IPL match for the four-time IPL champions. "Having someone like Pollard in the squad is always nice. He is a massive player for us, hopefully he'll come out and enjoy his game, like he always goes," MI captain Rohit Sharma said of the towering West Indian at the start of Wednesday's match. A master of hitting humongous sixes, 33-year-old Pollard has played 11 consecutive seasons for MI since 2010, has scored 2,773 runs at an amazing strike rate of 146.64 — hitting 177 sixes and 182 boundaries, before the start of Wednesday's game against KKR. The only other player that instantly comes to mind for his loyalty to a single franchise is Virat Kohli, who has played for RCB in all 13 seasons that IPL has been in existence for. Pollard didn't have an extraordinary first season with MI in 2010 — 273 runs in 14 matches without a half-century and 15 wickets — but the franchise owners kept faith in him as he was more than handy with the ball too. He has bagged 56 wickets at an economy rate of 8.83, before the KKR game on Wednesday. A brilliant fielder in the deep, Pollard has taken 82 catches so far.

Malinga's absence is opportunity for others

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

The absence of veteran pacer Lasith Malinga is an opportunity for others to step up, according to Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma. The 37-year-old Malinga has been ruled out for the season and in his absence, MI relied upon James Pattinson and Jasprit Bumrah to deliver in the death overs in the IPL season opener against Chennai Super Kings.

It didn't quite work out for them and they ended up losing the match by five wickets. "What happened in the past is in the past," said Rohit after the toss on Wednesday. "There are some areas where we need to rectify. Hopefully we don't make those mistakes."

"Malinga is like Pollard, has been a massive player for us. It was unfortunate that he couldn't make it due to personal reasons. That gives an opportunity to others. We need to enjoy our cricket as a squad."

KKR captain Karthik chose to field first, despite teams batting first winning three of the four games that have been played in the season thus far. "We will bowl first." IANS

DUGOUT



Mumbai Indians Windies all-rounder Kieron Pollard poses with his special shirt that was given to him prior to the start of the match as he steps on the field to play his 150th game for Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League. MI/Twitter

DEW FACTOR WILL GAIN MORE SENSE

The first week of the IPL has already shown that dew will play a major role in the tournament and it will only gain more significance as the pitches get slower, said Australian limited overs skipper and RCB opener Aaron Finch. The teams are expectedly preferring to chase after winning the toss with pitch getting easier in the second half and a wet ball making life tougher for the bowlers. "The dew will play a big part in the tournament. The last three games, the game at Sharjah (CSK vs RR) and our game here (Dubai), there was more dew than expected," said Finch. "I think as the games go on and there will be lots of games played over and over on the same wickets, the wickets will get slower and the dew factor will become even more."

MORRIS RECOVERING FROM SIDE STRAIN

South Africa all-rounder Chris Morris is unlikely to be available for RCB's match against Kings XI Punjab on Thursday after suffering a side strain, the team's Director of Cricket Operations Mike Hesson said. "Chris Morris unfortunately picked up a slight side strain a few days ago, he would have played a huge role through the middle and death overs, his batting would have had a huge impact as well," Hesson said in a video posted by RCB's Twitter handle. "This does change the balance of our side, he is a three in one cricketer, he is not easy to replace and as a result, we had to change the structure of our side. Hopefully, Chris will come into consideration for selection in a game or two, we will continue to monitor him," he added.

HOLDER REPLACES MITCHELL MARSH

Australian and Sunrisers Hyderabad all-rounder Mitchell Marsh was on Wednesday ruled out of the remainder of the IPL with an ankle injury he suffered in the team's opener against RCB. West Indies captain Jason Holder has been named as Marsh's replacement and is expected to join the Sunrisers squad soon in the UAE. "Mitchell Marsh has been ruled out due to injury. We wish him a speedy recovery. Jason Holder will replace him for #Dream11IPL2020," Sunrisers posted on its official Twitter handle.

RECORD 33 SIXES HIT IN CSK-RR CLASH

A total of 33 sixes were hit during the IPL 2020 clash between CSK and Rajasthan Royals which the Steve Smith-led side won at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium. This was the same number of sixes hit during an IPL match between Chennai Super Kings and Royal Challengers Bangalore in 2018. On Tuesday, Sanju Samson led the sixes chart with nine maximums, followed by Steve Smith (4), Jofra Archer (4), Shane Watson (4), Faf du Plessis (7), Sam Curran (2) and MS Dhoni (3).

GILL FOCAL POINT OF KKR BATTING

Shubman Gill is a "terrific" batsman and is the focal point of the Kolkata Knight Riders batting unit, feels former New Zealand cricketer Scott Styris. Gill, 21, has played a total of 28 matches for KKR in which he has amassed 506 runs. "I've been the number one cheerleader since the last 18 months. Since Shubman Gill has been around I can say I'm at the top of that fanboy list and I think Gill is a fabulous cricketer. I think he's a terrific, talented batsman," Styris said while speaking on Star Sports show Game Plan. "Shubman Gill, now with the loss of Robin Uthappa and Gautam Gambhir at KKR, is a leader, the focal point of that batting unit. He is best batsman of KKR," he added.

14-day quarantine didn't help: MS

PTI ■ SHARJAH

The extended two-week quarantine of Chennai Super Kings hampered his preparations as he did not get enough time for batting practice, said captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni after his side lost to Rajasthan Royals by 16 runs in their second IPL game.

Dhoni came in to bat at No 7, sending the likes of Sam Curran and Kedar Jadhav ahead of him in a mammoth 217-run chase on Tuesday. Asked why he came so low in the order, the CSK captain said, "I haven't batted for a long time, 14-day quarantine doesn't help."

"Also, we wanted to try different things, give opportunities to Sam (Curran). We have the opportunity to try different things. If they don't work, you can always go back to your strengths," the CSK skipper said.

Dhoni's reference was to CSK's extra one-week quarantine after 13 people in their contingent tested positive for Covid-19, resulting in missing out on important training sessions. He was not out on 29 off 17 balls with three sixes in the last over. Although he didn't name Murali Vijay but the veteran opener's run-a-ball 21 was one of the reasons for CSK falling short besides an off-day from his spin duo of Ravindra Jadeja and Piyush Chawla.

"With 217 on the board, we needed a very good start which was not the case. Steve (Smith) and (Sanju) Samson batted very well. We need to give credit to their bowlers. Once you've seen the first innings, you know the lengths to bowl," Dhoni said. "Their spinners did well to bowl away from the batsman. Our spinners made the error to bowl too full. If we would've maybe restricted them to 200, it would've been a good game."

Kings look to open account

PTI ■ DUBAI

Kings XI Punjab will look to put behind the controversial 'short run' decision in their IPL opener and start afresh when they take on Virat Kohli's buoyant Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Thursday.

In their opening game against Delhi Capitals, the square-leg umpire erroneously called KXIP's Chris Jordan for a 'short run' in the third ball of the 19th over, effectively costing his team the closely fought game.

KXIP went on to lodge an appeal to the match referee over the incident but on Thursday, KL Rahul and Co would like forget the unsavoury incident and focus on the task ahead.

In contrast, RCB opened their campaign on a winning note defeating Sunrisers Hyderabad by 10 runs, raising hopes that things might finally fall into place



for them this season. Devdutt Padikkal started his IPL career on a classy note hitting a sublime half-century and will once again be in focus, while AB de Villiers will also look to continue in the same vein following a crucial half-century.

Both Kohli and Aaron Finch looked good on Monday night and would be itching to spend more time in the middle. Yuzvendra Chahal, as always, will be the key man in the RCB bowling attack. But Umesh Yadav continues to leak runs and going by his showing in the first game, he could be replaced by Mohammad Siraj. It remains to be seen if the team can fit in England all-rounder Moeen Ali in the middle-order.

With Josh Philippe being chosen as the specialist wicketkeeper batsman to start with, Ali can only replace Dale Steyn in the eleven.

For KXIP, Mayank Agarwal looked in imperious touch but was gutted to not be able to get his team over the line with just one run required to win. Rahul, Glenn Maxwell and Nicholas Pooran will be expected to step up as they possess the ability to take away the game from any opposition. Big hitters Chris Gayle, who was left out of the opener for better balance in the eleven, could be back and batting all-rounder Jimmy Neesham could also be given a chance. KXIP's bowling is spearheaded by Mohammed Shami, who proved his high worth in the team's opener. Young leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi will go into the game more confident, having impressed against Delhi Capitals.

Batting at No 7 is not leading from front: Gambhir lashes out at Dhoni

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mahendra Singh Dhoni did not lead from the front by dropping himself down the batting order during a mammoth chase, opined former India batsman Gautam Gambhir, tearing into CSK captain's decision to bat at number seven against Rajasthan Royals.

The former India opener reckons that if any other captain had done this, he would have drawn a lot of flak but since it is Dhoni, people are not even talking about it.

"I was a bit surprised to be honest. MS Dhoni batting at No 7? And sending (Ruturaj) Gaikwad, Sam Curran before him. Makes no sense to me. In fact you should be leading from the front," Gambhir told ESPNcricinfo's T20 Time Out. "This is not what you call leading from the front. Batting at No 7 when you're chasing 217. The game was over. Faf was probably the lone warrior," he said. "See, if someone else would have done this, some other (batsman) captain had batted at No 7, he would have got a lot of flak. It is MS Dhoni — probably that's why people don't talk about it."



Faf du Plessis raises his bat after scoring fifty runs against Rajasthan. IPL20.com

The 38-year-old Gambhir, who played 58 Tests and 147 ODIs between 2003 and 2016, also questioned CSK's intent to win the game.

"There is nothing wrong if you end up getting out early, at least start leading from the front, trying to inspire the team as well. What you did in the last over (hitting 3 sixes in last over), probably if you'd done that coming in at No 4 or 5, alongside Faf, you could have made a game out of it," said Gambhir. "Probably there was no such intent to make a game out of it. I thought after the (first) six overs, they had literally

given up on the game. And probably MS was trying to get back into that match rhythm of batting till the end and get some runs under his belt so he can actually play these kind of innings in the coming games. "You've got to be in the present, try and win each game possible. I thought there was no intent to win the game and they were never there in the chase."

On Dhoni hitting three sixes in the final over, Gambhir said, "Yes, you can talk about MS Dhoni's last over but it was of no use to be honest. It was just all personal runs."

Dhoni will take some time to find form: Fleming

Sharjah: It will take some time to see MS Dhoni — the finisher, that everyone is waiting for, says Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming as his side fell short in its run chase against Rajasthan Royals despite having the former India captain at the crease.

"We have this question every year. He was in in the 14th over, which is pretty much optimal time, and sort of batted accordingly. He is coming back from not playing a huge amount of cricket," Fleming said at the post-match press conference. "So, the expectations to see him at his best is gonna take some time. But you see him towards the end, he was very good. Faf du Plessis carried the

form, so we weren't too far away. It wasn't the batting that was the worry to be honest."

Fleming said his spinners were slow in adjusting the length of their deliveries (they bowled overpitched). Sanju Samson (74) was on fire against their spinners. "Their (RR) hitting was very good in the 8 overs they faced. It was a good surface (to bat) and we were slow on adjusting. We did not adjust quickly. There was intent to adjust but execution was poor."

"So it was dangerous time and we had to just hang in there and try. We came close to pulling back to a manageable score but that last over took us out of reach." PTI

Gambhir said it was "absolute miscalculation" on the part of CSK to delay Dhoni's arrival at the crease. "When you don't have Suresh Raina, you're making people believe that Sam Curran is better than you. You're making people believe

that Ruturaj Gaikwad, Curran, Kedar Jadhav, Faf du Plessis, M Vijay, all these guys, are better than you. "Probably not the right captaincy as well. This is not how you ask someone like MS to lead the side."

Bianca to miss rest of 2020

Ottawa: Last year's US Open champion Bianca Andreescu said on Tuesday she will sit out the remainder of the season to focus on her "health and training" after a year beset by injury.

Andreescu, who beat Serena Williams at Flushing Meadows 12 months ago, has not played a match since hurting her knee last October at the WTA Finals in Shenzhen. "I have come to the difficult decision to skip the clay court swing this year and will be taking the remainder of the season off to focus on my health and training," Andreescu wrote on Twitter.

"As hard as it was to come to this conclusion, I have so much to look forward to in 2021, including the Olympics; I want to use this time to focus on my game so I can come back stronger and better than ever."

Andreescu joins defending Roland Garros champion Ashleigh Barty and newly-crowned US Open winner Naomi Osaka on the absentee list for the September 27-October 11 Grand Slam in Paris.

Women's FIFA U-17 World Cup likely to be postponed again

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The women's FIFA Under-17 World Cup, which has been rescheduled to February-March, is likely to be postponed yet again in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Originally scheduled to be held in five venues of India from November 2 to 21, the women's age group showpiece was pushed to February 17-March 7 next year due to the pandemic, which has played havoc with sporting calendars worldwide.

With the health crisis still showing no signs of abating and with the qualifying tournaments yet to be held in Africa, North and Central America and South America, there is a high possibility of the tournament getting postponed yet again.

"There is a high possibility that the women's FIFA U-17 World Cup will be postponed again. The new time frame when the tournament will be held is yet not known. But most probably it is getting postponed," a source privy to the development told PTI.

All India Football Federation (AIFF) general secretary Kushal Das, however,

told PTI that there is "no official update" on the matter yet. But when asked specifically whether there is a possibility of the postponement of the tournament in view of the prevailing situation, he said, "It can be postponed."

With less than five months left for the tournament, the confederations of Africa (CAF), North and Central America (CONCACAF) and South America (CONMEBOL) are yet to hold their qualifiers.

Europe (UEFA) cancelled its qualifying tournament last month and nominated Spain, England and Germany — its highest-ranked teams. The confederation of Oceania (OFA) did the same and nominated New Zealand as its representative in the U-17 World Cup.

Only Asia (AFC) conducted the qualifiers as scheduled. Japan and North Korea qualified after becoming the champions and runners-up respectively in the 2019 AFC U-16 Women's Championship.

The AIFF had planned to start the national camp early next month but it may not happen if the tournament is postponed.

KARTHIKEYA PLAYING A 24-YEAR-OLD

new NIA recruit in my film: Sri Saripalli



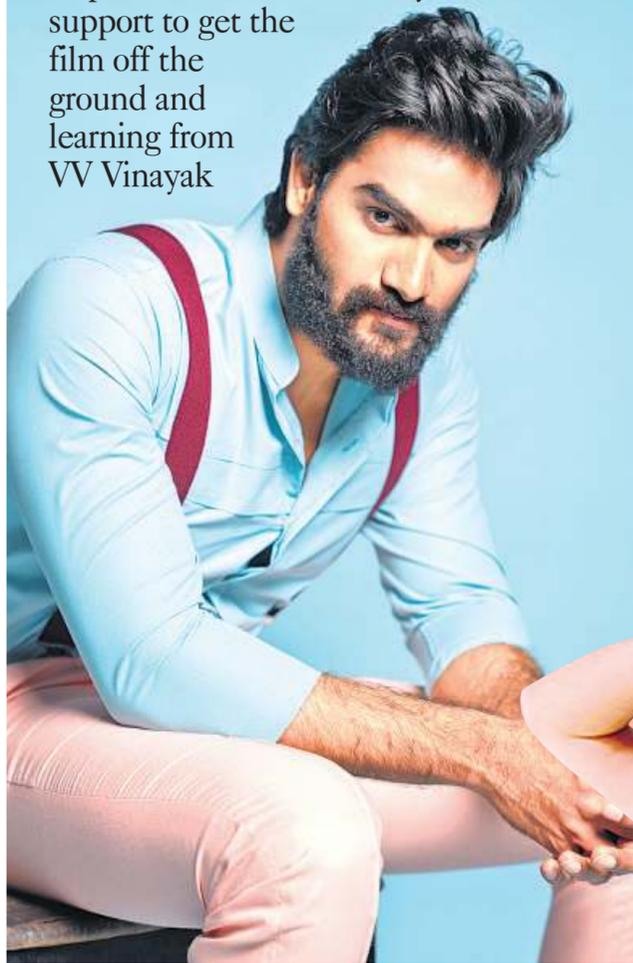
Sai Tej-Katta film to roll next month



With the filming on *Solo Brathuke So Better* which resumed on August 31 last month more or less completed, Sai Tej will begin his film with director Deva Katta from next month. The untitled film was launched earlier this March but couldn't get on with principal shoot due to COVID-19 outbreak. "SDT#14 prep work on high gear!! Twelve-aspect Mise-En-Scene session-1 with all HoDs!! Shoot from mid October," film's director Deva Katta posted on Twitter on Wednesday, tagging a picture of his head of

departments. A social drama, the film will see Sai Tej in the role of a young IAS officer, while Ramya Krishna is believed to be playing a chief minister. Nivetha Pethuraj is cast opposite Tej in the film, a joint production venture between J Bhagawan and Pulla Rao. Katta planned to shoot a month schedule in Eluru and Kolleru Lake and it remains to be seen whether he will stick to this plan. After completing this film, Sai Tej will move to the sets of Karthik Dandu's mystic thriller based on the superstitious beliefs of the late 70s.

Sri Saripalli, the director of Karthikeya's new film, talks to NAGARAJ GOUD about the inspiration behind the story, his actor's support to get the film off the ground and learning from VV Vinayak



Announced officially earlier this week, Karthikeya's new movie with Sri Saripalli is 40 percent completed. The actor agreed to spearhead the film after his breakthrough project *RX100* (2018) but as he was tied up with other commitments, Sri was "willing to wait." "The project went to floors 18 months after it was green-lit. It was worrisome because here in the industry anything can. There were hiccups on the way but Karthikeya stuck with me through thick and thin. He was just a phone call away and was prompt with his responses. He was the one who saw light at the end of the tunnel and kept me pushing. The project took off because of him," Sri tells us. A Hyderabad-set drama, the still-untitled film, Sri says, is an action-comedy set in an NIA backdrop. "Karthikeya will be seen as a 24-year-old new NIA recruit. The character is close to what he is in real life and it is the reason why I didn't alter a single scene to suit his body language. I'm not making an unconventional film. It is a film meant to entertain the audi-

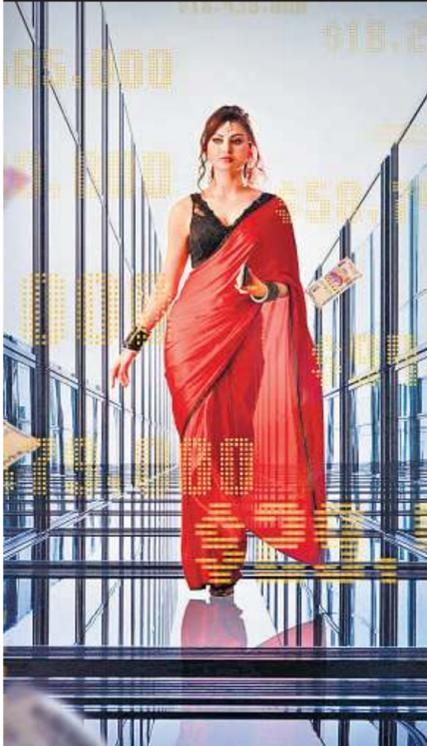
ence. The characters are serious and will be associating with their job honestly but the irony of the situation makes the audiences crack up. From start to end credits, we are trying to make sure that there is a smile on their face throughout the running time and their way back home. The teaser will encapsulate the basic concept of the film. The next schedule will mostly start in January," the director, who has a master's degree in filmmaking from Universal Studios, US, points out. The director has an interesting story to share on how he started developing the story. "My apartment in Jubilee Hills shared a compound wall with the CBI colony and I would see officers going in and coming out from my window. I didn't get to talk to them but could get a hang of their body language to an extent. From the observations, I conceived a character and formulated a story. Later, I realised that the story conflict falls under the purview of NIA not CBI. So I started digging more about NIA online. I've taken some cinematic lenience but the film would be authentic to look at. I'm

too small a person to get rendezvous with NIA officers for thorough research but that said I kept the proceedings simple," he explains. Sri is introducing Tamil actress Tanya Ravichandran into Telugu with the film. On the thought-process that went behind her casting, he informs that the role's prerequisite was a trained classical dancer. "Our best option in Telugu was Sai Pallavi but she was beyond our budget. So we didn't even try to approach her. I got to know about Tanya later and after scanning through her dance videos, I've signed her. We even shot portions involving her and she has done a fantastic job," informs the director, who assisted Vinayak for films like *Naayak* and *Alludu Sreenu*. "With Vinayak garu, the prep he undertakes before he embarks on a project is enormous. He shoots what he needs. In both the films I've worked under him, there isn't a single shot that he didn't use in the final product."

BLACK ROSE is an emotional thriller: Makers

The first look of actress Urvashi Rautela from her Telugu debut *Black Rose*, created by Sampath Nandi, was unveiled by the makers on Wednesday. Mohan Bharadwaj, screenplay writer of films like *Sneha Geetam* and *Dongaata*, is making his directorial debut with the project whose filming has been wrapped up in a start-to-finish schedule. It went to floors on August 17 last month. Based on a character named Shylock from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, the film, according to Nandi, also deals with the point 'transactions which have

no conscience or morals... are indicators of death' from *Kautilya's Arthashastra*. Bharadwaj said that it narrates the tale of a strong modern woman, Vasudha. "She is a 30-year-old beautiful, matured and kind woman. But she goes through a lot personally and professionally and how she confronts her challenges make the entire story," he said and added that people in this world can be categorised into two kinds — those who want to succeed in life and those who want to survive. "Vasudha belongs to the third category in that she wants to be happy," he stated about the emotional thriller.



OTT release for Anand's second film



Wrapped up before the coronavirus-induced lockdown, Anand Deverakonda and Varsha Bollam-starrer *Middle Class Melodies*, produced by Bhavya Creations, will have a direct-to-web release. According to a source, the makers have successfully negotiated the digital release with a streaming giant. The source informs, "The makers have been in talks with a leading streamer for the past two months and the deal was finalised recently. The film will drop on the streamer in the first half of November. The makers have been asked to get ready with the promotional material." A slice of life film minus the big stakes and outstanding drama, the film, directed by debutant Vinod Anantoju from a script of Janardhan Pasumarthi, sees Anand playing a vil-lager Raghava, an expert in whipping out Mumbai chutney. Hailing from Kolakaluru, which is 20.5 kms drive from Guntur, he aspires to open a hotel in Guntur and introduce Mumbai chutney to the locals. Fresh faces like Chaitanya Garikapati, Divya Sripada, Goparaju Ramana, Surabhi Prabhavathi, Prem Sagar and Prabhavathi Varma have played supporting roles.

NITHIIN BACK ON SETS

As reported by us earlier this month, the filming of Nithiin and Keerthy Suresh-starrer *Rang De*, directed by Venky Atluri, resumed in Hyderabad on Wednesday, with the unit following all safety protocols. The unit will shoot in the city for nearly two weeks before flying off to Europe for the other portions. The makers have reiterated that the film is scheduled for a Sankranti release, ruling out a direct OTT release.



Actress Adah Sharma is into martial arts, and often shares videos where she can be seen using the Silambam sticks to workout. "Lockdown or no lockdown I work out on my terrace. I don't really go to the gym. I mean I got to the gym sometimes but I really like my terrace. There is a sea view, breeze and so much space to do my martial arts. For the Silambam sticks I need a lot of space. I cannot do it in a closed space." On why there are only a handful of actresses who seem interested in martial arts, Adah said, "I think people pick an activity that is easier to get results quicker." She feels that learning a new activity takes time. "You get results quicker by running on the treadmill for 40 minutes — you would burn as much as I would probably in two hours with the (Silambam) sticks, because when you are learning a new skill you won't be immediately able to fluidly do it. You take time to get into it," she said, adding, "But I really like doing challenges. I got a few bruises. But it's fun and I enjoy it."

Adah prefers her terrace to gym for workout