



# the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

VIJAY KONDA AND  
RAJ TARUN TEAM  
UP AGAIN

Page 12

## MALAYALAM POET AKKITHAM ACHUTHAN WINS JNANPITH AWARD

Eminent Malayalam poet Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri was on Thursday conferred with the Jnanpith award at his residence 'Devayanam' by Kerala Culture Minister A.K. Balan. Appearing live from his office in the state Secretariat, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan paid tributes to the life and works of 93-year-old Akkitham, as he is popularly known. Seated in an armchair at his home, Akkitham received the award and became the sixth Keralaite to be conferred the prestigious literary award. Akkitham's work includes 'Irupatham Nootantinte Ithihasam', 'Balidarashanam' and 'Dharma Sooryan' among over 45 works of poems, plays and short stories.



## FORMER AUSTRALIAN CRICKETER DEAN JONES DIES OF HEART ATTACK

Former Australia cricketer Dean Jones passed away on Mumbai, sources said. He was 59. The cause of death was ascertained as "heart attack". Reportedly, Brett Lee, his fellow commentator at the IPL, tried to give him CPR, too, but unsuccessfully. Jones was in Mumbai working as a commentator for the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2020. Only this morning he had had breakfast with Lee and Nikhil Chopra. Reportedly, Jones had a massive heart attack in the lobby of the hotel where he was put up by BCCI's host broadcaster Star Sports. "It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing away of Mr. Dean Mervyn Jones AM. He died of a sudden cardiac arrest," Star said in a statement.



## CONGRESS SENIOR SALMAN KHURSHID NAMED IN DELHI RIOTS CHARGESHEET

Senior Congress leader and former Union Minister Salman Khurshid has been named in the latest chargesheet filed by the Delhi Police in the Delhi riots case for giving 'provocative speeches'. The 17,000-page chargesheet, filed on September 17, contains a statement from a witness saying: "Umar Khalid, Salman Khurshid, Nadeem Khan... they all used to give provocative speeches (at anti-CAA/NRC sit-ins in Delhi) and people used to get mobilised." The police have not mentioned the exact nature of the alleged provocative speeches. The identity of the witness has been concealed by the police (known as a protective witness).



## ONGC DOUSES FIRE AT HAZIRA; GAS SUPPLIES TO INDUSTRIES HIT

A fire at an ONGC plant caused by a pipeline rupture has cut gas supplies to customers including power and fertiliser companies, said a person familiar with the matter at gas marketing firm GAIL (India) Ltd. The fire broke out on Thursday morning at ONGC's Hazira gas processing plant in Gujarat and has since been extinguished, ONGC said, adding that it is working to resume normal operations. There were no casualties, ONGC said. GAIL, India's biggest gas marketing firm, supplies the bulk of gas produced at ONGC's western offshore fields to customers in the states of Gujarat, Goa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.



India Ratings  
maintains  
negative outlook  
on NBFCs

8



75% of new Covid  
cases from 10  
States/UTs

5



Dharani: Panacea  
for all land  
disputes

2

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam: Tithi: Navami: 06:43 pm

Nakshatram: Purva Ashadha: 06:31 pm

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

Rahukalam: 10:37 am - 12:07 pm

Yamagandam: 03:06 pm - 04:36 pm

Variyam: 02:49 am - 04:29 am

12:00 am - 05:31 am

Gulika: 07:38 am - 09:08 am

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amratikalam: 01:38 pm - 03:16 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:43 am - 12:31 pm

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Thunderstorm

Temp: 33/24

Humidity: 77%

Sunrise: 06:05 am

Sunset: 06:09 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated September 24, 2020 5:00 PM



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and his Karnataka counterpart BS Yeddyurappa offer prayers during a ceremony to lay the foundation stone for two pilgrim complexes, at Tirumala on Thursday.

## Yeddy lays stone for Rs 200 cr pilgrim complex at Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa on Thursday laid the foundation stone for two massive complexes for pilgrims to be built at an estimated cost of Rs 200 crore at nearby Tirumala.

The foundations were laid in the presence of AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

Based on the plan given by the Karnataka government, the TTD which governs the hill shrine would construct a mammoth pilgrims amenities complex and a marriage hall for the benefit of devotees from the neighbouring state, a temple official told P T I.

3

## JAGAN, YEDIYURAPPA OFFER PRAYERS AT BALAJI TEMPLE

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy along with his Karnataka counterpart BS Yeddyurappa offered prayers in the temple of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala on Thursday. Earlier, Jagan was given a warm reception on his arrival at Mahadwaram.

CVSO Gopinath Jatti. Later, Jagan received Yeddyurappa on the later's arrival at Mahadwaram.

Following this, both the Chief Ministers had darshan of Lord Venkateswara.

After darshan, they were rendered Vedasirvachanam at Ranganayakula Mandapam.

TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy and EO Anil Kumar Singhal offered Theerthaprasadams to the CMs of both the states.

## SPB NO MORE?

■ Health further deteriorated last 24 hours

■ MGM docs say singer is on maximum life support

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Renowned playback singer 'Gana Gandharva' SP Balasubrahmanyam, who has been battling Covid-19 for over a month and on life-support despite testing negative recently, perhaps passed away on Thursday night.

Although the hospital authorities kept saying (until we went to the press) that he was 'extremely critical' and on 'maximum life support', his close relatives in the hospital believe and shared with media persons that he is no more.

Joining millions of his fans across the globe, we also wish his full recovery and hope that the doctors, who seem to be doing their best, will rescue him from the jaws of death.

Given the extremely delicate situation, his family members reached the hospital to have last sight. Earlier, doctors said SPB fighting Covid-19 for over a month and on life support is extremely critical,



2

## Deepika to join NCB probe on Sat, Rakul today

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Actor Deepika Padukone will join the NCB probe into alleged Bollywood-drugs nexus on Saturday, an official said on Thursday.

Earlier, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) had summoned Padukone on Friday to record her statement in the drugs case, a fall-out of probe into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput.

According to the official, the 34-year-old actress has acknowledged the summons sent by the central agency and will join the investigation on Saturday.

2

## Indian students appeal in English test visa row

PNS ■ LONDON

Several Indian students are among over 200 overseas student signatories of a letter delivered to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Downing Street in London on Thursday, seeking justice in the wake of being accused of cheating in a compulsory English language test six years ago.

The scandal, believed to have impacted around 34,000 international students, relates to the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), a compulsory requirement in some student



Many of the students caught up in the row are Indian and have consistently maintained their innocence

visa cases.

Many of the students caught up in the row are Indian and have consistently maintained their innocence and have been lobbying the government for a chance to prove their inno-

cence. "We were innocent but our visas were refused or revoked and the government gave us no way to defend ourselves. Our futures were destroyed and we were left to fight a years-long

## Centre permits AP, TS to raise additional loans

■ States rewarded for backing 'One Nation-One Ration Card' reform

L VENKAT RAM REDDY  
■ HYDERABAD

In partial relief, the Centre has granted permission to five cash-strapped States, including Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, to raise additional loans totalling Rs 9,913 crore through open market borrowings (OMBs).

The other three states are Goa, Karnataka and Tripura.

This permission has been accorded as these States could successfully meet the condition of implementing the 'One Nation One Ration Card' system, as part of the slew of reforms being introduced by the Centre, obviously with strings attached.

The Department of Expenditure, Union Ministry of Finance, issued orders to this effect on Thursday.

Accordingly, AP has been allowed to raise additional loans totalling Rs 2,525 crore, Telangana Rs 2,508 crore, Karnataka Rs 4,509 crore, Goa Rs 223 crore, and Tripura Rs 148 crore.

In view of the unprecedented crisis induced by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Central Government had in May, 2020 allowed an additional borrowing limit of up to 2 percent of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) to States for the year 2020-21.

This made an amount up to Rs 4,27,302 crore available to the States.

One percent of this was subject to the implementation

of following four specific State-level reforms, with weightage for each reform being 0.25 percent of G S D P :  
Implementation of One Nation One Ration Card system; Ease of Doing Business reform; Urban Local bodies/ utility reforms; and Power Sector reforms.

The remaining additional borrowing limit of 1 percent was to be released in two instalments of 0.50 percent each: first one, immediately to all the States as untied; and the second one, upon undertaking at least three out of the above-mentioned reforms.

The Government of India had granted permission to

States to raise the first 0.50 percent as OMB in June, 2020. This made an additional amount of Rs 1,06,830 crore available to the States.

As the TS government has already rejected power sector reforms and ULB/utility reforms, Telangana will be eligible to claim only additional loans for implementing EoDB reforms later.

This being so, the AP government has agreed to implement power sector reforms and EoDB reforms. With this, AP is entitled to raise additional loans for the power sector and EoDB reforms later.

After that, states will be allowed four increments of 0.25 per cent subject to implementation of four specific state-level reforms, where the weightage of each reform is 0.25 per cent of GSDP.

## CBI steps up probe into Vivekananda murder case

Close aide of MP Avinash Reddy taken into custody

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After a lull, the CBI has stepped up investigation into the murder of former minister YS Vivekananda Reddy, uncle of YSRC president and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

On Thursday, the CBI authorities are learnt to have taken into custody several people, including Uday Kumar Reddy, a close follower of Kadapa MP YS Avinash Reddy.



The authorities, who seized the mobile phones of Uday, an employee in Uranium Corporation of India Ltd in Kadapa, are now questioning

him.

Earlier, the CBI took into custody a footwear shop owner Munna and his family members for questioning.

The authorities found cash of Rs 48 lakh and 25 tolas of gold, besides fixed deposits worth another Rs 20 lakh in his bank lockers in Kadiri in Anantapur district.

Apparently, Viveka had reprimanded Munna in the past in an issue of polygamy and settled the domestic issue.

2

## Farm Bills to hurt interests of 62 cr farmers, says AICC

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Congress on Thursday termed three farm bills as "anti-farmer" and said that it would adversely affect the interest of 62 crores farmers and farm labourers by destroying the agriculture produce market system (APMC) in the country. The party cited Bihar as an example, saying in 2006 the APMC Act was abolished in the state resulting in a

bad situation for farmers whose produce was purchased at cheaper rates by middlemen and sold in other states at MSP after earning profits.

The three anti-farmer bills passed by the BJP government will adversely affect the interests of 62 crore farmers and farm labourers by destroying the APMC. The farmers will neither get the minimum support price (MSP), nor will they get the mar-

ket rate of his produce," Congress national spokesperson Pawan Khara told reporters here. Flanked by Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress (JKPCC) president Ghulam Ahmed Mir and other senior party leaders, Khara said the three laws were passed after bypassing parliamentary traditions and genuine objections of the Congress and other opposition parties.

2

## NGOs urge Prez to stay FCRA Bill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several NGOs on Thursday appealed to President Ram Nath Kovind to not sign the FCRA amendment bill and send it back for a parliamentary committee consultation.

The Parliament on Wednesday passed a bill to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act to make furnishing of Aadhaar

numbers by office bearers of NGOs mandatory for registration. The government has asserted that the proposed legislation is aimed at transparency and is not against any NGO.

"We request the President of India to send back this amendment and that a special committee to be appointed to review the same in an appropriate manner.



2



In the good old days, when it was supposed that life and living conditions were better than in the immediate period that followed, there was no concept of somebody owning any land. The whole expanse belonged to the state. Whoever was capable of tilling the land, to the extent possible and depending on one's own capabilities, was in possession of that particular piece.

However, with passing of time, possessiveness started pervading giving place to selfish interests where the thought of 'I' and 'mine' brewed. Organized farming followed, with estimates of value for land which conferred status. With the advent of modern market, the value of land and the produce from it gained market value and naturally land ownership in different forms emerged over a period. Over centuries, land ownership patterns changed.

There was a phase where land ownership meant physically possessing the land. With the advent of absentee land ownership, possession of the

# Dharani: Panacea for all land disputes

land documents on one's name conferring the right over the land became the order of the day. Then came the phase, where both possessing land as well as documents became imperative. Over time, land disputes often resulted in bloody conflicts, criminal offences, and prolonged court cases. The main reason was actual possession of land and entry in the records will be on two different persons.

Over the past three years, Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao and a team of senior bureaucrats, experts and legal advisors have been deeply involved in a noble and extremely difficult task of establishing a system that would settle existing land-related disputes once and for all and give no room for any fresh dispute. A beginning in this direction was made through updating and purification of land records. This

**Over the past 3 years, K Chandrashekhara Rao and a team of senior bureaucrats, experts and legal advisors have been involved in a noble and extremely difficult task of establishing a system that would settle existing land disputes once and for all.**

paved the way for passing the new Revenue Act. Central to the new Revenue Act is the Dharani web portal. For, Dharani would permanently put an end to all land disputes and litigation, besides fixing the land rights forever.

It is pertinent here to recall what the Chief Minister said while outlining the features of the new Revenue Act and the Dharani site. He said ever since organised farming began in the history of mankind about 6,000 years ago, 95 per cent of people have been eking out their living on land and land-related activities.

In our country, since the days of the First Five-Year Plan, planners have been advocating proper maintenance of land records as the basis of good administration. This was reiterated in the Second Plan and Third Plans. The Sixth Plan envisaged the updating of land records from 1980 to 1985. According to the Seventh Plan document, land records form the basis of all land reform measures; and, therefore, regular periodic updating of land records is essential in all states. The Eighth Plan and the Ninth Plan also envisaged the fulfill-



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

ment of all principles of the National Land Reforms Policy i.e. abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms with security to actual cultivators, redistribution of ceiling, surplus land consolidation of holdings and updating of land records. Subsequently in the 73rd Amendment to the

Constitution it has been mentioned that computerization of land records is an essential step to achieve decentralized planning and effective administration. All these remained on paper.

As the Chief Minister pointed out, none of the past governments, for reasons best known to them, ever bothered to integrate IT into Revenue matters. This led to large-scale corruption, emergence of the land mafia, enmity between the revenue officials and the poor. Telangana State has 2.75 crore acres landmass. Of this, cultivable portion is 1.65 crore acres. There are about 66.56 lakh acres of forest land in the State. There are other categories of land such as non-agriculture lands. The proposed Dharani web portal would have data on just two categories of land: agriculture and non-agriculture lands. With one click, one can know

the category of the land in question.

The entire land transaction can be done within five to 10 minutes; registration, mutation and final documents of the land would be ready. Details regarding the land transaction would be available on a click and up to date. Details regarding the crop loans taken, loans raised pledging the land would also be posted on the portal. This will put an end to corruption while seeking the Encumbrance Certificate. Bank authorities also can check land details online. Anybody can access the data from anywhere in the world. They cannot tamper with the records, but can view, download the data.

Under the New revenue Act no officer at any level is given discretionary power. No body would need to run from pillar to post in the offices. The land rates for the entire State will be fixed and available in the portal. The entire registration process would be completed, upon submission of

necessary documents. Land records would be updated on real-time basis and MROs will have no discretionary powers whatsoever. The portal provides encumbrance details of the land and the citizen need not apply for it separately.

Hence, the Chief Minister has already instructed the officials concerned to register houses, plots, apartment flats and other non-agricultural properties of people, in rural and urban areas, which are not yet registered online so far within 15 days. He wanted officials to take precautions and help maintain land records with cent percent transparency through the Dharani portal. Dharani would also offer a GIS-based system, which provides visual representation of the land record data.

Dharani portal is thus designed to serve as a panacea for all land disputes, making Telangana's revamped revenue set-up a model for other states.

(With VJM Divakar)

## AP, K'taka CMs participate in Sundarakanda Pathanam

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the 106th day of Sundarakanda Pathanam, the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka States YS Jaganmohan Reddy and BS Yediyurappa respectively participated at Nadeerajana Mandapam at Tirumala on Thursday morning.

The principal of Dharmagiri Veda Vignana Peetham Kuppa Siva Subrahmanya Avadhani rendered shlokas narrated by Akella Vibhishana Sharma, the project officer of the Sri Venkateswara Higher Vedic Studies.

Artists of the Annamacharya Project, led by Dr Gurazada Madhusudhana Sharma, rendered the famous Annamacharya Kriti, "Tandanana Ahi.. Tandanana Pure.." at the beginning of the programme and concluded with Hanuman Bhajan.

Among those present were Deput CM Narayana Swamy, Ministers P Ramachandra Reddy, Vellampalli Srinivasa Rao, Venugopala Krishna, Alla Nani and Kodali Nani, MPs Mithun Reddy and Vemireddi Pratap Reddy.



## Malayappa as Venkatadri Ramudu rides on Hanumantha vahanam on sixth day of fete

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

On Thursday, the sixth day of the ongoing annual Brahmotsavams at Tirumala, Malayappaswami donned the Avatara of Venkatadri Ramudu and blessed devotees on Hanumanta Vahanam.

Hanumanta vahanam is usually considered as an icon of devotional bliss. Lord Hanuman symbolically stands for pure devotion, complete surrender and absence of ego. His character

tells us what we can do in our lives by becoming pure. Hanuman represents the tenets of devotion and Sharanagathi in its both physical and intellectual form.

Malayappa Swamy by riding Hanumantha Vahana sent message to His devotees that He is always there with those who completely shower pure love towards Him leaving aside their egos.

TTD Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal and others were present on the occasion.



## Yeddy lays stone for...

Continued from Page 1

The Karnataka government would fully fund the construction of the complexes, he said.

Before laying the foundation stones, Yediyurappa accompanied by Jagan offered worship to Lord Venkateswara.

Jagan had reached the hill temple in advance and received Yediyurappa on his arrival at the main entrance.

## Security at Sri City reviewed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Additional Director General of Police (Law and Order), Ravishankar Ayyanar on Thursday reviewed the security systems in place at the Sri City Special Economic Zone at Satyavedu in Chittoor district.

Accompanied by Chittoor district Superintendent of Police Senthil Kumar and police officials, Ayyanar inspected the Foxconn manufacturing facility at Sri City and reviewed the security sys-



tem there. A Sri City release said a meeting was held with the SEZ MD Sannareddy Ravindra and other officials on law and order in the region.

Ravindra apprised Ayyanar about the existing set up and

mentioned some specific issues, the release said.

In recent times, some cases of robbery were reported wherein mobile phones manufactured at Sri City were looted while being transported to different cities by trucks, the MD said.

The ADGP asked all the stakeholders to evolve a consolidated approach and action plan for strengthening the safety and security systems for resisting any challenges and security threats.

## Row after temple staffer gets gift from Christian organisation

PNS ■ SRISAILAM

A row erupted after a parcel was sent to a contract employee working in the tourism wing of Srisailem Devasthanam from a Christian organisation in Kurnool.

The parcel was sent to a family living in the Dalit colony near the temple through the RTC cargo services.

The locals identified the parcel at the bus stand and tipped the Srisailem Temple Devasthanam officials about it, who in turn informed the police following which a probe was initiated.

## Deepika to join NCB...

Continued from Page 1

Another actor, Rakul Preet Singh, and Padukone's manager Karishma Prakash will join the investigation on Friday, he said.

Prakash's WhatsApp chats included conversations about drugs with one 'D' and central agency wanted to find out who this person was, NCB sources had said earlier.

Meanwhile, statements of fashion designer Simone Khambatta and Shruti Modi, Rajput's former manager, were recorded by the NCB.

## SPB NO MORE?

Continued from Page 1

The 74-year-old singer, was admitted on August 5, "remains on ECMO (extra-corporeal membrane oxygenation) and other life support measures," MGM Healthcare said.

"His condition in the last 24 hours has deteriorated further warranting maximal life support," Assistant Director (Medical Services), MGM Healthcare, Dr Anuradha Baskaran said.

## CBI steps up probe...

Continued from Page 1

The CBI authorities also interrogated Munna's first wife in this regard.

It has been more than one-and-a-half years since Viveka was found to have been brutally murdered in his own residence. It triggered a political war between the YSRC and the TDP.

While the then TDP government constituted a special



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Dr Rajendra Singh, known as 'Waterman' of India, along with environmentalist Bolisetty Satyanarayana has filed a writ in the AP High Court over the untreated sewage water being released into sea and other water bodies in the State.

Dr Singh and Satyanarayana had conducted Uttarandhra Rivers, Reservoirs and Water Bodies conservation Yatra two years ago. They also wrote letters and made open requests to authorities and to the Chief Minister to take action in this connection.

The PIL is against the AP government, Chairman of APCCB, AP State Biodiversity

Board and the Commissioner of Visakhapatnam (GVMC). The petitioners prayed the HC to issue a writ, order or direction, more particularly one in the nature of Writ of Mandamus by remedial actions of not allowing untreated industrial effluents and toxic sewage water into the nearby sea water and adjacent water bodies.

"Negligence in monitoring

by APCCB and district authorities concerned is not only endangering flora and fauna, biodiversity but also the lives and health conditions of the fisher folks living on the abutting sea shore of the area," Dr Singh contended.

He urged the High Court to pass an order to check the release of untreated sewage water to water bodies.

After considering the circumstances of the case, Justice Rakesh Kumar and Justice Uma Devi have asked the parties to file their counter by November 6 and at the same time directing the concerned authorities to take necessary steps to control the pollution as alleged in the petition.

## Indian students...

Continued from Page 1

We are terrified of catching the virus and being hospitalised, or dying with a black mark still against our names. This is not the future we wanted or worked for," they wrote.

Several reports over the years, including by the United Kingdom's National Audit Office and House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC), have flagged "flawed" evidence used by the Home Office against the affected students and raised serious doubts over the decision to revoke or refuse tens of thousands of visas.

## NGOs urge Prez to stay...

Continued from Page 1

The legislation needs to be enabling and at par with FDI for corporates, and it needs to be done in a consultative manner with NGOs," Poonam Muttreja, Executive Director of the Population Foundation of India (PFI) said during an online press conference.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 51,870 (10 gm)	
₹ 600	
<b>SILVER</b>	
₹ 57,000 (1kg)	
₹ 2000	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹187
Without Skin	₹213
Broiler at Farm	₹129
EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	510
HYDERABAD	507
VISAKHAPATNAM	515
RETAIL PRICE	₹5.01

## Daily recoveries surpass cases for sixth day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Daily new recoveries in India have surpassed the new cases of coronavirus infection for the last six days and the country's total Covid-19 recoveries have surged to 46.7 lakh exceeding active cases by more than 37 lakh.

A total 87,374 people have recuperated in a span of 24 hours in the country, while the number of new confirmed cases reported is 86,508, according to the data updated at 8 am on Thursday.

With its focussed strategies and effective people-centric measures, India is reporting exponential increase in recoveries, the Union Health ministry said.

"New recoveries in India



have exceeded the new cases for the last six days. This is a result of focus on testing, tracing, treatment, surveillance and clear messaging, as highlighted by the prime minister in his review meeting with seven high focus states and UTs on Wednesday," the ministry said.

A total 87,374 people have recuperated in a span of 24

hours taking the total number of recoveries to 46,74,987 pushing the recovery rate to 81.55 per cent, the ministry said.

"As India records more recoveries than the new cases, the gap between recovered cases and active cases is continuously widening. The recovered cases (46,74,987) exceed active cases (9,66,382) by more than 37 lakh. tThis has also

ensured that the active caseload accounts for merely 16.86 per cent of the total cases," the ministry highlighted.

Following the national lead, 13 states and UTs are also reporting higher number of new recoveries than the new cases.

Among the 10 states and UT reporting 74 per cent recovered cases, Maharashtra has maintained this lead with 19,476 cases (22.3 pc) for the sixth consecutive day.

These sustained encouraging results have been made possible with the Centre-led proactive and calibrated strategy of 'test, track and treat' which has focussed on 'Chase the Virus approach', the ministry said.

"Early identification through high and aggressive testing,

prompt surveillance and tracking combined with high quality medical care through Standard of Care protocol issued by the Centre has aided the high number of recoveries," it underlined.

There has been sustained focus of the Union and state and UT governments on improved and effective clinical treatment in hospitals, supervised home isolation, use of non-invasive oxygen support, use of steroids, anti-coagulants, and improved services of ambulances for ferrying patients for prompt and timely treatment.

Tireless efforts of ASHA workers have ensured effective surveillance and tracking progress of patients in supervised home isolation.

## AP records 7,855 fresh Covid cases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Continuing the downward slide, Andhra Pradesh registered 7,855 fresh cases of coronavirus, while 8,807 more patients got cured on Thursday.

The State also reached a new milestone of over one lakh tests per million (population), the highest among states, after a total of 53,78,367 samples were screened till date. Tamil Nadu is far behind with 87,338 TPM.

The overall infection positivity rate stood at 12.17 per cent, against the national average of 8.50 per cent but in

terms of recoveries, AP was seven percentage points ahead of the national average of 81.55 per cent.

The State also reported 52 more Covid-19 deaths in 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday.

The overall mortality rate stood at 0.85 per cent, compared to the national average of 1.59 per cent.

The aggregate number of coronavirus positive cases touched 6,54,385, recoveries 5,79,474 and death toll 5,558 so far, the bulletin said.

The number of active cases declined further to 69,353.



CAPSULE

**rites wins  
Rs 206 cr  
contract to build  
RoBs in AP**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

rites Ltd on Thursday said it has bagged a Rs 206 crore contract to construct four road over bridges in Andhra Pradesh from Indian Railways.

"rites Ltd has been awarded a turnkey contract for construction of (ROBs) in replacement of existing level crossings on competition basis from Railway Board amounting to Rs 205.85 crore," the company said in a statement.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be executed between rites and South Central Railway (SCR) in this regard in due course, the statement said.

ROW OVER MINISTER'S COMMENTS ON PM

# BJP cadre up in arms against Nani

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The BJP leaders and workers staged protests across the state on Thursday demanding dismissal of Minister for Civil Supplies Kodali Venkateswara Rao alias Nani from the Cabinet. The minister's comment on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and also on the tradition of TTD with regard to 'Declaration of Faith' has triggered an outrage.

Nani made comments on Modi objecting to the demand of BJP leaders, who wanted YS Bharti, wife of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, to accompany him to Tirumala temple. The minister hit back by questioning BJP whether Modi and Yogi Adityanath brought their wives for laying the foundation stone of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya.

The BJP leaders and activists staged protests in Vijayawada, Vizag and Guntur demanding dismissal of minister and warned intensifying of protests

- Demand his dismissal from the Cabinet
- Nani made comments on Modi objecting to the demand of BJP leaders, who wanted YS Bharti, wife of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, to accompany him to Tirumala temple
- The minister hit back by questioning BJP whether Modi and Yogi Adityanath brought their wives for laying the foundation stone of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya



if the government fails to do so. In Vizag, the BJP cadre led by MLC PVN Madhav staged a protest in front of Gandhi statue near GVMC.

BJP leaders and activists led by its state secretary Vishnuvardhan Reddy staged a protest on the road in Vijayawada as the police prevented them to do so at the sub-

collector office. The police made preventive arrests of BJP leaders and shifted them to various police stations and later released them.

Vishnuvardhan Reddy alleged that Nani and YSRCP MLA RK Roja intentionally provoked Hindus through their objectionable comments against Hindu customs and

traditions. He reminded that police arrested 41 persons based on a complaint for hurling stones on a church but did not arrest a single person in the Antaredi chariot burning case, which shows the biased attitude of the government.

He alleged that BJP lodged a complaint against Nani with the police but in vain and demand-

ed that Jagan dismiss him with immediate effect for his objectionable comments against Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister.

At Amalapuram, the BJP cadre urged Minister for Social Welfare Pinepe Viswaroop to advise the Chief Minister to drop Nani from the Cabinet. BJP leaders led by its Parliamentary Constituency president Manepalli Ayyaji Vema staged a protests in front of Amalapuram Sub-Collector's office on Thursday and submitted a memorandum to Sub-Collector Himanshu Koushik.

In Kakinada, BJP staged a dharna in front of the Collectorate led by its constituency president Ch Ram Kumar. Similarly, the BJP activists staged dharnas in front of Narasapuram and other Revenue Divisional Offices in East and West Godavari districts.

The BJP leaders with their activists in large numbers joined dharna and raised slogans against Nani at Guntur demanding his dismissal.

CM'S VISIT TO TIRUMALA

# Sajjala accuses Oppn of playing faith card

PNS ■ AMARAVATI



Opposition parties are playing religious card for their selfish ends by politicising Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's visit to Tirumala, alleged Government Advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, he said the opposition parties are trying to defame the government by creating unnecessary disputes involving the Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister went to Tirumala and took part in all rituals duly following the traditions. He recalled that Jagan had presented silk robes with utmost devotion and added that the TDP leaders with the support of their favoured media are creating ruckus and misleading the public by drawing cheap controversies. He stated that an administrator will not be confined to a particular caste or religion, Jagan is a people's leader following the footsteps of his father Dr

YS Rajasekhara Reddy. Sajjala alleged that the recent attacks on temples was conspiratorial where the opposition TDP leaders are suspected to be behind the series of incidents and stated that Naidu has been trying to politicise by creating communal clashes and religious conflicts to divert the public attention from the land scam issue.

He stated that the TDP leaders are creating controversies on the attacks of Hindu temples, not with faith in Hinduism, but with the grievance that they were not in power. He asserted that Naidu is a litigant, who always strives for public attention and thus politicised minor issues to get political mileage

# Organic food for herbivores at zoo

SUMIT ONKA  
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Nowadays health conscious people consuming organic food is common but being conscious about the health of animals in a zoo and feeding them organic food is quite rare to witness.

Such a noble cause has been taken up by the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) in Vizag as the authorities have developed two organic fodder plots spread over seven acres. And, their efforts that began in June have also paid off as the harvest is also ready.

The animals in the forest may gorge over the naturally available food resources. But the inmates in the zoo depend on the food provided to them.

Varieties of grass, green leaves and veggies grown in the Vizag zoo, which is spread over 625

- Such a noble cause has been taken up by the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) in Vizag as the authorities have developed two organic fodder plots spread over seven acres. And, their efforts that began in June have also paid off as the harvest is also ready

- Dr Nandani Salaria (IFS), after joining the Vizag zoo as curator, initiated the green fodder parks in the zoo



- Speaking about the plans behind the green initiative, she said, "The primary objective is to ensure good health of the zoo inmates. The foods the living creatures take reflect on their health. We hope, with no chemicals, the pesticide-free fodder will keep the inmates here fit"

would also be taken up in future considering feasibility and sustainability," said the zoo chief.

She further elaborated the other objective is to trim down the expenditure as the Coronavirus induced lockdown has stopped the revenue generation of the zoo, especially coming from the visitors and other sources. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests N Prateep Kumar, appreciated the efforts of the Vizag zoo park authorities after visiting the fodder plots.

The World Bank funded works are also being taken up in the zoo under Andhra Pradesh Disaster Recovery Project (APDRP). Ripped apart by the gusty wind during the Hudhud cyclone, which passed right over the zoo, the authorities are taking various initiatives, especially to improve the enclosures and moats of the zoo inmates.

# 4 held for robbing women

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Vizag city police on Thursday arrested five persons in three separate incidents for their involvement in various crimes.

In the first incident, the city police rescued two women and arrested four persons, including a juvenile for robbing the two women. The arrested have been identified as M Ganesh (30), N Yellaji (31) and T Kumar (20) and a juvenile.

DCP (crime) V Suresh Babu said that the four people on September 22 night threatened an auto-driver near Old Gajuwaka and stole his auto-rickshaw. One of the four members gang posed as auto-driver while the remaining as passengers in the auto-rickshaw and the vehicle was heading towards Duvvada area in the city.

Around 12.15 am, two women came from Vijayawada in a bus and alighted near Duvvada and they are waiting for another vehicle to reach their destination Anakapalle. Noticing the two women at that time, the gang stopped the



auto-rickshaw and claimed that the auto-rickshaw was heading towards Anakapalle.

The two-women boarded the auto-rickshaw. Later, the gang threatened the women with knives and relieved them of Rs 4,000, bags, mobile phones and others from their possession and pushed them from the vehicle.

Based on the information from the police patrolling teams, the police led by P Suryanarayana (Inspector of Crime, South Sub-Division) nabbed the gang in the wee hours of Wednesday. The police also rescued the women and recovered the stolen property and the auto-rickshaw from the gang.

DCP said that prior to the crime, M Ganesh, N Yellaji and two others robbed one person to the tune of Rs 4,800 when the person boarded the auto-rickshaw.

The juvenile was handed over to his parents while the three accused were sent for remand. The police said that M Ganesh is an old-offender and he was involved in over 30 crimes and similarly N Yellaji has been involved in some property offences in the city.

The DCP said that they also arrested one K Raju (32) for his involvement in theft of bikes and auto-rickshaws. The investigation has revealed that N Yellaji has also been involved in a pick-pocketing case.

NSS DAY CELEBRATED

# 'Youth activism can bring a social change'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The NSS (National Service Scheme) Day was celebrated by GITAM Deemed to be University NSS units here on Thursday. A special webinar was organised by the university to encourage the volunteers during the present Covid-19 to serve the society.

Addressing the NSS volunteers, GITAM University Vice-Chancellor Prof K Sivaramakrishna said that the present generation lacks the critical social connections, which are crucial for their future development. NSS teaches the development of society at large as well as community and personality development. He observed that youth activism and engagement can bring about important social changes.

Satya Sai Seva Organisation Andhra Pradesh and Telangana services head MS Prakash Rao mentioned that when young

people contribute their ideas and energy to addressing social issues, they begin to see themselves as capable leaders, who can make important contributions to the lives of others. He said that service to humanity is service to God.

He advised the volunteers to study deeply before attending any social problem for better solutions.

University Registrar Prof KVG D Balaji appreciated the NSS volunteers for actively involving in Coronavirus awareness programmes. Dr Nikhila and Dr Ramana Rao of GITAM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (GIMSIR) Hospital explained the importance of public awareness programmes during the present Covid-19 conditions.

GITAM NSS Coordinator Dr A Srinivas explained the strength of GITAM NSS and the importance of NSS in community service.

# Jagan should break silence on Delhi visits, demands Yanamala

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy should explain to the people what projects and promises he took up with the Centre during his latest visit to Delhi, demanded former Finance Minister and TDP senior leader Yanamala Ramakrishnu.

He asked why the Chief Minister was keeping mum on all major issues, including his visits to New Delhi. It was unfortunate that Jagan was not able to hold joint press conferences with any Union Minister after meeting them in Delhi.

In a statement here on Thursday, the Opposition leader in the Council alleged that the Chief Minister's meetings with Union Ministers were solely aimed at safeguarding his own future and escaping from his cases but not for the larger interests of the people.

Jagan harped on the Special Category Status prior to the

elections but now he was not at all raising this issue during his visits to Delhi, he pointed out.

Accusing the YSRCP of perpetrating a 'loot and hoard' regime on people, he deplored that Jagan has thrown all promises in the bifurcation Act to the winds.



"Though the Amaravati Capital issue was pending before the courts, Jagan and his MPs were repeatedly raising this issue with the Central government. The Chief Minister has made many visits to Delhi since he took over and it is his bounden duty to tell people about the new projects he brought for the State," he demanded.

The TDP leader said that

there was no doubt that Jagan had broken all records by bringing Rs 1.28 lakh crore in just 16 months of his regime without creating any wealth for the State. Whereas, the TDP regime was known for real records like the Guinness record for pouring 31,000 cubic metres of concrete in a single day in Polavaram project. While the TDP completed 72 per cent works in 60 months, the YSRCP could not complete even two per cent works in Polavaram in its 16 months rule so far.

He expressed surprise that the YSRCP government has stopped all development works and projects in the state but it has not stopped asking the Centre for funds.

The Chief Minister has no minimum understanding that the Central funds would be released when his regime shows some progress in the projects. There would be no support if the State goes on misusing the funds in every way possible, he said.

# Police foil YC rally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police on Thursday thwarted Youth Congress leaders' efforts from organising a 'torch rally' opposing the Centre's Farm Bills. The police gathered in huge numbers at the New MLA Quarters and obstructed the Youth Congress leaders. The police did not even allow the Youth Congress activists to light the torches. Youth Congress contemplated organising the rally from New MLA Quarters to Ambedkar Statue located at Tank Bund.

However, the Youth Congress activists reached Ambedkar Statue without organising a torch rally and staged candle light demonstration at Ambedkar Statue.

DS NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION DAY

# NEP launch a silver lining, says Jindal University V-C

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Students should learn the values that the late Damodaram Sanjivayya was known for, said OP Jindal Global University founder Vice-Chancellor Prof C Raj Kumar. He also said that the university will be benefitted by the services of Prof S Surya Prakash and Prof Bhavani Prasad Panda, who are the founder Vice-Chancellors of MNLU-Aurangabad and MNLU-Mumbai respectively.

Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University celebrated its 13th Foundation Day on September 23 as a part of the celebration, the university organising a three-day national webinar on National Education Policy-2020 till September 25.

The seminar was inaugurated by Vice-Chancellor Prof Surya Prakash. In the three days sem-

inar, experts will be discussing about implementation and impact of 'National education policy 2020'.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made the universities around the world give a new meaning to the word 'resilience'. He emphasised on the responsibility that comes with the privilege of the students in continuing their learning process even in these tough times unlike the millions of students whose learning is affected. He said that one should keep this in mind and be more responsible.

The launch of NEP-2020 is a silver lining in these tough times. It is a document with a great vision and it is needed at this hour due to the prevailing conditions, particularly in higher education. According to him there are 10 important aspects to improve the quality of education.



The first one is the vision of the NEP to develop multi-disciplinary holistic liberal education. The second aspect is about the enhanced student experience.

The third is concerned with the most important aspect of faculty development and teacher education. The fourth is about the development of the research, eco-system to make way for innovation. The fifth aspect is related regulatory reforms and the need of autonomy wherein the policy aims for light and tight

regulation as the higher education in India is over-regulated and under-governed.

The sixth significant issue is the effort to balance quality and equity of access to education so as to make the system inclusive and more diverse. The seventh aspect is about the consolidation of higher education institutions and the formation of multi-disciplinary universities so as to cater to the needs of the day. The eighth aspect is related to funding, wherein the policy takes

about both public funding and private not for profit philanthropy. The ninth aspect is about the governance and leadership in institution development, administration and institutional planning. The 10th aspect is concerned about the internationalisation, accreditation and digitalisation to make it better and equitable.

He opined that the execution of NEP-2020 requires commitment, investment of resources, recognition of institutional challenges, behavioural aspects, and cohesive collaboration among the governments, regulators and higher educational institutions to realise the vision of the NEP 2020. According to him, the following five key areas of reforms, re-imagination and transformation to go ahead: first is about creating a culture of trust and collaboration among the govern-

ments, regulators and higher educational institutions, which is lacking at the moment. The second area is concerned with institutional autonomy, academic freedom and independence so that the institutions take decisions with responsibility and accountability vested with themselves than with the government, or regulatory bodies.

The third aspect deals with the effective engagement of higher education institutions in consultancy and research related activities of the government bodies. The fourth issue is concerned with the need of more transparent and accountable mechanisms in government and regulatory bodies so that the system propels towards development. The last aspect is related to the empowerment of institutions of eminence so as to create world-class institutions.

# Bio-Bubble camp for cricket coaches

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Cricket Association (ACA) is conducting a two-week long 'Bio-Bubble' camp for coaches, trainers, physio and video analysts in its Vizianagaram unit from September 23.

ACA President P Sarath Chandra Reddy said: "ACA is conducting this programme keeping in view the pandemic situation prevailing due to Corona. Also this programme is aimed and designed in such a way that our support staff are experiencing and practising the safety measures, which are being strictly implemented in the programme. This will enable them to implement the safety measures among all the players during the ensuing cricket season."

"In all, 21 are participating in this programme. All the participants will undergo strict training such as dos and don'ts during their regular coaching and matches likely to start once the pandemic is off," he said.

Besides the strict regimen of social distancing, use of masks, sanitisation, nutritious diet and other precautions, the trainees shall have their field of activity like improving their coaching skills, physios and trainers shall take part in refreshing their programme and all the activity shall be videographed for discussion and improvement.

The Andhra cricket Association is leaving no stone unturned for keeping all departments connected with the game and during the pandemic, ACA had conducted webinars on ZOOM for the players.



# The legend lives on...

Ace Indian singer SPB tested positive for coronavirus in August 2020, and was admitted at MGM Healthcare, where his health deteriorated



music visionary Panchakshari Gawai, he "ran away from the project". Eventually, he did sing and won the national award for this too. A trained listener can easily tell that SPBs rendition of the Carnatic or Hindustani classical is far from authentic, but he celebrates his imperfections by capturing the essence of the genres.

## Being the default dubbing artist for Kamal Haasan...

SPB accidentally became a dubbing artist with K. Balachander's film Manmadha Leela, the dubbed Telugu version of Manmadha Leelai, providing voice-over for Kamal Haasan. He has also provided voice-overs for various artists, including Kamal Haasan, Rajinikanth, Vishnuvardhan, K. Bhagyaraj, Mohan, Anil Kapoor, Girish Karnad, Gemini Ganesan, Arjun Sarja, Nagesh, Karthik, and Raghuvaran in various languages. He was assigned as the default dubbing artist for Kamal Haasan in Telugu-dubbed versions of Tamil films. For the Telugu version of Dasavathaaram, he gave voice to seven characters (including the female character) out of ten characters played by Kamal Haasan. He was



awarded the Nandi Award for Best Male Dubbing Artist for the films Annamayya and Sri Sai Mahima. He dubbed for Nandamuri Balakrishna for the Tamil version of the movie Sri Rama Rajyam in 2012. He also dubbed for Ben Kingsley in the Telugu-dubbed version of Gandhi.

— (Content curated by K Ramya Sree)



## A rare distinction...

Veteran singer SP Balasubramaniam has the rare distinction of singing the maximum number of songs on a single day. He holds a Guinness World Record for recording the highest number of songs. He recorded 21 songs in Kannada for composer Upendra Kumar, from 9 am to 9 pm 1981. He has also sung 19 songs in Tamil and 16 songs in Hindi in a day. The Padmabhushan awardee went on to sing over 40,000 songs in five decade long career and became notable pan-India and International star that many musicians adore and admire.



him, achieved what he did, the

pan-India phenomenon.

## Emulating Rafi's style...

Throughout his life as a musician, SP Balasubramaniam held the iconic Mohammad Rafi close to his heart and hero-worships him and sees him as his guru. He admits to being deeply moved by the music of the legendary singer. He also acknowledges that he emulated Rafi's style to the point of overdoing it. Citing Rafi's rendition of "Eh Mera Patra Padkhar" from the film Sangam as example, SPB during one of his previous interviews explained, "The camera first captures the beautiful flowering trees and then focusses on the hero. From an external landscape it gradually moves towards the internal landscape.

If a singer cannot capture the beauty of that inner emotion which is as grand as the external, what's the point? Just listen to how Rafi saab articulates the word 'zindagi', it's to die for!"

## Busted the myth of formal education...

SPB's singing busted the myth of formal education. He had no training in musica, as he commonly declares, he knows no theory of music and neither is his music an outcome of rigorous sadhana of the classical forms. He admits to have learnt music from several gurus and from each, different aspects of music. With an expressive, flexible light baritone, SPB has effortlessly matched acoustic parameters that a cinematic situation needed. However, there were challenges for SPB. When director K. Vishwanath asked him to sing for a Carnatic classical musician for Sankarabharanam (1980), SPB refused to take up the offer as he was not a trained musician. But SPB came to international prominence with the film and won his first national award for the film. He used a 'film music' aesthetic in recording the songs. Even in the case of Ganayogi Panchakshari Gawai (1995), the Kannada film based on the life of the blind Hindustani



## TRS will win big in MLC elections, says KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS working president KT Rama Rao on Thursday held a teleconference with the graduate MLC election in-charges of erstwhile Khammam, Warangal, and Nalgonda districts. He asked them to work for the victory of the TRS party in the upcoming elections. During the session, the working president asked the in-charges to give top priority to the voter registrations which will begin on October 1.

He also asked them to make the voter registration programme a huge success. The working president slammed the opposition parties stating that they have no agenda to fight against the TRS party in the upcoming election. Giving directions to the party men, KTR stated that TRS has won all the elections in the state, from Panchayat to Assembly elections. He added that the party has registered a grand



victory in municipal and ZPTC elections. He expressed confidence that the party will again record a big win in the upcoming MLC elections.

He highlighted that the TRS party, under the leadership of Chief Minister K Chandrababhu Naidu, has introduced various welfare and development schemes in the state. He also mentioned that the TRS government has eradicated the 60-year-old fluorosis problem in just six years.

Today there are no fluoride victims in the state and it is the achievement of the TRS party, he said. KTR stated that the in-charges at district and Mandal levels are already working with the graduates on voter registration. He stated that the TRS government took the development activities to every corner of the state. He mentioned that the reorganization of districts, mandals, revenue divisions is for better governance. He also highlighted the New Revenue Act, Municipal Act, and stated that their benefits are reaching every citizen in the state.

KTR asked the party men to highlight the welfare schemes introduced for the benefit of youth and students. Under various recruitment programmes, the government has filled one lakh vacancies in the State. In the private sector, the government has attracted about two lakh crore investments, creating 15 lakh employment opportunities, he added.

## 'Ensure timely treatment of animals'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Animal Husbandry Talasani Srinivas Yadav on Thursday directed officials of the department to provide timely treatment to animals suffering from seasonal diseases and warned of stern action if they fail to do so.

He expressed ire at complaints being received from farmers over shortage of medicines in veterinary clinics and non-availability of doctors and wanted DVAHO to undertake field visits for three days in a week.

Addressing officials of the department of Animal Husbandry and Vijaya Dairy through teleconference mode, he asked the secretary of his department Anita Rajendra to verify whether the veterinary clinics have stocks of medicines with them in district hospitals.

The Minister asked offi-



cials to purchase only those medicines that are in high demand in the market and supply them to government veterinary clinics. He suggested that the primary veterinary clinics should get direct supply of medicines. He asked the veterinary doctors to take precautions to prevent cattle from affected by seasonal diseases.

The Minister expressed displeasure over slow pace of vaccination programme among the sheep. He asked the district veterinary officials to supervise the implementation of the services of mobile veterinary clinics in districts.

## MLC polls a litmus test for TRS

PV KONDAL RAO  
■ WARANGAL

With the talk about Telangana Jana Samithi chief Professor Kodandaram contesting from the Graduate constituency MLC post from the Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda making rounds, the ruling TRS party is moving its pawns meticulously to retain the coveted seat. The TRS is holding this seat for the past twelve odd years and its nominees Kapilavai Dileep Kumar and Palla Rajeshwar Reddy have won the elections in three successive hustings.

The present MLC, Palla Rajeshwar Reddy's tenure will end May next and since an election is essential, the enrolment process of voters has been taken up. Graduates who completed their degrees by 2017 are entitled to enrol and this time an increase of new voters seems imminent. The TRS is the first party to take up preparatory for enrolment last fortnight and the party leadership and the working president KT Rama Rao held



meeting with local leaders of three erstwhile districts to ensure the enrolment process is taken up in a systematic manner.

Palla Rajeshwar Reddy, a native of erstwhile Warangal, called upon the party workers to work hard and assist graduates of the villages to register their votes. Stating that the TRS with the support of all sections of people will win any election in the State Palla Rajeshwar Reddy exuded confidence that party's candidate will win in the forthcoming Graduates MLC election for Nalgonda - Khammam - Wara

ngal seat. He is vying for the MLC ticket again from this seat. However, the name of Professor Kodandaram as the nominee for the post has emerged during the past one week. His candidature may give scope for the opposition parties to support him as their nominee and if such a situation arises, the election may become a battle royale between the ruling TRS and opposition parties. As on date, the parties and groups are keenly engaged in making necessary arrangements for the enrolment process of new graduates.

The ruling TRS has kept the options wide open though it decided to field Palla Rajeshwar Reddy as its nominee again. Unconfirmed sources say that the TRS working president KT Rama Rao is holding parleys with some seniors and suggesting their names for the fray. He reportedly advised the probable candidates to prepare themselves for the contest if the party decides to replace Palla in the next polls.

## Teacher turns campaigner to help beat Covid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Wearing a helmet and face-mask and carrying handwritten posters, this teacher of a government school has been pedalling around villages in Khammam district for over six months to create awareness among people about the deadly Coronavirus.

Ever since the pandemic broke out earlier this year and the lockdown imposed in March, Gollamandla Suresh Kumar has been cycling to remote villages in his district to educate people on how they can protect themselves by following simple precautions.

"Maintain cleanliness, keep your surroundings clean, always wear a face mask when going out and keep physical distance," he announces on megaphone while peddling



around in the villages. He has fixed to his bicycle posters with slogans in Telugu about the Covid-19 precautions. He has written slogans even on his helmet to send a message. Leaving home early in the morning and covering 2-3 has been his routine for 190 days. The 46-year-old is happy that he is doing his bit in the fight against Coronavirus. A teacher

in Zilla Parishad High School in Peuvoncha village under Kallur mandal, he has so far covered over 250 villages. He is continuing with his mission though the schools have reopened this week after six months. "I am still covering a few villages while going to the school from Kallur and while returning home. September 23 was 190th day of my jour-

ney on bicycle against Coronavirus," he said. Suresh Kumar has been active in social work besides discharging his duties as a teacher. He had earlier hit the roads on his bicycle to create mass awareness about pollution, HIV and ill-effects of smoking and liquor.

When Covid-19 broke out and even before the lockdown was imposed, Suresh Kumar was out on the streets with his 17-year-old bicycle to play his part. He felt that while author-

ities are doing their best to create mass awareness, there is a lot to be done and directly reaching out to people in villages with the message will be more effective.

He feels that addressing the villagers in their own language and taking the message to their doorsteps yield better results. Suresh Kumar took risks to peddle amid the pandemic and braved scorching heat and rains. "I also cover habitations around containment zones, urging people to take all precautions," said the teacher, who is inspired by Mother Teresa.

Khammam is one of the Telangana districts that have witnessed surge in Covid cases for the last two months. The state has so far reported nearly 1.80 lakh cases and 1,070 deaths.

## KTR flags off Corona testing mobile units

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Information Technology and Industries KT Rama Rao flagged off Corona Testing Mobile units and Ambulances here at Pragathi Bhavan under the "Gift A Smile" programme. The Minister waved a green flag for the mobile units gifted by TRS Malkajgiri Parliamentary constituency in charge Marri Rajasekhara Reddy.

The Minister appreciated Rajasekhara Reddy for his kind gesture considering the welfare of the people. Rajasekhara Reddy responded saying that he was happy to be a part of the programme. Secunderabad Cantonment Board members Jakkula Maheshwar Reddy, Keshav Reddy, Anitha Prabhakar, Pandu Yadav, Nalini Kiran, Bhagyasri Syam, Lokanath



and senior party leaders were also present.

The Minister also flagged off six ambulances gifted by party leaders from the same venue. He launched 3 ambulances gifted by Endowments Minister A Indrakaran Reddy, 2 ambulances gifted by government Whip Balka Suman and 1 ambulance gifted by Mancherial MLA Diwakar Rao. The Minister congratulat-

ed them for coming forward and donating the ambulances.

Indrakaran Reddy said that they have given the ambulances following the advice of the Minister to do something to bring a smile on the face of the common man, on the occasion of his birthday. He said that the ambulances he donated will operate from the Collectorates of Nirmal and Mancherial.







## Traitor to Govt cause

Salman Khurshid named in Delhi Police chargesheet on riots but there are no specifics on provocative speeches



This is more than a witch-hunt, it is a theatre of the absurd, this partisan investigation into the Delhi riots. One cannot even blame the police anymore, trotting out as it does the script that is handed down to it by the Home Ministry, having long lost the spine to stand up to its constitutional mandated functions and bending instead to the political masters of the day. The message, howsoever unpalatable to our Indian ethos and civilisational DNA, is clear — there can be only one ideology that works, anybody else choosing the other end of the divide just won't be tolerated. And that the democratic right to dissent, even one in defence of the

Constitution, is as good as treason. In this case, challenging the new law that makes grant of citizenship conditional on religion and tears asunder the secular rights of all Indians. What else can explain the names in the outrageous chargesheet of the Delhi Police on the February riots? Congressmen, Leftists, scientists, filmmakers, civil society activists, students, basically everybody who agreed to disagree with the Government. Take the case of Salman Khurshid. Forget that he has been a Congress veteran, a Union Minister handling key portfolios, an educationist, a legal eagle, a liberal Muslim who refused to be card-boarded into stereotypes or become an apologist of his faith. Forget his pedigree and lineage as the grandson of our third President Zakir Husain. Has there been any precedent of his anti-India intentions or has there been any visual footage of him delivering divisive and hate speeches? Or having an aggressive tenor of words? Yet he has been chargesheeted for instigating the riots in the city this February through provocative speeches and a studied design. No specifics have been mentioned. He has been named with his party colleague Udit Raj and CPI(M) leader Brinda Karat for fanning sentiments during the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act. The police claims to have “protected” witnesses, who were conspirators themselves and perhaps needed intense “security” to spill the beans on the complicity of senior leaders. And to indicate the weightage and seriousness of the statements, the police said they had been recorded before a Magistrate under Section 164 of Code of Criminal Procedure. Other big names in the disclosure statements include those of Left leader Kavita Krishnan, student activist Kawalpreet Kaur, scientist Gauhar Raza and advocate Prashant Bhushan. The bigger question is then what does one do with the stronger visual evidence of incendiary speeches by ruling BJP leaders, like “*goli maaro, saalo ka*,” that were repeatedly played out on news television. The likes of Anurag Thakur and Kapil Mishra have been spared, the latter spewing vitriol and issuing barely veiled threats under police watch. There were videos of a group of people cheering and chanting “*Jai Shri Ram*” as bricks and stones were unloaded. It was clear that violence was being planned and frantic appeals were made to Delhi Police to act. Later shops were set on fire in Muslim localities in Maujpur. So why was no action taken against the BJP motormouth for his hate speech and disruption of peace and communal harmony? Simply because he held rallies in favour of the new citizenship law and was the Government's mouthpiece? If hate begets hate, then there ought to have been two guilty parties, not one.

The brutality of targetting is even more evident as names uncomfortable to the establishment are circled out while provocateurs friendly to it are let off. Earlier, too, there was a motivated leaking of information about noted civil society activists figuring in a supplementary chargesheet based on disclosures of the accused. While the police had then claimed that the disclosure was not the sole basis of further action, and needed to be backed up by corroborative evidence, cross-checking and information, why were their names listed? CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury was labelled as an instigator for representing an ideological polarity. Riots probes by their very nature are sensitive and it is all the more necessary for the police to sift fact from fiction, identify the perpetrator and the victim, regardless of fear or pressure. For a society needs healing and by the Government's own figures, the minority communities have been affected more in the arson and violence that followed. What makes the Delhi riot probe a dangerous precedent is that there is nothing that separates the protester from the rioter, the dissenter from the conspirator and the citizen from an arsonist. If this is going to be the template going forward, then there would be no need for a trial by court. By deriding and selectively targetting some of the best educated and informed minds in the country, the new India is about using knowledge and wisdom to be a qualified conformist than a disgruntled critic. Disproportionately and sadly, the Government narrative of stereotyping the riots as another volatile expression of communal angst has swamped every logical argument on why citizenship should be selective. Most disturbingly, such actions prove that the Government can well do without civil society who might either become a voiceless and rare species or be coopted. But dangerously, we are also losing the Muslim intelligentsia to hate politics. One dreads to imagine its fallout.

## Rafale under fire again

CAG says offset obligations under jet deal yet to be fulfilled; LCA project could be hit



The ruling BJP might have capped the Rafale deal as a non-issue during the general elections and there was general acceptability of the acquisition of the fighter jet for improving our strategic competence. But now the ghost of murky deal-making has returned with the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG) finding that French aerospace major Dassault Aviation and European missile maker MBDA have defaulted on offset clauses. The report says that till date they have “not confirmed” the transfer of technology for the indigenous development of the engine for the Light Combat Aircraft

(LCA) by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the offset contract relating to the nearly ₹60,000 crore deal for 36 Rafale fighter jets. Under the offset policy, a certain percentage of the deal value with foreign firms should flow into India as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which would eventually include technology transfer, local manufacturing of advanced components and creating jobs. Most vendors over-commit to get the contract and breaches of this nature aren't new. But such a lapse could prove costly for the Government. According to the CAG report tabled in Parliament, as the vendor has not confirmed the transfer of this technology till date, the targets for doing so had already been delayed badly and could not be met before deadline. In its defence, Dassault Aviation has said it will eventually meet its obligation, which has slowed down in the last few months due to the pandemic. If Dassault does not make good on its commitment, then the Kaveri engine project will continue to hang fire. For the DRDO, which has been involved in the LCA project for long and has been unable to give its engine the kind of performance and thrust that it had planned, had to choose one made by the US firm GE. However, hopes of indigenisation of the project were raised again when during the Rafale negotiations, France agreed to help India work on an upgraded Kaveri engine.

Worryingly, the CAG also warned against the efficacy of our offset policy, saying it did not find a single case of foreign vendors transferring high technology to Indian industry, particularly in the defence sector, which ranked 62 out of 63 sectors receiving FDI. The failure on the part of Dassault to keep its end of the bargain would give more ammunition to the Opposition, which has also opposed and questioned Anil Ambani's Reliance entering the deal as an offset partner for Dassault Aviation. The CAG report further said that “non-fulfilment of offset obligations by the vendor, especially when the contract period of the main procurement is over, is a direct benefit to the vendor.” This questions the Government's ability to drive a bargain. Would this report be a can of worms?

# opinion06

## When *babu* becomes *neta*

Restrictions need to be placed to account for situations where the independence of the judiciary and of the civil services could be threatened



AJOY KUMAR

Like most people, I enjoy listening to music in my free time. Other than being an expression of art, songs are often a great medium to get a message across. Some are subtle where you have to find understated and intelligent references to the message that is hidden. However, at the same time you have songs with lyrics like “Sushant superstar, you were Bihar's treasure... The DGP came, he faced attacks but he took the case to the CBI. (The DGP) is the pride of the nation...” It is safe to say that this music video, which was released on the same day as the voluntary retirement of the DGP, can be a lot of things but “subtle” is certainly not one of them.

The release of the music video and the reports of Gupteshwar Pandey (the DGP in question) making a foray into politics, do, however, give us an opportunity to examine the situation in the country and the question of ethical conduct by certain individuals from the Indian civil services and the judiciary, two pillars on which the modern Indian state stands. The title of this week's piece may seem a tad ironic, especially considering that the writer himself was one time a “*babu*” and is now in active politics. However, having joined politics close to a decade after leaving the civil services, I believe that I can offer a unique perspective on the topic.

To be clear, this is far from the first time questions regarding the ethics of appointment or nomination of individuals who come from the civil services or the judiciary have been raised. Even in a meeting of the Constituent Assembly, this issue was discussed. Professor KT Shah moved an amendment, which contemplated restricting judges who had served for more than five years in the Supreme Court or on any of the High Courts, from being appointed to any executive office or Ministers in a Government. The intent, as explained by a supporter of the amendment, was imperative because “if the temptation of being appointed to other high positions after retirement is not removed, it will also be liable to be abused by the Executive or by any party in power and they may hold out such temptations which might affect the independence of the judiciary.” The amendment was ultimately

rejected by Dr BR Ambedkar because at the time he believed that this was only a theoretical protection as the “opportunity for the executive to influence the judiciary is very small”. While there is no such restriction, the Constitution of India does lay down administrative details like retirement of judges and remuneration in the Constitution. Similarly, civil servants are granted privileges like pension after retirement. Furthermore, removing a civil servant from service is an extremely difficult proposition. The intent of such protections is to ensure that both civil servants and judges carry out their duty as contemplated under the Constitution without fear or incentive to act otherwise.

Dr Ambedkar, in all probability, believed that the individuals, who would form part of the judiciary or the civil services, would exercise their personal ethical framework and to this extent the issue of independence of these institutions would not be tarnished. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that there is a need for us to legislate ethics and punish its abdication.

Most recently from the judicial sphere, you have the case of the former Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, getting nominated to the Rajya Sabha. This move drew sharp criticism from judges and lawyers alike, pointing to the fact that his appointment came barely months after his tenure as Chief Justice ended. Such is the criticism around the appointment that a news personality noted that the DGP's move to take voluntary retirement and possibly

“THE UPSC CAN BE TASKED WITH SHORTLISTING CANDIDATES FOR POST-RETIREMENT ASSIGNMENTS INSTEAD OF LEAVING SUCH DECISIONS TO THE WHIMS AND FANCIES OF ANY GOVT IN POWER. THE CRITERIA FOR SUCH APPOINTMENTS SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC AND GO THROUGH A POINTS SYSTEM. THERE IS NEED FOR A STRUCTURAL SOLUTION”

join politics would be akin to “doing a Gogoi.” Another move that attracted criticism was of a Central Vigilance Commissioner joining a large corporate house immediately after retirement. But like I said, this is not about one particular instance. According to a study done by Vidhi, a legal think tank, close to 70 out of over a hundred retired judges have taken up assignments after their retirement. Unfortunately, this is inevitable considering the number of statutory authorities that require a retired judge to hold office under their parent statute.

Therefore, what is the way ahead? It is obvious that relying on the integrity of individuals to take the right call every time is not a tactic that has worked. While there are a number of individuals who have displayed and continue to display courage, integrity and a strong conscience, the damage by a few to the institutions that they have served can be so scarring that its impact would be felt on the core foundations of a democratic republic such as ours. Therefore, there is a need to legislate to account for situations where the independence of the judiciary and of the civil services may be threatened. One solution is to do away with post-retirement posts and to appoint only senior personnel who are currently serving as judges or civil servants. Another option is to legislate like the US has done, where in case of former senior civil servants (in certain departments) there is a permanent ban on appearing before Government authorities on mat-

ters where they may have participated personally or substantially. An alternative restraint could be establishing a separate authority like the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), as former civil servant Anil Swarup talks about in his book *Ethical Dilemmas of a Civil Servant*. Swarup suggests that the UPSC can be tasked with shortlisting candidates for post-retirement assignments instead of leaving such decisions to the whims and fancies of any Government in power. I would add that the criteria for such appointments should be made public and be through a points system. There are many possible solutions but in order to implement any solution, we need to first accept that there is a problem and that there is a dire need for a structural solution.

As said by Dr Martin Luther King, “The arc of the moral universe is long but bends towards justice.” Therefore, I am hopeful that in the long run our institutions will survive, not least because of the many righteous individuals who serve these institutions. I am hopeful that the examples that exist today will only serve as examples to future generations to keep their guard up, similar as to how examples from the Emergency serve as examples for today. However, with the benefit of hindsight, if Dr Ambedkar had a chance to discuss Professor KT Shah's amendment in the Constituent Assembly today, I have a feeling that the outcome would be quite different.

(The writer is a former IPS officer, a former MP and currently a member of AAP)

### SOUNDBITE

In our four biggest provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec), the second wave isn't just starting, it's already under way. We're on the brink of a fall that could be much worse than the spring.

**Canadian PM**  
—Justin Trudeau



The Morrison Government will undertake the most significant reforms to Australia's insolvency framework in 30 years as part of our economic recovery plan.

**Australian Treasurer**  
—Josh Frydenberg



The European Union is our key partner in restoring sovereignty, territorial integrity and supporting reforms... However, Ukraine wants full integration into the European Union.

**Ukrainian President**  
—Volodymyr Zelensky



He (Sunil Chhetri) spoke about putting hard work and practice first, and the importance of rest and nutrition.

**Footballer**  
—Sahal Abdul Samad



### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Labour-friendly laws

Sir — The Constitution allows migration across the country for employment needs. However, there has been no comprehensive legal framework to protect the workers from exploitation. More than one crore migrant labourers returned home on foot during the lockdown and around 29,415 lost their lives in the process. This is the harsh reality of how safe the workers are under the present labour laws. Adding to the problem are the recently passed three key labour reform Bills that further dilute workers' rights than protect them. A more pragmatic approach with a full understanding of the problem must be put in place to alleviate labourers' underlying distress due to the Government's apathy.

**SK Nag**  
*Mumbai*

#### Monsoon Session ends

Sir — The Monsoon Session of Parliament came to an end amid protest by the Opposition parties and suspension of eight members. The Rajya Sabha passed 25 bills, including 15 on the last two days, when the Opposition

members had boycotted the proceedings as they united against the Government for overriding parliamentary procedures to pass the two controversial farm Bills. The ruling dispensation failed to uphold the constitutional values and its dictatorial attitude made a mockery of the Parliament. Indeed a wrong precedent.

**N Nagarajan**  
*Secunderabad*

#### The actual beneficiaries of farm Bills

The Central Government claims that farmers will have unfettered freedom to sell their produce at higher prices in any market in India hereafter, under the “revolutionary” Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and Farmers' Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services (Empowerment and Protection) Bill. However, the fear of traders about corporates dictating procurement terms is not altogether unfounded. With the dismantling of Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) *mandis* and the Government having no power to keep a watchful eye on the deals struck between farmers and traders, there is a greater chance of the farmers being exploited by the heavily cartelised corporate giants. Also, the State Governments stand to lose the revenues from the APMCs, which fund the various farmers-related welfare measures.

Another claim made by the Government is that there will be an explosion in infrastructure in the agricultural sector with the inflow of massive private investments.



It would be dishonest to construe that the modern markets and the infrastructural facilities created with private funds will be available to the farmers at even nominal, if not free of charge. The Bills in no way give any freedom to the farmers, rather it is the private industries that will be benefitting.

**Haridasan Rajan**  
*Kozhikode*

#### Fair and responsible

Sir — It is a matter of deep concern that some media houses are using their platforms to create communal disharmony and spread hatred. *Sudarshan News' Bindass Bol* programme, that was aired on August 28, targeted the Muslim community and questioned the credibility of the UPSC. The Central Government

allowed the channel to air the show again on September 10 in the name of freedom of speech. It was only later on that Supreme Court barred the channel from going ahead with the telecast of the remaining episodes.

Hate speech should not be allowed to be disguised as freedom of speech. And media being the fourth pillar of democracy should act responsibly and not

further the communal agenda of the Government.

**M N Musaeed**  
*Mumbai*

#### Rising COVID cases

Sir — COVID-19 cases in India crossed the 57 lakh mark with 86,508 new cases and 1,129 deaths reported in the last 24 hours. There are 9,66,382 active cases and 91,149 people have died. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has emphasised the need to increase focus on “effective testing, tracing, treatment and surveillance” to bring the coronavirus outbreak under control. In his virtual review meeting with Chief Ministers of seven states with the highest number of coronavirus cases in the country, he spoke of the need for clear messaging to dispel rumours about testing. However, the initiatives taken by the Government don't seem to help curb the crisis. It is, therefore, important that the people take the utmost precautions and follow WHO's guidelines.

**Urvi Jain**  
*Ujjain*

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



FIRST COLUMN

The threat posed by hospital waste

Efficient bio-medical waste clearance is as important as efficient handling of the Coronavirus crisis. Else we will have to face a secondary wave



KOTA SRIRAJ

Imagine a public health epidemic of colossal proportions that also doubles up as a threat for the environment close on the heels of the devastating COVID-19. This is a possibility that can well turn out to be true if the mounting bio-medical waste generated while battling the pandemic is not managed and disposed properly. At the last update, COVID-19 had already caused a loss of 90,000 lives in India with a further 5.6 million active cases. This state of affairs can get considerably worse if a callously disposed bio-medical waste triggered a secondary wave of infections across the nation. Countless hospital premises, morgues, cremation grounds, ambulance parking lots and even garbage dumps in residential locations are replete with carelessly discarded PPE kits, gloves, suits and masks. This is in spite of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) guidelines that clearly state that COVID-19 related waste must be double-bagged and labelled. However, looking at the waste lying around, it is clear that this is not being followed and needless to say, these items carry the virus that can spread to healthy people, especially sanitation workers and those involved in sorting waste at landfills and waste incinerators. Delhi has two biomedical waste treatment facilities that can handle 63 tonnes of medical waste per day. But a study by Toxic Links noted that much of this waste is being disposed of as municipal solid waste. To make matters worse, many of the facilities generating this waste were not registered with the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC).

The study's findings also revealed that 27.9 per cent of the hospitals did not have mandatory needle cutters whereas 34 per cent of the facilities did not have wheeled transportation for medical waste. As a result, the same was carried by hand for disposal through patient areas. Adding to this dismal state, a further 26.4 per cent of the facilities were also found to be disposing liquid medical waste into the public sewage system. With disturbing conditions such as these, India surely is not in a fit condition to handle the contagion-generated bio-medical waste. The gravity of the condition of bio-medical waste generation and its disposal can be gauged by the fact that the Union Home Ministry had to answer queries for the same in the Rajya Sabha recently. According to a paper published in *ScienceDirect*, India, the country currently generates approximately two kg of medical waste per bed, which includes anatomical, cytotoxic and sharps, but this is set to increase manifold due to the pandemic. Before the impact of the outbreak became acute, Delhi on an average generated 25 tonnes of medical waste but this output jumped to 349 tonnes per day in July. Similarly, Mumbai's per day waste generation went up from 12,200 tonnes in June to 24,889 tonnes in August. This deluge of waste has caused the already creaky waste management infrastructure to be stretched to its limit. There is an urgent need to address the issue before the metro cities become overwhelmed with biomedical waste and there is a need to follow the Government's guidelines on this.

As per the rules, the waste needs to be segregated into recyclable and non-recyclable bins and then isolated for 72 hours so that its infectious intensity is neutralised. Medical institutions must be inspected from time to time to ensure that they have the requisite equipment needed to safely dispose biomedical waste. More importantly, the liquid medical waste needs to be sent by authorised bio-medical waste collection companies for requisite treatment and not dumped in the sewage system.

Western nations are setting high standards in Coronavirus waste management and a peek into their practices also tells us why these nations are getting back on their feet faster as far as biomedical waste management is concerned. Some of the best practices being followed in France and Germany include keeping a very strict record of the waste generated by each medical facility and ensuring the same quantity is actually and properly incinerated. Other advanced measures being followed include the usage of sodium hypochlorite solution in regularly cleaning the waste bins in the medical facilities.

France has moved a step further by focussing on the households where quarantined patients are. Waste is being collected at source by the authorities so that no inadvertent cross-contamination occurs. The quarantined residents are able to procure free sealable waste bins from pharmacies on producing their prescriptions, which they can then use to dispose their waste by handing over to the authorities. Germany on the other hand has set up specialised waste incinerating facilities in Bavaria. These measures have helped these nations save themselves from the boomerang effect of bio-medical waste and its harmful impact. Efficient bio-medical waste generation is as important as efficient handling of the crisis. This alone will prevent a secondary wave of infection and contamination.

(The writer is an environmental journalist)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I CAME IN TO BAT AT NUMBER SEVEN POSITION TO GIVE YOUNGSTERS A CHANCE AS I HAVEN'T BATTED FOR A LONG TIME. A 14-DAY QUARANTINE DOESN'T HELP. —CSK CAPTAIN MS DHONI






YEAH, YOU GOT TO GET UP. YOU HAVE TO AT LEAST GIVE YOURSELF THE OPPORTUNITY TO WIN THE GAME. I'M NOT BUYING THAT. —FORMER CRICKETER KEVIN PIETERSEN

Corona paints a bleak picture

Art talks to us like nothing else does. It re-awakens our senses and reminds us of the power of imagination in the face of the death and economic destruction brought about by the pandemic



UMA NAIR

The pandemic has brought the art world to its knees. The silence is ominous and the webinars and online propaganda are somewhat stifling when you think of how suddenly it is only about talking and voices and voices and talking. Amid the many cancellations of fairs, exhibitions, films, plays, performances and dances globally, we must ask ourselves questions about the value of art and culture at a time when humanity is under great stress. When it is fighting for its very survival as the virus throws up a kind of socio-economic disparity and devastation we have not witnessed in recent times.

At a time when people tell us that there are much more important things to worry about in this world than art, one would beg to differ. Art talks to us like nothing else does. It re-awakens our senses and reminds us of the power of imagination in the face of the death and destruction brought upon us by the pandemic.

The *New York Times* states that though fairs have been cancelled and galleries have closed, the wealthy are still buying. In India it's difficult to get true stories of buying and selling from art galleries/dealers/consultants/artists. The physicality of looking at a work and buying is something that needs to be worked upon. An image does not do justice to a work of art. Perhaps private appointments by clients are the way to go in the new pandemic scenario. But there are hectic announcements of online shows and galleries coming together to host prized possessions on the internet and social media. Some galleries are stating that they have a few sales but it's not as much as they would like in a stagnant market.

In the West, a report of 795 galleries representing 60 different national markets, called *The Impact of COVID-19 on the Gallery Sector*, written by the cultural economist Clare McAndrew, is the first major survey of how the contagion has hit art dealers globally. Until sales statistics are shared by galleries all over India, it's difficult to add a percentage of propensity to the real figures. But one scene that has remained buoyant is that of online auctions.

**Pundoles looking West:** Pundoles Mumbai ruled the roost the past month with its *Looking West* auction split into two parts, featuring a part of the collection of fish baron Masanari Fukuoka, who decided he wanted Pundoles to handle the sale rather than international houses like Christies, Sotheby's or even Saffronart. With blue chip names on its avant-garde list, the auction threw up some magnificent numbers. VS Gaitonde, the abstract master, was top draw. His untitled 1967 work set a new record at ₹32 crore as the selling hammer price. Two sculptures also set their own highs. The first was a "Bull's Head" (1998) by Tyeb Mehta, who created this sculpture as his tribute to the trussed bull (he used to hear their heart-wrenching cries when he lived next to a slaughterhouse in Mumbai). It sold at a new record of ₹3.2 crore.

The second sculpture was printmaker and sculptor Somnath Hore's "Goat" (1988) that sold at ₹65 lakh, a new high for this venerated master. India's greatest figurative master Jogen Chowdhury's "The Couple" (1999) sold for ₹1.7 crore, setting a new record for the 80-year-old Kolkata artist.

INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE LALIT KALA AKADEMI HAVE A GREAT ROLE TO PLAY IN OPENING THEIR SPACES TO AS MANY SOLO SHOWS AS POSSIBLE TO LIFT THE DARKNESS IN THE WORLD OF THE LONELY ARTIST WAITING IN THE WINGS. THE INDIA INTERNATIONAL CENTRE AND AIFACS DO YEOMAN'S SERVICE FOR THE ARTS. BIG ARTISTS, TOO, NEED TO GET OUT OF THEIR COCOONS AND HELP OTHERS IN NEED



**Saffronart's success:** The next auction high was Saffronart's *Evening Sale*. The highly-anticipated online live auction — the first since the pandemic — closed at 88 per cent lots sold, achieving a total sale of ₹66.4 crore amid enthusiastic bidding. The 300th auction in Saffronart's 20 years, this sale was a unique hybrid experience that allowed bidders from across the globe to participate virtually.

The sale was led by VS Gaitonde's masterpiece painting of 1974 from the collection of Sabira Merchant, which sold for ₹35.5 crore, making it the second-highest price achieved for the artist, as well as for a work of Indian art to be sold in an auction worldwide. Among the best works Gaitonde ever produced, this ethereal, luminescent work embodies his preoccupation with Zen Buddhism as well as his associations with the sea.

Among the top highlights of the sale were two exquisite works by modernist NS Bendre, including a figurative work from 1971 which sold for ₹1.56 crore, more than tripling its pre-sale estimate, and an untitled work (possibly a view of Mandu), 1982, which sold for ₹1.14 crore. Jehangir Sabavala's "The Cactus Wave", 2006, sold for ₹2.63 crore.

**Artists in studios/homes:** Across the land in homes, in studios that belong to them as well as others, artists are still pouring out their imagination. Those who have computers and laptops are busy with Zoom webinars and the like but my heart goes out to artists who have no technology. They continue to be inspired in their own small rooms with minimal media and materials. Questions arise as to how they are eking out their living.

The buyer's market is not so well laid out. Galleries have their own list of collectors and buyers but it is only established artists who can share in that bouquet of well-being. One of the greatest contributions to an artist's life can be through corporate houses, hotels, Government and private offices and complexes that can use art works and help artists to thrive in a market that has fallen to the Covid climate.

Take for instance Tom Vattakuzhy, a brilliant artist in Kerala who lost out on a historic series of illustrations in the *Malayala Manorama* because of a misunderstanding with the Church. His works echo his solitude. They make everyone empathise with him and stir their inner recesses. Vattakuzhy, a Masters from Shantiniketan and then Vadodara, is a prime example of a brilliant artist waiting to be shown by a curator, gallery or promoter who will not throw him to the sharks. Let's face it, the art world thrives on profit margins and cut-throat competition. India needs more institutions and philanthropic agencies to help artists all over the country.

Institutions like the Lalit Kala Akademi have a great role to play in opening their spaces to as many solo shows as possible to lift the darkness in the world of the lonely artist waiting in the wings. The India International Centre and AIFACS do yeoman's service for the arts. Big artists, too, need to get out of their cocoons and help others in need.

**Black Lives Matter:** The most beautiful example of an artist helping others has been that of the great artist Banksy. The British street artist financed a boat to rescue refugees attempting to reach Europe from north Africa. The vessel, named *Louise Michel* after a French feminist anarchist, set off in secrecy on August 18 from the Spanish port of Burriana, near Valencia, and was in the central Mediterranean Sea, where on August 30 it rescued 89 people, including 14 women and four children.

It was looking for a safe port to disembark the passengers or to transfer them to a European coast guard vessel. Since setting off from Burriana, the boat, registered in Germany and manned by a crew of activists from across Europe led by Pia Klemp, rescued more than 150 people off the coast of Libya. The majority of the passengers were transferred to a larger rescue vessel a few days ago, after European authorities appeared to ignore Mayday calls from the *Louise Michel*, which had become too overloaded to steer. The survivors finally arrived in the port of Palermo, Sicily.

Underscoring the hypocrisy of governments shouting out for racial equality while simultaneously taking a hardline anti-immigration stance, Banksy's video of the rescue mission, posted on Instagram, concluded with the words: "All Black Lives Matter." Perhaps in a blanket equation of everyone in the world, we could tweak it to say "All Lives Matter." Maybe the virtual world is here to stay until the virus is tackled with a vaccine that says: "Get thee behind me."

(The writer is a senior art critic and independent curator)

A double whammy to the girl child's survival

The rising crime against women has emerged as yet another factor for augmenting the traditional preference for sons



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

Last week, a six-month pregnant woman in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh (UP), was attacked by her husband with a sharp-edged weapon. Her family alleged that he slit her stomach to find out the gender of the unborn baby. They told the police that the father of five daughters was so desperate for a son that he resorted to this brutal way to check if the foetus was that of a boy or a girl. Although a First Information Report (FIR) has been registered and the husband arrested, this gruesome crime underlines once again the deeply-entrenched preference for sons in our culture. Despite the best efforts of the Union Government, States and non-governmental organisations over the years, there seems to be very little change in attitudes towards the girl child in the country. This is not just deeply worrying but also frightening. It is not, however, surprising that girls are less valued than boys in UP, a State that has recorded the most crimes against women in the country. The latest 2018 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data ranked the State as the worst for women's security with 59,443 crimes against them. Incidentally, in 2018, the crime rate was the highest for cruelty by husbands and relatives. Although the NCRB data for 2019 has not been released as yet, media reports of crimes against women in UP during the last two years do not inspire confidence in the possibility of any turnaround.

But do the rising crimes against women have any bearing on the preference for a son? Yes, says a new study conducted in UP and Haryana. Its objective was to examine discrimination against the girl child and its linkages with the declining child sex ratio and violence against women. The report states that the responsibility of security and maintaining the chastity of daughters in the context of rising sexual violence in the country has added to the larger concern of wanting a son. In other words, the increasing crime against women has emerged as yet another factor for augmenting the traditional preference for a son. Supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), the study was conducted by Bijaylaxmi Nanda, Nupur Ray and Ritwika Mukherjee. The preliminary findings indicate that perceptions about crime play a pivotal role in the increasing preference for a male child. Thus, as long as women continue to remain insecure in the nation, chances that girls will be unwanted by families will be high.

Further, with three out of every 10 women, who had more daughters than sons, reporting that the husband/family members express dissatisfaction at the birth of a girl child, the study also reinforces the fact that gender inequality remains at the heart of violence against women in UP. The male offspring is preferred because he is culturally perceived as a protector and provider during the old age of the parents. An earlier study to understand the intrinsic relationship between masculinity, son preference and intimate partner violence came to similar conclusions.

The 2014 study by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), found that in UP, the two most important reasons for having a son were to carry on the family name and to provide support to parents in their old age. Six years later, as the ICSSR study shows, little seems to have changed on the ground.

The ICRW-UNFPA report found that of the seven States studied, UP had the largest proportion of men reporting high control over their intimate partners and the lowest proportion of men displaying gender equitable attitudes.

Education is a big tool to engender transformation in beliefs, attitudes and practice. It is an equally important predictor of son-preference attitudes. In UP, the ICRW-UNFPA study found that 55 per cent of men with no education had a high preference for sons compared to 39 per cent of men with graduation or higher degrees.

Studies have shown that spouses of men with no or little education are unlikely to have ready access to sexual and reproductive health services. In the Badaun case, the fact that the woman had five children and was pregnant with her sixth child indicates she may have faced barriers in accessing family planning services. The fourth National Family Health Survey (NFHS 2015-16) states that the unmet need in UP was 18 per cent for currently married women aged between 15 and 49 years. This means an estimated 8.2 million women have been denied access to family planning. In Badaun, which has a more than 70 per cent rural population, the total unserved need is almost 14 per cent. This is higher than the national average of 12.9 per cent.

The preference for sons puts women under so much pressure to produce a male heir that many times they are forced into numerous pregnancies and a series of abortions until they do so. The preference for a son has led to around 4,60,000 girls going missing due to sex selection at birth each year between 2013 and 2017, according to the UNFPA's 2020 *State of the Population Report*.

Last month, noted researcher Fengqing Chao of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Saudi Arabia, and his colleagues projected an even darker future for girls in India. According to their research published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, the average annual number of missing female births between 2017 and 2025 was likely to be 4,69,000 per year and would increase to 5,19,000 per year for the time period between 2026 to 2030. This research singles out UP as the Indian State most likely to have the maximum missing female births due to the preference for a boy and accounting for almost a third of the total number projected.

But girls don't just go missing at birth. India also has the highest rate of excess girl child deaths at 13.5 per 1,000 births. This critical data suggest post-birth sex selection. An estimated one in nine deaths of girls below the age of five may be attributed to post-birth sex selection, says the UNFPA report. So, while gender-biased sex selection accounts for about two-thirds of the total missing girls, post-birth girl child mortality accounts for about one-third.

UP lags behind on many indicators of gender equality, including early marriage and crimes against women.

If Yogi Adityanath really wants development, the Chief Minister must make greater investments in improving gender indicators. Prejudice against girls can be countered by programmes that focus on engaging boys and instilling values of gender equality in them at an early age. Comprehensive sex education in schools could help redefine notions of masculinity and foster respect for women.

(The writer is a senior journalist)



FOREIGN EYE



PAKISTAN MUST LEARN FROM INDIA

Numerous factors have been identified to ascertain the reasons behind the huge Corona outbreak in India. The lockdown was hastily imposed and the resultant mass return home of workers from the cities led to the virus' spread. The stories from across the border, raise a question that crops up frequently in the history of Pakistan-India affairs: Is there something that one neighbour could learn from the other? They could if they so wish.

(Dawn editorial)



SHORT READS



UTI AMC's Rs 2,160-cr IPO to open on September 29

**New Delhi:** UTI Asset Management Company (AMC) on Thursday fixed a price band of Rs 552-554 per share for its initial public offering (IPO), that will open for public subscription on September 29. The IPO would open for public subscription on September 29 and close on October 1. The bidding for anchor investors would open on September 28. The company has fixed a price band of Rs 552-554 a share for its IPO, UTI AMC announced in a virtual press conference. At the upper end of the price band, the IPO would fetch Rs 2,160 crore. This will be the third AMC to get listed on the stock exchanges after Nippon Life India Asset Management and HDFC AMC. The IPO comprises sale of 3,89,87,081 equity shares or 30.75 per cent stake by existing shareholders.



Standards for safety of hydrogen fuel cell vehicles notified

**New Delhi:** The government on Thursday said it has notified standards for safety evaluation of hydrogen fuel cell-based vehicles. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has issued a notification in this regard. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified the Standards for Safety Evaluation of vehicles being propelled by Hydrogen Fuel cells through an amendment to Central Motor Vehicles Rules 1989, dated 23rd September, 2020, the ministry said in a statement. This would facilitate the promotion of hydrogen fuel cell-based vehicles in the country, which are energy-efficient and environmentally friendly, it added. "The prospective manufacturer and suppliers of such vehicles have the standards available for the testing of such vehicles," it said. These are also at par with the available international standards, it noted.

Rupee slips 32 paise to 73.89 against US dollar

**Mumbai:** The rupee depreciated 32 paise to settle at 73.89 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday as sell-off in domestic equities and foreign fund outflows weighed on investor sentiment. At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened on a weak note at 73.82, then fell further to finally close at 73.89 against the American currency, registering a fall of 32 paise over its last close. On Wednesday, the rupee appreciated by one paisa to settle at 73.57 against the US dollar. During the session, the local unit witnessed an intra-day high of 73.75 and a low of 73.96 against the greenback. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.04 per cent to 94.42. On the domestic equity market front, BSE benchmark Sensex was trading 798.06 points lower at 36,870.36, and broader NSE Nifty plunged 235 points to 10,896.85.

# India Ratings maintains negative outlook on NBFCs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

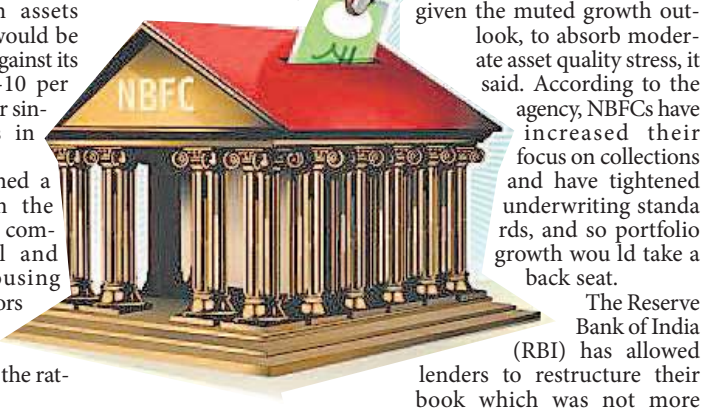
Domestic rating agency India Ratings and Research on Thursday said it has maintained a negative outlook on non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs) for the second half of 2020-21.

It said growth in assets under management would be flatish for NBFCs as against its earlier estimate of 8-10 per cent y-o-y, and in lower single digits for HFCs in 2020-21.

"We have maintained a negative outlook on the non-banking finance company (NBFC, retail and wholesale) and housing finance company sectors for 2HFY21, amid COVID-19 related business disruptions," the rating agency said.

It said that considering the unabated spread of the virus at pan-India level, time required for NBFC operations to return to normalcy could be prolonged.

Although the liquidity and funding environment has improved for better-rated entities after July,



there would be asset quality issues impacting overall profitability in 2020-21 and beyond, it said. The sector's capitalisation remains reasonable, given the muted growth outlook, to absorb moderate asset quality stress, it said. According to the agency, NBFCs have increased their focus on collections and have tightened underwriting standards, and so portfolio growth would take a back seat.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed lenders to restructure their book which was not more

## Singapore to introduce special travel pass for sr executives

SPNS ■ SINGAPORE

Singapore will introduce a new business travel pass for senior executives with regional or international responsibilities, as it announced that more COVID-19 restrictions will be eased.

Travellers on this pass can choose to take a COVID-19 test in lieu of a stay-home notice when they return to Singapore, Channel News Asia reported. On Wednesday, Singapore authorities announced that more COVID-19 restrictions will be eased including allowing more people to return to the workplace, subject to conditions.

Among employees who are able to work from home, no more than half should return to the workplace at any point in time. In addition, employees should continue to work from home for at least half



their working time, the Health Ministry said.

Working from home will still remain the default mode of working, the ministry added. Restrictions on worship services and wedding receptions will also be eased from October 3. Up to 100 attendees will be allowed at worship services and weddings, up from the current limit of 50.

Authorities are also considering a trial to increase attendance limits at congregational services to up to 250 people, with five zones of 50 people

each. On Wednesday, Singapore also raised the minimum age of children who need to wear masks from two to six years old. However, health authorities said young children should be encouraged to continue wearing a mask or face shield, especially when they are in groups, to guard against COVID-19.

Singapore recorded 15 COVID-19 cases on Thursday, including five imported, taking the national tally to 57,654, according to the Health Ministry. There were no new cases from the community while the imported cases have been placed under stay-home notice (SHN).

Three of the four imported cases, reported on Wednesday, came from India on September 11 while the other case was from Iran arriving here on September 11, the ministry said.

### Sector's capitalisation remains reasonable, given the muted growth outlook, to absorb moderate asset quality stress

than 30 days past due as on February 29, 2020. The credit cost that has to be provided on the restructured book is higher of 10 per cent or extant provisioning held on those assets.

"To that extent, there could be some relief on credit costs; however, slippages could be higher for certain segments, resulting into higher credit costs," the agency said.

The agency has maintained a negative outlook on CV as an asset class for the second half of this financial year.

## Gold price falls again, declines by Rs 485 per 10 grams

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price fell for the fourth consecutive day on Thursday, declining by Rs 485 to Rs 50,418 per 10 grams in the national capital amid weak international trends, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal closed at Rs 50,903 per 10 grams. Silver also tumbled by Rs 2,081 to Rs 58,099 per kilogram from Rs 60,180 per kilogram in the previous trade.

"Spot gold prices for 24 carat in Delhi extended decline for the fourth consecutive day falling Rs 485....," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, adding that it reflected selling of the precious metal in the international market.

In the international market, gold traded with losses at USD 1,854 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 22.12 per ounce.

Gold prices continued on



### In the previous trade, the precious metal closed at Rs 50,903 per 10 grams. Silver also tumbled by Rs 2,081 to Rs 58,099 per kg from Rs 60,180 per kg in the previous trade

the downside as stronger dollar weigh on prices amid slowdown in general economic activities in Europe due to rising virus infections, Patel said.

Reliance Securities, Senior Research Analyst, Sriram Iyer

said that international gold and silver extended losses on Thursday afternoon session in Asia as the dollar strengthened further.

"Domestic markets were trading weak tracking weak overseas prices," he added.

## IOC mulls deferring expansion of projects to sync them with demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's top oil firm IOC is looking to defer some of its refinery expansion projects to sync them with changes in demand patterns resulting from the pandemic and a gradual rise in the use of cleaner fuels, its chairman Shrikant Madhav Vaidya said.

In an interview with PTI, Vaidya said oil demand in India has not been destructed but only deferred and Indian Oil Corp (IOC) was also betting big on petrochemicals to hedge fuel shocks.

Liquid fuels such as petrol and diesel will continue to play a dominant role in the country in the next two decades despite a creeping increase in the use of electric vehicles (EVs) and cleaner fuels like gas.

"You see the pie is also increasing. While we see EVs

growing, the oil will remain a dominant fuel," he said. "Even BP in its latest world energy outlook has projected India's oil consumption to double to 10 million barrels by 2050."

In 2018, an Oil Ministry report had projected that oil refining capacity will rise to 439 million tonnes by 2030 from the current 250 million tonnes, to meet the rising fuel demand of a fast-expanding economy.

IOC, which currently owns and operates 11 out of the country's 23 refineries, had plans to double refining capacity to 150 million tonnes per annum by 2030 from 80.7 million tonnes per annum.

"I firmly believe that demand has not been destructed. It has got deferred. So the condition is such that we would like to once again assess the demand-supply. Nothing has been shelved as such but



maybe deferred slightly," he said.

While the company is going ahead with the expansion of the Koyali refinery in Gujarat to 18 million tonnes from 13.7 million tonnes, the plan for raising the capacity of Panipat refinery in Haryana to 25 million tonnes from 15 million tonnes may be pushed back by a few years, he said.

IOC is also adding 3 million tonnes of capacity at Barauni refinery in Bihar as well as adding a 9 million tonnes unit at its subsidiary Chennai

Petroleum Corp Ltd (CPCL). "Panipat (expansion) will happen ultimately but it will get staggered," he said.

Also, the planned 60 million tonnes a year grassroots refinery project on the west coast "is very much needed to meet the projected oil demand for 2050," he said.

"If you go by supply-demand, yes there is a scope for the west coast refinery," he said adding the project may get delayed by a few years due to issues with land acquisition.

While fuel demand has fallen in recent times due to slowdown in the economy and the lockdown imposed to curb the spread of coronavirus, India is likely to return to the project demand trajectory in two years.

India had consumed 213.7 million tonnes of petroleum products in the year to March 31, 2020.



## Mazagon Dock's IPO to open on September 29

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned defence firm Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders on Thursday said its initial public offering will open for bidding on September 29 and price band for the issue has been fixed at Rs 135-145 per share.

The initial public offering is of 3,05,99,017 shares through an offer for sale (OFS). The issue will close for subscription on October 1, the company said in a virtual press conference. The offer is expected to raise about Rs 444 crore at

the upper end of the price band and at the lower range about Rs 413 crore.

Shares of the company are proposed to be listed on BSE and NSE.

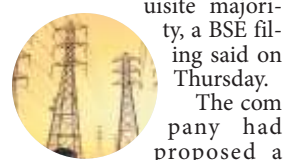
YES Securities, Axis Capital, Edelweiss Financial, IDFC Securities and JM Financial are the managers to the offer.

The company is engaged in construction and repair of warships and submarines for use by the Indian Navy and other vessels for commercial clients, according to the red herring prospectus.

## PGCIL gets nod to raise Rs 10,000 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) has got shareholders' approval to raise up to Rs 10,000 crore via bonds on a private placement basis in 2021-22. All resolutions as set out in the notice of 31st Annual General Meeting held on September 22 have been duly approved by the shareholders with requisite majority, a BSE filing said on Thursday.



The company had proposed a special resolution in the AGM to raise up to Rs 10,000 crore from domestic mar ket in financial year 2021-22. The funds were proposed to be raised through issuance of secured or unsecured, non-convertible, non-cumulative or cumulative, redeemable, taxable or tax-free debentures or bonds under private placement in up to 20 tranches/offers.

## Govt to industry: Cut import dependence for spl grade steel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday stressed the need to cut import dependence for special grade steel, exhorting the domestic players to go for research and development activities and take required measures to make India self-reliant in value-added steel production. Union Minister of State for Steel Faggan Singh Kulaste, while speaking at a FICCI event, said though the country is the second largest producer of crude steel in the world, it is purely dependent on imports for special grade steel.

Value added steel or special grade steel is used in segments like power, ship, rail, metro, defence, auto etc.

Kulaste asked steel makers to identify those grades of steel which are not manufactured in the country and are widely used and develop them in India.

He said the industry players can conduct research and development (R&D) activi-



ties, go for transfer of technology or form Joint Venture to set up special grade steel plants in the country.

This will help India become 'Aatmanirbhar' in value-added steel and save huge forex outgo besides generating employment opportunities, the minister said at the conference on 'FICCI-Manufacturing Value Added Steel - Contribution Towards Vocal for Local & Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

"India is the second largest producer of steel in the entire world, yet it is fully dependent

on imports for special grade steel. Let's have a look at the import dependence of 2019-20. In the year import of 6.778 million tonne took place and India exported 8.356 MT... In monetary terms, import of Rs 44,683 crore happened while export was (lower) at Rs 36,726 crore," he said.

The figures, he said, clearly show that even as the export exceeds import, the value of imported special grade remains higher. The country needs to increase the volume keeping the prices in mind.

## Raymond to raise Rs 100 cr through NCDs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Textile and Apparels firm Raymond Ltd on Thursday said it will raise Rs 100 crore through NCDs on a private placement basis. "The Committee of Directors approved the Issue of Non-Convertible Debentures (NCDs) of Rs 100 crore on private placement basis," the company said in a BSE filing.

The NCDs, which would have a coupon rate of 8.60 per cent, would be listed on the National Stock Exchange of India, it added. Tenure of the instruments would be 1,095 days from the deemed date of allotment, which is September 29, 2020.



## People cautious about spending going forward

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With the record-setting coronavirus caseload creating more uncertainty about jobs and economic recovery, nine in ten people polled in the country are worried and cautious about spending going forward, says a survey.

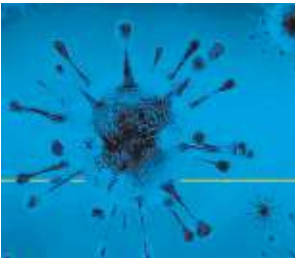
According to a global survey by British lender Standard Chartered Bank on Thursday, "as much as 90 per cent of Indian respondents say the pandemic has made them more careful with their expenditure now. Globally, only 75 per cent say so".

Reflecting this increased caution, 76 per cent of Indian respondents as against 62 per cent globally feel that the economic impact of the pandemic has made them more likely

to track their spending, with over 80 per cent either using or interested in using budgeting tools or tools that block card-spend over specified limits, says the survey.

They also want new ways to track their money digitally even as a vast majority of 78 per cent of the Indian respondents say they will shop more online while the global average is only around two-thirds.

Consumers around the world, including in India, are now spending more on basics such as groceries and health-care and digital devices than they did prior to the pandemic, and they expect this increase to continue in the future. Also, a full 64 per cent of Indians in the survey said they have spent less on travel/holidays than they did



### As much as 90 per cent of Indian respondents say the pandemic has made them more careful with their expenditure now

before the pandemic (64 per cent globally), while 30 per cent have spent less on experiences (41 per cent globally) and 56 per cent have spent less on clothes (55 per cent globally).

The survey assumes this trend to continue in India with 41 per cent saying they anticipate spending less on travel/holidays, 19 per cent on

experiences and 28 per cent on clothes in the future. Also, Indians are more likely to shop conscientiously than the average global consumers as over two-thirds say they are now more likely to shop locally (72 per cent), more sustainably sourced products (69 per cent) and with small businesses (73 per cent).

The online survey -- conducted among 12,000 adults across 12 markets of Britain, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Kenya, China, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Taiwan, the UAE, and the US -- is the second in a three-part series, looking at how the pandemic has transformed consumers' way of life, and what changes could be here to stay.

While the first survey, carried out in July, had focused on the pandemic's impact on earnings, the second offers new insights into the way the global health crisis is changing consumer spending habits.

Respondents in all the 12 markets want to do more online shopping from now on because of the pandemic but in India, the preference for online shopping has shifted significantly.

## Jio starts offering mobile services on 22 international flights

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Jio has started offering mobile services on 22 flights on international routes, with plans starting at Rs 499 per day. The company's partner airlines include Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Etihad Airways, Euro Wings, Lufthansa, Malindo Air, Biman Bangladesh Airlines, and Alitalia.

With this, Jio has become the second Indian telecom company to offer in-flight service. Tata group firm Nelco has started providing in-flight mobile services in Vistara airlines on the London route.

The company has announ



ced three international roaming packs for international travellers from India priced at Rs 499, Rs 699 and Rs 999 with 1-day validity.

While all plans offer 100 minutes of outgoing voice calls and 100 SMS, the Rs 499 plan provides 250 megabyte (MB) of mobile data, Rs 699 gives 500 MB and Rs 999 plan comes with 1 GB of data.

None of the plans will allow incoming calls, while incoming SMS is free, according to information available on Jio website. First-time users of the in-flight mobile services will need to activate the plans on Jio network, and international roaming services will not work on JioPhone and Jio's wifi device, according to the information on the website.



## MEANINGFUL WORK OVER WHAT SELLS



Every inspiring story has three things in common: A Dreamer, his Struggles and his Victory. Here's a story of a young and successful corporate leader. Celebrated Entrepreneur Sharat Sharma turned writer for the book *The ONE Invisible Code* that tells the story of a dreamer – Joy. The author talks to *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE about the book, his life, and more

**S**tarting out as a young entrepreneur, Sharat Sharma, feels most of the lessons he learned about entrepreneurship came by the virtue of experiencing failure. Awarded "Young Entrepreneur For Business Excellence", Sharat added another feather by turning author for the book *The ONE Invisible Code*.

The thought of writing the book crossed Sharat's mind 4 years back. He wanted to make a meaningful contribution with his book and not just write for the heck of it. Taking inspiration from his mentor's saying, Sharat penned *The ONE Invisible Code* in the last one-and-a-half years.

A professional speaker, coach, and a facilitator, he has shifted gears from entrepreneurship to writing, despite being awarded the Young Entrepreneur For Business Excellence.

He explains, "I am still an entrepreneur at heart and I love writing. I have been writing on various forums and my writing too has gone viral several times. So, when I decided to write a book, it wasn't really tough. I

continue to run my business and write too, but more. As of now, I have 2 more books in my head. What inspires me is meaningful work."

Sharat enjoys writing about personal development, leadership, and sales. Hence, it comes as no surprise his next two books are about the same.

On the professional front, he wants to be able to speak to people across the globe and influence their lives.

"Now that travel restrictions have shrunk boundaries, more possibilities in the speaking industry have opened up. Apart from the two books, I'm working on a start-up too," he says.

On a concluding note, Sharat, who feels the 'BestSeller' tag is the most unethical practice in the publishing industry explains, "The biggest trap is to think of becoming an overnight best-selling author. This has become a cliché. My message to aspiring authors is to stop chasing the label of best-selling authors, instead, focus on making meaningful contributions and deeper impact through your books."



## MeToo movement getting derailed this way: Producer Vinta Nanda

**V**eteran television producer Vinta Nanda, who was among the first women to break their silence and trigger off the MeToo movement in the film industry a couple of years back, feels there is a danger that the movement is getting derailed in this country.

Nanda addressed the issue while commenting on actress Payal Ghosh's allegations of sexual misconduct against filmmaker Anurag Kashyap.

"The (Anurag Kashyap-Payal Ghosh) case you are referring to is different from my case. This is a catch-22 situation. When I broke my silence, several women came out and said they had also experienced something of that kind with that particular man. See, in our industry everyone knows what goes on but for years we have maintained silence. So, when I broke my silence and other women came forward and shared their stories, it helped us find our voice, made our account credible and the #MeToo movement gained momentum," Nanda

**NANDA SAYS, "I FEEL CURRENTLY THE MOVEMENT IS AGENDA-DRIVEN, POLITICISED, AND WEAPONISED, AND THAT SADDENS ME. IT TOOK YEARS FOR WOMEN TO FIND A VOICE, AND THIS WAY WE ARE RUINING THE CREDIBILITY OF THE MOVEMENT."**

said.

However, she feels Payal Ghosh's case is different from hers. Soon after Payal levelled sexual misconduct allegations against Kashyap, several actresses who have worked with him, such as Taapsee Pannu, Huma Qureshi, Radhika Apte, and Mahie Gill, came out to vouch for the filmmaker. Kashyap's ex-wives, Aarti Bajaj and actress Kalki Koechlin, have also dismissed the idea that the director could be a sexual

predator.

"In this (Payal's) case, the opposite has happened. Those actresses who worked with Anurag Kashyap have come up to stand by him and have shared their experience of working with him. The #MeToo movement was something in which women trusted women, and that is how we felt empowered and came out with our stories. I am confused about this situation," said Nanda.

She added, "I think the whole movement is getting derailed this way. As a woman, you do not pull down the dignity of other women, you uplift them. Here, just the opposite thing has happened. I feel currently the movement is agenda-driven, politicised, and weaponised, and that saddens me. It took years for women to find a voice, and this way we are ruining the credibility of the movement," said the producer, known for TV show *Tara*.

Nanda said that she does not want to speak in favour or against of Payal at this point, adding that the case should rather be investigated.

## A JOURNEY IN DIGNITY

**W**hen the heart-breaking saga of migrants walking back to their homes, thousands of kilometres away, post lockdown unfolded on our TV screens earlier this year, there was perhaps none, who was left unmoved. Men and women, children in tow, with their meagre possessions bundled, determinedly making a beeline for the nearest path home, some walking barefoot, a few cycling and the fewer who could manage resources, crammed into lorries, stirred our collective conscience.

While most of us watched helpless and angry at the apathy of their employers and the government, there were thankfully a few who decided to do something about it and answer the call of their conscience.

Among them, were Mukti Bosco, the founder of NGO Healing Fields Foundation, retired bureaucrat Sujatha Rao, and technocrat Bosco Malapatti, who on their walks, had come across some migrants near Filmnagar Checkpost and had been quite intrigued as to where they were travelling.

"It was the TV grab of a pregnant woman who picked herself up, just two hours after delivering her child on the streets, and started walking again, which made me feel that it was no longer enough to just sympathise with these migrants in the comfort of our homes, we needed to do something more," shares Ms Rao, who had served as Union health secretary at the

centre and is on the board of advisors of Healing Fields, which focuses on affordable and accessible health care to rural areas.

The trio then decided to research the issue a bit with journalist friends who were covering this mass exodus of humans, said to be the largest, since the 1947 Partition. They found that most migrants were headed to Medchal checkpoint on National Highway 44. "On driving down there, we saw hordes of migrants assembled and the police rounding them up for questioning. More hearteningly, voluntary organisations and individuals had set up food distribution counters, but they were desperate to reach home, several kilometres away, how would we address that?"

Most migrants had been rendered penniless, by their contractors, who had not even paid their dues. Some of them would hand out their entire earnings and others would hand over funds, (borrowed at very high interest rates by their families back home), to be ferried back home, only to be abandoned by the roadside, there would be a check by the police authorities.

"After assessing the situation in Medchal, and winning the confidence of the migrants, we realised that most of them were headed to UP, Bihar, Chattisgarh and MP, and decided to set up our camp site at Kamareddy, a little further off, as it is considered the Telangana gateway to the north, and decided to start our "Dignity Journeys"



Migrants who had been offloaded from a lorry await their bus



Footwear donated by a volunteer

of sending back migrants in buses from here," says Rao.

With decades of state administration experience, Sujatha Rao decided to strategise a workable mechanism, with the cooperation of the district administration, by which they could help these hapless souls. Help came in the form of the very able and compassionate SP of Kamareddy district, Swetha Reddy who brought out all the stops, in accordance with required protocol, to enable this humanistic gesture of



The women who showed the way, (L to R): Sujatha Rao, Veena, RTO of Kamareddy, Swetha Reddy, SP of Kamareddy and Mukti Bosco.

helping migrants reach back their villages. "She helped us with all the paperwork and police permits and along with Mr Srinivas, the deputy transport commissioner of Telangana and the RTO of Kamareddy Ms Veena, who helped us with the inter-state travel permits, we were

sorted," adds Mukti.

By then they had initiated crowdfunding campaigns on social media, which got good response. "Our transparency in motives and sharing funding and expenditure details also helped garner more funds and we raised around a crore. We had to pay for 47



SWATI SUCHARITA, Senior journalist



Dignity Journeys sets off

bus journeys to and fro, and it cost anywhere between Rs 70,000 and 1.6 lakh (in the case of Odisha) for a return journey," adds Mukti.

Finally, around mid-May, the 47 buses started their journeys, ferrying back around 2,650 migrants to UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, MP and Chattisgarh. Food and water were provided, as well as sanitation kits consisting of hand sanitiser, mask and soaps (bath and detergent).

"In UP and Bihar, where we already have our health work-

ers, around 103 quarantine centres were set up, and we took care of their protein needs like eggs, Sattu and milk during the isolation period, while the villagers set up community kitchens to feed them."

For the Boscos and Rao, it was just a beginning and they feel lots more needs to be done. "We felt validated when we rescued some of the migrants from lorries where they were crammed like cattle, and recover their money from the drivers, and when

some of them called us from their homes, thanking us, it made every drive for those two weeks, worthwhile and satisfying," concludes Rao.

Healing Fields is planning to set up a help centre for migrants in Hyderabad and is also trying to document those who travelled, but there has been almost no return to the cities. Till that time, they are planning better futures for these men and women who help us lead our comfortable lives in metros and big cities...



# OTTs STOCK UP FOR A BOLLYWOOD-PACKED FESTIVE SEASON

OTTs stock up for a Bollywood-packed festive seasonSuperstar Akshay Kumar is leading the trend of booking festival dates to release films on digital platforms, with direct-to-OTT films emerging as top trend during the upcoming big season this year. With cinema halls shut, the trend of Bollywood stars and filmmakers releasing films on OTT continues. With the festive Fridays round the corner, every digital platform is stocking up on fresh quota of films. Here is a list of some of the big films slated to release on the streaming platforms in the coming months.

## LAXMMI BOMB

The Akshay Kumar-starring horror comedy premieres digitally on November 9, on the occasion of Diwali. The film is a remake of the Tamil blockbuster *Muni 2: Kanchana*. Raghava Lawrence, who had helmed the original, also helms the Bollywood remake co-starring Kiara Advani, Tusshar Kapoor, Sharad Kelkar, and Ashwini Kalsekar. The film is slated to premiere on Disney+ Hotstar.

## KHAALI PEELI

Starring Ishaan Khatter and Ananya Panday, the Maqbool Khan directorial is a romantic action drama that is being touted as a roller coaster ride that kicks off when a boy meets a girl one night. It will launch on Zeeplex and Zee5 on October 2.

## SERIOUS MEN

Starring Nawazuddin Siddiqui, Sudhir Mishra's latest is an adaptation of Manu Joseph's book of the

same name. The film is a satire about an under-achiever, lower caste man who wants to project his boy as a boy genius. The film releases on October 2, on Netflix.

## NISHABDHAM

A highlight of the Anushka Shetty-R. Madhavan horror thriller is Hollywood star Michael Madsen of *Kill Bill* and *Reservoir Dogs* fame in a special role. Directed by Hemanth Madhukar, the film has been confirmed for a Gandhi Jayanti release on Amazon Prime Video.

## GINNY WEDS SUNNY

The romantic-comedy, starring Vikrant Massey and Yami Gautam, is about Ginny, who gets set up with Sunny but the match is not that simple, and complications arise amid love, life, weddings and music. The film is slated to release on Netflix on October 9.

## BHUJ: THE PRIDE

## OF INDIA

The war action film, based on a true story, stars Ajay Devgn, Sanjay Dutt, Sonakshi Sinha, Ammy Virk, and Sharad Kelkar. It is set during the Indo-Pak war of 1971. The film will release on Disney+ Hotstar.

## LUDO

Anurag Basu's multi-starrer *Ludo* features Abhishek Bachchan, Rajkummar Rao, Fatima Sana Shaikh and Sanya Malhotra. It is a dark comedy drama is about four people whose lives collide. The film will release on Netflix.

## THE BIG BULL

The film stars Abhishek Bachchan. Directed by Kookie Gulati, the film is reportedly based on India's securities scam of 1992. It will release on Disney+ Hotstar.

## TORBAAZ

Sanjay Dutt plays an

army officer in the Girish Malik directorial, which also stars Nargis Fakhri and Rahul Dev. *Torbaaz* is the story of one man who rises above a personal tragedy and decides to transform the lives of refugee camp kids who are on the path of destruction, through cricket. The film will release on Netflix.

## KAALI KHUHI

The film is about Shivangi, a 10-year-old girl who must save her family's village in Punjab from the restless ghosts of its horrific past. The film stars Shabana Azmi, Satyadeep Mishra, Sanjeeda Sheikh and Riva Arora. It is slated to release on Netflix.

## BOMBAY ROSE

Directed by Gitanjali Rao, the award-winning animated romance is about living on the streets and loving on the screen, Bollywood style. The film will release on Netflix.

## Crucial to support folk artists: SHAAN

Popular playback singer Shaan says that folk artists and daily workers are keeping the music heritage and industry intact, and it's crucial for the society to support them in these trying times. "Our country's musical heritage is on the shoulders of our folk artists and in the present situation of the pandemic it is very difficult for them to find livelihood and to feed their families. At this stage, it is very crucial for us to support our folk artists — our industry, workers who are keeping our heritage intact," Shaan, 47, told *IANSLife*.

The singer is supporting the "very worthy" cause of "Together Louder Stronger" by Anahad Foundation and Believe Entertainment, which is a fundraiser featuring renowned entertainment artists performing from their homes that will raise funds to support the unsung unseen performance industry workers (freelancers and daily wagers) and folk artists during the ongoing pandemic. It is aimed at conserving India's beautiful folk music heritage and its artists.

While mainstream artists are now going digital and have found alternatives during these unprecedented times, it is the freelancers and daily wagers of this industry along with the folk artists for whom the lockdown has had a devastating impact. Up to 20 mainstream and independent, highly talented musician and stars of India like Shaan, Mame Khan, Jonita Gandhi, Benny Dayal, When Chai Met Toast, Bhuvan Bam, Nithyasree Mahadevan and others have come together to support these folk artists, workers and their families at this critical time through this fundraising initiative on Saturday, September 26, live on Facebook and YouTube channels of Anahad Foundation and Believe Entertainment.

Sharing his views on music bringing people together, Shaan shared, "During the pandemic where we have to maintain social distance, music is one thing that breaks through all the barriers, breaks through all the distances. Listening to music, even if its online, is a great connector especially when we



## THE SINGER IS SUPPORTING THE "VERY WORTHY" CAUSE OF 'TOGETHER LOUDER STRONGER' BY ANAHAD FOUNDATION AND BELIEVE ENTERTAINMENT

are together and appreciating the same piece of music, from our homes. Music binds us all and has a positive effect, more so at a time when everyone is going through such hardships."

How soon can musicians can go back to performing on ground for an audience? The noted singer says, "The world is waiting for a vaccine and hopefully that happens soon. 2020 is a year for self-help where we as musicians work harder on our skills and understand the kind of music we want to create and collaborate on. Come 2021, once everyone is comfortable in being in gatherings and groups, the quality of music will be much better and the kind of music that we are going to listen to, understand and appreciate is going to be of a higher level. Its going to be a good time for music starting 2021."

This initiative, according to Abhinav Agrawal, Founder — Director, Anahad Foundation, will try to provide financial aid to around 600 performance industry workers across the country.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



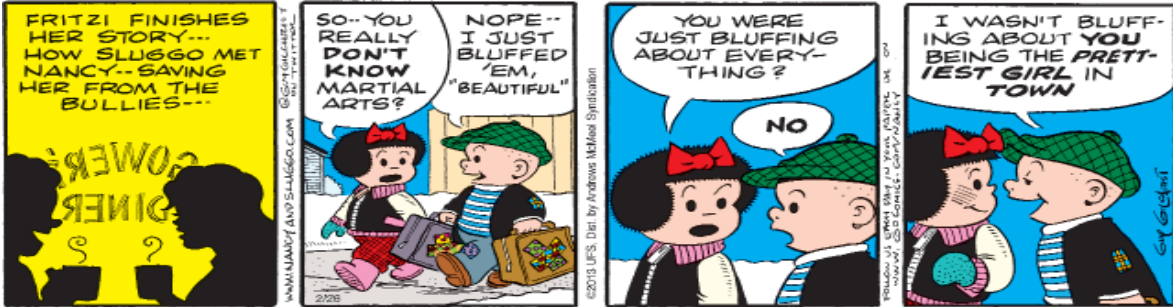
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- The largest land animals
- A small rock
- Move slowly and quietly
- A flower with thorns on its stem
- An extinct animal or plant that has turned to rock
- Film stars
- A sound bouncing back to you
- A cloth for drying yourself
- People who make meals
- The leader of the USA
- Large plants in a forest
- A housemaid or butler
- Headrests on beds
- Tools for making holes
- A tall, narrow building
- A circus funny person
- This liquid chemical will burn your skin

#### DOWN

- Large wild cats
- A writer of verse
- A ship's heavy metal hook



### SUDOKU



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

#### Rules

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





We were  
things p  
what str  
executed  
we just s  
it went o

Since joining Barca from



# VIJAY KONDA AND RAJ TARUN TEAM UP AGAIN

Unlike *Orey... Bujjigaa*, the director's second film with Raj Tarun will see his departure from the rom-com space, as he is attempting a romantic thriller for the first time. His frequent collaborators Anup and Andrew headline the technical departments, finds NAGARAJ GOUD



**E**ven before their first film together *Orey... Bujjigaa* drops on streamer *aha* on October 2, the director-actor duo of Vijay Kumar Konda and Raj Tarun have joined forces again for a new feature, which after being launched in Hyderabad on Thursday also hit the ground running. The untitled film, a production venture of Mahidhar and Devesh, features Hushaaru girl Hemal Ingle as the female lead, while noted actress Poorna will be seen in a role

with negative streak.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, Vijay Konda, who is directing the film from a script of Nandyala Ravi, said, "It's a thriller love story with a lot of suspense elements. The story was tailor-made for Raj Tarun. Plus, I felt I could try out a new genre before I move on to my Kannada film with Nikhil Kumar, which falls in a familiar territory for me. Raj Tarun will be seen as a middle-class youngster in the film."

The director is happy that Raj Tarun has agreed to spearhead the project even before the word on *Orey...*

*Bujjigaa* is officially out. "We forged a good bond on the sets of *Orey... Bujjigaa* and it is the reason why he commenced the new film even though he has a good line-up of films. We are planning to complete the shoot in less than 40 days. It is being made for a silver screen debut though," the director stated.

He added that the likes of Kota Srinivas Rao, Ajay, Madhuranand, Dhanraj, Venu, Raja Ravindra and Raj Varma are on board for supporting roles, while the technical composition includes Andrew for cinematography and Anup Rubens for music.



## KOSURI VENU GOPAL succumbs to COVID

**P**rominent film and TV actor Kosuri Venu Gopal passed away in Hyderabad on Wednesday. He was admitted in a private hospital in Gachibowli 23 days ago after testing positive for COVID-19 and breathed his last after his condition worsened on Wednesday. Some of his family members too are being treated in the same hospital for coronavirus.

Venu Gopal, who comes from Narsapur of West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh, made his screen debut with *Thegimpu* in 1994 and later got bits and pieces roles in many films. He worked as a manager in FCI, while simultaneously accepting films.

SS Rajamouli's *Maryada Ramanna* saw him in a meaty role and after which he started getting more traction as an actor. Many directors explored his uncanny sense of comic timing in films like *Gabbar Singh*, *Chalo* and *Ami Thumi*. The last film he shot for as an actor is *Rory*.



## Veteran actor Rockline Sudhakar passes away

**K**annada film actor Rockline Sudhakar passes away. Veteran

Kannada film actor Rockline Sudhakar (64), who was known for his comic and negative roles, died of cardiac arrest on Thursday, an official said.

"Sudhakar died this morning at a private hospital where he was rushed on Wednesday evening after he collapsed on the sets while shooting for a film,"

Karnataka Film Chamber of

Commerce spokesman Chidanadanad said.

Sudhakar had tested Covid positive a month back. After recovering from the disease, he resumed work a fortnight ago and was shooting for the Kannada film *Sugarless*.

"According to a production unit person, Sudhakar was getting ready with a make-up artiste for a shot when he collapsed," Chidanadanad said.

Sudhakar entered the Sandalwood, as the Kannada film world is known, over three decades back, when he worked with noted film producer Rockline Venkatesh.

As Sudhakar was associated with

Rockline

Productions of Venkatesh, he acquired the moniker Rockline. He also worked as production controller in over 30 films for Venkatesh. Sudhakar acted in over 200 movies, including many hits like *Dakota Picture*, *Pancharangi*, *Paramathma*, *Topiwala*, *Mukunda Murari*, *Devarantha Manushya*, *Vaastu Prakara*, *Ayyo Rama* and *Love in Mandya*.



# Saiee Manjrekar signs her second Telugu film

**I**n their bid to increase the pan-India appeal of *Major* further, the film's makers on Thursday announced the casting of *Dabangg 3* girl Saiee Manjrekar in a pivotal role. This is her second successive film in Telugu, as she is debuting in the language with Varun Tej's boxing drama with Kiran Korrapati.

Sesh, who is playing the titular role in the film directed by his buddy Sashi Kiran Thikka, wrote on Twitter, "Happy to welcome the talented & ravishing @saieemanjrekar to @MajorTheFilm. An amazing role with intensity & innocence in equal measure. She joins the film Late Oct."

Saiee said that for her the script and the impact her character has in the overall narrative matters the most. "Once you deep dive in the dissection of the character, there are so many beautiful emotions that as an actress I can explore. This is what I saw in the script of *Major* which is why when it was offered to me, I instantly said a 'yes' to it," she pointed out.

Saiee's addition to the film comes six months after the makers announced the signing of Telugu girl Sobhita Dhulipala for a key role. Major is based on the life of Major Sandeep Unnikrishnan, a National Security Guard commando, who had led the Black Tornado operation to save hostages in the 26/11 Taj Hotel attack in Mumbai. He was martyred in action.

Sony Picture International Productions is foraying into Telugu Cinema with *Major*, co-produced by Mahesh Babu, Advi Entertainment and Sharath Chandra and Anurag Reddy's A+S Movies. The film, which has resumed in Hyderabad earlier this month, is 50 percent over, with the makers targeting a 2021 big screen roll out.

## Raahu director's next with Hrishikesh of Raghuvaran B. Tech fame

**R**emember Hrishikesh, who played Dhanush's adorable younger brother Karthik in the super hit *Raghuvaran B. Tech*? The actor, a Visual Communication graduate from Madras University, is making his Telugu debut as a lead with Raahu director Subbu Vedula's next.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*, the director said the film's story unfolds during COVID-19 times. "It's a thriller set in the backdrop of a love story," he pointed out. On preferring Hrishikesh, he stated, "His looks and demeanor fit the bill

perfectly. Plus, he is good with Telugu. For a major part of the film's running time, his characterization will be serious in nature."

A production venture of Dr AVR Swamy under Pruthvi Creations, the as-yet-untitled film will roll in November, with filming set to take place in Hyderabad and Ooty. "The idea is to complete it in a start-to-finish schedule of 40 days. We are planning to kick off the proceedings in Ooty with a month's schedule, adhering to all safety protocols," the director noted, adding that Pravin Lakkuraju has been signed on as the tunesmith.

— NG

