

**ANALYSIS 7**  
BILLS TO GROW  
FARMERS' INCOME**MONEY 8**  
GLOBAL TRENDS TO DICTATE DIRECTION  
OF STOCKS THIS WEEK; ANALYSTS**SPORTS 11**  
TEWATIA STAR AS RR  
TRUMP KXIP

VIJAYAWADA, MONDAY SEPTEMBER 28, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

EVEN IF I PLAY A  
DEMURE GIRL, I WANT  
IT TO BE IMPORTANT  
IN THE SCRIPT: ADAH

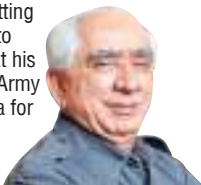
Page 12

**FORMER UNION MINISTER UMA  
BHARTI TESTS COVID-19 POSITIVE**

Former Union minister and senior BJP leader Uma Bharti has said that she has tested positive for COVID-19 and has quarantined herself. She requested people who came in her contact to get themselves tested and follow protocols. Taking to Twitter, Bharti on Saturday night said that she had taken a COVID-19 test as she was suffering from fever, and the report came positive. She has quarantined herself at a place between Haridwar and Rishikesh in Uttarakhand.

**JASWANT SINGH PASSES AWAY;  
PREZ, PM PAY TRIBUTES**

Former Union minister Jaswant Singh, one of the founding members of the BJP and a close associate of ex-prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, died here on Sunday following a long spell of illness. He was 82. President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers and other top leaders cutting across the political spectrum paid rich tributes to Singh. Singh, a former Army officer, had a fall at his home in August 2014 and was admitted to the Army Research and Referral Hospital. He was in coma for a long spell and had been in and out of the hospital since then.

**PREZ RAM NATH KOVIND GIVES NOD  
TO THREE CONTENTIOUS FARM BILLS**

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday gave assent to three contentious farm bills passed in Parliament last week that have triggered farmers' protest especially in Punjab and Haryana. These three farm bills are: The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020. A gazette notification has been issued in this regard. Parliament last week cleared the bills that are aimed at liberalising the agriculture sector and allowing farmers to sell their produce anywhere they want at a better price.

**I WISH GOVT'S COVID VACCINE  
STRATEGY WAS 'MANN KI BAAT': RAHUL**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday questioned the government on its strategy for making the COVID-19 vaccine available to people, saying he wished it was the subject of the 'Mann Ki Baat' programme. "The question is legitimate, but how long will India wait for the government's answer? Alas, the Covid vaccine access strategy should have been the 'Mann ki baat'," he said in a tweet in Hindi. Gandhi's tweet came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi aired his monthly 'Mann ki baat' programme on the All India Radio (AIR).

**RBI to maintain  
status quo in  
upcoming policy  
review**

8

**SAD snapped ties  
with NDA 'out of  
compulsion':  
Sukhdev**

5

**Kondaveedu Fort  
will be a tourist  
destination:  
Minister**

3

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**  
**Month & Paksham:**  
Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha  
Panchangam  
**Tithi:** Bhadresh: 07:45 pm  
**Nakshatram:** Shravana: 08:49 pm  
**Time to Avoid:** (Bad time to start  
any important work)  
**Rahukalam:** 04:35 pm - 06:04 pm  
**Yamagandam:** 12:06 pm - 01:36 pm  
**Varjyam:** 01:08 am - 02:51 am  
**Gulika:** 03:05 pm - 04:35 pm  
**Good Time:** (to start any important work)  
**Amritakalam:** 09:49 am - 11:31 am  
**Abhijit Muhurtham:** 11:42 am - 12:30 pm

**VIJAYAWADA  
WEATHER**

**Forecast:** Scattered thunderstorms  
**Temp:** 29/22  
**Humidity:** 79%  
**Sunrise:** 06:05 am  
**Sunset:** 06:07 pm  
Current Weather Conditions  
Updated September 27, 2020 5:00 PM

**ICMR's survey shows Indians  
yet to achieve herd immunity**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ICMR's second sero-survey shows that Indian population is still far from achieving herd immunity against coronavirus infection, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Sunday while underlining the need for following COVID appropriate behaviour.

He also stressed that masks be worn even in places of worship.

During an interaction with his social media followers, the minister said the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is actively researching on reports of COVID-19 reinfection and although the number of such cases is negligible at this moment, the government is fully seized of the importance of the matter, the health ministry said in a statement.

He cautioned that the sero-survey report should not create a sense of complacency among the people.

The first sero-survey of May



2020 had revealed that the nationwide prevalence of novel coronavirus infection was only 0.73 per cent.

"Even the soon to be released second sero-survey indications are that we are far from having achieved any kind of herd immunity which necessitates that all of us should continue following COVID appropriate behaviour," Vardhan said in response to the queries posed

by his social media followers on Sunday Samvad' platform.

The health minister also dispelled fears regarding the phased opening of schools, and advised on proper protocol to be followed while visiting salons and hair spas, the ministry said.

**TDP drops district model,  
appoints parliamentary unit chiefs**

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu has rejigged the party structure by appointing a president for each parliamentary constituency, rescinding the earlier district model on Sunday.

"Naidu announced the names of 25 parliamentary unit presidents among others. He indicated that the party had selected hard-working talented leaders, who have proved their mettle and passion for



working for the people," said a TDP statement.

The new parliamentary constituency presidents are Kuna Ravi Kumar (Srikakulam), Kimidi Nagarjuna

(Vizianagaram), Gummidi Sandhya Rani (Araku), Palla Srinivasa Rao (Visakhapatnam) and Buddha Naga Jagadeeswara Rao (Anakapalli).

According to the party, Srinivasa Rao is a strong leader from the Yadava community while Nagarjuna is just 32-year-old, coming from Turpu Kapu community, which has a stronghold in north Andhra.

Others include Jyothula Naveen (Kakinada),

2

**Jogaiah floats  
new body to  
fight for Kapus**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Kapu Samkshema Sena Joint Action Committee (KSSJAC) was formed to fight for reservations and development of Kapus. Former minister and senior Kapu leader Chegondi Harirama Jogaiah formed the KSSJAC and appointed members on Sunday. It may be recalled that senior Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham led the Kapu movement for BC

2

**Inter-state robbers' gang busted**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An inter-state robbers' gang was busted by the Kadapa police on Sunday. Police arrested 21 members of the gang, who were involved in several crimes across Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Addressing the media on Sunday, Kadapa District Superintendent of Police KKN Anburajan said that their modus operandi was to iden-

**Covid-19 recoveries cross  
six lakh mark in State**

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Covid-19 recoveries in the state have crossed the six lakh mark to reach 6,05,090 with 7,796 more recoveries on Sunday. For the past several days, the state has been registering more recoveries than infections.

On Sunday, the state has registered 6,923 new Covid cases, increasing the tally to 6.75 lakh. As usual, East Godavari district logged the highest number of cases, 1,006, raising its tally to 94,190.

Among other places, West Godavari accounted for 929 infections, followed by



Prakasam (659), Chittoor (577), Guntur (535), Nellore (506), Srikakulam (503) and Anantapur (480). Meanwhile, Visakhapatnam is just 600

cases shy of the 50,000 mark. In the past 24 hours, 45 more patients succumbed to the virus, swelling the statewide toll to 5,708.

**Second flood alert  
at Prakasam Barrage**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector MD Imtiaz instructed officials of various departments to be alert about the flood situation as six lakh cusecs of flood waters is likely to reach the Prakasam Barrage. He said that by mid-night on Sunday, the second flood warning will be issued. He reviewed the flood situation with various district officials through a teleconference on Sunday.

He said that Minister for Irrigation Anil Kumar Yadav reviewed the situation with officials on the alarming flood situation and told them to be alert. The Collector said that

at 11.30 am first flood warning was issued and by 10 pm the second flood warning will be issued and told the officials of various departments to be vigilant.

The Collector told officials to alert the people residing in the low lying areas of downstream and upstream of the Prakasam Barrage as six lakh cusecs of water is expected at the barrage. He instructed tahsildars of Kanchikacherla and Jaggayapet to alert the people of Vedadri, Ravella, Ganiatmakur villages and also take all precautionary measures.

2

**VSP may  
close stock  
point in Vja**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

For almost two decades steel manufacturers from across the country have established their branches and stock points in Vijayawada at Bhavanipuram, which is one of the biggest stock points. Steel giants like Steel Authority of India, Tata Steel and other big players have their branches in Vijayawada as it is the big market for them.

Meanwhile, Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) has opened its branch office in Vijayawada in 2016 and later it opened its stock point in 2017 as the region was announced as the Capital of AP. During the year 2018-19, they had a business of 2.25 lakh tonnes with good profits among the other 25 branches across the country as the stock point was set up in Vijayawada. However according to sources, the VSP was making moves to windup the stock point in Vijayawada through there was a good demand and business for VSP steel.

Even the capital shifting to Visakhapatnam cannot be ruled out for the management of VSP to take this decision as construction activity has come down drastically. The other reason was, before setting up of branch in Vijayawada, distributors used to procure VSP steel from Visakhapatnam where in the distributors enjoyed good profits. After the stock point was set up in Vijayawada, customers are directly buying the material at the stocking point that was affecting

2

**DO NOT ACT ON ANONYMOUS  
CORRUPTION COMPLAINTS: CVC**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anonymous corruption complaints should not be taken cognisance of, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has told all government departments, saying any violation of this guideline will be viewed seriously. The move comes after the probity watchdog noticed instances wherein some departments/organisations were taking cognisance of anonymous complaints, despite strict guidelines issued by Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) and the CVC.

Such non-compliance/violation of guidelines by the concerned authorities would be viewed seriously, said the order issued on Thursday. All chief vigilance officers -- who act as distant arm of the CVC to check corruption -- and administrative authorities should ensure strict compliance to these instructions, it said. The Commission said that earlier orders by the DoPT and the CVC prescribed that no action would be taken on anonymous/pseudonymous complaints by ministries/departments/organisations.

**Kavitha's MLC berth precursor to cabinet reshuffle**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The imminent entry of former Lok Sabha member Kalvakuntla Kavitha, daughter of TRS supremo and Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao, into state politics has triggered speculation within the party party circles that KCR would soon go for a cabinet reshuffle to induct his daughter.

This is because Kavitha's victory in the upcoming MLC poll on October 9 is a foregone conclusion since TRS enjoys absolute majority in the Nizamabad Local Authorities'

**TRS-watchers say that  
K Chandrasekhara Rao  
has fielded his  
daughter for the MLC  
election with a 'broader  
political plan'  
stemming from her  
entry into state politics**



Constituency, which is going to polls. Only the members of ZPTCs, MPCTCs, councillors and corporators in undivided Nizamabad district are allowed to vote in this election. This means there are 824 voters in

this election. Among these, 494 belong to TRS, 140 to Congress, 84 to BJP, 28 to AIMIM, apart from 66 Independents and 12 others. All told, the voter base suggests that TRS has a clear edge in this

election and can win on its own without anyone's support.

However, the AIMIM and Independents, besides a few voters from the Congress and BJP, are also extending support to Kavitha, making this election a 'one-sided war' for TRS. The counting of votes will take place on October 12. Speculations are rife in TRS that KCR may take up the cabinet reshuffle anytime and induct Kavitha into his team once she becomes an MLC.

However, TRS sources see two possibilities with regard to cabinet reshuffle. One, it may take place anytime next month

(October) or else it would happen in March 2021, i.e. after completion of GHMC and all other polls.

TRS-watchers say that KCR has fielded his daughter for the MLC election with a 'broader political plan' stemming from her entry into state politics. If not for this, KCR would have nominated her to the Rajya Sabha itself,

if he was keen to confine Kavitha to national politics. Compared to MP post, the MLC post is smaller. Despite this, if KCR is fielding Kavitha for MLC election,

2



# Monday Mirchi

Where change is not just constant, but instant too

For the record, he is Special Chief Secretary to Chief Minister. Yet, no one listens to him these days. PV Ramesh, who was recently stripped of all his powers, along with another senior officer Ajeya Kallam, is now facing a daunting task of staying relevant. With great fanfare, he was invited and ushered into AP CMO, after holding the coveted post of chairman of the Rural Electrification Corporation in New Delhi. During the initial days, he, along with Ajeya, 'advised' the new Chief Minister on almost all administrative matters. Within one year, both the officers were relegated to sinecures. Within the Administration, people with trained receptors are quick to read signals and identify where real power lies. Accordingly, these people shift their loyalties and shirk responsibility if they can't psyche themselves to openly defy their superiors just-rendered power-less. The latest news is that Ramesh is struggling to retain in his office an employee who had been asked to return to his parent department. His repeated requests to allow that staffer to remain in his skeletal peshi were not received well by the new powers. Everyone in AP administration is now commiserating with senior officers who have lost their sheen in just one year.

## One-man army at the till

Who said Covid pandemic is bad for everyone? It cannot be so for a government that knows how to make the best of a bad bargain. They may in fact recoup, so to speak, some of the revenues they had lost due to the lockdown. All they need is tact to strike the right chord at the opportune moment. Such an attitude would make even Covid a blessing in disguise. Take, for example, the Telangana government, which had postponed several payments it had long withheld from different people, citing Covid spread. That is not all. Principal finance secretary K Ramakrishna Rao's home isolation came as a shot in the arm for the state government, which had put off further payments that appeared to be within the reach of all departments, contractors and even employees. Government staff too were eagerly waiting to get their salary dues as they have been told that since KRR (as the bills babu is called) has not been coming to office, there is a pile of bills waiting to be processed and cleared by him! Some of the departments have not received even their medical reimbursement bills due to paucity of funds. Still the situation is such that

they all are now reconciled to believe that even in government departments one-man army works in some wings. Now the good news is KRR is back. Let, Covid go to hell. They know KRR's magic will get them their moolah.

## Right man at the write place

An institution, they say, is the lengthened shadow of one man. Almost everything hinges on such men. Techies across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh say that they know only IT Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan when it comes to issues related to state government. Such is the affinity that Jayesh has with the 'Telangana IT industry', which has been scaling new heights despite the Covid pandemic. Naturally, everyone thinks that Jayesh is an IT guy or at least a tech buff. A little bird, however, told us that his wife and daughter are writers and they recently penned down a beautiful book 'A symphony of Drabbles'. The book depicts different shades of life covering three generations. It has received good reviews. Jayesh's father was a journalist who worked with The Pioneer for over two decades. One may be surprised to see so many people within the family with extra-ordinary writing skills. Jayesh, who holds a Master's degree in Psychology, likes reading and we can expect some brilliant work from Jayesh in realms other than IT too.

## Super consultants

It is not yet clear whether the new Industrial Policy released by the Andhra Pradesh government has attracted good investments. Nevertheless, it has become a bone of contention among three major consulting companies. Initially, KPMG was engaged by the Industries Department to prepare a new policy. Then R Karikal Valaven brought PricewaterHouse Coopers (PWC) to finalise a robust industrial policy for the state. After that Executive Vice Chairman of AP Economic Development Board (EDB) Krishna GV Giri roped in BCG consulting group to prepare a policy to attract foreign investments into Andhra. BCG, not surprisingly the very same group that had prepared a report to say Amaravati is not good as the capital for the state and three capitals are so better, finally won the race and submitted the new policy, which was readily accepted by the state government. Now, the other two agencies know jolly well that there can't be three policies as well even if one amongst them posits it as a capital idea. They are trying to figure out why they lost in the race. If you have any idea please enlighten them. Three cheers, if you make it!

—Yours truly

# Naidu urges govt to set up Music University in memory of Balu

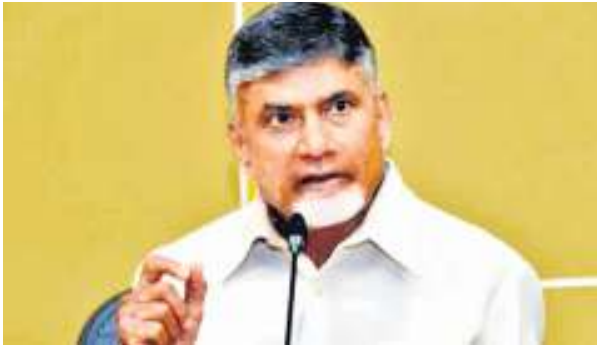
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SP Balasubrahmanaym popularly known as SPB had left indelible mark not only in southern film industry but also Bollywood. Though he had left heavenly abode he will remain in the hearts of Telugu people with his songs. The TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu appealed to the YSRCP government to set up a Music University in his memory in his home town Nellore as a befitting tribute to the legendary singer. Naidu addressed a letter to

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, underlining the need for preserving the legendary singer's legacy by setting up of the Music University. Through this, music and fine arts may be encouraged in the state, he felt.

Saying that Balu had made the Telugu people across the globe proud with his outstanding contributions, the TDP chief said that a bronze statue of the singer should be installed by the government on the premises of Music University.

Naidu recalled how the government set up the Telugu University and also installed 33



statues of Telugu stalwarts in different fields on the Tank Bund in Hyderabad. Also, the

TDP regime initiated efforts to keeping the memory of the contributions of film director

Bapu and writer Ramana by developing a Kala Khestra and a museum. Also, an annual national award was instituted in the memory of renowned musician and vocalist M a n g a l a m p a l l i Balamuralikrishna.

The TDP chief asked the Chief Minister to start annual state official celebrations to mark the birth anniversary of the late singer. A national award should be instituted in his name and Rs. 10 lakh should be presented to the recipient every year, he suggested.

## Chakra Snamam conducted at Tirumala temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Heralding the finale of the nine-day Navahnika Srivari Salakatta Brahmotsavams, Chakra Snamam was conducted at Tirumala temple on Sunday.

In view of the Covid 19 restrictions, the sacred Avabhrida Snamam was performed in a newly constructed Pushkarini (temple tank) inside the Srivari temple facing Ayina Mahal where the Snapana Tirumanjanam to the deities was conducted.

According to Hindu scriptures, Sudarshana Chakra is a spinning, disk-like weapon of Lord Maha Vishnu with 108 serrated edges. The Sudarshana Chakra is often depicted as an A y u d h a p u r u s h a (Anthropomorphic form).

The Snapana Tirumanjanam event to Sri Malayappa Swamy, Sri Devi, Bhu Devi and Sudarshana Chakrattalwar was performed on a grand manner

amidst chanting of Vedic hymns. Panchabhisheka Snamam with milk, curd, honey, turmeric and sandalwood paste was smeared to deities.

Later, Sudarshana Chakrattalwar was brought ceremoniously to the temple tank and immersed in the holy waters in the sacred muhurtam. With this, the nine day annual Brahmotsavams, which commenced in the Kanya month in the advent of Chitta star, concluded on a grand manner on the Shravana star, the birth star of Lord Venkateswara with Chakra Snamam.

TTD Chairman YV Subba Reddy, Executive Officer Anil Kumar Singhal, Board members Sekhar Reddy, Siva Kumar, DP Ananta, Nischita, additional executive officer AV Dharma Reddy, CE Ramesh Reddy, temple deputy executive officer Harindranath, and others were present.

## TDP rescinds district model...

Continued from page 1

Reddy Anantha Kumari (Amalapuram), Kothapalli Samuel Jawahar (Rajamundry), Thota Seetharama Lakshmi (Narasapuram), Ganni Veeranjaneyulu (Eluru), Konakalla Narayana Rao (Machilipatnam) and Nettem Raghuram (Vijayawada).

Tenali Sravan Kumar (Guntur), GV Anjaneyulu (Narsaraopeta), Yeluri Samba Siva Rao (Bapatla), Nukasani Balaji (Ongole), Shaik Abdul Aziz (Nellore), G Narasimha Yadav (Tirupati) and Pulivarthi Venkata Mani Prasad (Chittoor) have also made the

cut.

Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy (Rajampeta), Mallela Linga Reddy (Kadapa), Kalava Srinivasulu (Anantapur), BK Partha Sarathi (Hindupur), Somisetty Venkateswarlu (Kurnool) and Gowru Venkata Reddy (Nandyal) culminate the list of new appointees.

In addition to the presidents, Naidu has also appointed 13 observers to supervise affairs in two districts each.

The new observers include Kondapalli Appalanaidu (Machilipatnam and Guntur), Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy (Kakinada and Amalapuram), PGVR Naidu (Srikulam and Vizianagaram).

## APSAC contractual employees move HC

Continued from page 1

Instead of revising the remuneration of all, the NACO revised the remuneration of only senior medical officers and medical officers, which met with strong opposition from the APSAC employees, who termed it as divide and rule policy.

The NACO employees contended that disparity in the remuneration of the same people is illegal, arbitrary and violation of principles of natural justice according to Article 14, 16, 21 and 300A of the Constitution.

The employees have prayed the High Court to direct the Additional Secretary and Director General of the National AIDS Control Organisation to act on the representation of the petitioners and pass such order that may deem fit and proper in the circumstance of the case.

The APSAC employees deployed at ART and ICTC centres (all are contract employees) have been roped in for Covid duties to conduct Covid tests.

They were getting exposed to the TB and AIDs patients early and now the Covid but the authorities concerned are turning a blind eye to their plight and basic demands.

"More than 23,000 employees, who have been working under NACO through State AIDS Control Society (SACS), are engaged to provide quality facilities and services like HIV testing, treatment, counseling, clinical investigations, drugs, maintenance of records, enhancing government schemes like pension and health schemes," said Venu Sudarshi, state president and national coordinator of All India AIDS Control Employees Welfare Association.

"Most of the staff has been working since 2002 with very meagre honorarium, which is insufficient to get over minimum basic needs in day to day life. Maximum salary for paramedical staff is Rs 24,450 with an experience of more than 18 years and minimum salary is Rs 13,000 only which is very less when compared to other sectors," he added

## Cricket betting busted in Hyderabad

Continued from page 1

Shiva Kumar, a delivery boy, had come in contact with the Rajasthan-based main organiser, who is known by the name 'KD Online bookie'. "Through him, he started indulging in online cricket betting and collecting amount from punters clandestinely and transferring it to main bookie through digital wallets and accumulating easy money by taking commission," said North Zone task force inspector K.Nageswar Rao. Investigations revealed that the accused also engaged sub-organizer/betting collection agent, D.Naveen Kumar, and used to collect betting amounts for ongoing IPL Cricket matches.

## Precious metals shed extra weight

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Amidst the prevailing uncertain geo-political situation, precious metals shed extra weight during the week ended Saturday. Recession seems to have caught major economies into its grip. While the end of COVID-19 pandemic has not been within sight, global economies are struggling to gain their vim and vigour. Consequently, New York gold declined and finally closed at US \$ 1,861.20 (per ounce). Silver followed the suit and closed at \$ 22.89 (per ounce). Platinum depreciated and closed at \$ 841 (per ounce). Palladium too depreciated and closed at \$ 2,102 (per ounce).

Other economic parameters remained low. Brent closed at US\$ 41.92 (per barrel), while Crude MCX oil was quoted at Rs.2,969 (per barrel). While Gold MCX stood at Rs.49,659 (per 10 gms), MCX Silver declined and closed at Rs.59,027 (per kg), Copper M C X closed at Rs.531.15 (per kg). Sensex and Nifty 50 closed at 37388.66 and 11050.25 points. Leading foreign currencies' exchange rates were, US \$: Rs.73.70, British Pound: Rs.93.99, Euro: Rs.85.72, Singapore \$: Rs.53.47,

Swiss Franc: Rs.79.33, Australian \$: Rs.51.79, Saudi Riyal: Rs.19.65, New Zealand Dollar: Rs.48.17, Kuwaiti Dinar: Rs.240.49, Omani Rial: Rs.191.43 and UAE Dirham : Rs.20.07, Japanese Yen: Rs.0.70, Hong Kong Dollar: Rs.9.51. In local markets, standard gold (24 carats) decreased by Rs.1,480 and closed at Rs.52,380 (per 10 gms). Ornamental gold followed suit and was quoted in the range of Rs.47,960-48,060 on the closing day. Silver (0.999) declined

and closed at Rs.59,050 (per kg).

## COMMODITIES

The sentiment in principal wholesale commodity markets in the twin cities turned moderate due continued parting rain showers of the current monsoon season. Rythu Bazaars and the various commodity markets located in Begum Bazar, Kishangunj, Mukhyargunj, Risala Abdullah, Mir Alam Mandi, Dilukhnagar, Kukatpally, Bowenpally, General Bazar witnessed moderate trading. During the week, common pulses such as tuar dal, masoor dal, moong dal and urad dal and commodities like chillies and garlic remained unchanged for the second consecutive week.

## Inter-state robbers' gang...

Continued from page 1

people on the pretext of performing 'Kshudra' pujas. After gaining the trust of the gullible people, he used to attack them with the help of other gang members and then used to decamp with booty. Police said that the gang had committed similar crimes

at Tirupati, Bellary in Karnataka and also other places. They recently came to Kadapa and confessed that they had planned to burgle the residence of Rajampet MLA Meda Mallikarjuna Reddy. In another incident, Kadapa police arrested 13 persons accused of smuggling red sanders.

## VSP may close stock...

Continued from page 1

the business of the local distributors. There are allegations that big stockists and steel traders are behind the closure of the branch. A Srinivas Rao, a steel trader in Vijayawada, says that if at all the VSP stock point is shut it will be a big set back to the construction activity for the people in and around Vijayawada. So, it would be better is the management of VSP rethink before the closure of the stock point in Vijayawada.

## Kavitha's MLC berth...

Continued from page 1

it show that he has 'big plans' in mind for Kavitha. They believe that KCR will make her a minister and give her an active role in the party as well as in the TRS government. These speculation assumed significance in the backdrop of KCR's plans, up his sleeve, to enter national politics by handing over the Chief Minister post to his son KT Rama Rao early in 2021, once all civic and municipal bodies' elections are over in Telangana i.e. by March 2021.

## Sorry, Bapu. Your ideals donot work here!

HC UPADHYAY ■ HYDERABAD

While the whole world is devotionally celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, fondly called 'Bapu', here in our own country, that too in the citadel of democracy - Parliament, the world witnessed in awe the violent scenes during the last week. In the melee that ensued after the Lok Sabha-passed Bills for the welfare of farmers were tabled in the Rajya Sabha, not only verbal abuses were hurled at the treasury benches but also at the Dy. Chairman, who was occupying the august seat of the Chairman of Rajya Sabha then. The acrimony culminated into rushing of the members to the well and tearing off the papers of the draft Bills. Thereafter, in order to maintain order in the House, the Dy. Speaker had to call in marshalls. While the rest of the House was aghast to see the marshalls being attacked physically by the unruly 'Hon'ble' Members of Parliament, the common men had only to curse himself for sending such worthless people to represent them in the temple of democracy.

This is not an isolated incident.

Even in the past there have been untempered incidents of unruly behaviour by elected representatives. What is worse is that gradually but steadily such incidents are increasing day by day and that too with more severity and violent punch. Gone are the days when a witty sarcasm ruled the roost. Now, the place of decency has been captured by violence, anger, and total disregard for democracy.

Considering the latest incident, it must be said to the credit of Dy. Speaker Harivansh Rai that he maintained his cool and, despite a No Confidence Motion moved against him by the unruly Opposition, chose to personally offer tea to the unruly and violent gang outside Parliament which was staging sit-out dharna. In turn, the victim Dy. Speaker too sat on a token hunger strike for 24 hrs.

True, both the dharna and the act of offering tea to the perpetrators of crime are certainly called, 'Gandhigiri'. In any other civilised democracy, the gesture of the Dy. Speaker would have been highlighted by the media, but alas! our myopic media mughalshave yet to learn such niceties of Gandhian ideology. The agenda-oriented

**The Supreme Court, in an important judgment delivered in *BeliRam v. Rajinder Kumar &Anr*, has held that, when the owner of the motor vehicle employs a driver, he cannot wash off his hands from his duty to make sure that the driving licence of his employee is renewed timely**

thick-skinned Opposition ought to spend a few weeks, if not months, to understand the Gandhian philosophy of protest.

Let it be clearly understood by the anti-Modi, anti-BJP and anti-NDA forces that if they do not understand the Gandhian gestures such as the one shown by the Dy. Speaker, the innocent nation loving people of this country cannot be blamed if they go berserk to assert their rights in the larger interests.

And God save this nation if the heavy hammer of masses eventually falls on such rockheads who refuse to see the dire consequences awaiting their end. In such an eventuality, even if

Mahatma Returns in his physical form to this country, he would be a failure. **No driving licence, no claim** The Supreme Court, in an important judgment delivered in *BeliRam v. Rajinder Kumar &Anr*, has held that, when the owner of the motor vehicle employs a driver, he cannot wash off his hands from his duty to make sure that the driving licence of his employee is renewed timely.

In the instant case, the licence of the driver was not renewed for the period of 3 years and when the driver had met with an accident, his claim from the

insurance company stood invalid as the SC observed that this proves the gross negligence of the owner of the motor vehicle, which is in violation of Sec. 5 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and hence the insurance company cannot be made liable.

**Right to shelter, a fundamental right**

The right to shelter is a fundamental right said the Bombay High Court. The Court after takingsuo motu cognizance of the building collapse tragedy in Thane's Bhiwandi area, which took the lives of 41 innocent people, has noted that "We are of the prima facie opinion that the right of the citizens to live in safe buildings and environment would be a facet of the right guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India and that would be the duty of the civic bodies to bring about a situation that all buildings within their respective municipal jurisdictions are legal, sustainable and safe."

The division bench of Bombay High Court, comprising Chief Justice Dipankar Dutta and Justice GS Kulkarni, issued the notices and gave October 15 as the next date of hearing in the matter.

## Second flood alert at Prakasam...

Continued from page 1

Instructions were given to officials of Chandralapadu to alert the villagers apart from cautioning the villagers on the flood situation to Chinalka, Pedalanka of Imrahimpatnam mandal, said the Collector.

Apart from Jaggayapeta and Ibrahimpatnam, tahsildars of Penamaluru, Thottavallur and Kankipada have also been asked to alert the people in the river basin and take precautionary measures. Krishna river basin tahsildars, irrigation, police, fire, R&B, PR, electricity, agriculture, fisheries, VMC, medical and health department officials are put on high alert to take flood relief measures, he said and added that all tahsildars shall visit the flood affected areas and update the situation from time to time.

The teleconference was attended by Joint Collector K Madhavilatha, Sub-Collector HM Dhyanchandra, Pulichentala project superintending engineer and irrigation department officials.



CAPSULE



Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for CDFD scientist

**HYDERABAD:** Dr Subhadeep Chatterjee, scientist from Hyderabad-based Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostic (CDFD), has been awarded the prestigious Shanthi Swarup Bhatnagar Prize (SSB) for the year 2020 in Biological Sciences by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Dr Chatterjee has been selected for his contributions in identification of reversible non-genetic heterogeneity in bacterial quorum sensing (QS) and providing novel insights into the mechanisms by which the Xanthomonas group of phytopathogens which causes several economically important plant diseases, coordinate virulence functions and lifestyle transitions by sensing cell density and iron availability, according to a press release. Dr Chatterjee's research has greatly increased understanding of basic social communication systems in bacteria and their mechanisms of iron metabolism and regulation in bacteria.



MANUU entrance tests from today amid Covid precautions

**HYDERABAD:** Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) is conducting entrance tests for admission into its regular courses on September 28, 29 and 30. Around 10,000 candidates are expected to attend the entrance test at 16 examination centres across the country. The university has taken all precautionary measures at the exam centres in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, said MANUU in-charge Registrar Prof Siddiqui Mohd Mahmood, in a press release on Sunday. Candidates were also given an additional opportunity to choose their nearest exam centre, he said. The entrance test will be conducted in two sessions — 9.30 am to 11.30 am and 2.30 pm to 4.30 pm. Apart from the university headquarters Hyderabad, the entrance tests will be conducted at Asansol, Aurangabad, Azamgarh, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bidar, Cuttack, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kadapa, Kishanganj, Lucknow, Patna, Sanbal and Srinagar. All the candidates have to mandatorily submit a copy of "No Covid-19 Self Declaration" at the examination centre in the format available on university website.

# Kondaveedu Fort will be a tourist destination: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Kondaveedu Fort, a symbol of the Reddy kings' glory, will be developed as a tourist destination, assured Minister for Home Mekathoti Sucharitha.

Measures will be taken to preserve the heritage and wealth of the fort. She was the chief guest at the Kondaveedu Development conference organised to mark the World Tourism Day on Sunday.

Addressing the gathering, the minister recalled that the fort has a great history and she grew up seeing the Kondaveedu Fort and the hills. During her childhood days, the way to the hill was not proper, she reminded. She said that development activities will begin after the Coronavirus gets under control.

When Shiva Reddy, convenor, Kondavidu Fort Development Committee, brought to the notice of the minister that the road from Pirangipuram to Kondavidu was narrow, the minister

● Minister for Home Mekathoti Sucharitha recalled that the fort has a great history and she grew up seeing the Kondaveedu Fort and the hills

● Chilakaluripet MLA Vidadala Rajani said that Kondaveedu will be developed as a place that provides valuable knowledge to tourists on a global scale with the remains of the fort and historical models

● Guntur District Collector Samuel Anand Kumar said that both the Kondapalli Fort and the Kondaveedu Fort were built during the reign of the Reddy kings. Kondaveedu is said to be the perfect abode for the great heroes



An aerial view of the Kondaveedu Fort in Guntur district (file photo)

directed officials concerned to prepare a proposal for widening the road from Aminabad to Kondaveedu as an alternative route for tourists coming from Guntur to Kondaveedu. The aim was to carry forward the culture and heritage of Kondaveedu Fort and historical treasure to the future generations, she said.

Chilakaluripet MLA Vidadala Rajani said that Kondaveedu will be developed as a place that provides valuable knowledge to tourists on a global scale with the remains of the fort and historical models. She said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was conducting continuous reviews on the development of

Kondaveedu Fort.

Guntur District Collector Samuel Anand Kumar said that both the Kondapalli Fort and the Kondaveedu Fort were built during the reign of the Reddy kings. Kondaveedu is said to be the perfect abode for the great heroes. They would finalise the entry fee soon, he said.

## Naidu driving a wedge among Dalits, alleges YSRCP MLA

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSRCP has alleged that TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu has been using Dalits for his political gains and has been trying to create a wedge among them.

Speaking to the media in Visakhapatnam on Sunday, YSRCP MLA Merugu Nagarajuna criticised Naidu for the round-table and stated that it was held by his puppets, who parroted his script.

Unlike in the previous government, where Dalits were insulted and assaulted by TDP leaders, they are happy with the rule of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy. He questioned Naidu, why he didn't come with such a round-table meeting during his tenure, while Dalits have been attacked



many times.

He said that Naidu is in the habit of conspiring against Dalits and using them for political gains. He questioned why Babu Jagajivan Ram's photo was not put up at the meeting and said that Naidu is trying to divide the Dalits.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is a true leader for Dalits, as he laid a

big pedestal for the welfare of Dalits. Besides taking quick action against those attacking Dalits, separate Corporations were started for Dalits' welfare. A 125 feet statue of Ambedkar is being installed in the heart of Vijayawada, he reminded.

Speaking at a separate press conference, MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu reiterated that Naidu is anti-Dalit but he is trying to cast aspersions on the Chief Minister. He stated that the round-table was organised only to safeguard the political interests of Naidu and use Dalit card for gaining sympathy from public. MLA Sudhakar Babu affirmed that the public are not going to fall for his words but in turn will attack the opposition leaders for their false propaganda against Jaganmohan Reddy.

## AP Polycet results on October 5

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As many as 71,589 candidates appeared for the AP Polycet-2020 examination held on Sunday from 11 am to 1 pm at various exam centres across the state.

Out of 60,222 boys, who applied for the exam, 50,639 attended the exam with 84.09 per cent, while 28,091 girls applied for the exam and 20,951 attended the exam with 74.58 per cent. About 388 exam centres were set up for conducting the exam across the 13 districts.

MM Naik, Special Commissioner, State Board of Technical Education and Training, said that the examination was held peacefully.

## Six held for theft from hundis

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Vizianagaram police arrested six members of a gang for stealing money from donation boxes (hundis) of temples in Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts.

The arrested have been identified as M Nagarjuna, T Veera Babu, M Dhanaraju, Ch Sai, A Chiranjeevi and G Eswar Rao and all belonged to Vizag and Vizianagaram districts. On September 23, a gang had stolen the donation box, which contains cash and some valuables, of a temple at Jammu village in Vizianagaram district. They had also attempted to steal the donation box of a temple at Dasannapeta in Vizianagaram district on the same day.

Acting on the complaints from the locals, the Vizianagaram police formed a special team to nab the gang members. The police nabbed the gang members when they were travelling in an auto-rickshaw as they found their activities suspicious.

Deputy Inspector General (Visakha Range) LKV Ranga Rao said that during the interrogation, the gang confessed that they were involved in stealing cash and valuables from the donation boxes at the temples in Vizianagaram and

● Deputy Inspector General (Visakha Range) LKV Ranga Rao said that during the interrogation, the gang confessed that they were involved in stealing cash and valuables from the donation boxes at the temples in Vizianagaram and Vizag districts.



● The investigation has revealed that the gang was accused of stealing from donation boxes of over 10 temples in the two districts in the past few months. All the members of the gang are habitual offenders and have been involved in property offences in the region, he added.

Vizag districts.

The investigation has revealed that the gang was accused of stealing from donation boxes of over 10 temples in the two districts in the past few months. All the members of the gang are habitual offenders and have been involved in property offences in the region, he added.

"Though it is difficult to tell how much they stole as temples don't always count the money and valuables in the donation box daily, the gang confessed that they have stolen more than Rs 1.3 lakh from the

donation boxes of the various temples," the officer said. The police managed to recover Rs 21,000 from the gang.

The police said that the gang in an auto-rickshaw would recce temples in the morning hours to burgle them during the night.

DIG LKV Ranga Rao said that they would initiate action against those who spread rumours on social networking platforms on religious issues. He also said that they intensified the patrolling to prevent the possible thefts and others in the region.



## 10 dists register excess rainfall in four months

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Ten districts have received excess rainfall in the past four months till September 26, barring Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram with normal rainfall and Srikakulam being the lone deficient district.

According to the Met department's cumulative data for the period June 1 to September 26, five districts in the state reported rainfall beyond 60 per cent than the usual quantum they receive.

Kadapa lead the pack of those five districts with 115 per cent more rainfall, followed by Anantapur (83 per cent), Chittoor and Kurnool (76 per cent each) and Nellore (66 per cent).

Five coastal districts registered 20 per cent to 59 per cent more rainfall than usual, Prakasam (44 per cent), Guntur (55 per cent), Krishna (26 per cent), West Godavari (41 per cent) and East Godavari (36 per cent).

In north coastal Andhra, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram registered normal rainfall while Srikakulam is the lone district with a deficit rainfall of 25 per cent at a time when most of the state witnessed copious rains.

In terms of actual rainfall in millimetre unit measurement, West Godavari district recorded 1,078 mm against a normal of 763 mm while Prakasam recorded 535.1 mm against a normal of 370.4 mm.

## APWSEA state committee elected

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Village Ward Secretariats Employees Association (APWSEA) has elected a new state panel here on Sunday. G Rajesh has been elected as the president of the panel and Abdul Razak has been elected as the general secretary. Sri Lakshmi and Y Naidu have been elected as the vice-president and the treasurer. Besides, 20 members have been elected to the State Executive Committee. The elections were held under the supervision of Andhra Pradesh Government Employees Association president KR Suryanarayana.

Chief guest KR Suryanarayana, president said Chief Minister had recruited 1.32 lakh Village and Ward Secretariat staff to provide transparency in the administration. He said that he was very happy that the Village and Ward Secretariat staff became part of the government employees. He praised the services of the Village, Ward Secretariat staff stating that the people are appreciating their services.

He said the main objective of the Village, Ward Secretariats is to provide all services to the people. Krishna District Government Employees Association president Kondapalli Srinivas and others spoke on the occasion.

## Guv condoles Jaswant's death

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

Governor Biswa Bushan Harichandan on Sunday condoled the death of former Union Minister Jaswant Singh and recalled his contribution to public life.

"He expressed his profound grief and sadness at the pass-

ing away of Jaswant Singh, a founding member of BJP, on Sunday," said an official from Harichandan's office.

The Governor recalled that Singh served first as an Army officer and later as a Rajya Sabha member for five terms and Lok Sabha member for four terms. "Singh served as a

Union Minister in the NDA government headed by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and held several important portfolios such as External Affairs, Finance, and Defence," he said.

According to Harichandan, the state Value Added Tax (VAT) was introduced during Singh's tenure as the Finance

Minister between 2002 and 2004.

He prayed to Lord Jagannath and Lord Venkateshwara for peace to Singh's soul, offering his condolences to the bereaved family. Singh passed away in Delhi on Sunday following a cardiac arrest. He was 82.

## Sri City MD's donation to SVIMS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Managing Director of Sri City, Sri Ravi Sanna Reddy, has donated Rs 25 lakh towards the development of Covid Lab in Sri Venkateswara Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS) Super Specialty Hospital in Tirupati.

He handed over the cheque for the same to TTD Trust Board Chairman YV Subba Reddy on Sunday at Srivari temple. TTD Trust Board member Sekhar Reddy was also present.



## Jaswant Singh, an inspiring leader: CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has expressed grief over the demise of former Union Minister Jaswant Singh. The soldier turned Parliamentarian was an inspiring personality whose contribution to Indian polity is immense, the Chief Minister said and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members.



## Ritwiks to recite Shodasadina Sundarakanda

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Seeking the blessings of Lord Venkateswara for the mankind, which was badly affected by the dreadful Covid 19, TTD has mulled yet another Deeksha Parayanam, 'Shodasadina Sundarakanda Deeksha Parayanam' with 16 versatile priests, which will be conducted from September 29 to October 14 at Vasantha Mandapam in Tirumala.

Elaborating on the programme, Dharmagiri Veda Vignana Peetham Principal KSS Avadhani said this programme is taken up to bring back the health and wealth of the entire mankind, which was seriously disturbed in the last few months due to Corona. This Shodasadina Sundarakanda Parayanam will be recited separately by a team of 16 expert Vedic scholars at Vasantha Mandapam every day starting from September 29 from 9 am onwards, which will be telecast live on SVBC. This apart from the daily Sundarakanda Pathanam, which takes place between 7 am and 8 am," he added.

"The significance of this Shodasadina Sundarakanda Deeksha is that it has a 16-letter Beejakshara mantra. And if you tally each akshara, the total will be 68. It means the



Beejakshara. Sol in these 16 days, the entire Sundarakanda Pathanam will be completed by the Ritwiks with each day reciting the slokas from the sargas based on the Beejakshara.

"Sree Raghavaha Vijayamatdhyat Mama Seetapathi Prabhuhu"... Each letter is equivalent to some sargas. On total 68 sargas, which includes 2,821 slokas from Sundarakanda will be recited in these 16 days. And this will bring back the lost glory in all our lives," he maintained.

Adding further he said, the Ankurapana for this prestigious programme will be performed at Veda Pathashala on September 28 at 7 pm. In addition to the 16 Ritwiks, who perform the recitation of Shodasadina Sundarakanda Deeksha at Vasantha Mandapam, another 16 Vedic scholars recite the same in Dharmagiri also strictly observing Deeksha norms.

## Construction of new chariot for Antarvedi temple begins

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The government has started the new chariot construction work for the Antarvedi Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple on Sunday, deputing ministers and officials for the rituals.

Minister for Revenue Dharmana Krishnadas said the government is building a new chariot on the instructions given by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy.

According to the minister, the government wants to complete the chariot construction as soon as possible.

"Probe to find the culprits responsible for the chariot blaze is continuing. Whoever it is and however big they may be, the government will severely punish them when nabbed," he said.

**Using Bastar teak, the government aims at building the chariot in three months' time, which will be identical to the old one**

However, he said some political parties are trying to take mileage out of the chariot issue and called it a sad development. As part of the rituals to build a new chariot, priests started performing the ceremonies right from the wee hours of Sunday.

Using Bastar teak, the government aims at building the chariot in three months' time,

which will be identical to the old one. It may be recalled that on September 5, a six-decade-old wooden chariot of the famous Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Antarvedi in East Godavari district was gutted in a fire under mysterious circumstances.

The State government has allocated Rs 95 lakh to build a new chariot and the Chief Minister handed over the investigation to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Scenic Antarvedi is located in the lush green Konaseema region of East Godavari district, 57 km south-east of Bhimavaram. The temple is located near the confluence of the mighty Godavari river and the Bay of Bengal on the east coast of India.



Puja being performed for the construction of new chariot for Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Antarvedi on Sunday



## Srinivas dwells on scope for boosting rural tourism

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Tourism V Srinivas Goud has dwelt on significance of development of rural tourism in state. Participating in the Rural tourism development webinar organised by United World Tourism Organisation in connection with World Tourism Day on Sunday, he said tourism development was not limited to Hyderabad alone and listed out the heritage tourism places located in rural areas like the Kakatiya fort, Ramappa temple and 1,000-pillar temple.

Explaining the tourism development projects in Telangana in KCR regime, he said that the Tourism Department annually gives awards to stake holders. The state government developed Gattamma temple, holding Medaram festival every two years on a grand scale and set up accommodation facilities and restaurants in Malluru and Bogota water fall areas. Tourism development works were taken up in Ramappa temple, Pakala, Jannaram rural areas.

# Reservoirs in Telangana brim due to heavy inflows

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Incessant rains have proved to be a boon to the reservoirs of various projects in the State. Projects on Godavari and Krishna and their tributaries were receiving heavy inflows and the reservoirs are brimming with flood water.

At the flagship Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS) the inflows into Lakshmi (Medigada) barrage were 2, 50,000 lakh cusecs and same quantity has been discharged by lifting 46 gates out of 85 gates . According to KLIS Superintending Engineer Ramana Reddy, the barrage is holding 5 tmc of water against its capacity of 16.17 tmc. At Saraswathi (Annaram) barrage the inflows were 1,00,000 cusecs. Outflows of 1,00,000 cusecs were discharged downstream by lifting 22 gates out of 66 gates. The quantum of water available in Saraswathi barrage was 6.6 tmc.

At Parvathi (Sundilla) barrage of KLIS the inflow and out flow were 1,02,000 cusecs , water was let down stream by



opening 60 gates out of 74 gates. The quantum of water available was 6.8 tmc out of a total capacity of 8.83 tmc. In other projects on Godavari too the inflows continued. At SRSP 98.78 per cent of the reservoir was full and the inflows were 64,385 cusecs and outflows were 47,302 cusecs. At Sripada Yellampalli 92.15 per cent of the reservoir was full and inflows were 1,17,614 cusecs and outflows were 1,02,170 cusecs. At Lower Manair the reservoir was brimming with 98.77 per cent of its capacity, while the inflow was

71,809 cusecs the outflow was 1,13,223 cusecs.

On the other hand on river Krishna, projects from upper riparian State Karnataka continued to dump flood water in Telangana projects. Outflows from Almati were 56,838 cuses and outflows from Narayanpur were 1,39,400 cusecs which might go up to 2,00,000 cusecs by Saturday night. At Priyadarshini Jurala Project (PJP) the inflows were heavy at 1,92,000 cusecs and outflows were 2,24,345 cusecs released through 27 gates. Power house was utilizing 27,775 cusecs.

Srisailem was receiving 1,89,776 cusecs and outflow was 1,77,176 cusecs. Quantum of water available in the project was 215.33 tmc which is approximately 99.78 per cent of the reservoir capacity. Nagarjuna Sagar was receiving 93,538 cusecs of water and was discharging 1,21,205 cusecs. The reservoir has 310.55 tmc of water. Pulichintala was receiving 1,42,233 cusecs and was discharging 1,70,761 cusecs. The quantum of water available at Pulichintala was 45.05 tmc of water out of its full capacity of 45.77 tmc.

## Maize sale likely to cause Rs 500 crore loss to govt

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State Government has been facing a piquant problem in disposing of maize procured by it during the last Rabi in the light of the Centre allowing import of maize from other countries. During the Vanakalam season, the KCR government discouraged the cultivation of maize stating that the government has enough stocks of the maize in its godowns.

The Markfed produced at least 94 lakh quintals of maize last year by paying Rs 1,760 per quintal. In the light of the Centre's import order, if maize were to be disposed of now the government will sustain at least Rs 500 crore loss.

As if it is not enough, the farmers raised Mazie in two lakh acres during the current Vanakalam season, albeit on a low level perhaps for personal consumption. With the Centre allowing import of 15 lakh tonnes of maize at an import duty of 15 per cent, the prices of maize have fallen down across the country. Meanwhile, the Markfed has initiated measures to dispose of



the maize stocks with it as soon as possible.

Last year, the Markfed even borrowed Rs 1,500 crore to procure maize from farmers. To earn profit, under the prevailing circumstances, the Markfed should sell a quintal at Rs 2,100. Traders have been taking advantage of the situation of the state government. When tenders have been invited for sale of six lakh quintals of maize, the traders quoted the price of Rs 1,188 a quintal. The bids will be opened on September 28. The Markfed is in a dilemma whether to dispose of the maize or not if the price quoted was low.

The Markfed also invited tenders for sale of rest of the 88 lakh quintals of maize. In the domestic market, the price of maize varies between Rs 1,300 and Rs 1,400 a quintal. The farmers have cultivated maize in the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka on a large scale during Vanakalam. The harvested crops would be sold in Telangana perhaps during the next month, a measure which is likely to crash maize prices even further. If the old stocks of maize with the Markfed remained unsold, the market would collapse further accumulating losses to the government.

### GETAWAY SPOT



Tourists thronged Nagarjuna Sagar Project on Sunday. Badminton player PV Sindhu arrived at Nagarjuna Sagar and spent time at the project watching the water release along with her family members.

### MOINABAD RAPE CASE

## Congress demands State government to constitute SIT



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress party on Sunday demanded the Telangana Government to constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigation into the alleged rape and murder of a girl by a local

TRS leader. Hyderabad City Congress Committee (HCCC) Minorities Department chairman Sameer Waliullah, along with TPCC Spokesperson Syed Nizamuddin, ex-Corporator Shaik Shareef, Youth Congress leaders Shahbaz Khan, Mohd Inram Khan, Mohd Mohsin and other leaders, met the family members of the victim,

Nazia Begum, at their residence in Moಿನabاد on Sunday.

Speaking to the media, Sameer Waliullah said that the statements of family members clearly suggest that the girl was sexually abused by the TRS leader Madhu Yadav for over a year and he allegedly murdered her on September 25. However, he said that the police was trying to show girl's death as suicide. He said that the police have registered a case of rape and abetment to commit suicide case against TRS leader Madhu Yadav. He said that the police had earlier registered a case under IPC section 354

(Outraging Modesty of a woman) and 306 (Abetment to commit suicide). But after investigation, the police have altered the section 376 (Rape) from 354. Similarly, he said that the Section 306 should be altered to Section 302 as the girl was allegedly murdered and she did not commit suicide. Sameer Waliullah alleged that some ruling TRS party leaders were reportedly trying to pressurise the local police to hush up the case. Therefore, he demanded that the State Government constitute a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe into the matter in a fair manner.

## 'State failed to handle situation in rain-hit Hyd'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC working president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy on Sunday questioned TRS working president and Municipal Administration Minister KT Rama Rao to reveal as to why the latter is not seen in Hyderabad city except on Twitter and video conferences.

"KTR is seen only during inaugurations of flyovers. However, he will not come to the rescue of the people when they are in troubles. The people of LB Nagar Constituency are facing lot of troubles during rains because of encroachment of tanks and FTL lands by the associates of LB Nagar MLA D Sudhir Reddy," he alleged. While visiting rain hit areas in LB Nagar area on Sunday, Revanth Reddy alleged that the Ministers and officials were least bothered about the people even though the people are facing troubles



due to floods in Hyderabad.

Revanth alleged that troubles due to rains are not because of natural calamities but because of human errors. "Chief Minister conducts review meetings on useless issues and never concentrates on public issues. The people of several colonies of LB Nagar constituency experienced huge losses due to floods. The state government should extend help to the victims by estimating the loss immediately," he alleged.

## '2BHK houses a symbol of dignity'

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

The double bedroom houses being constructed by the State government to provide shelter to the homeless were the symbol of respect for the poorer sections, stated Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar.

The minister has inaugurated 80 double bedroom houses constructed with an expenditure of Rs 5 crores- 20 houses each at Gandhi Nagar, Chimalavarigudem and Kotha thanda in Singareni mandal and at Chintagurthi village of Raghunathapalem mandal in the district on Sunday.

The Minister said that the Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao wants the houseless poor to have a dignified life and hence was spending around Rs 15 lakhs on each house's construction, including cost of the land and infrastructure.

## KCR neglecting TS protagonists: Bandi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday slammed Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao for allegedly ignoring Telangana protagonists. While paying floral tributes to Konda Laxman Babuji on his 105th birth anniversary, the BJP chief said, "It is painful to see that Chief Minister failed to keep up his promise to install the statue of Konda Laxman Babuji's on Tank Bund," he said.

"Konda Laxman Babuji was a freedom fighter. Babuji also waged a movement for separate Telangana rigorously. Konda Laxman Babuji had participated in first phase Telangana movement selflessly by tendering resignation to his minister position," he further added. Sanjay said that Konda Laxman Babuji is an inspiration to the youth. He raised his voice on injustices



meted out to Telangana wherever the meetings were held. He emerged as a strong leader though he came from weaker sections. The Telangana state government should work in tune with the aspirations of Babuji, who fought untiringly for the sake of separate Telangana state, the BJP chief said. On the other hand, Bandi expressed condolences to the family members of former Union Minister Jaswanth Singh. He said that the demise of Jaswanth Singh is a heavy loss for the party as Jaswanth Singh was a founder member of the BJP.

## Community CCTV project inaugurated

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A community surveillance camera project was inaugurated at Karkhana in Secunderabad by Cantonment MLA G Sayanna on Sunday. As part of the project, 100 CCTV cameras were installed through community participation in different areas of Karkhana.

The project will cover the areas of Dhoobi Ghat, Kendriya Vidyalaya School, Cantonment Quarters and Ambedkarnagar.

The cost of the project is around Rs 15 lakh and the money was contributed by the local people and the MLA. P Madhukar Swamy, SHO, Karkhana police station appreciated the public for their active participation in 'Nenusaitam' community project.

### MLC ELECTIONS

## Cong not keen on supporting Kodandaram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Jana Samithi president Kodandaram's dream of making electoral debut may become a herculean task as the Congress party is not showing interest to extend its support to him.

It may be recalled that the TJS has decided to field its chief from Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduate Constituency and has sought the support of Congress, TDP, CPM, CPI and Telangana Inti Party. Kodandaram had not shown interest to contest the Assembly and Parliament elections. However, the TJS chief is now keen to enter the fray by contesting from the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduate Constituency. The Congress contested Assembly elections in alliance with TJS, TTDP and CPI. However, it failed to show its impact. However, the Congress leaders from Nalgonda-Khammam-



Warangal districts expressed mixed responses on extending support to Kodandaram in graduate MLC elections. In the preparatory meeting for graduate MLC elections for Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal and Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar constituencies held at Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday, several leaders from Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal districts asked the Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore to not to support other party candidate. They opined that it is better they support a

candidate who is with the party. They also stated that the cadre will also be destroyed if the party extends support to other political party candidates. They opined that it is better for the party if it fields a strong leader in Graduate MLC elections, it is learnt.

Some leaders in the meeting suggested the party incharge to give a chance to contest graduate MLC elections to the leaders who didn't contest Assembly and Parliament and other elections. They also asked Manickam to announce the candidates by October 1.

However, Manickam Tagore didn't respond to the extension of support of Congress party to Kodandaram. He asked the local leadership to concentrate on enrolment of graduate voters' process. He said that he will appoint a five-member committee to scrutinise the party candidates for MLC elections. According to party sources, the high command will take final call on extending support to Kodandaram.

Meanwhile, unconfirmed sources say that one of the leaders proposed the party to stay away from Dubbaka by-elections and give a call to make the election unanimous in favour of deceased family member as the party is not as strong as expected. However, Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy's wife Sujatha will win easily on sympathy votes and the party may not do well in the elections. However, the party leaders didn't consider this proposal it is learnt.

# TRS eyes victory in series of elections

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has taken the soon to be held series of election as a matter of prestige and devising strategies to win all the elections - polls to the local bodies constituency of Nizamabad for Upper House, by elections to Dubbaka seat, MLC elections to graduates' constituencies, GHMC polls and the Municipal Corporation elections to Warangal and Khammam.

The TRS has decided to adopt exclusive action plan for each and every elections and deploying the party workers for poll work accordingly.

As per the directions of the party president and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao, party working president KT Rama Rao has been executing the Chief Minister's orders.

The Nizamabad local bodies' constituency elections were slated for October 9. The former MP Kalvakuntla Kavita is going to contest the elections on behalf of the TRS. Therefore, the TRS is giving lot of importance to winning the seat. MPTCs, ZPTCs and corporators and councillors constitute voters. In fact, TRS has 80 per cent of the electorate. The party is exuding confidence of winning the elections.



As soon as the election notification was out, KT Rama Rao discussed with district minister Prashant Reddy, MLAs, MLCs, ZP chairperson and others and entrusted specific duties to them assembly consti-

tituencies wise, mandal wise, municipal corporation and municipalities wise. By-elections to Dubbaka constituency, forced due to death of sitting TRS MLA Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy, are likely to

be held in November simultaneously with Bihar Assembly elections. The TRS is keen to recapture Dubbaka seat, since the constituency falls in the CM's own district and also the TRS has very strong hold over the constituency. The party leadership is working to get at least one lakh majority in Dubbaka. Finance Minister T Harish Rao took upon the responsibility of winning the seat for the TRS and has been coordinating the efforts of the party workers, leaders and others. Sujata Reddy, widow of the deceased MLA, is keen to contest the bypolls. Efforts are underway to garner support for her candidature.

## Congress condemns delay in resumption of properties' registration

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) Treasurer Gudur Narayana Reddy on Sunday strongly condemned the delay in restoration of registration of properties across the State in view of introduction of a new Revenue Act and alleged that there was no functional administration in Telangana State.

Narayana Reddy said that Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao was emulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi in introducing

new laws without any planning and preparation. "Although it is debatable where or not Telangana needs a new Revenue Law at this juncture, KCR government should have planned its implementation in a proper manner. All registrations are at a halt for the last one month and the situation would remain unchanged until next month till Dussera. CM is apparently not conscious of the impact of his wrong and ill-planned decisions on the common man. Both Modi and KCR have a long history of implementing decisions with-

out giving any thought on their implications," he said.

The Congress leader alleged that there was no visible administration in Telangana State. He said there was no working Secretariat and all Ministers and senior officials were functioning from symbolic make-shift offices. With the Chief Minister shutting down all Revenue offices until further orders, there is no visible administration in Telangana State. He said except police stations, no other government office is functioning in a full-fledged manner.



SHORT READS



Maha Governor, Pawar pay tributes to Jaswant Singh

**Mumbai :** Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari and NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Sunday condoled the death of former Union minister Jaswant Singh and lauded his contribution towards the country. Singh, 82, a close associate of ex-prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, died in New Delhi on Sunday following a long spell of illness. Koshiyari said Singh was fiercely patriotic, articulate and eloquent and made his mark while holding defence, external affairs and finance portfolios in the Vajpayee-led government. "His learned speeches and interventions within Parliament and outside were awaited and appreciated by one and all. I had the proud privilege of knowing Jaswant Singh ji intimately. In his demise, India has lost a world class diplomat and statesman," he said. Pawar on Twitter said Singh was an eminent parliamentarian and served the nation in varied capacities.



FIR against Bihar Cong chief for violating Covid norms

**Patna:** An FIR has been registered against Bihar Congress president Madan Mohan Jha and several other senior party leaders for violating COVID-19 norms at Patna airport, officials said on Sunday. They have been accused of violating COVID-19 protocol by amassing a large number of people at the airport on Saturday when some party leaders were arriving in the Bihar capital to strategise for the upcoming assembly elections. The FIR has been registered by special executive magistrate Mohammed Saifullah Khan at the airport police station under section 188 IPC, 269, similar other sections of the penal code, besides provisions of Epidemic Diseases Act and Disaster Management Act. Those named accused in the FIR include Jha, Congress Rajya Sabha member and state Congress campaign committee chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh, and AICC secretary incharge Ajay Kapoor.



'Ryots playing major role in building Aatmanirbhar Bharat'

**New Delhi:** Lauding farmers for strengthening the country's agriculture sector, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the farm sector is playing a major role in efforts to build a self-reliant India. He also said if the essence of Mahatma Gandhi's economic philosophy was followed, there would not have been any need for the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' campaign as India would have become self-reliant much earlier. Speaking on various issues, Modi said many farmers benefitted after fruits, vegetables were brought out of APMC Act in some states a few years ago. He also interacted with members of the Bangalore Storytelling Society.

# SAD snapped ties with NDA 'out of compulsion': Sukhdev

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Dissident Akali leader Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa on Sunday said the Shiromani Akali Dal snapped ties with the NDA "out of compulsion" as farmers were angry with it over the farm bills.

The SAD had on Saturday quit the NDA over the farm bills issue, the third major party to walk out of the BJP-led coalition in the last couple of years. "They (SAD) have done it out of compulsion as farmers are upset with them," Dhindsa, a Rajya Sabha member, said. He said the Akali Dal initially supported the bills with even party stalwart Parkash Singh Badal speaking in the favour.

"They then took a U-turn,

## The SAD had quit the NDA, the third major party to walk out of the BJP-led coalition in the last couple of years

saying it is not in the interest of farmers. Were these bills not bad for farmers earlier?" the dissident Akali leader said.

"They have lost support at the ground level in the state," he alleged. Dhindsa, who had formed the SAD (Democratic) party, said his political outfit has been supporting farmers from the beginning over the issue. "From the day one, we have been supporting farmers



and standing with them. Our party wants the issue to be resolved at the earliest," he told PTI. Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, along with his son and former state finance minister Parminder Singh Dhindsa, was expelled from the SAD in February this year over 'anti-party' activities. SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal had

announced the decision to snap ties with the NDA, amid stepped up agitation by farmers in Punjab over the three legislations which were recently passed by Parliament amid opposition protests. Badal's wife and SAD leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal had on September 17 quit the Union Cabinet after he strongly opposed the bills in Lok Sabha, claiming these legislations will 'destroy' the agriculture sector in Punjab. Parliament had recently passed the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill; Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill; and Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill.

# Docs offering free telemedicine service to J-K residents

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

A group of 300 doctors from across the world have come together to set up a free telemedicine consultation service in Jammu and Kashmir to serve non-COVID-19 patients who have suffered as the focus of the existing healthcare infrastructure has been on dealing with the pandemic.

Under the 'Dial a Doctor' programme, more than 300 doctors across the globe and from different specialties and sub-specialties provide voluntary health services to the patients. Ehsaas International and Dard Welfare Society, in association with Kashmir Health Care Support Group, have initiated this healthcare consultative service, Hakim Mohammad Ilyas, general secretary of Ehsaas International,

## Over 300 doctors across the globe from different specialties providing voluntary health services



told PTI.

"Considering the adverse impact the COVID-19 pandemic has put on the existing health infrastructure of J&K, we decided to launch 'Dial a Doctor' programme wherein people would get access to quality health consultations and services without leaving the four walls of their houses," he said.

"This was conceptualised keeping in view that hospitals are high risk places for con-

traction of COVID-19 and many medical ailments can be managed by telephonic consultations thus avoiding visit of patients to hospitals," Ilyas said.

To ensure timely disposal of queries, a control room managed by doctors and paramedical staff has been set up with a toll free number 1800 889 2729 backed with 10 lines at the back end to avoid any inconvenience to the patients, he said.



# Congress MLA Dinesh Gundu Rao tests positive

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Congress leader and MLA Dinesh Gundu Rao on Sunday said he has tested positive for COVID-19. "I have tested #Corona positive today.

Therefore will be quarantining myself for 10 days. I request all my primary contacts

to get themselves checked and take necessary precaution," Rao tweeted. The former state Congress President said he was asymptomatic and will recover soon because of the good wishes from every one. Rao had taken part in the proceedings of the monsoon session of the Karnataka assembly till late last night.

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Shiromani Akali Dal quit the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) over farm bills, but strains in relations between the two oldest allies had begun surfacing for over a year.

SAD chief Sukhbir Singh Badal announced the decision to snap ties with the NDA on Saturday night amid the stepped up farmer agitation in Punjab over the three farm legislations which were recently passed by Parliament.

It was, however, not for the first time that the two allies had differed on several issues, including various legislations.

On the Citizenship Amendment Act, the SAD had last year said the Act should not specify any particular religion and the right to acquire citizenship should be given to refugees of all religions.

## It was, however, not for the first time that the two allies had differed on several issues, including various legislations



Though the party had voted in favour of the contentious law in Parliament last year, it had maintained that it was against keeping out any religious community from the law's purview.

The SAD's core committee had then reiterated that it supports the CAA to the extent that it protects the interests of the Sikh community but wanted the legislation to widen its ambit to include Muslims as well.

Later, in first signs that all

was not well between the two allies, the SAD opted out of contesting this year's Delhi assembly polls.

The SAD had then announced that it would not contest the polls after it was asked by the Bharatiya Janata Party to change its stand on the contentious CAA.

Senior SAD leaders Daljit Singh Cheema and Manjinder Singh Sirsa had then said the party wanted to contest the elections in alliance with the

# Mamata, Guv indulge in war of words

PNS ■ KOLKATA

War of words intensified between West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, as they continued to shoot off letters to lash out at each other over a host of issues, the latest bone of contention being the PM-Kisan scheme.

The governor on Sunday sent a missive to Banerjee, seeking to know why the state wants to be an "intermediary" in the transfer of central funds to farmers under the PM-Kisan scheme, a day after the CM, in a letter, asked him to "act within the mandates of the Constitution".

Earlier in the week, Banerjee

## Dhankhar asked the West Bengal Chief Minister to submit the proposal before the state Cabinet for consideration



wrote to the Centre, saying that she was ready to implement PM-Kisan and Ayushman Bharat schemes in West Bengal if the funds are routed through the state government.

Dhankhar asked the CM to submit the proposal before the state Cabinet for consideration. Describing Banerjee's

request to the Union government as a "retrograde step", he expressed apprehensions that it might open floodgates of corruption. "National policy is 'minimum government, maximum governance', why this approach of 'maximum government, minimum gover-

nance?" the governor asked in the letter, which he also posted on Twitter. Contending that the "recent rampant corruption with patronage to undeserving favourites in Amphan relief and PDS is fresh memory", Dhankhar said it was "time to be transparently fair to farmers". Shockwaves all around that the Mamata Banerjee government seeks to be intermediary agent, he wrote, calling upon the chief minister to submit her proposal to the Cabinet for consideration.

"All are justifiably alarmed and concerned as to why the state government seeks to be an intermediary agent, at the cost of farmers, in PM-KISAN which provides seamless."

# Govt looks to implement all 4 labour codes in one go by Dec

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is aiming to implement all the four labour codes in one go by December this year and complete the final stretch of labour sector reforms, Union minister Santosh Gangwar has said.

Parliament in its just concluded session passed three labour code bills: the Industrial Relations Code, the Social Security Code, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code. The Wage Code Bill, 2019



was passed by Parliament last year. The labour ministry had circulated the draft rules on the Wage Code Bill last year but held back its finalisation and implementa-

tion. The ministry wanted to implement all the four codes and rules under those in one go as all of them are inter-linked.

Talking to PTI, Labour Minister Gangwar said, "Government is doing all efforts to complete the labour reforms by implementing the all four labour codes by December this year..." He further said the Wage Code Bill was passed last year and now with the passage of three more codes by Parliament, "the rules under these legislations would be enforced at once".

# 'No intention of joining hands with Shiv Sena'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Former Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday asserted that the BJP has no intention of joining hands with the Shiv Sena or to bring down the Uddhav Thackeray-led state government.

Talking to reporters here, Fadnavis claimed people of the state are "unhappy" with the performance of the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and it "would collapse due to its own inactions". The senior BJP leader also said his meeting with Shiv Sena MP Sanjay



Raut on Saturday, which prompted speculation in political circles, was regarding an interview for the Sena mouthpiece 'Saamana'. The Shiv Sena snapped ties with the BJP last year after the Maharashtra Assembly polls over the issue of sharing the chief ministerial post.

# 36K Covid cases, 128 deaths in central police forces

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The total number of coronavirus cases in central police forces under the Ministry of Home Affairs have gone over 36,000 with 128 personnel succumbing to the pandemic, according to a latest data.

The cases pertain to the seven forces of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), National Security Guard (NSG) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

As per the latest data accessed by PTI, these forces have

## Maximum cases at 10,636 have been recorded in the BSF, the country's largest border guarding force with about 2.5L personnel



recorded over 36,000 COVID-19 cases till now, out of which, 6,646 are active while rest of the personnel have recovered.

The maximum cases at 10,636 have been recorded in the BSF, the country's largest border guarding force with about 2.5 lakh personnel. This is followed by 10,602

cases in the largest paramilitary force CRPF and 6,466 cases in the CISF. The BSF guards Indian frontiers with Pakistan and Bangladesh, while CISF is the national civil aviation security force. The ITBP has had 3,845 cases, SSB 3,684, NDRF 514 and NSG 250 coronavirus cases.

# Terrorists in J-K hide in bunkers under toilet

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

A false cavity under an Indian toilet or planting a steel box beneath a seasonal nullah or taking refuge in man-made cavities is a new trend emerging among terror groups in Jammu and Kashmir to play hide-and-seek with security forces after their stay with the local population turned out to be a high risk.

Police and Army officials feel that mounting pressure has forced the terror groups and their sympathisers to look



for alternative hiding places after several encounters with security forces led to several casualties in the militant rank and file.

# Nutri-gardens can reduce exposure to Covid: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The concept of developing nutri-gardens at anganwadis will not only help in fighting malnutrition but can also play a crucial role in protecting children and pregnant women from coronavirus infection by reducing their exposure and building immunity, experts have said.

The Women and Child Development Ministry has urged states and Union territories to focus on the nutri-garden initiative for anganwadis.

To tackle malnutrition, the government is identifying locally available nutritious food

in different parts of the country that can be grown at anganwadi centres. These gardens are called nutri-gardens.

Experts said that apart from fighting malnutrition these nutri-gardens can also play a role in protecting children and pregnant women from coronavirus infection.

Somya, program manager for health, sanitation and nutrition from Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society popularly known as JEEViKA in Bihar, said in the era of COVID-19, having a nutri-garden at the household level can be very beneficial.



"It restricts movement to crowded places like vegetable markets and also helps save money during the period of economic hardship and organic fruits and vegetables help in improving immunity,"

she said.

Ajay Srivastava, program manager - health and nutrition - Jharkhand state Livelihood Promotion, said there is a growing awareness of improving immunity to

## The Central government has urged states and Union territories to focus on the nutri-garden initiative for anganwadis

reduce the risk of contracting diseases like coronavirus. "It is being emphasised that immunity can be built by the consumption of vegetables and fruits rich in B-carotene and ascorbic acid. Growing of foods and vegetables pre-

scribed for immunity booster. It is cost effective and accessible for the rural community of Jharkhand," Srivastava said. Jharkhand state Livelihood Promotion and Bihar Jeevika are autonomous bodies under the rural development department of the respective state governments.

Growing of specific vegetables such as spinach, chola etc in pots etc would help in improving daily consumption. These minerals and vitamins have immunological property but the diet needs to be wholesome -- tiranga colour -- cereal (rice/roti), dal and vegetables," she noted.



# India drowns out Pak

Modi seizes the solemnity of the UNGA session to prioritise pandemic management as Imran Khan gets stuck on Kashmir



The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session this year is significant in more ways than one. It is the first virtual session, the first being held under the shadow of the pandemic and the first reset effort when de-globalisation and protectionism spin the narrative of the day as the world stands divided between polarities. It also happens to be the 75th anniversary of the august institution, and, therefore, a time to step back for member-countries and redefine their participatory role and contribution in a post-pandemic world. The theme is resonant of our times and at the same time loaded with possibilities, *“The Future we want, the United Nations we need: reaffirming our collective commitment to multilateralism — confronting COVID-19 through effective multilateral action.”* But Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan over-rode the solemnity of the occasion and the geopolitical re-adjustment it demands by raising the Kashmir issue again and launching a diatribe against its changed status, ramming the same paragraphs of his earlier speeches. The world has accepted the constitutional space within which India abrogated Article 370 and has long turned a deaf ear to Khan’s persistent chorus. But that has not stopped him from trying to “internationalise” the issue, even at the risk of appearing petty in the middle of an unprecedented world crisis. India’s First Secretary in the Permanent Mission to the UN, Mijito Vinito, walked out when Khan started his rant and availing the right of response, made a pointed retort. As all the video speeches by world leaders had been pre-recorded, India did have an inkling of what was to come. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi left the rebuttal to officials and himself claimed the high moral ground by highlighting India’s role as a “pharmacy to the world” while elaborating on its contribution to global cooperation against COVID-19 by aiding more than 150 countries. He also prioritised India’s role as a South-South development partner, especially in the context of the India-UN development partnership fund and reiterated the pledge to take on global terrorism. By highlighting India’s global commitment to welfare and respect of rule-based laws, he even negotiated a better role for India in the UN and sought reforms. This was a smart move, aligning India’s objectives with the world imperatives and dismissing Pakistan’s moves as unworthy of reaction from Modi himself. Khan’s provocation has clearly not worked up either opinions or compelled Modi to dignify that with a reaction. And except Turkey, which echoed similar concerns on Kashmir, there was no taker for Pakistan’s fresh tirade against us. That, too, because the latter has convinced the former that together they need to set the agenda for a neo-Islamic world as modern nations, considering the Arab world had accepted India and had been co-opted by the US to establish a working relationship with Israel.

Running promptly out of alliances and friends, and given the US’ pro-India tilt, Pakistan is progressively getting aggressive on territorial gains for itself. It desperately wants to legitimise its illegal hold on Kashmir to counter India’s abrogation of Article 370. That’s the reason why it announced elections for the legislative assembly of Gilgit-Baltistan on November 15. Of course, India has protested against this forced conversion of a military occupied territory into an autonomous political entity but the fact is Pakistan wants to justify it as a reaction to India’s move and is hoping to internationalise the issue once again. Besides, elections would also give legitimacy to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which runs through Gilgit-Baltistan, thereby riling up India further. This follows its earlier declaration to redraw its maps and appropriate what it fancifully feels India owes it, parts of Kashmir, Ladakh and Junagadh in Gujarat. This is not backed by any credible reasoning, support groups, historical reasoning or legal validity. That’s why Pakistan’s cartographic offensive seems part of a larger Chinese design in the region and not just its independent move as it clearly shows that Kashmir shares a border with China. Held off by India on Ladakh that seems to have driven a wedge in China’s greater plan to control the Karakoram by squeezing us with salami-slicing, Pakistan’s territorial claims are clearly intended to exhaust our capacities and opening up a second flashpoint along our borders. Pakistan is simultaneously heating up the Line of Control (LoC); its ceasefire violations and infiltration bids have gone up by about 60 per cent this year. If recent reports are to be believed, then the Chinese have had a series of meetings with their Pakistani counterparts in Gilgit-Baltistan and have been aiding Pakistan clandestinely to revive old terror networks against India. Chinese drones have been deployed for surveillance missions along the LoC. Debt-trapped by China, Khan forgets that such unilateralism will beget unilateralism from the Indian side as well. And hurt its interests. The new map is nothing but an adventurist version of its 1947-48 map and negates all bilateral agreements that came after it, including the 1972 Shimla Agreement. What then would be the cascading impact on all subsequent treaties, like those on water-sharing? What about our valid land claims? Pakistan doesn’t realise that its Kashmir strategy is not working anymore and exported militancy is tiring out in the Valley. And China may use it for posturing but apart from niggling India with its proxy, will delink itself and go for a one-on-one strategic engagement with us for its larger concerns. Pakistan has misread its transactional and inscrutable all-weather friend.

# Much needed closure

The Government should accept the arbitration verdict and draw a line under the Vodafone issue



Pranab Mukherjee was a consummate politician and when the man, who was India’s 13th President, passed away recently, he was fondly remembered by all across the political spectrum. Yet, one of Mukherjee’s legacies as Finance Minister was the unfortunate retrospective tax legislation that he included in one of the Finance Bills he presented. This singular piece of legislation, for which the entire Cabinet of the time, including Dr Manmohan Singh, must share responsibility, ruined India’s reputation as an investment destination. It was in May 2012 that the Parliament passed the Finance Act under which various provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961, were amended with retrospective effect to tax any gain on transfer of shares in a non-Indian company which derived substantial value from underlying Indian assets. And the exemplar of this legislation was the case the Government fought against British telecom giant Vodafone. Despite losing the case in the Supreme Court, tax authorities and the Government doubled down and the case went to arbitration in London, where even the member appointed by the Indian Government was found in Vodafone’s favour. The international arbitration tribunal ruled that India’s demand in past taxes was in fact a breach of fair treatment under the bilateral investment protection pact. Vodafone India was later on merged with Aditya Birla Group’s telecom company Idea.

Mukherjee had logic on his side when he wanted to tax deals where entities operating in the Indian market were bought and sold, even if they were not “based” in India. However, to make any act of legislation retrospective is not only unfair, it is also a confidence buster for investors, the thinking being that if it can be done once, it can be done again. When Narendra Modi said that he wanted to make doing business easier in India, he should have started by withdrawing the case against Vodafone and some other companies like Cairn. Maybe it wasn’t done lest he be accused of being friendly to industrialists or the tax authorities thought that they had a good case (as they always think) but now that the arbitration case has been lost, it is time to end this once and for all. This was a clear instance of tax terrorism and India’s reputation suffered as a result. At a time we need to roll out the red carpet for all investors, that is the least that can be done right now.

# Free market or Company Raj?

Corporations and agro-processors can demand graded products for MSP. Otherwise they may not buy at all or at reduced prices. Where will the small farmer go then?



INDRA SHEKHAR SINGH

A Bharat bandh, millions of farmers on the streets, eight Opposition leaders suspended, National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) affiliates openly rebelling against the Government, these scenes have been dominating our news cycles. Yet Prime Minister Narendra Modi is confident that the three farm Bills are good for India.

Theoretically, the Bills appear well-intentioned but the devil is always in the implementation. Overall, they aim to empower farmers to sell from farm-gate but in the process end up empowering corporations and traders to expand their businesses and swamp the farm to fork chain. A new wave of liberalisation just rammed into rural India. But many suspect the real agenda is generating “agri-dollars” and in the words of dissenting (Telangana Rashtra Samithi) MP Dr Keshava Rao, to “make an agriculture country into a corporate country.”

The Government argues that farmers are not free to sell anywhere because of a “corrupt and middlemen-infested Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC).” Hence, break the APMC and free the farmers. Now corporations and any other person with a PAN card can directly procure products from farmers. Agri-business companies can enter into contracts with them. But what complicated matters was the lack of substance in the Bills, no mention of a guaranteed price for farm pick-ups in case of a bad year or excess yields and the Government’s cavalier manner of handling the Rajya Sabha last Sunday, negating debate and passing the Bills by voice vote. This naturally raised more doubts. Indian farmers have had centuries of slavery under the Company Raj and perhaps that’s why a muffled voice of MP SR Balasubramanian, who evoked the “Champanan Satyagraha”, rang the loudest. APMC will be replaced by the corporate market as there is no fair agreement between two unequal parties, he stated. He may be right after all as a David and Goliath can never have a fair agreement. Neither can sheep and wolves co-operate, nor can a corporation and a marginal Gond farmer in Madhya Pradesh.

Today the farmer is weak, high-



ly indebted and trapped in the cycle of over-production and low income. His monthly household surplus is under ₹1,500 per month. This has already been destroyed by COVID-19.

Each harvest season, his input and production costs rise, yet he cannot even sell at a minimum support price (MSP). As per reports, only six per cent farmers sell at MSP, the remaining 94 per cent are dependent on markets and traders outside the APMC *mandi*. Reality check — small and marginal farmers cannot even reach the APMC as they don’t have any means of transportation, forget selling outside their geographic limits. The majority of farmers are marginal. This means they only grow enough to feed their families and sell a little surplus to the markets. From the village field, away from the town, they sometimes find it convenient to sell to local traders.

Most of them begin the sowing season by taking credit for seeds and fertilisers and repay them through post-harvest sales. The tenant farmers are worse off. They want to sell at MSP but due to the trader-creditor-farmer relationship and market forces, which have an upper hand in price fixation, they cannot.

So, on the face of it, liberalisation seems to be a good step as “farmers can sell anywhere.” But is it? Here we must go by the warning given by MP Professor Manoj Jha to the Rajya Sabha:

“You have replaced the rohu and hilsa with the sharks. You will bring the East India Company back to India.” He was referring to traders as the small fish and the big agri-business corporations as “sharks” that have no personal connection with farmers. In fact, most farmers still trust their eco-system of licenced commission agents as they deliver on prices and guarantee sales.

Given agri-dollars in their pockets and new reform policies, food majors can break any market and create monopolies, forcing the farmers to sell cheaper or let their produce rot. Not convinced? Let’s go back to the *dal* scam of 2015. After an investigation by the IT department, a scam valued at ₹2.5 lakh crore was unearthed. The consumers paid the price by buying *arhar dal* at ₹210/kg. It was reported that a cartel of agri-business companies was responsible for buying pulses at low prices through the supply chain networks and hoarding it overseas, creating artificial scarcity and profiting immensely by selling the stocks back to Indians at high prices. The Government used the Essential Commodities Act (ECA) to bust hoarders and recovered 75,000 metric tonnes of *dal*. But now, even the ECA limits on hoarding and stocking are being done away with.

In 2006, Bihar removed the APMC regime and the real incomes of farmers in the State have fallen while private invest-

ment is yet to move into the State. Only traders are carting produce from Bihar all the way to Punjab to sell in *mandis*.

Many vouch for APMC reforms and not its destruction as the regulated market is still the farmer’s best chance at getting MSP. This is evidenced by Punjab. Won’t rural India be engulfed by corporate markets that will ruin APMC systems and farmers’ rights as the growers will be left unprotected overnight without a transitional and transparent system codified? The Samajwadi Party MP, Professor Ram Gopal Yadav, asked if these reforms can assure the farmers’ good prices? No, because the difference between APMC and corporate markets would be of “BSNL and Jio”, he said. It was Bijn Janata Dal MP, Dr Amar Patnaik, who had first warned against “cartelisation.” In effect, the private sector will be a phoenix rising from the ashes of our public infrastructure.

The biggest problem in procurement, as we have seen globally, is grading. Corporations and agro-processors can demand graded products for MSP and if the gunny bag is ungraded, they may not buy at all, or at a reduced price. This is common practice, which results in huge losses for farmers and food security of the world. Traditionally traders graded the produce. With them gone, will farmers bear grading costs? Naturally, if they do, MSP can never be realised.

There are also serious questions on post-harvest infrastructure and warehousing in rural India. Will the farmers, due to bad storage facilities, make distress sales? The new reforms favour the big farmers and agri-businesses but are detrimental for small and marginal farms (below two hectares) that constitute 86.21 per cent of our total land holdings.

Further, once the market forces evolve, unless MSP is made a legal right or Government procurement increases, achieving it will be a challenge. Contract farming is specious. A glimpse into the US model is enough to deduce how the contracting parties (agri-business firms) force the farmers to buy their recommended seeds, fertilisers and other inputs, often from their allied stores or vendors and at their prices. They also force the farmers to buy more equipment, increasing the cost of production each year. If the farmers don’t abide, they don’t buy the produce and legal proceedings follow.

In India, the poultry sector is a good example of how the owners have been reduced to farm hands on their own property. And to take two steps back, PepsiCo filed a case against Gujarat farmers unfairly. PepsiCo has got more flak as many potato farmers committed suicide due to their procurement policies in West Bengal. The stories of contract used to exploit farmers are endless.

The next big problem is no small and marginal farmer has access to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate and District Magistrate. How many of them will be able to go to the already over-burdened official to settle trade disputes? Even their journey for justice will become a nightmare given their literacy levels and manipulation by the bigger parties. The companies or traders will not be criminally liable; this is a regressive step favouring big agri-businesses.

Modi needs to critically think about rising farmer suicides and doubling farmers’ income by 2022. He ought to dispel the farmers’ doubts and insist on specifics and mechanisms like ensuring the retail buyers do not go beneath a cut-off price. Otherwise, the haze of silence can be ominous. One fears the day when the words of Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) MP TKS Elangovan come true — “To sell the farmers themselves as slaves to the big industrial houses... It will kill the farmers and make them a commodity.”

(The writer is programme director for policy and outreach, National Seed Association of India)

## SOUNDBITE

Establishing constructive relations between Japan and North Korea will not only serve the interests of both sides but will also greatly contribute to regional peace and stability.

**Japanese Prime Minister**  
—Yoshihide Suga



Always live a positive life, never give up, strive, work hard and do your *riyaz* (practice) daily. If I can sing at 88, it is only due to *riyaz*.

**Singer**  
—Asha Bhosle



Sixty eight BJP workers throughout Goa tested positive during the pandemic. They tested positive precisely because they were out in the field, in the service of people.

**Goa BJP president**  
—Sadananand Shet Tanavade



We need to get better with our lengths, lines and pace. We are bowling good deliveries, but we are giving away the boundary deliveries bit too often.

**Cricketer**  
—MS Dhoni



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Protect the voters

Sir — Dates for the Bihar Assembly elections have been announced with special provisions, keeping in mind the ongoing pandemic. To make sure that the polling doesn’t become a super-spreader event, the Election Commission (EC) has issued a slew of measures. The election will be held in three phases. Polling or paramedical staff will conduct thermal screening of voters at the entry point of each polling station, the guidelines said. They will have more than seven crore single-use gloves for voters to put on before using the electronic voting machine to cast their vote. Over seven lakh units of hand sanitiser and about six lakh personal protective equipment (PPE) kits have also been arranged. For Covid patients and those with high fever, the EC has arranged an extra voting hour under the strict supervision of health authorities.

This will be the first major election to be held in the middle of the worldwide Coronavirus crisis and it is yet to be seen if the above provisions will be enough to keep the voters safe. Bihar has

### Hasty passage of farm and labour Bills

Given that the putative benefits of big structural reforms such as demonetisation and GST are not within sight, it is difficult to judge the likely impacts of the new farm and labour Bills. These moves will have enormous implications irrespective of whether they have any great merit or not.

What is more important is the timing of these reforms. It is ironic that they come in the middle of a pandemic-hit economy. At a time when the overall national income has already shrunk 24 per cent and the economy faces massive demand compression, people cannot understand the logic of making these hasty moves. Structural reforms should be made when the economic agents are prepared for the change. Also, it is of paramount importance that a democratic Government communicates with people before enacting and enforcing new laws. There is no point in beginning communication exercise after committing the act.

The corporatisation of agriculture and the provision for more flexibility to companies to freely hire and fire



workers will adversely affect both farmers and labourers. There is also a greater chance that the cartelised industry giants will dictate the terms in both cases. In that sense, they could still end up being exploited as before. Obviously, these laws are only aimed at benefiting big corporate giants.

**Venu GS**  
Kollam

already battled floods and mass reverse migration, it cannot afford a massive COVID-19 outbreak.

**Nihaj Raj**  
Noida

### Political drama

Sir — What started as an investigation into the untimely death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput

and the mysterious circumstances under which it happened has meandered into busting the drug racket in Bollywood. Many believe that this will unveil the dark side of the industry but will it? The Narcotics Control Bureau’s investigation doesn’t seem to be much concerned about unearthing the drug nexus but rather hunting down selective names unfriendly to the

establishment. This has given the media anchors yet another chance to divert public attention from crucial issues. Increasing COVID-19 cases have been reduced to numbers flashing on one’s television screen, concerns around the economic crisis have been hushed and discussions on the recently passed farm and labour Bills are lost in the din. Rajput’s death was most unfor-

tunate and the truth behind it needs to be exposed but people should not fall prey to the political drama surrounding it.

**Urvij Jain**  
Ujjain

### Bihar elections

Sir — With the dates of the Bihar Assembly elections being announced, the fate of the ruling Janata Dal (United) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Government, headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, will be decided. Under fire for badly handling the Covid outbreak and the returnee migrants, Nitish Kumar might find staying in power rather challenging. This can also mean a transfer of a huge chunk of voters to Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), which along with the rest of the Opposition bloc, the Congress and smaller allies, faced a humiliating defeat in last year’s parliamentary polls. The stakes are also high for the Congress as the verdict will decide whether the grand old party can improve its tally of 27 legislators.

**Bhagwan Thadani**  
Mumbai

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



FIRST COLUMN

## Mixed feelings and hard reality

It is the best of times, it is the worst of times. Each day brings forth its old cacophony of contradictory claims and overwhelming statistics



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The global pandemic has sired some new phrases and expressions. One of them is “the new normal is the ever-changing normal” and another is “progressive digitisation.” Between “the changing normal” and “progressive digitisation” is endemic anxiety over a situation totally out of our control. One doesn’t know where it began and frankly one doesn’t know where it could end. In the meanwhile, the act of governance of 130 billion people continues to spawn a large number of contradictions. It began with the slogan “*jaan hai, toh jahan hai* (health is wealth).” All shutters were closed in a matter of hours and events were allowed to run their course. Many in the power circles claimed to be surprised at the mass exodus on foot the lockdown triggered. Teenage daughters and pre-teen sons were seen pedalling their fathers and mothers on bicycles and tri-cycle carts to destinations they thought of as home, hundreds of kilometres away. A child perched on a suitcase on wheels was seen being pulled by a mother on a 700 km-long journey home. The distressing images were so many that even those who sensationalise such things in the media failed to call them “haunting images.”

Some news channels launched a campaign to extend the period of the lockdown when the first three weeks were about to end. The powers that be obliged. The believers celebrated the extension of the lockdown period, which was then prolonged all over again. By the time the actual unlocking process started, many had almost forgotten how to begin again. This time around, the new slogan was “*jaan bi, jahaan bi* (health as well as wealth).” There were various permutations of the early “un-lockdown.” Inter-State barriers got diluted, inter-district constraints played havoc and many “innovative” constraints surfaced.

Even today, in a city which is the proverbial centre of power, pick up a phone and call a landline of the metropolitan telephone service. The ring is preceded by a recorded voice message, which when translated into English, goes something like this: “In the entire country, the process of un-lockdown has begun. In such circumstances, move out of the house only when it is totally necessary ...” The political masters proclaim that the “un-lockdown” phase is necessary to encourage economic activity. One is not quite clear how such telephonic alert on stirring out of the house would encourage economic activity. When this question was posed to the head of an information technology company, he chuckled and said, “Surely this is to encourage online business!” Pointing out that internet capacities are stretched to the limit, several communication platforms have drafted their amateurish connectivity regulations. This is something few have patience with. The endless webinars often get interrupted and the screen blinks that the “internet connectivity of xyz is weak.”

Undeterred, the economically weaker sections, desperate to keep the learning of their kids alive, scout around for second hand smart-phones. To borrow from a much-celebrated English novel: “People were all going to heaven and all of them were going the other way. It is the best of times, it is the worst of times.” Each day brings forth its old cacophony of contradictory claims and overwhelming statistics. One news channel proclaimed that 17 per cent of the world’s total cases of Covid are in India — among the highest figures countrywise. Practically no virus-detection test claims to be definitive. Being positive needs an interpretation on where you could stay to get cured. Being negative leaves open the possibility of you still being infected. A statistician commented that a similar situation was reported 100 years ago when the Spanish Flu struck Mumbai and subsequently the rest of India. Indeed, the colonisers were to “blame” for that sorry state of affairs. After so much fanfare over “the great revolution” the Indian healthcare system has undergone, the tally of victims today remains similar in global percentages to that in the times of the Spanish Flu. In the meanwhile, one witnesses a spate of policy reforms in education, administration, maritime-related matters and of course agriculture. Each intervention threatens a “new dawn.” Believing in it is a great source of joy. One may suffer from COVID-19 or simple pharyngitis. One may or may not have access to a simple medical advice, which may or may not be clear or effective, but the sheer joy of living in such “pulsating digital times” is surely a “unique” experience.

In the meanwhile, a few business houses move from being successful to being even more successful. *Mandis* to ports are variously covered. We should be “grateful” their enterprises keep the wheels of the Indian economy lubricated. That apart, the poor pensioner — especially if he is on Government benefits — has not had his pension revised for several years since the last Finance Commission while other groups of employees have raked in their increments. Yet in the true Indian spirit, we firmly believe that “we shall overcome.”

(The writer is a globally-acclaimed management consultant)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE SEE ATTEMPTS ON PART OF INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES TO USE THE CURRENT SITUATION TO SETTLE SCORES WITH AN UNDESIRABLE GOVERNMENT OR COMPETITORS.

—RUSSIAN FOREIGN MINISTER  
SERGEY LAVROV



SHAME ON MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WHO TOOK THIS OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON POLITICAL GRUDGES RATHER THAN THE ISSUE AT HAND.

—US AMBASSADOR  
KELLY CRAFT

# Bills to grow farmers’ income

Reforms will have a net positive impact as the agricultural sector moves from a subsidy-centric to a market-oriented approach, encouraging the agripreneurial aspirations of the growers



BINDU DALMIA

Tough times are testing the most resilient of leaders globally. Despite the nation being confronted with serial adversities, Modi 2.0 retains and compounds the Prime Minister’s political capital by powering on with the reforms agenda, regardless of the clamour by “compulsive contrarians”, as the late Arun Jaitley referred to the Opposition.

Since the lockdown, the Centre has pressed ahead with a series of incremental reforms: From the *Atmanirbhar* series to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the trilogy of agriculture reforms. Then there are the three new Bills intended to consolidate social security for migrant labourers, which will impact 80 per cent of the population employed in the informal sector. The series of post-pandemic legislations cannot be viewed in silos but must be seen as a set of structural and incremental reforms aimed at rebooting the economy and improving the ease of doing business (EODB) for farmers.

The post-Corona “new normal” challenges every vector of economic growth to optimise and converge resource efficiencies. This is so that each vertical of the economy turns self-sustaining and profitable. Agriculture is one vertical that has been constantly dependent on subsidies, doles and welfareism. This has been a constant drain on the exchequer as it was compelled to fund an uneconomic sector. To make matters worse, the farm sector delivered only subsistence-level earnings to the farmers, a point validated by the NSSO (National Sample Survey Office) estimates which show that rural indebtedness escalated by 12 per cent between 1993 to 2013.

Mitigating agrarian distress requires reducing dependency on cultivation as a source of livelihood and moving towards value-added manufacturing. Because, a whopping 58 per cent of our workforce is dependent on farm income, but contributes only 17 per cent to India’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). At present, agriculture can only deliver a growth rate of 3.4 per cent per annum, whereas we need the sector to increase its productivity potential to at least 10 per cent in order to lift rural India out of poverty. Increasing per capita earnings can only happen through expansion of economic activity by firing equally on all four cylinders of the economy: Agriculture, manufacturing, exports and services.

Essentially, the intent of any reform must be gauged by the “degree of inclusivity embedded in its blueprint.” Considering that 500 million of our workforce is engaged in farming, the landmark reforms will have a net positive impact as the agricultural sector moves from a subsidy-centric to a market-oriented approach, encouraging the agripreneurial aspirations of the growers.

The agri-reforms, though politically sensitive, were much needed after 73 years of Independence in order to transit towards a “One Nation, One Market.” Each farm Bill enables this transition differently. But this article specifically focusses on the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, which will increase efficiencies in the low-profit agriculture sector by opening it up to contract farming.

Why is corporatising agriculture a farmer-friendly reform? India, having matured to a food-

“EVENTUALLY, THE CENTRE MUST AIM AT BUILDING CONSENSUS BY ASSUAGING APPREHENSIONS OF FARMERS. THOUGH AGRICULTURE IS NOT IN THE CONCURRENT LIST AND REMAINS A STATE SUBJECT, AS THE NEW LAWS DEAL WITH INTER-STATE TRADE, IT BECOMES A CENTRAL SUBJECT. THIS SHOULD HOLD UP TO LEGAL SCRUTINY. THE CENTRE IS THEN WELL WITHIN ITS RIGHTS TO ENACT LAWS AND NO STATE GOVERNMENT THAT CHALLENGED THIS PROVISION HAS WON IN THE PAST”



surplus economy, is today more in need of focussing on “surplus-management” to decrease wastage. This will increase farmers’ profitability by ramping up cold storage facilities and food-processing infrastructure that will lead to value-added manufacturing. The annual agri-wastage is estimated at ₹92,000 crore, so corporatisation of the sector will enable building a seamless farm-to-consumer supply chain.

Contrary to allegations that the legislation is loaded in favour of corporates, I wish to substantiate through empirical evidence how corporatising the sector benefited farmers. It profited growers by underwriting their seasonal produce through a negotiated pre-fixed price with corporates that offered income surety. It also encouraged a shift from mono-cropping to crop diversification, bought in new technologies and helped in financing and modernisation. The best Indian examples of corporatising farming are seen from the outcomes of the Amul paradigm, the *e-chaupals* and the Patanjali models of sourcing from farmers’ collectives.

The active involvement of farmers in shared initiatives creates a sense of co-ownership as seen in the successful prototype of the Amul cooperative which was legendary in leading the White Revolution. Today, India is the largest milk producer, and Amul is the largest food product FMCG outfit with a ₹52,000 crore turnover. The winning philosophy of Amul’s strategy was that it treated the dairy farmer as a stakeholder by offering him higher prices for the produce while purchasing, yet sold it to the consumers at marginal profits.

I am guilty of being politically incorrect by validating another example on how pursuing a successful Chinese template can benefit India, too. In 2016, the State Council of China officially made rural e-commerce a national strategy in its anti-poverty drive, which

decreased poverty rates from 10.2 per cent to 1.7 per cent in the last six years. And one of the ways it achieved this was by uplinking farmers onto Alibaba’s e-commerce platforms of the Taobao Village.

The Bill on contract farming is a win-win for both suppliers and marketers. The collectives gain by tapping into multiple synergies derived from the corporates’ ability to support post-harvest logistics, processing, packaging, branding, retailing and their access to a wide distribution network. Marginal and small farmers own less than five hectares of land, so when they form collectives, the aggregation favours regular income, and, in fact, serves to enhance their collective economic and bargaining power.

Narendra Modi had promised to double farmers’ income by 2022. The *status quo* in their earnings will remain if this incremental reform is not translated into action. The challenge is doubling farmers’ income without unduly raising consumer prices, even as input costs continuously increase. To boost profitability, farmers need the skill sets at the command of corporates who have deeper insights into the ever-changing consumer needs.

To cater to the altered behavioural profile of the post-contagion consumers mean that they now have diminished purchasing power, yet seek superior nutritional benefits, better hygiene and contactless doorstep delivery. Also, the share of cereals in middle-income households is reducing in favour of fruits, vegetables and milk. Demand for value-added processed foods is on the rise. Increasing health and wellness awareness, too, is generating demand for a wider variety of foodgrains. This calls for a fundamental transformation for the farmer, from selling whatever was his traditional produce to adapting to what the consumer actually wants.

When demand-driven value chains

enter the sector, they bring enormous benefits to the growers as they are able to align production with market demands. Because, at the end of the day, increased crop productivity alone is not sufficient to raise farmer incomes if market needs do not support such production.

Eventually, the Centre must aim at building consensus by assuaging apprehensions of farmers, who are being misled through fear-mongering by vested interests, lest they succeed in sabotaging a progressive legislation, as in the case of aborting the Land Acquisition Bill. Though agriculture is not in the Concurrent List and remains a State subject, as the new laws deal with inter-State trade, it becomes a Central subject. This should hold up to legal scrutiny. The Centre is then well within its rights to enact laws and no State Government that challenged this provision has won in the past.

Besides, over time, once farming turns into a lucrative industry, it holds the potential of widening the taxpayer base and could then be considered for being transferred to the Union list. The Centre should in fact aim at taxing farmers thus far exempt from taxation. Especially the rich growers with over 10 acres of land. A fair yardstick of evaluating taxation herein would be to take three-year averages, as there are annual variations in produce due to climate-risks.

Ultimately, India must harness the potential to transform into a mega food processing hub by optimising efficiencies, as the farmer, too, aspires to move up in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs and go beyond the Congress era slogan of “*roti, kapra aur makaan* (food, clothing and housing)” to partake in a thriving modern economy.

(The writer is author, columnist and Chairperson of the National Committee for Financial Inclusion at the Niti Aayog.)

# When the ugly past comes knocking

People wonder how did Pakistani society come to accept for 11 years the draconian laws and ordinances that Zia passed during his rule?



NADEEM PARACHA

Recently, when social media in Pakistan exploded, condemning the rape of a woman on the Lahore motorway and the insensitive words used by Lahore’s Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) for the victim, there were also folks who suggested that the punishments for *zina* (rape and premarital sex) introduced in 1979 by the Zia-ul-Haq dictatorship, were successful in curbing sexual assaults in Pakistan. It wasn’t hard for those who disagreed with this perception to produce facts and figures to negate this claim.

But this piece is not about that. Instead, it is a response to those who were left baffled after learning the dynamics and technicalities of Zia’s laws in this context and inquired how society had accepted such laws for 11 years — the number of years the dictator General Zia was in power.

First of all, since women were most affected by these laws, which actually

saw scores of them ending up in jail while their tormentors were set free, there was constant resistance from various women’s organisations against Zia. In fact, bodies such as the Women’s Action Forum (WAF) found themselves pushed on to the frontlines of the resistance, after many mainstream political outfits opposed to Zia were neutralised through arrests, jail sentences, disappearances, torture and exile.

Zia extracted power from above by being part of the military establishment and through the support that he received from the US and Saudi Arabia. To draw political support from below, he nourished those segments and constituencies that had been developed and activated by religious parties during the 1977 movement against the ZA Bhutto Government from 1972-77.

One can assume that had he failed to cultivate support from these segments, he would have struggled to introduce the series of controversial laws that his regime imposed in the name of faith.

Nevertheless, in 1988 when he passed away, he left behind a country wracked by escalating Sunni-Shia strife, the growth of militant sectarian and “Islamist” outfits whose leaders were brought into the mainstream to preach and practise armed jihad, a rise in hate

crimes against minority sects and other religions, an onslaught on women’s rights and a generation of young Pakistanis ravaged by drug addiction, gun violence and embroiled in deadly ethnic and sectarian conflicts. Corruption in State and Government institutions, too, increased when the regime repealed anti-corruption laws enacted in 1973. Zia introduced “development funds” for members of his hand-picked national and provincial Assemblies and wrote off bank loans taken by his supporters. Many senior officers of the armed forces and members of Zia’s Cabinet were reported to have been involved in the narcotics trade and money laundering scams.

So why did so many Pakistanis go along with the charade of a regime which promised them a “new Pakistan” by claiming that it was going to finally create an “Islamic State” that it insisted was what Pakistan’s founders had been committed to deliver?

An increase in the rate of literacy from 1972 onwards meant that more urban Pakistanis were exposed to the writings and theories of scholars operating outside the intellectual and political realm of the “Muslim Modernism” of the country’s founders. By the late 1970s, they had begun to question the

sincerity and feasibility of the modernist project. Because of the impact of the loss of East Pakistan in 1971, many tended to agree with the anti-modernists that the project had been engineered to keep an economic and political elite in power. An increase in the literacy rate saw young wo/men from the country’s small towns and villages furthering their studies in colleges and universities of main urban areas. When they arrived to take their place in educational institutions in cities such as Karachi and Lahore, the ethos of their traditional upbringing felt alienated and even threatened by the vocal Left and liberal groups on campuses. Consequently, they were embraced by Right-wing religious outfits.

Many of these students would go on to graduate and settle in cities and become part of urban Pakistan’s emerging new petty bourgeoisie and trader classes. What’s more, when these classes came out on the streets during the 1977 anti-Bhutto movement, they were backed by the industrialist and business classes, who were repulsed by the “Left-leaning” Bhutto regime. The movement’s slogan was Shariah law. So in Zia’s promise of an Islamic system, they could identify with what they believed was their true heritage and call-

ing, whereas the industrialists and the businessmen yearned for a strong ruler who would reset the country’s economic direction back to what it had been before Bhutto’s chaotic “Socialism.”

According to Riaz Hassan in the anthology, *Pakistan at Seventy*, an increase in the urban population also had important social and political consequences. A large segment of the increasing population led a precarious existence, subjected to all kinds of hardships. This frustration generated a considerable amount of disillusionment with modernist governments and their policies of economic and social development. The persistent insecurity of urban existence over the years resulted in the emergence of various religious movements. The number of mosques in the cities multiplied and, through them, religious influences further permeated social life. This was shaped into a powerful segment and constituency by the religious parties and then nourished and expanded by the Zia dictatorship.

These segments provided considerable support for Zia’s so-called “Islamisation” process. Even though those protesting against Zia’s programmes and laws often managed to embarrass the regime by getting their point of view published in some

Western newspapers, most human and civil rights activists and political workers went unheard even in the most liberal and democratic European countries.

This was because of the fact that much of the efforts of the media in these countries and of their governments were focussed on the civil war in Afghanistan. The US and its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) largely looked the other way when the Zia regime was using religion to commit open human rights violations and intense political repression. The most the West was willing to offer at the time was political asylum to those thrown out or volunteering to move out of Pakistan because of the oppressive atmosphere here. For the US and its European allies, Zia was too important an asset to upset in their Cold War against “Soviet expansionism.”

These are some of the prominent factors behind the dictatorship’s success in unleashing laws and Ordinances which, today, would be almost impossible to enact without being vehemently challenged within and outside the country. However, attempts to retain and re-ignite them are still very much part of Pakistan’s political playbook even today.

(Courtesy: Dawn)



FOREIGN EYE



## AUSSIES DON’T GET INTIMIDATED

Concern is warranted that Zhenhua Data has profiled the children and partners of prominent Australians with photographs, news articles and criminal histories. The risk of online impersonations, deep fakes and other distressing forms of disinformation attack is real. But one must suggest, politely, that if the intent of authoritarian China is to exert influence over Australians to blackmail them, then their investment may reap more returns elsewhere.

(The NYT editorial)



SHORT READS



Voda Idea starts upgrading 3G users to 4G

**New Delhi:**Telecom operator Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) on Sunday said it has started upgrading its 3G users to 4G in key markets. Further, the company said it is in the best position to upgrade 2G customers also to 4G, but it will continue with basic voice based services to its 2G subscribers. "While the company will continue to offer basic voice services to its 2G users, 3G data users will gradually be upgraded to 4G in a phased manner across all markets. VIL has started informing its customers in the markets where re-farming is getting completed," it said in a statement. With the highest quantum of spectrum in the country and a large part of it already re-farmed for 4G, VIL is now best placed to upgrade 2G and 3G to high speed 4G.



CMS to hire 1,000 employees in next 2 months

**New Delhi:** Leading cash management services provider CMS is planning to hire 1,000 employees in the next two months with salaries upward of Rs 30,000 per month as it expands into service vertical of cash collections for its partner banks, NBFCs and microfinance firms, a company official said. CMS Info Systems (CMS) has signed up for cash and cheque collections with several companies, including, Mahindra Finance, L&T Finance and Hero FinCorp. Anush Raghavan, Senior Vice-President and Head – Cash Business Unit of the CMS said that with a network spanning over 115,000 ATMs and retail outlets that spread across 98.3 per cent of districts in India, the company is uniquely positioned as the "backbone of the circulation cycle" of the economy. "CMS is looking to hire 1000 employees in the next two months. We will continue to expand and hire more in this fiscal," he said.



Launch of more products to scale up GIFT IFSC: Ray

**New Delhi:** A bigger basket of financial service products and retail participation will help in making GIFT IFSC attractive for international players, GIFT City managing director Tapan Ray has said. Launch of more products and participation from retail investors will shore up volume and liquidity at the country's only International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in GIFT City, he said. At present, only derivative products are available for trading and retail investors are not allowed to participate. Recently, markets regulator Sebi allowed investment advisory services in IFSC and permitted emerging investment vehicles REITs and InvITs to list on stock exchanges operating in IFSC.

# RBI to maintain status quo in upcoming policy review

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank is likely to keep interest rates unchanged in the forthcoming bilateral monetary policy review in view of the rising retail inflation driven mainly by supply side issues, experts say.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had earlier said although there was headroom for further monetary policy action, it was important to keep our arsenal dry and use it judiciously.

The six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) headed by RBI Governor is scheduled to meet for three days starting September 29. The resolution of the MPC would be announced on October 1.

In its last MPC meeting in August, RBI kept policy rates unchanged to help tame inflation that in recent times had surged past 6 per cent mark,



RBI chief had earlier said although there was headroom for further monetary policy action, it was important to keep our arsenal dry and use it judiciously

and said the economy is in an extremely weak condition following the pandemic. The RBI has cut policy rates by 115 basis points since February.

As regards the next policy review, industry body Confederation of India Industry said: The RBI should maintain its accommodative stance, while avoiding a rate cut for now given the stickiness in CPI inflation. While supporting growth is critical, the RBI could wait till there is some visible moderation in inflation. Expressing similar opinion, ASSOCHAM Secretary

General Deepak Sood said the Reserve Bank should continue in a more pronounced way the accommodative stance on the policy interest rates in the wake of serious challenges due to contraction in the economy induced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Union Bank MD and CEO Rajkiran Rai G feels it's going to be status quo. "With so much of high inflation, I don't think they will cut rate this time".

There is a scope for a rate cut but that will happen around February, he added.

"The food inflation is likely to ease in December and post that due to the good crops and, so, the opportunity may come around February for rate cut," he said.

Retail inflation softened slightly to 6.69 per cent in August from 6.73 per cent in July.

The government has mandated RBI to keep inflation at 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent).

Aditi Nayar, Principal Economist, ICRA said inflation is expected to harden further in September and ease gradually over the next few months, led by a base effect driven softening in food inflation.

"However, the core inflation is expected to remain stubbornly sticky around current levels. Accordingly, we anticipate an extended pause from the MPC, despite the recession that is currently underway," she said.

## Airowater looking to raise \$20 million

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Atmospheric water generator firm Airowater Pvt Ltd is looking to raise around USD 20 million (nearly Rs 150 crore) to fund its expansion plans, including increasing production capacity, strengthening presence in India and overseas markets like Africa, and ramping up its R&D, according to a top company official.

The company, which uses patented technology to create water from humidity in the air to provide impurities-free drinking water, sells machines ranging from 25 litre per day capacity, priced at around Rs 50,000, to 1,000 litre per day capacity, tagged at about Rs 9.5 lakh.

The firm sells machines ranging from 25 litre per day capacity, priced at around Rs 50,000, to 1,000 litre per day



"As of now, we have around 200 to 500 machines manufacturing options at our plant on a monthly basis. The capacity has to come before the market. So if we start growing, definitely we would look forward to larger capacity," Airowater Pvt Ltd CEO Siddharth Shah told PTI.

When asked by how much the company is looking to hike the production capacity, Shah

said, "From 200 to 500 (machines per month), we should be entering into a range of 1,000 to 1,500 (machines) per month kind of a capacity very soon."

In terms of future investments, Shah said, "As you start scaling up, it would require to grow into that segment also in terms of fabrication. So we are looking at another investment of around

## Global trends to dictate direction of stocks this week; Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stock markets are expected to consolidate in near-term due to economic uncertainty and a host of factors such as RBI monetary policy, car sales and macroeconomic data and global cues would dictate the direction in this holiday-shortened week, analysts said.

They said that despite a relief rally on Friday markets are likely to remain volatile amid resurging coronavirus cases in Europe.

The RBI's monetary policy review on October 1 and auto sales numbers would be among the key events for investors. The RBI's monetary policy committee will be meeting for three days from September 29.

Indian equity benchmark index Sensex declined by 3.83 per cent or 1,457.16 points and the broad-based Nifty tumbled 4.04 per cent last week.

The stock indices declined



for six straight sessions to Thursday, plunging by more than 7 per cent due to growth concerns after resurgence in coronavirus cases globally.

The markets, however, cut short their losses and rallied over 2 per cent on Friday after reports that the US lawmakers were working on a stimulus deal that could be voted on as early as this week. "We expect market to consolidate in near term given the rising global virus cases, economic uncertainty and continuous FII selling for

past few sessions.

"This week, investors would watch out for GDP data of the US and the UK, PMI data for the US on the global front, while on the domestic front RBI's monetary policy along with infrastructure output would provide direction to the market, said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd. The PMI data for the manufacturing sector is scheduled to come on Thursday.

## 'Medical tourism sector needs govt support'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Healthcare major Apollo Hospitals Enterprise said the medical tourism sector in the country needs support from the government to get back on its feet after being severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The medical tourism sector came to a standstill due to the lockdown. This has impacted not just India but Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and other Asian countries also which have a thriving medical tourism sector", Apollo Hospitals Group Joint MD Sangita Reddy told PTI.



While there is easing out of the lockdown, it will take government level discussions to help bring patients in for treatment, she added.

"For example, Malaysia has seen some patients coming in for open-heart surgery from Brunei as a direct result of government level discussions.

## BPCL pays for defaulting Videocon in Brazil oil block

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) has been forced to pay for its defaulting partner Videocon Industries Ltd after it had relied on a rarely used model to acquire stake in five oil blocks in Brazil, sources said.

In September 2008, BPCL and Videocon Industries had formed a 50:50 joint venture to acquire a Brazilian oil exploration firm for USD 283 million.

The two firms formed an



incorporated joint venture IBV Brasil Petroleo Limitada to acquire Encana Brasil Petroleo Limitada from Canadian gas producers EnCana.

Sources said usually such acquisitions are done through unincorporated joint ventures but BPCL chose to form an incorporated joint venture.

Incorporated joint venture is organised as separate and distinct legal entity. And the entire entity is held in default if any one of the partners doesn't pay for its share of cost.

With bankrupt Videocon unable to pay its cash calls for exploration and development of the oilfields, IBV faced likelihood of a default and the risk of being booted out.

## NTPC synchronises one more unit of 3,300 MW power plant

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-run NTPC Ltd on Sunday said it has successfully synchronised a 660-MW unit of its supercritical thermal power plant in Bihar with the grid, which would help the commercial generation of electricity from it. The power producer has been setting up five units with 660 MW capacity each, spread across 3,200 acres of land at Barh in Patna district.

The construction work of



three units of stage-I of the project was delayed due to "contractual, execution and timeline issues" with Russian firm Technoprom Export

which was supposed to develop them, while two units of stage-II (2x660 MW) of Barh STPP have already been commissioned and are presently under operation, an official said. "The first unit of 660 MW of stage -I of Barh plant was successfully synchronised with the grid at 7.32 am today. The plant has achieved desired capacity," he said.

The successful synchronisation would pave the way for commissioning of the unit, the official said.

## Action plan to boost domestic manufacturing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The DPIIT has shared a list of 24 key sectors including food processing, toys, furniture, agro chemicals and textiles with respective ministries asking them to work on an action plan with a view to boost domestic manufacturing and make India a self-reliant country, an official said.

The other sectors include organic farming, iron, aluminium and copper, electronics, industrial machinery, furniture, leather and shoes, and auto parts. "Each

ministry has been sent those sectors to identify their response. What incentives they (sectors) need, what policy tweaking is required, they (respective ministries) should do that. We have given them a preliminary action plan and the ministries will work on that. Each ministry will bring its own policy on these sectors," the commerce and industry ministry official said.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is working actively on promoting domestic manufacturing of toys and furniture.

## Sun Pharma bullish on specialty biz

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug major Sun Pharma is looking to expand its specialty business across different regions like Greater China and Japan after having established presence in the US market, as per the company's Annual Report for 2019-20.

Sharing information with shareholders, Sun Pharma CEO Dilip Shanghvi said the company's strategy of developing the specialty business as an additional growth engine has started delivering results, with a gradual ramp up in specialty revenues.

"We expect this momentum to continue over the next



few years, although the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns may throw up some uncertainties in the near-term," he added. Specialty medicines are used in treatment of chronic, complex or rare diseases, which require advanced research and innovation.

Oncology, autoimmune dis-

We expect this momentum to continue over the next few years, said Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Managing Director Dilip Shanghvi

eases and immunology are the main segments in the space, and will likely remain the key growth drivers in the 2019-2024 period.

The Mumbai-based company's global specialty revenue for 2019-20 stood at around USD 430 million (about Rs 3,200

crore) and accounted for around 9 per cent of its consolidated revenue, which stood at Rs 323 billion. Shanghvi said the specialty business is also helping the company to move up the pharmaceutical value chain and bring in more innovation to its business. "We have invested significant resources over the past few years in building this business and are now focusing on commercial execution to ensure that future cash flows justify these significant investments," he noted.

During the last fiscal, the company launched four specialty products in the US market and is now targeting new markets like Japan and China for business growth.



## India's crude steel output falls over 4 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's crude steel production fell over 4 per cent to 8.478 million tonnes (MT) in August 2020, according to the World Steel Association (worldsteel).

The country had produced 8.869 MT of crude steel during the same month last year, the global industry body said in its latest report.

However, global steel output has started showing a positive trend, the data showed.

"World crude steel production for 64 countries reporting to the worldsteel was 156.244 MT in August 2020, registering a rise of 0.6 per cent compared to August 2019," the worldsteel said.

"Due to the ongoing difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, many of this month's figures are estimates that may be revised with next month's production update," it added.

Global steel production was at 155.374 MT in August 2019. China registered a 8.4 per cent year-on-year growth in steel output at 94.845 MT during August 2020 as compared to 87.499 MT in August 2019.

## IKEA to adopt omni-channel approach in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down Swedish furniture retailer IKEA's expansion plans in India but the company is adjusting to the new reality while continuing to bet on the country as one of its "very important markets", according to company's India CEO Peter Betzel.

With the changing consumer behaviour due to the health crisis, online business will play a "very important role" for IKEA, which plans to expand in India with an omni-channel approach.

"The pandemic may have slowed us down a bit like it has for everyone, but we are adjusting to the new reality and are

on track with our projects. Our Mumbai store as I mentioned will open within the next half year or so," Betzel told PTI.

He further said, "India remains a very important market and we have our plans to enter many cities with an omni-channel approach. Bengaluru, Mumbai, Delhi are among the prioritised cities for Ingka Group for fast expansion." Ingka handles the global retail operation for IKEA, which has a target to reach 100 million people in India by 2022 through an omni-channel approach. IKEA, which is planning to open stores in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi/NCR, is now looking to have an omni-channel approach, by integrating its brick and mortar format



Covid may have slowed us down a bit like it has for everyone, but we are adjusting to the new reality, said Betzel

stores with online stores.

"We will establish a strong omni-channel presence in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi/NCR and are also exploring other opportunities in India," he said adding "It will be through a combination of big IKEA stores, smaller city-centre stores, and online platform as a selling channel."

IKEA, which received government approval in 2013 for its Rs 10,500-crore proposal to open retail stores under 100 per cent FDI, has signed MoUs with Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana to open retail stores. The company is planning to open 25 stores by 2025 in nine cities. Ingka, which handles the global retail oper-

ation for IKEA, would open its second store in Mumbai in the next six months after making its first store at Hyderabad operational two years ago. "Our ambition is to expand in more cities in India with an omni-channel approach. Based on our expansion plans, we will also develop logistical capabilities to serve customers more efficiently," said Betzel who is also Chief Sustainability Officer, IKEA India. Presently, IKEA has one distribution centre in Pune. During lockdown, IKEA had introduced "Click and Collect" contactless and safe shopping in Hyderabad. Now more people are shopping online for all the things they need for their homes.

## Power plants agree to substitute imported coal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power plants located in the southern part of the country and non-regulated sector (NRS) consumers, including steel and cement, of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd have agreed to substitute imported coal with the dry-fuel produced by the Coal India subsidiary.

The development assumes significance in the wake of government's thrust on reducing coal import dependency of the country under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. Southern India power plants and NRS consumers, who are importing coal at present, have been approached

based on the logic that MCL's coal is quite comparable with imported coal as per Gross Calorific Value land cost analysis, the CIL arm said in a report.

"They have agreed for import substitution with MCL coal," it said. Also in near future, the vehicles being run on diesel and petrol will be replaced by electric-driven vehicle and this will significantly reduce the requirement of importing oil and save a lot of forex, it said. CIL has also introduced a new category of spot e-auction for importers only and aimed at replacing 150 million tonnes of fuel sourced from abroad with domestic supply.



# THE LOVE AFFAIR WITH DU-VIN

An important source of nutrition, a complimentary drink, and a trendy lifestyle experience. We are talking about ‘Du Vin’ — the saviour beverage called wine in local languages. The classiest and sassiest among alcoholic beverages, the number of wine lovers are growing by the day, and restaurants are more than happy to offer varieties of the drink to their customers, writes SHIKHA DUGGAL



**SINCE THE WHOLE CONCEPT IS IMPORTED FROM ROYAL COUNTRIES ACROSS THE GLOBE, IT IS A PREFERRED DRINK AMONG THE ELITE SOCIETY AND IS LOVEABLE**

It is said to be a beautiful amalgamation of unique complex flavours that are fully appreciated and enjoyed worldwide. Even Bollywood diva Bebo carries a bottle of red wine, for herself and Saif, when she goes visiting. Wine culture is slowly catching on in cities across the country with modern-day wine production.

A mixologist that has pioneered this art of wine-making is Justin Joy from Zing: Sky Bar+Lounge who considers wine to be ‘the epitome of civilisation’. If there’s any truth to this statement then wine, like any other drink, is a form of intoxication. “Since the whole concept is imported from royal countries across the globe, it is a preferred drink among the elite society and is loveable. In fact, since the past decade, there has been a subtle rise in the number of avid drinkers who drop into our lounges and prefer having variations of wine,” shares Justin.

Did you know there are many influences on the style and flavour of wines? Yes, wine has a lot to do with style. At Zing, they believe that to describe the dramatics of wine-making, one must date

## THE WINE LINGO!

- AERATION:** Wondering what’s wine aeration? It’s the process of exposing the wine to air to trigger oxidation and evaporation, done by either letting wine rest in a glass, decanting it, or using a wine aerator.
- BOUQUET:** The smell of wine resulting from the winemaking process itself, often describing woody or funky flavours from the aging and fermentation processes, respectively.
- CORK TAINT:** A fault in a wine characterized by an overpowering

musky, dank smell, and a dull taste.

**DECANTER:** A glass or crystal vessel designed specifically to increase the amount of wine exposed to air to enhance a wine’s flavour and aroma.

**HORIZONTAL TASTING:** Wine tasting that surveys multiple producers of similar wines from the same vintage.

**TANNINS:** Naturally occurring compounds in grapes that impart the bitter, dry sensations in wine.

**VINIFICATION:** The process of turning grapes into wine.

back to its origin in the Mediterranean countries. “With the evolution of

how people hangout it has changed the presentation and variations of a terrific

drink like wine. Cocktail, especially ‘Sangrias’ are very common all over the world known for the blend with various fruits. People also use it in shots these days. A normal Sangria is made with a mix of wine with club soda or ginger ale and topped with fruits like berries, oranges, peach, etc. The wine used here is predominantly red, but some people make their variations with white wine too. At ZING, we have our own recipe for ZING Sangria, which is kept a secret to date,” adds the bartender.

Consumers increasingly choose higher quality wines to be enjoyed in moderation as part of a modern, sustainable, and healthy lifestyle. On the other hand, there are also differences in habits and dangers among people who binge drink and people who are alcoholics. Without a style statement, wine is meaningless. Style and quality of wine are the elements that underwire its appeal. Look east, Asian countries provide the best answer to it. The culture of wine is being adapted to fit very different standards and expectations. Today, red wine is appreciated in its own right, and its popularity is majorly attributed to its gifting habits.

Travelling is not just a leisure activity or a getaway from the mundane for many of us, unlike a decade ago. There is an increasing number of people who travel to earn. We have ‘Travel Influencer’ of the year, and other such awards acknowledging their hard work. A communications strategist, Fashion Merchandiser, entrepreneur — Mohit Kharbanda has donned many hats through his professional career, but the one he enjoys the most is something that keeps him wandering and clicking, he tells *The Pioneer’s* **K RAMYA SREE**

# Of travels, trips and tours overtime

For Mohit Kharbanda, travel is life and livelihood. He says, he and many travel enthusiasts like him, document their journeys, which serves as a motivation for people to push boundaries and experiment with their destinations. “The industry as well as the travelers have evolved drastically. People have started seeking joy in the experience rather than only the destinations,” he adds. He feels motorcycling has further evolved this travel ecosystem. “It inspires people to explore and gives the rider independence that is unmatched. People purchase motorcycles which resonate with their personality and suit their travel style,” he explains. Although biking hasn’t evolved in India as it has in many other countries, it definitely is on the right track of popularity and has tremendous scope in the country. There are numerous motorcyclists who have made India proud and have served as an inspiration for many youngsters to follow suit. Mohit explains, “Motorcycling is fast becoming a very popular sport in India. There are formats like Moto racing and there are off-road competitions like MotoCross. It is super popular with the youth who passionately follow adventure format sports. We do see a lot of collaborations and support for these formats. Having said that, more awareness about these in smaller cities as well is perhaps needed.” For Mohit, the love to explore is in his blood. His grandfather as well as his father were avid travellers. It is the same urge that drove him at a very tender age to ride his bicycle in the paddy fields near his house and

go as far as possible to explore beyond what the eyes could see. As he grew older, the bicycle turned into a motorcycle and his custom-built gypsy. Mohit says custom motorcycles and jeeps satisfy the off-roader in him. Over the years, his journey has taken him to places around the world that few have explored and experiences that he proudly calls unique. He documents these journeys on his blog ‘Moving Compass’ and hopes to inspire people to take up similar adventures. He feels Motorcycle knows no gender! “It is ironic that for decades something as basic as travelling has been associated with a particular gender. Fortunately, things have changed significantly over the last few years. More women are breaking these stereotypical norms which stem from nothing but a misplaced societal ego. A lot of brands are welcoming and promoting women riding culture. In my opinion,

women do not need any encouragement, rather it is the men who need to be conveyed that women are equally equipped to take the saddle,” he explains. How is photography helping him with biking? He explains, “For me, photography and motorcycling go hand-in-hand.

Motorcycling allows me to be an independent traveller and experience nature in the closest way possible from the saddle and photography helps me in documenting my journeys. To me, journeys are as exciting as the destination and thus I never leave home without a camera. Ever since action cameras have

come in play, one can enjoy an uninterrupted riding experience without worrying about capturing precious moments.” His gypsy, which he loves to call the ‘Raptor’ has seen the most far-flung, the most off-beat places with him. He says, “The stark yellow standout beauty is custom built by me

and is an extension of my personality, of who I am as a traveller. It is my home on-the-go which is built as a pick-up truck that allows me to carry my tent, cooking apparatus, and daily essentials. I have covered the length and breadth of the country on the gypsy. It has taken me to desserts, jungles, and snow-clad mountains.”



MOHIT KHARBANDA



At Sarchu



Spiti



Kaza



Winter Spiti





## Do your riyaz daily, advises Asha Bhosle

When she turned 88, Asha Bhosle reinvented herself. She launched her YouTube channel, shared anecdotes about her life with audiences spanning three generations or more, and launched #AshaKiAsha, a talent hunt where only the voice matters.

Needless to say, entries poured in from across the globe. Asha personally listened to over 2,000 entries over 45 painstaking days and nights, and finally zeroed in on five finalists. September 27 will see the finale where Shankar Mahadevan has joined the jury along with Asha Bhosle.

Bhosle told IANSlife: "I saw more than 2,000 entries. I listened to each and every entry personally. I am truly amazed at the talent in India and abroad. There were young children and elderly people who sent their singing videos. In fact, there is an 11 year old girl in the finals! From 2000 voices, I selected 28, and from there, we selected five. I feel extremely happy that people got a chance to showcase their talent through my medium."

Revealing that it is a very

**#ASHAKIASHA WILL HAVE FIVE FINALISTS AND THE AWARD WINNING SINGER WILL PERSONALLY ANNOUNCE THE WINNER ON HER OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE. SHE WILL ALSO BLESS THE WINNER WITH A SUM OF ONE LAKH RUPEES.**

difficult choice to select few and not many. "In my eyes all are winners! Since the selection became very tough for me, I requested Shri Shankar Mahadevan ji, who most kindly accepted my invitation to join the jury."

In addition the veteran is looking forward to another season of #AshaKiAsha, simply because there are too many talented people waiting in the wings. "Yes, I am looking forward to hosting Season 2. I am happy that I can give back to society,

music and music lovers, with this quest. Many hidden gems need a chance to be showcased to the world."

Giving a word of guidance she says, "To all the participants and to everyone in general, I would just like to say — always live a positive a life, never give , strive, work hard and do your riyaz (practice) daily!"

"My daughter Varsha used to say that the legendary Gangubai Hangal's voice remained young at 90 due to riyaz. If I can sing at 88, it is only due to riyaz. Always practice, be positive and do your best. If you have not got a chance this time, you can surely get it the next time. My prayers are always with each of you. I am overwhelmed by the sheer response and the energy of each participant."

#AshaKiAsha will have five finalists and the award winning singer will personally announce the winner on her official Facebook page. She will also bless the winner with a sum of one lakh rupees. "There are no sponsors involved because I don't believe in asking someone for help. I'm doing this from my heart."

## Sonu Sood extends support for medical care & treatment of children

Actor and philanthropist Sonu Sood has launched the ILAAJIndia initiative to extend support for the medical care and treatment of the children.

ILAAJIndia is a helpline number developed by Ketto.org Asia's most visited and trusted crowdfunding

platform with the aim to support paediatric patients with medical care and treatment.

Commenting on the initiative SonuSood said, "An estimated eight lakh children died in 2019, more than in any other country. The inadequate number of government hospitals and the limited coverage of health insurance force people to incur heavy

out-of-pocket expenses for availing private healthcare services. The ILAAJIndia helpline number will enable patients with financial aid for their medical treatment and surgeries."

"Patients who require to undergo any medical treatment, transplant or critical surgeries can give a missed call on 02067083686 and the

Ketto team will reach out to the patients for the next steps" adds SonuSood.

ILAAJIndia helpline number initiative is launched with an endeavour towards bridging the affordability gap and making quality healthcare accessible to all.



## GOT stars Rose Leslie, Kit Harington to become parents

Actors Rose Leslie and Kit Harington of *Game of Thrones* fame are expecting their first child.

The actress showed her baby bump in the new issue of *Make Magazine*, reports *people.com*.

She and Harington had played star-crossed lovers Ygritte

and Jon Snow in the hit series *Game of Thrones* (GOT).

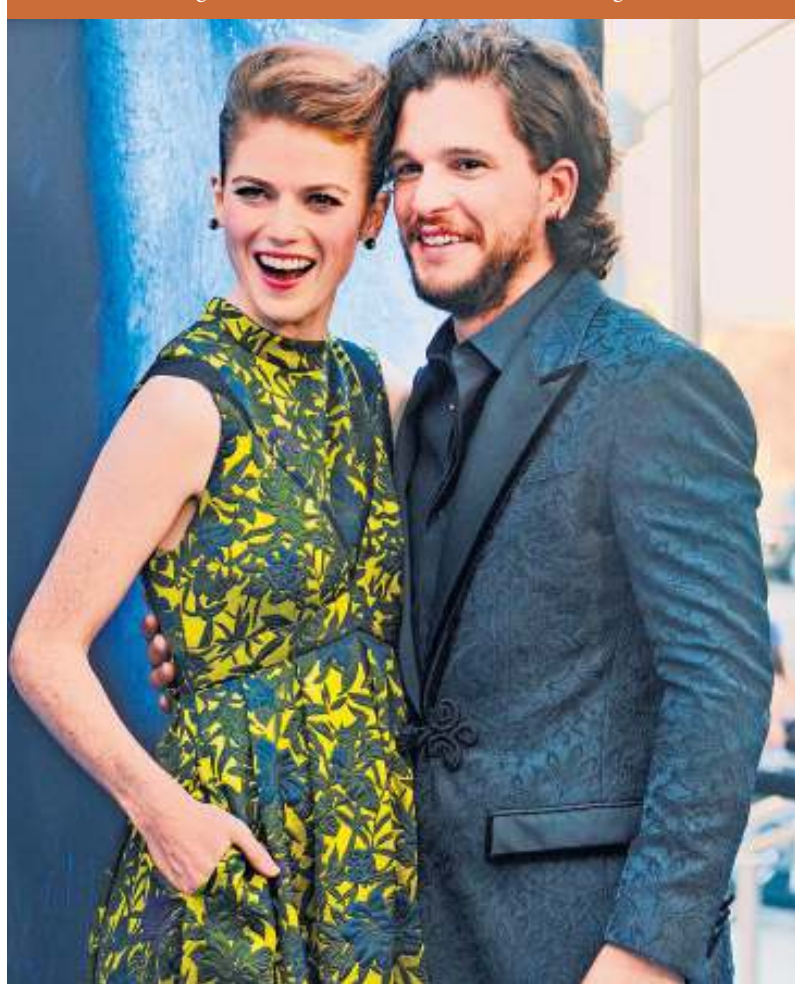
The dating rumours began in 2012. After a brief split, the couple reconciled. They officially confirmed the relationship in April 2016.

After getting engaged in September 2017, they married in Scotland in June 2018.

In an interview with

*Make Magazine*, Leslie spoke about her GOT experience. "It was an incredible experience, and for me — as an actor — it definitely opened a lot of doors with casting directors, and producers."

Leslie and Harington are currently spending time together in their Tudor manor house in East Anglia.



## Chris Hemsworth, Miles Teller, Jurnee Smollett in 'Spiderhead'

Actors Chris Hemsworth, Miles Teller and Jurnee Smollett have reportedly teamed up for *Spiderhead*.

The film is an adaptation of a George Saunders short story.

The story takes place in the near future and follows two convicts who are housed in a

facility run by a doctor who experiments on inmates with powerful drugs that alter emotions.




Joseph Kosinski, who is directing *Top Gun: Maverick*, will helm the Netflix project, reports *variety.com*.

Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick, who penned *Deadpool* and *Zombieland*, will write the screenplay.






### FUN




ARCHIE



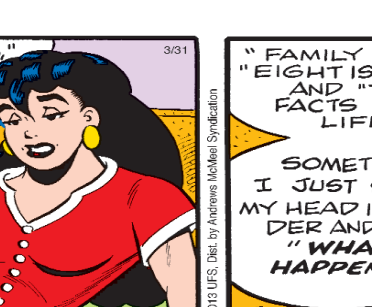
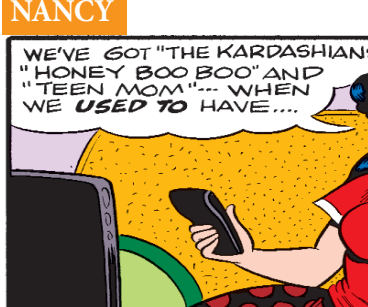
CALVIN AND HOBBS





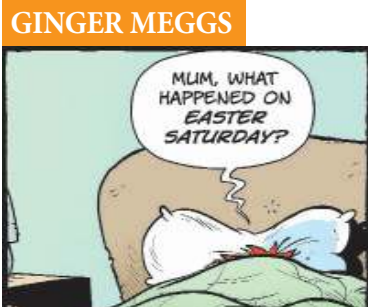
GARFIELD




NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

	1		2		3		4		5
6									
7									
8			9			10		11	
					12				
13									
14		15		16			17		18
19									

ACROSS

6 A flying machine  
8 Light a fire with this  
10 Our planet  
13 In a coma  
14 A feeling of rage  
17 Less  
19 Carrying on

DOWN

1 Remaining  
2 Wealthy  
3 Sleep lightly  
4 Mix with a spoon  
5 A large group of musicians  
7 An emergency vehicle  
9 Nearby

SOLUTION

M	U	T	T	O	N		C	H	A	T		
A	R	T		E	A		I	N	J	U	R	E
K	E	V		C	O	L		L				
R		E	A	L								
S		F	A	R								
C	R	A	F	T								
U	N	E										
E	D	G	E									

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.



I've practiced power hitting a lot in the past couple of years. I think it was really important for our team to get this win

Rajasthan Royals 226/6 (19.3 overs); Kings XI Punjab 223/2 (20 overs)

Mayank Agarwal plays a shot during Indian Premier League between Rajasthan Royals and Kings XI Punjab held at the Shriharish Cricket stadium BCC

to rejoin the track from a run-off area and Lance Stroll's Racing Point span into a barrier after contact with Ferrari's Charles Leclerc.



# DHANANJAY'S baddie avatar for Shiva Kandukuri

A popular name in Sandalwood, Dhananjay will be playing Warangal-based villain in debutant director Bharat's *Manu Charithra*, toplined by Shiva Kandukuri and Megha Akash. He will join the film next month, finds NAGARAJ GOUD



**A**fter his striking turn in box-office turkey Bhairava Geetha, popular Kannada actor Dhananjay seems to be emerging as a popular choice for Telugu directors. While it was reported that he landed a key role in Allu Arjun-starrer *Pushpa*, which is conceived as a pan-India film, *The Pioneer* has exclusively learned that he also signed Shiva Kandukuri and Megha Akash-starrer *Manu Charithra*. Ajay Bhupathi's associate Bharat is making his debut as a director with the flick.

A source close to the development tells us, "Dhananjay will be seen as a Warangal-based antagonist who speaks

local dialect. Although he was offered quite a number of Telugu films in the recent past, the actor felt his role in *Manu Charithra* was not run-of-the-mill, prompting him to evince his interest in it. He was to join the sets last week but due to a scheduling conflict, he told the makers he will join the sets from October. Bharat needs 12 days to wrap up his portions."

The source further adds that the film-after being hit by the pandemic-has recommenced earlier this month in Hyderabad. "It was shot for 10 days in Hyderabad, with filming taking place at a college in Medchal and later at Manikonda. The new schedule of 21 days will begin on October 5 in Warangal. After

**THE NEW SCHEDULE OF 21 DAYS WILL BEGIN ON OCTOBER 5 IN WARANGAL. AFTER SHOOTING FOR A WEEK IN WARANGAL, THE UNIT WILL BE BACK IN HYDERABAD.**

shooting for a week in Warangal, the unit will be back in Hyderabad. 70 percent of the film will

be wrapped up with the next schedule."

Bankrolled by Apple Tree Entertainment banner, the film, an action-love story set in the backdrop of Warangal mafia, will see Shiva in two shades. The actor needs to go for a makeover after the October schedule ends.

## Ghibran's tunes for *Sebastian P.C. 524*



**C**omposer Ghibran, who is choosy when it comes to his work, has hopped on board Kiran Abbavaram's next project, *Sebastian P.C. 524*. His participation comes in the wake of the film's makers signing on Sin girl Deepthi Sati as one of the female leads.

A source close to the development tells us, "Ghibran loved the script of *Sebastian P.C. 524* and felt it has a rich scope for music. While the material was entertaining, the fact that it was emotional as well meant that the Chennai-based composer didn't think twice to accept it. The icing on the cake was that all the songs that have been conceived by director Balaji Sayyapureddy are situational numbers."

In the film, a production venture of Pramod and Raju under Elite Entertainments, Kiran will be seen as a constable in Madanapalle police station, Chittoor. It will go in front of the cameras as soon as the actor completes SR Kalyanamandapam.

— NG

Even if I play a demure girl, I want it to be important in the script: Adah Sharma

**A**ctress Adah Sharma wants her characters to be of importance in a script, even if she plays a demure girl running around the trees. "I would love to be running around trees and I love to play the demure girl, which I have played in a few of my south films. My point was even if I am a demure girl or running around trees, I want that to be important in the script," Adah said. "Whatever I am doing I want that to be important to the script. So, for me picking a role is not (about) sweet girl or bad girl," she explained.

What does she choose for while taking up a script? "I want it (the character) to be important to the plot. If you take away the character from the story, will the story still work? Sometimes I do movies where, yes, if you remove the character the story would still work. But take the effort to make my character a memorable one," she said.



## KGF stunt masters for Chiru?

**F**ilmmaker Meher Ramesh is slowly ramping up the crew for the Telugu remake of Tamil monster hit *Vedalam* with megastar Chiranjeevi.

After getting the megastar's nod for Mahati Sagar as the composer, the director, it is believed, has now got the nod of *KGF: Chapter 1* stunt masters duo Anbu-Arivu for the project. With their stunts for *KGF* and *Khaidi* receiving much praise,

Meher, according to reports, felt the duo was the best option for the untitled film, which is high on action. The fight masters too were quick to say yes to Meher's proposal as the film stars none other than the megastar. It is said that fight masters who made their Telugu debut with Naga Shaurya-starrer *Aswathama* are looking at choreographing innovative sequences for the project.

*Vedalam* remake, to go on floors after Chiru wraps up *Acharya*, will narrate the tale of a gangster-turned-cab driver, who secretly avenges the murders of his sworn sister's parents. Anil Sunkara is producing it.



## Deergayushmanbhava is a love story with a socio-fantasy touch: Director

**T**he filming of *Deergayushmanbhava*, featuring Mishti Chakraborty and Karthik, is over. Debutant director Purnanand tells us the film is a love story with a socio-fantasy angle to it. "It is on the lines of *Yama Gola* and *Yamudiki Mogudu* but with a modern twist to it. Kaikala Satyanarayana is playing Yamudu once again," the director, who worked under Pranam

Khareedu and Mogudu Kavali director K Vasu for nine films as an assistant director and as an associate, informs.

He adds that Mishti will be seen as a software employee who is brave and independent, while Karthik of Padesave, Tippu and Operation GoldFish fame is playing a gaming designer. "Mishti has a more important role than Karthik," he states, adding that he is confident of a big screen rollout for the film. "I'm confident that it

would do well in the cinemas. People who have watched so far said it's good and I will wait for the theatres to reopen. I will not say that I've made an extraordinary film but I'm sure that people who will watch it will come out of the theatre saying it's a nice film."

On directing the veteran Kaikala, he shares, "I don't think my generation directors have had the luxury of working with a legendary figure like him and I consider myself lucky for

it. While there are many actors who played Yama after him, for Telugu audiences he has become synonymous with the lord of death."

Set in Hyderabad, the film has been wrapped up in 42 days. The likes of Aamani, Satyam Rajesh, Kashi Viswanath, Thagubothu Ramesh, Ramprasad and Getup Sreenu have played supporting roles. Presently, graphics work of the film is in its final stages.

— NG

