

ANALYSIS 7

A MIXED
BAG

MONEY 8

DIGIT INSURANCE SEES TOPLINE
CROSSING RS 3K-CR

SPORTS 11

RCB BEAT MI
IN SUPER-OVER

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 29, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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DEVERAKONDA
AND SUKUMAR
JOIN FORCES

Page 12

SUPREME COURT GIVES CENTRE ONE WEEK TO SUBMIT LOAN MORATORIUM PLAN

The Supreme Court today allowed the government one more week to come up with a plan on loan moratorium to ease the financial burden on borrowers during the coronavirus crisis. The top court, which had asked the government to submit its plan on September 28, deferred the hearing till October 5 after the government sought more time. The government, however, said discussions are at an "advanced stage" and its plan will be ready in 2-3 days.



B'LURU LAW STUDENT GRADUATES WITH RECORD 18 GOLD MEDALS

A female student from Kerala set a record of sorts by bagging 18 of the 48 gold medals awarded to passouts of the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), officials said on Monday. While Yamuna Menon bagged 18 medals, 20 others who earned a BA LLB (Honours) degree shared the remaining 30. "Yamuna became the first student to win the highest number of medals (18) in the NLSIU history," an official said a day after the 28th annual convocation held virtually on Sunday here.



SABARIMALA PILGRIMAGE FROM NOV 16 WITH ALL COVID PROTOCOLS

Announcing steps to conduct the annual pilgrimage to Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple, the Kerala government on Monday said the two-month long season from November 16 will be held strictly adhering to Covid-19 protocol. The government said steps will be taken to ensure that those infected with the novel Coronavirus would not participate in the pilgrimage. According to officials, those below 10 years and above 60 will not be allowed to take part in the pilgrimage.



TTD BOARD MEMBER SEKHAR REDDY GETS RELIEF IN BANNED NOTES CASE

A CBI ACB court in Chennai on Monday gave a clean chit to TTD board Member AJ Sekhar, alias Sekhar Reddy, and five others in two cases of circulating demonetised currency notes. According to the FIR and charge sheet, the sum involved was Rs 247.13 crore, but the CBI failed to produce evidence linking the accused to the charges. Sekhar Reddy and five others in the case were given clean chit. On Monday, the CBI ACB, Chennai submitted a final report through senior public prosecutor, CBI, praying to accept the closure report in the case.



Sonia asks Congress-ruled states to override 'farm laws'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Monday asked States ruled by her party to consider bringing laws to overrule the Centre's farm laws, which have provoked massive farmer protests across the country. Congress-ruled Punjab is the epicentre of protests against the three controversial laws and its Chief Minister Amarinder Singh held a sit-in on Monday, joining the cause of the farmers. "Hon'ble Congress President has advised the Congress-ruled states to explore the possibilities to pass laws in their states under Article 254(2) of the Constitution which allows the state legislatures to pass a law to negate the anti-agriculture Central laws encroaching upon state's jurisdiction under the



Constitution," the Congress said in a statement. "This would enable the states to bypass the unacceptable anti-farmers' provisions in the three draconian agricultural laws including the abolition of MSP and disruption of APMCs in Congress-ruled states," the statement said.

RAHUL: AGRI LAWS ARE DEATH SENTENCE FOR FARMERS

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday alleged that the agriculture-related laws are a "death sentence" for farmers whose voice has been crushed both inside and outside Parliament.

"The agriculture laws are a death sentence to our farmers. Their voice is crushed in Parliament and outside. Here is proof that democracy in India is dead," he said on Twitter. Gandhi tagged a news report along with his tweet that claimed that Opposition members demanding a division of votes were on their seats when the farm bills were passed

in the Rajya Sabha, while the government said they were not. Gandhi and his Congress party have been demanding that the farm legislations be withdrawn as they are not beneficial for farmers, who will be enslaved at the hands of private players and big businesses. The Congress party is also protesting against the farm laws across the country. The government has, however, asserted that the new laws will free farmers from the clutches of middleman and allow them to sell their produce anywhere they want at a remunerative price.



Gautam Adani debunks GDP rhetoric

8



CBI: No conclusion in Rajput case, all aspects being probed

5



KCR has no respect towards women, alleges Seethakka

4

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Ashwin (Adhik) & Shukla Paksha Panchangam

Tithi : Trayodashi: 10:32 pm

Nakshatram: Shatabhishta: 12:48 am (Next Day)

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

Rahukalam: 03:04 pm – 04:33 pm

Yamagandam: 09:07 am – 10:36 am

Varjyam: 06:29 am – 08:14 am

Gulika: 12:06 pm – 01:35 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 04:57 pm – 06:41 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:42 am – 12:29 pm

VUJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Thunderstorm

Temp: 32/24

Humidity: 79%

Sunrise: 06:06 am

Sunset: 06:06 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated September 28, 2020 5:00 PM

Attacks on places of worship are unrelated, says Sawang

Spin being given to incidents to suit narrative: DGP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Seeking to put at rest doubts being raised over the State Government's handling of the recent attacks on temples and temple properties, DGP Gautam D Sawang on Monday put forward a few key facts for citizens and all stakeholders, saying that not one incident was related to the other.

"Firstly, we have arrested the accused in as many as 12 out of the 19 cases of attacks on temples/temple properties reported since the Antaredi incident. We are confident that we will be able to crack the rest in due course. All these are standalone incidents and each one has a different motive."

Elaborating on why these incidents are factually unrelat-

“All these are standalone incidents and each one has a different motive. These incidents and attacks are factually unrelated and the facts reveal that there is an attempt being made to spin the narrative

—GAUTAM D SAWANG
Director General of Police



ed and the facts that reveal that there is an attempt being made to spin the narrative, the DGP said, "If you take the Srikakulam incident for example, people claimed that the arm of an idol was desecrated. Our investigation revealed that the arm of the idol fell off last year due to the idol being

exposed to heavy rains." He said that regarding the Kurnool incident, the accused revealed that he desecrated the idol and stole the private parts of the deity because he was made to believe that this could lead his wife conceiving a child.

Jala Kala is one more act of deception, says Yanamala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP senior leader Yanamala Ramakrishnu on Monday slammed the Jaganmohan Reddy Government, accusing it of 'deceiving' farmers with false promises like free power and free pumpsets without transferring the real benefits in the field level. Ramakrishnu said that the YSRCP Government was unveiling one more programme to impose burden on the farmers in the name of 'Jala Kala'.

It is an attempt to betray farmers in the name of giving 2 lakh free pumpsets by spending Rs 2,340 crore in the next four



years, Yanamala said. He alleged that the Government already dealt a severe blow by fixing meters on the existing pumpsets and farm connections. "The escrow accounts were being opened only to rob the farmers of their

Rs 4,000 crore benefit under the free power scheme. On the other hand, power bills were raised by three to four times which imposed a burden of Rs 4,000 crore on the people," the former state finance minister said.

The new promise to give two lakh pumpsets was undoubtedly a clear gimmick to mislead the people. Stating that the people were caught in financial and health crisis, Yanamala said that nobody was coming forward to extend financial assistance to rescue the needy from Coronavirus impact.

Apex Council meet on Oct 6

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The second meeting of the Apex Council, constituted to resolve the water sharing issues between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh will be held on October 6.

This was intimated to both the States on Monday, along with the agenda points for the meeting to be chaired by the Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. The Apex Council was constituted as per the provisions of the AP Reorganisation Act 2014, in which the TS and AP Chief Ministers are members and Union Jal Shakti Minister the chairman.

AP received excess rainfall this monsoon

Withdrawal of monsoon begins; officially, the season ends tomorrow

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Andhra Pradesh has received excess rainfall till Monday even as the withdrawal of the Southwest monsoon commences and the season is set to officially end on September 30. On Monday, IMD stated that the southwest monsoon has withdrawn from some parts of west Rajasthan and Punjab on September 28 against its normal date of September 17.

According to the real-time



monitoring of rainfall by the AP State Development Planning Society, Andhra has received 26 percent or 690

Of the 13 districts, 10 are in deep green zones with excess rainfall, two in light green and Srikakulam falls in yellow slab

mm excess rainfall, against the normal of 545.4 mm. Of the 13 districts, 10 are in deep green zones with excess

rainfall, two in light green with normal rainfall and Srikakulam falls in yellow slab with deficit rainfall of 28 percent.

The active monsoon coupled with the low pressures at regular intervals flooded most of the coastal districts and ravaged mostly the Godavari and Prakasam districts. Serious flood situations damaged crops along the rivers in some districts and damaged the properties too.

Diwali, Dasara festivals may be without sparkle this year

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the festival season kicking in next month, officials concerned are trying to dampen the usual large public celebrations and cross-country travel. India's festival season, which peaks in October and November with Dasara and Diwali, comes at a time when the novel Coronavirus cases in India crossed six million, with the latest million infections



coming in 11 days. According to government data, India has the second-highest number of infections, behind the United States which

crossed 7 million last week. Typically the festival season brings a big increase in consumer spending, and the more sombre atmosphere this year will further dampen an economy that contracted by almost a quarter in the three months to June - the worst figure on record. Many people consider the festival season between Navratri and Diwali auspicious for making purchases.

TOURISM CHALLENGE

Fearing virus spread, tribals say no to visitors

SUMIT ONKA
■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Even as the Andhra Pradesh government opened the doors for tourists after months of lockdown, people of the hilly tribal and scheduled areas that lack advanced healthcare facilities are reluctant to welcome visitors, fearing spread of the Coronavirus.

Come winter, thousands of tourists visit the hilly belt of Eastern Ghat in North Andhra and especially Vizag Agency, due to its scenic location and drop in temperature.



However, fearing the spread of the virus, tribes of Lammasingi, Tajangi and Siripuram areas under

Chintapalle Mandal in Vizag Agency, the most visited hill stations in Vizag Agency, have expressed reluctance to wel-

come tourists.

The number of Covid-19 cases in Vizag Agency (Tribal Pockets) crossed over 1,100 and the virus has claimed seven lives so far.

After the lockdown was eased, youngsters from Vizag, East Godavari and other parts of Andhra Pradesh have started visiting Lammasingi and Tajangi.

Some vehicles, mostly from Vizag and East Godavari, were sighted in Lammasingi and Tajangi on Sunday evening. However, locals stopped the tourists and requested them

not to roam in their area.

Former sarpanch and local leader at Lammasingi, K Raghunath said that tourism would create some revenue for locals. However, there is also a high chance of the virus getting spread when visitors from urban areas through the places.

"If we allow visitors in the present circumstances, the tribals in our region will be victims of Covid-19, hence we are against the tourism activities for the safety of our community," he added.

Unlike other parties, discharging duties as a BJP office-bearer is not a joke. Posts in other parties are decorative; leaders in those parties vie with each other for posts to see their names on letterheads. Those holding key party posts try to implement their personal agenda.

In sharp contrast, party positions and responsibilities in the BJP are not easy to come by. Those given the honour have to work with dedication day and night to expand the party, without compromising on party philosophy.

The BJP saddles its leaders across the country with crucial responsibilities.

In this context, the team BJP national president JP Nadda's new team deserves a closer look.

Crucial responsibilities are entrusted to only 40 leaders in the BJP, which has over 17 crore party workers. It explains their significance to the party.

The BJP culture has nothing to do with thinking about coming to power in certain

Team Nadda is future perfect for the BJP

states or not.

When the Jan Sangh was founded in 1951, Deen Dayal Upadhyay toured the entire country to build a viable alternative to the Congress but never thought about making the party strong in any particular state.

Leaders who contested on Jan Sangh tickets never thought about victory but worked only to expand the party.

When he contested from Lucknow in 1955, Atal Behari Vajpayee finished third.

Today, not just Lucknow, but the entire state is a BJP stronghold. Once, the Jan Sangh had to toil to gain a foothold in UP and could only poll 6.45 per cent of the votes. In 2019, the BJP polled over 50 per cent of the votes.

The experience of BJP in UP, a state that defines who rules the country is sufficient to explain the evolution of the saffron party.

A simple leader like Kusabhav Thakre worked relentlessly and selflessly for decades so that the BJP could gain a foothold in MP. Because of the efforts of such leaders the BJP is today unrivalled with over 300 seats in LS

Those familiar with the BJP are well aware of the fact that the victory is automatic if one works with dedication without bothering about electoral gains.

A simple leader like Kusabhav Thakre worked relentlessly and selflessly for decades so that the BJP could gain a foothold in MP. Because of the efforts of such leaders the BJP is today unrivalled with over 300 seats in LS.

This victory is attributed to the hard work of lakhs of party workers, presidents of the party, vice-presidents and general secretaries.

The specialty of the BJP is that services of even ordinary workers are recognised. The harder one works, the higher he or she rises in the BJP.

Three decades ago, Narendra Modi was an ordinary party worker when he participated in Advani's Rath Yatra and today, he is the Prime Minister.

Venkaiah Naidu conducted election meetings for Vajpayee and Advani; even pasted the posters and now, he is the Vice-President of the country. There are many such examples.

The BJP has adapted to



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

changing times; it has stepped up efforts to expand to new states. It became a historic necessity for the BJP to bring leaders of new communities into the party fold and give them opportunities to grow.

Since long, people of West Bengal, Telangana, AP, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and so on are waiting for a political alternative.

Anarchic rule in the states

and communal tendencies have risen. There is no end to corruption and nepotism in these states. In this backdrop, the BJP set its sights on these states and giving leaders of the states prominent positions at national level is a welcome development.

At one time, the BJP was regarded as a party of the North. Today, there is no room for such criticism. The BJP made a Dalit the party president in Tamil Nadu. In AP, leader of a strong community Somu Veerraju was appointed party president. Leader from another significant community D Purandeshwari was appointed the party general secretary at the national level.

Similarly, in Telangana, Bandi Sanjay, a BC, was appointed president of the

state unit, while DK Aruna who hails from a strong community was made national vice-president and Kishan Reddy was inducted into the Union Cabinet.

Dr K Laxman was appointed national level BC Morcha president while I (Satyakumar) was appointed national secretary. This is an example of how BCs from Telugu states got prominent positions in the party.

Critics of BJP who said that people from other parties would not be able to survive in the party find it hard to substantiate their views.

It is pertinent to note here that those who became vice presidents and general secretaries in Nadda's team today belonged to which party five or six years ago.

Abdullah Kutti joined the BJP quitting the CPM in Kerala. Similarly, Mukul Roy dumped Trinamool Congress

in West Bengal for the BJP. They assumed the office of the vice-president of the BJP at the national level.

Tom Vadakkan, who was Congress official spokesperson in Kerala, today is the spokesperson of the BJP.

This explains the importance that the BJP gives to Kerala, West Bengal and Telugu. Similarly, two leaders from the North-East were given the party vice president and general secretary posts.

The BJP is successful in Tripura and Assam. The whole North-East is looking towards the BJP for leadership.

Moreover, Nadda's team has many new faces -- Tejasvi Surya, who joined the BJP during the last LS elections was given reins of the BJP Yuva Morcha. There is no doubt that it would inspire the youth.

Similarly, Nadda's team has saddled women with crucial responsibilities too. There is no doubt that the team gives new shape to the BP and helps expand the party more and more under the leadership of Modi.

Daily case count dips below 6,000

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After many weeks, Andhra Pradesh's count of Coronavirus cases increased by a little over 5,000 on Monday, as state Special Chief Secretary (Health) KS Jawahar Reddy said the infection spread has been on a declining trend over the last couple of weeks.

The state reported 5,487 fresh cases of Covid-19 from 66,121 sample tests in 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday while 7,210 patients got cured and discharged from hospitals.

The Covid-19 toll in the 24 hours was only 37, a significant drop over the past few days.

"If you look at the biweekly change, there has been a 23.75 per cent reduction in the number of Coronavirus cases in the fortnights August 30-



September 12 and September 13-26. The reduction in the number of deaths was 22.5 per cent," the Special Chief Secretary told a press conference.

About 58 per cent of the Covid-19 deaths were being

reported from the rural areas in the state, while the rest from urban centres.

From a high of 16.73 per cent, the infection positivity rate fell to 10.22 per cent by September 26.

"Yesterday, it was only 8.3

per cent," he pointed out.

The average doubling rate of cases in the state now stood at 72.7 days, with Kurnool district having a high of 181 days and Prakasam a low of 51 days.

"The reproduction rate (wherein the disease spreads from an infected person) is about 0.94, well below the normal 1," Jawahar Reddy said.

He said they were now trying to increase the RT-PCR testing capacity by at least 1,000 per district.

"We have asked the Collectors of all the 13 districts to now prepare sub-district level action plans to contain the spread of the pandemic. We have also directed them to lay special focus on persons in home isolation," he added.

Meanwhile, the daily Covid-19 bulletin said the total num-

ber of cases in the state now increased to 6,81,161 and total discharges to 6,12,300. While the overall toll stood at 5,745, the number of active cases decreased to 63,116.

East Godavari district reported the highest 1,010 cases in 24 hours followed by West Godavari 903.

For the first time in more than three months a district Krishna reported less than 100 new cases on Monday.

Krishna, which once was the second top district in Coronavirus cases, now stood at the bottom of the state table with 26,584 cases, including the 97 added in 24 hours.

East Godavari crossed the 95,000 total cases mark while West Godavari went past 65,000 and Chittoor 60,000 total cases.



Deputy CM inaugurates SVBC's new building

■ 'Ad-free' SVBC to be aired in HD to help in propagation of Hindu Dharma: Subba Reddy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The modernisation of Sri Venkateswara Bhakti Channel is aimed at spreading the Hindu Dharma Prachara activity across the country by enhancing the quality of programmes with advanced studio set up and gadgets, said TTD Trust Board Chairman YV Subba Reddy on Monday.

Inaugurating the SVBC new building at Alipiri, built at a cost of Rs 20.45 crore, along with Deputy Chief Minister Narayanaswamy on Monday, Subba Reddy said that the idea of setting up an exclusive channel for TTD religious

activities to wide spread Hindu Sanatana Dharma Prachara to the nook and corner of the country took root when the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy was the Chief Minister in 2007 and SVBC was launched on July 7 in 2008. In the last 12 years, the channel made its mark across the nation and with the introduction of recent Veda, Sundarakaanda, Virataparva and Bhagavat Gita Parayanams in the Covid pandemic times, the channel has become a household name across the globe," he added.

The TTD Board chairman said there are two studios and a teleport facility in the new

building with adequate infrastructure for launching Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Hindi channels.

Upon the request of devotees, SVBC will be made an advertisement-free channel soon. SVBC trust has so far garnered Rs 4 crore in the form of donations. Presently Kannada, Hindi channels are under pre-launch stage. Plans are under way to launch a HD version of the channel soon," he maintained. Additional EO and SVBC MD AV Dharma Reddy, JEO P Basanth Kumar, CE Ramesh Reddy, CEO SVBC Suresh Kumar and others were also present.

Sonia asks Congress....

Continued from Page 1

"This would also alleviate the farmers from the grave injustice done by the Modi Government and the BJP," said the party.

The Constitutional rule that Sonia Gandhi refers to allows a state legislature to enforce laws "repugnant to the Parliament law", if they get Presidential approval. In 2015, then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had advised states to use the same route to bypass a Land Acquisition law passed by the previous Congress-led government.

The farm bills, which were passed in Parliament amid much controversy over the vote in Rajya Sabha, are now

laws with President Ram Nath Kovind signing them late on Sunday. The ruling BJP has lost key ally Akali Dal from Punjab, where farmers make for a significant chunk of the voters.

Farmers have blocked roads and railway tracks to protest against what the government says is a massive reform measure. This morning, a tractor was burnt at a protest near India Gate in Delhi, one of the most protected spots in the country.

The government says the new laws give farmers the option to sell their produce to private buyers while it would still buy staples such as rice and wheat at the MSP, but this has failed to reassure farmers.

Jala Kala is one more ...

Continued from Page 1

The farmers were badly hit, both in terms of getting trapped in mounting debts for lack of farm income and also due to unbearable costs of virus treatment, he said. The poor are leading miserable lives due lack of work opportunities, wages and financial assistance, Yanamala said.

He thanked TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu for giving greater priority to BC, SC, ST and Minorities. "These committees will stand by the people who have now distanced from the ruling YSRCP because of its attacks on Dalits, BCs and social media activists," Yanamala said.

Attacks on places...

Continued from Page 1

"Various other attacks were executed by treasure trove gangs who were hunting for treasures supposedly hidden under idols. Therefore, all these incidents have different motives and are completely unrelated," Sawang said.

Giving details of the precautionary measures being taken by the police department to ensure the safety of places of worship, the DGP said, "We have mapped a total of 47,593 places of worship out of which there are 28,567 temples. Only

10 per cent of the structures were equipped with CCTV cameras. We have issued notices to all the authorities of the respective temples to take necessary steps to ensure safety, like installing CCTVs, boosting the lighting around the structure etc. A comprehensive social audit of all these structures has been completed. The department itself has installed CCTVs at over 880 locations. The police have bound-over as many as 8,204 individuals who have committed similar offences in the past six years."

AP received excess ...

Continued from Page 1

Establishment of an anti-cyclonic circulation in the lower tropospheric levels over western parts of northwest India and substantial reduction in moisture content and rainfall has created a favourable condition for the withdrawal of the SW monsoon.

The weathermen also predicted that conditions are

becoming favourable for further withdrawal of southwest monsoon from some more parts of Rajasthan and Punjab and some parts of Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh during next 2-3 days.

Officially, the monsoon season commences from June 1 and ends on September 30 and the rainfall in this duration is considered as monsoon rainfall of the year.

Jagan demands Bharat ...

Continued from Page 1

SPBs immense popularity and the deep impact he left on the global music industry in his 50 years of legacy could be gauged by the continuous flow of rich tributes from music aficionados all over the world.

Jagan noted that the "unending saga of his staggering achievements go beyond music". With his unparalleled talent, SPB lifted compositions to sublime levels, he said.

Besides six National awards, SPB won 25 Nandi awards from the Andhra Pradesh gov-

ernment and numerous other awards from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

He received the Padma Shri in 2001 and Padma Bhushan in 2011 from the Government of India and the Silver Peacock Medal in 2016 as the Indian Film Personality of the Year.

Covid-19 recoveries in India cross

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Total recoveries from Covid-19 in India crossed the 50 lakh milestone on Monday with recovered cases outpacing active cases by more than five times, the Union Health ministry said.

In a statement, the ministry said the rise in the number of total recovered cases from 1 lakh in June 2020 has been steep and the last 10 lakh recoveries were added in just 11 days.

"India's total recoveries have crossed the landmark milestone of 50 lakh today (50,16,520). With a very high number of Covid patients recovering every single day, India's steady trend of posting high levels of daily recoveries continues," the ministry said.



"The total recovered cases have outpaced active cases by more than 5 times. With the exponential increase in the recoveries, there is close to 100 per cent increase in recovered cases in one month," it said.

Noting that 15 States/UTs are showing a recovery rate

more than the national average, the ministry said 78 per cent of the total recovered cases are recorded in 10 States/UTs with Maharashtra contributing maximum to the total recovered cases followed by Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

"Seventy-three per cent of

the new recovered cases are being reported from ten states, viz. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Kerala, Odisha, West Bengal and Punjab. Maharashtra leads the tally with more than 13,000 new cases of recovered patients," it said.

The ministry further said that 84 per cent of new deaths are reported from 10 States and UTs. It said 36 per cent of deaths reported on Sunday are from Maharashtra at 380 deaths followed by Tamil Nadu and Karnataka with 80 and 79 deaths, respectively. The ministry reiterated its call for strict adherence of norms of physical distancing, following hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and use of mask/face covers in public spaces.

Diwali, Dasara festivals...

Continued from Page 1

According to a research, in the last ten years, around 30 per cent of two-wheeler sales have come in the festive months.

Over and above this, industry estimates suggest that 35-40 per cent of sales of consumer durables-electronics products, in particular-takes place during the festival season.

Fearing virus spread,...

Continued from Page 1

"Rather than obstructing the inflow of visitors, we are appealing them to not visit for some time to consider the Covid-19 situation as Vizag Agency lacks proper medical facility and there is chances of

Businesses are hopeful that this festival season, people will come out and spend money, and they will be able to put the demons of the negative impact of pandemic lockdowns on sales behind them. Analysis suggest that the festival season between October and December 2020 will be a dull one, even though it is likely to be better than the previous two quarters.

spread of virus due to visitors," said a native of Lammasingi, V Raju Padal. Rama Rao Dora, Convener of the Adivasi JAC said that it is traders and non-tribals settled in parts of Vizag Agency that account for over 70 per cent of cases in Vizag Agency.

50% of heart patients...

Continued from Page 1

The number of people dying due to cardiac arrest at home has increased this year, point out doctors. World Heart Day is being celebrated on September 29 with theme "Use heart to beat CVD".

Dr. G S R Murthy, Clinical Director (Cardiology), CARE Hospitals, Vishakhapatnam said, "Around half of the people with heart and circulatory diseases have found it harder to get medical treatment since the pandemic began. The biggest concern is that despite having serious heart conditions, patients have been delaying treatments which will deteriorate their health further."

CAPSULE



Nakka: YSRCP persecuting Dalits out of vengeance

VIJAYAWADA: TDP leader Nakka Anand Babu on Monday accused the YSRCP government of targeting and harassing the Dalits and weaker sections just for raising their dissenting voices against the ongoing atrocities and attacks on their communities. He termed it as highly condemnable that a murder attempt was made on the life of Dalit judge S Ramakrishna's brother just because he questioned the government's actions at a round-table of weaker sections in Vijayawada. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, the TDP leader asked the Dalit Organisations and intellectuals to raise a banner of revolt against the ruling YSRCP leadership as their persecution was continuing despite the intervention of courts. The Jaganmohan Reddy's regime has turned vindictive even though 80 per cent to 90 per cent of Dalit voters favoured it in 2019 elections in the hope of great transformation in their lives.



JLSR wellness introduces oxygen generator with NASA technology

HYDERABAD: JLSR Wellness announced the unveiling of a first of its kind AI & ML and IoT configured, pure and fresh oxygen generator, Urb.Ox smart sensible oxygen generator on Monday. The technology developed by NASA for its critical space missions, was further finetuned after intense research at the company's R&D Labs in India, to suit commercial and residential needs with a sleek and user-friendly design and interface. Urb.Ox oxygen generator is available in three models to address the varying needs. It's a wi-fi enabled completely automated all-in-one smart sensible oxygen generator coupled with oxygen sensing air quality monitor. It is embedded with smart features including built-in artificial intelligence, machine learning modules and can be monitored by both iOS & android mobile apps. The product is integrated with high-quality sensors from Europe, which enable delivery of continuous and consistent high-quality fresh and pure oxygen indoors. The highly energy efficient Urb.Ox oxygen generator, comprises of an outdoor unit, which is smaller than an AC compressor and an indoor unit with world-class sensors monitoring the indoor air quality.

2K families hit by Krishna floods

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Even as the Krishna river in Vijayawada has been in spate since Sunday afternoon in the wake of a downpour, officials monitoring the situation said on Monday that around 2,000 families living in the catchment area were affected by floodwater. "Of the nearly 2,100 families living there, around 2,000 families have been affected," said an official.

He said the government was making arrangements at the IGM Stadium and five municipal schools to house 2,000 displaced persons. Officials have been monitoring the situation since Sunday night and arranging vehicles to shift the people. "However, only 500 persons are willing to move out while many others are not interested to leave their homes," he said.

Many residents were seen wading through chest-deep waters with their belongings. The government has also made food arrangements for the

The government was making arrangements at the Indira Gandhi Municipal Stadium and five municipal schools to house 2,000 displaced persons. Officials have been monitoring the situation since Sunday night and arranging vehicles to shift the people, officials said



evacuees. Likewise, medical teams have also been readied to attend to the affected people.

"We are holding a medical camp near the flood-affected place. We have advised people to wear masks due to Coronavirus pandemic. We have made public announcements to this effect," said another official. Relief efforts would be intensified once the

floodwater recedes. Floodwater began to rise around 2 pm on Sunday and was expected to go up further.

Meanwhile, Adviser to Government Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy took a jibe at TDP supremo Nara Chandrababu Naidu over the flood issue.

"Dear Chandrababu, there is flood in the Krishna river. At least now you should vacate the

illegal house you built at Vundavalli. You may block the government with protection from the courts but the floods may not spare your home from submergence," Reddy said. Following a downpour, the Krishna river is swollen at the Prakasam Barrage in Vijayawada, compelling authorities to open all sluice gates to release the excess water.

Antarvedi temple chariot to be completed on time

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The construction of the chariot (ratham) of Lord Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Antarvedi village in East Godavari district is going on at a brisk pace and will be ready within the stipulated time, said P Arjun Rao, Commissioner of Endowments, here on Monday.

He said that as per the Telugu calendar, the annual Rathotsavam of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy falls on February 23, 2021, and all the necessary measures are being taken to get the chariot ready much before that.

P Arjun Rao, Commissioner of Endowments said that as per the Telugu calendar, the annual Rathotsavam of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy falls on February 23, 2021, and all the necessary measures are being taken to get the chariot ready much before that.



for the purpose. Going by the pace of work, the Commissioner expressed confidence the chariot will be ready much before the due date.

Stating that the work for the already commenced on Sunday by performing the traditional homams and pooja in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Revenue Dharmana Krishna Das, who is the district in-charge minister, Minister for Backward

Classes Welfare Venugopal, Amalapuram MP Anuradha, local MLAs and the District Collector besides officials.

They garlanded the statue of Kommanati Krishnamma, a leader from the Agni Kula Kshatriya, who is said to be associated with the temple. MLA Ponnada Satish, who belongs to this community, expressed his happiness at the steps being taken for early completion of the ratham works.

TDP Dalit leaders parroting Naidu's script: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MP Nandigam Suresh said that the Jai Bheem round-table was held to please TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu, hence, Dalit leaders of TDP should introspect on how the community was being treated by the leadership.

Speaking to the media here on

Monday, Nandigam Suresh questioned over the silence of some Dalit leaders during previous government when Dalits were attacked many times. Citing the disparaging remarks against Dalits by TDP leaders Adinarayana Reddy, Chintamaneni Prabhakar and Chandrababu Naidu, the MP said some Dalit Organisations didn't

raise their voice against the atrocities of TDP against Dalits during the previous government and now they were parroting Naidu's script for gaining sympathy from the public.

He slammed the Dalit leaders, who were supporting Naidu, and said it was Naidu, who did grave injustice to Dalits by hindering the distribution of house

site pattas to the poor and obstructing English as medium of instruction in government schools. The MP told Dalit intellectuals to advise Naidu not to obstruct the welfare schemes in the state. The MP said it was only Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy who was striving for the development of SCs, STs, BCs and Minorities.

Naidu uses BCs as vote bank: Mopidevi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Rajya Sabha MP Mopidevi Venkataramana has ridiculed TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu for using BCs as vote bank and stated that not a single scheme was implemented by the TDP for the uplift of BCs during its tenure.

Speaking at a press conference here on Monday, he said that opposition leader Naidu had been repeatedly taking BCs for a ride and had done nothing for their welfare during the TDP regime. He stated that Naidu had failed to deliver his promises made to BCs' welfare when he was at

the helm and never bothered about the BCs while in power. He flayed Naidu for limiting the BC welfare activities to providing cattle, or milk cans, or fishing nets, or iron boxes.

It is Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, who is committed to providing equal opportunities for BCs and has established 57 BC Corporations category wise.

Unlike Naidu, who wanted to gain something by filling the Rajya Sabha seat, YS Jaganmohan Reddy had sent two BCs to the Rajya Sabha out of the four vacancies, he reminded.

SP: Judge's brother was attacked by TDP leader

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chittoor District Superintendent of Police Senthil Kumar made it clear that the YSRCP had no role whatsoever on the attack on Ramachandra, brother of a Dalit judge S Ramakrishna, at B Kothakota mandal in Chittoor district on Sunday.

The SP said that the accused, Pratap Reddy, who allegedly attacked the judge's brother Ramachandra, turned out to be a TDP leader. Senthil Kumar also refuted the allegations of the TDP leaders that the attack was politically motivated.

"Our investigations proved



Chittoor District Superintendent of Police Senthil Kumar

that it was a clash between Ramachandra and Pratap Reddy over a petty issue," he

CM launches YSR Jala Kala

■ Free motors for small and marginal farmers ■ New metres for transparency

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has launched YSR Jala Kala, which aims at drilling borewells in arid and uplands and as a bonus free motors would be provided to small and marginal farmers.

Speaking during the launch of the programme here on Monday, the Chief Minister said through YSR Jala Kala borewells will be drilled free of cost for the needy farmers bringing in an estimated five lakh acres under cultivation through groundwater irrigation with an expenditure of Rs 2,340 crore in a period of four years in all the constituencies.

Though not promised during the padayatra nor mentioned in the manifesto, motors will also be provided free of cost to the borewells for small and marginal farmers. This additional cost for the motors would be Rs 1,600 crore.

He told the farmers that the new electricity metres would not burden them but it will give data on consumption and the required load of feeders, which will help in bringing in transparency in the system. The bill amount for power consumed would be transferred to farmers' bank accounts and they will pay to Discoms, he said brushing aside negative propaganda of Opposition. A 10,000 MW solar energy unit is coming up to



cater to the nine-hour free power scheme for the next 30 years. YSR Jala Kala will be implemented in 144 rural constituencies and 19 semi-urban constituencies by setting up one rig in each constituency, which benefits around two-lakh farmers.

The drilling of borewells will be on the basis of the feasibility report given after the hydro-geological and geo-physical surveys. The farmers can also avail a second chance, in case of a failure to draw water in the first attempt. All the eligible farmers can avail of this initiative by applying either online, or through the Village Secretariats and the status of their application can be monitored at every stage.

He recalled that the free electricity scheme was started by his father, former Chief Minister YS Rajashekar Reddy, and asserted that the YSRCP government is committed to the wel-

fare of farmers.

He stated that the government had already introduced Rythu Bharosa Kendras to facilitate farmers with seeds, fertilizers; warehouses and crop procurement centres also being developed. Besides these, the government is also providing Rs 13,500 every year for farmers under Rythu Bharosa.

The Chief Minister said that the previous government ruined the free-electricity to farmers' scheme by leaving a debt of Rs 8,655 crore and paid no attention towards the strengthening of feeders. "While only 58 per cent of feeders can provide free power during the day time, our government has increased the feeder capacity by spending Rs 1,700 crore where the farmers can avail nine hours of free power supply in the day time." The Chief Minister assured that there would be no additional burden on farmers with new metres.

HEAVY RAINS
Govt urged to help farmers tide over crisis

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Expressing concern over frequent floods and heavy rains, Leader of the Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday appealed to the Chief Secretary Nilam Sawhney to launch relief and rescue operations.

In a letter to the Chief Secretary here on Monday, Naidu stressed the immediate need for ensuring remunerative prices for the crops of farmers so as to help them tide over the debts.

The government's assistance was immediately needed considering the fact that the farmers were steeped in financial crisis due to Coronavirus and lockdowns. The flood damages are causing greater losses in agriculture, he opined.

Naidu demanded that the government take up immediate preventive measures and launch relief operations because of heavy rains in Godavari districts and floods to Krishna river. "Low-lying areas and crops were sub-



merged in many places. Despite this, there were no preventive steps by the government anywhere. There were no measures to rescue the families, which were badly hit. All help should be given till the poor families regain financially and stand on their own feet," Naidu said.

Stating that farmers lost heavily in Krishna and Godavari floods in the past, the TDP chief said that the government has not given compensation to crop losses till now. Moreover, the farmers faced greater losses due to increased costs of inputs while not being able to get remunerative prices for their produce, he pointed out.

DSNLU wins National Mock Trial contest

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Students of Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University (DSNLU) proved themselves once again at the national-level. A team of students— Sai Suvendra R and Rahul Krishna Reddy Panati were adjudged as the winners of the National Mock Trial Competition-2020, Fete de La Nomos on Criminal Laws organised by Christ (deemed to be) University, Lavasa, Pune, held online from September 25 to 27.

The team from Tamil Nadu National Law University (TNNLU) was adjudged as the runners-up. In all, 24 teams from different National Law Universities, Central Universities and Private Law Schools from various states participated in the competition. The DSNLU team was presented with merit certificates and a cash prize of Rs 4,500. Vice-Chancellor S Surya Prakash and Registrar CM Rao, academic advisor and Prof Bhavani Prasad Panda congratulated the winning team.

5 held with hashish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The enforcement wing of the Prohibition and Excise department on Monday arrested five persons on charges of possessing hashish oil. The police officials seized 155 grams of Hashish oil from the accused.

After receiving credible information about the illicit movement of narcotic drugs, the enforcement team kept a vigil on suspicious movements from Bowenpally to Secunderabad.

"Five persons identified as A Ranjeeth Kumar, K Nitesh Kumar Yadav, C Sai Kumar Reddy, S Girish Kumar and Sanjay Sharma who were

found moving suspiciously were taken into custody," said police.

During the interrogation, the accused disclosed that they were addicted to ganja and hashish oil. After witnessing the huge profits in the illegal business, they turned into peddlers.

The accused revealed the details of their suppliers identified as Sai Reddy from Qutubullapur and Vikram Sandipeta from Kukatapally, who were absconding.

Sai Reddy and Vikram used to get the hashish oil from Araku for Rs 1,500 and are selling the same for Rs 2,500 per 5 grams in the city.

Jashuva Kalapranaganam, a tribute to legendary poet

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The government will build Jashuva Kalapranaganam in Guntur in memory of the legendary poet. Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has issued orders to this effect, Minister for Education Adimulapu Suresh said at a programme organised to mark the 125th birth anniversary of renowned poet Gurram Jashuva here on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister recalled the works of Jashuva and his contribution against untouchability and social awareness through his literary works.

Sahitya Akademi Award

winner and Padma Bhushan Gurram Jashuva will be remembered for his literary works against untouchability and casteism. The government has allocated Rs 3 crore for the project, which includes repairs to the tomb of Jashuva and developing it as a memorial and also installation of his statue.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy was working relentlessly for the welfare of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes in tune with the ideology of Gurram Jashuva, he said and flayed Chandrababu Naidu and TDP for making false allegations against the government citing



Tributes being paid to Gurram Jashuva by garlanding his statue on his birth anniversary (file photo)

Dalit issues.

It is unfortunate that some Dalit leaders are supporting

Naidu, he said adding that they should approach the government if they face any prob-

lems. The Chief Minister has been striving to develop Dalits financially, socially and politically and appointed Dalits as Home Minister and Education Minister.

MP Mopidevi Venkataramana said Gurram Jashuva inspired youth and downtrodden through his literary works. He said the Chief Minister has laid a pedestal for the welfare of Dalits and working for the development of BCs, SCs, STs and Minorities. MLAs Merugu Nagarjuna, MLC Dokka Manikya Varaprasad, party general secretary Lella Appireddy and other leaders were present on the occasion.

IDS to study impact of zero budget natural farming

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to assess the impact of the zero budget natural farming, the Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) of Andhra government has entrusted the task to IDS-AP.

APCNF, IDS-AP has appointed 10 senior researchers / resource persons and more than 50 field investigators and supervisors to conduct the study. It has prepared 10 research tools for the study of the impact of APCNF during the agriculture year 2020-21.

IDS-AP has initiated a six-day training programme for

the field staff and is undergoing at Andhra University here.

Prof. S Galab, Director of IDS-AP, said this year the focus of the study would be Pre-monsoon Dry Sowing (PMDS) crops.

The study would assess not only the impact of APCNF, but also the impact of PMDS crops/ practices. In its inaugural address, Mr T. Vijay Kumar, IAS and Executive Vice-President of RySS said, "We are living in the climate emergency periods. We have to address the challenges of climate change within 12-15 years. Otherwise the damages

would be irreversible."

He added that "APCNF has demonstrated that our farmers can reverse the process of climate change. Internationally there is growing interest for the APCNF."

While many countries across the globe are experimenting their own versions of natural farming, some countries such as Kenya, Rwanda, Mexico, Chilly and bilateral and multilateral agencies are coming forward to partner with RySS. APCNF is harnessing the ecological principles for the benefit of the farmers and nature.

MLC ELECTIONS

New entrants to test political waters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

It looks like the TRS leadership is well ahead of others in gearing up its cadres for the council elections to Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda graduates' constituency, scheduled early next year. As the tenure of MLC Palla Rajeshwar Reddy is to end in March 2021, the TRS leadership has, reportedly, entrusted the responsibility of retaining the council seat with the respective Ministers belonging to the erstwhile districts.

Not only leaders from mainstream political parties, independent candidates are also eyeing on Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduates MLC Constituency. In 2015 election, a total of 22 candidates were in fray. However, TRS candidate Palla Rajeshwar Reddy won the seat over his rivals E Rammohan Rao from BJP and Congress candidate Theenmar Mallanna stood in third place in first priority votes.

However, the election officers counted second priority votes for TRS and BJP candidates and Palla Rajeshwar Reddy emerged as a winner with second priority votes



against BJP candidate. However, this time all political parties took the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduate MLC constituency as prestigious though there is another graduate constituency-Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahbubnagar. Interestingly, TJS and Telangana Inti-party chiefs are trying to test their fate from Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduate constituency. Both TJS Chief Prof M Kodandaram and Telangana Inti Party Chief Dr Cheruku Sudhakar have already started groundwork in these constituencies. The remaining

political parties like Congress, TTDP, CPI and CPM are also contemplating to field their candidates in these elections. However, CPI has stated that it will announce its decision only after Election Commission's notification. Yuva Telangana Party working president Rani Rudrama has also announced that she is contesting from Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal constituency. Rani Rudrama also contested from Karimnagar graduate constituency MLC elections. Theenmar Mallanna is once again wants test his luck from the same constituency. More

Not only leaders from main political parties independent candidates are also eyeing on Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal Graduates MLC Constituency

than 10 aspirants are expecting the Congress party support to contest the election from Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal constituency. They are-Dr Dasoju Sravan, Prof Kathi Venkata Swamy, Guduru Narayana Reddy, Manavatha Roy, Muthineni Veeriah and several others are expecting the support of the Congress party.

The BJP has not yet announced its candidate however, it is also seriously preparing strategies for the same constituency in which the party finished second last time. According to sources, the ruling party is taking these MLC elections seriously. The TRS is

all set o field Palla Rajeshwar Reddy once again. Though he didn't show interest earlier he changed his mind following the pressure mounted by the party leadership. Palla has already started groundwork for the last three weeks. Several senior journalists including Vittal are gearing up ready to contest from Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal constituency.

On the other hand, several retired professors, lecturers and teachers are eyeing to contest from this constituency. Several graduates are also eyeing on this constituency and want to try their luck. All the way, several enthusiasts are looking towards the Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduate MLC constituency election, which is going to become an interesting contest. Political Science Professor from Osmania University opined that this election would be a real test for graduate voters not for the contestants particularly Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduate constituency as leaders like Kodandaram, Cheruku Sudhakar, sitting MLC Palla Rajeshwar Reddy and Dasoju Sravan are trying to contest election from this constituency.

TRS, Congress in secret pact, alleges Aruna

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Newly-appointed BJP national vice-president DK Aruna alleged that the TRS and Congress will work together in the ensuing Dubbaka by-election and GHMC elections. Speaking to the media on Monday, she said, "Already the Congress leaders have started campaign asking the voters to cast their vote to TRS in Dubbaka constituency. The BJP will show its strength in the ensuing GHMC elections. There is no place for groups and sections in BJP," she clarified.

Stating that the future of Telangana belongs to BJP, Aruna made it clear that she was not disappointed for not giving Telangana BJP Chief position. BJP national vice-president made it clear that she is ready to take up any responsibility entrusted to her by the national leadership.



Finance Minister T Harish Rao inaugurating the facility at Siddipet Government Medical College Hospital on Monday

Siddipet hospital gets liquid oxygen tank

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Finance Minister T Harish Rao on Monday inaugurated liquid oxygen tank at Government Medical College Hospital Siddipet. In the wake of increasing demand for oxygen at the hospital, Harish said that they have decided to instal liquid oxygen tank in the hospital by spending Rs 61 lakh.

Stating that the hospital had 405 beds, the Minister said that the hospital management will provide oxygen supply facility to all the beds since many people were suffering from breathing problems after they were infected with the novel Coronavirus. The Medical College hospital was

having 360 beds in general ward and 45 beds in ICU. Until today, the hospital management used to get oxygen cylinders from Hyderabad which used to cause lot of issues. Asking the people to approach the doctors in the government medical college if they are suffering with serious symptoms of Coronavirus, Harish suggested the people not to visit private hospital since they would charge them with exorbitant bills. He said that the hospital is well equipped to treat the Covid-19 patients.

Suggesting those infected with Coronavirus not to delay in visiting the hospital, the Minister said the delay will pose a danger to their life.

HUGE SUPPORT



Farmers take out tractor rally in support of the new Revenue Act in Adilabad on Monday

Manickam Tagore warns Jagga Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore warned Sangareddy MLA T Jagga Reddy for abstaining from TPCC Core Committee meeting (held on September 26) and Dubbaka by-election preparatory meeting (held on September 27) at Gandhi Bhavan, it is learnt. However, Jagga Reddy assured him that it won't repeat again in future.

During the meeting, Manickam Tagore pulled up Jagga Reddy on the latter's absence and warned him. Jagga informed Tagore that he failed to attend the Core meet-

ing and other meetings due personal works.

It is learnt that Jagga Reddy met Manickam personally along with Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy. On the occasion, Jagga suggested Manickam not to change the TPCC chief till completion of Dubbaka by-elections and GHMC elections.

He asked Manickam to give opportunity to him if the high command wants to change TPCC chief. Jagga also told Tagore that he will suggest name for TPCC Chief position in case it if AICC rejects his candidature.

KCR has no respect towards women, alleges Seethakka

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MLA from Mulugu Seethakka on Monday alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has no respect towards women. "No one will compete with KCR in suppressing the women," she alleged. The MLA opined that there is a need to float a Women JAC to highlight the problems of women.

Participating in a Round Table Conference on Constitution of Telangana Women Commission organised by TDP women wing Telugu Mahila, Seethakka said that women leaders from all



Seethakka

industry. Alleging that the children of bigwigs in the industry are addicted to drugs and they do anything for their needs, she demanded the Telangana government to reveal the status of the drugs case.

TTDP Chief L Ramana urged Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan to intervene in setting up Mahila Commission in the state. He opined that the atrocities against women are increasing because there is no Women Commission in the state. TTDP leader Jyotsna, Telangana BJP Mahila Morcha chief Geetha Murthy and others participated in the conference.

political parties would meet the Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan soon. Cine actor and TDP leader from Andhra Pradesh Divya Vani said that the women are facing a lot of troubles in the cine

Officials told to fast track RoB works

PNS ■ WARANGAL URBAN

Government Chief Whip and Warangal West MLA Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar on Monday asked District Collector Rajiv Gandhi Hanumanth to talk to the management of St Gabriel's High School and resolve a land issue which was stalling the works of a Road over Bridge (RoB) across the railway line at Fatima Junction in Kazipet.

Vinay Bhaskar inspected the construction works and enquired about the progress with the site engineer besides interacting with workers. He also spoke with officials of the Roads and Buildings Department, which is the executing agency of the works, and directed them not to compromise with the quality of the works. The MLA also asked



them to speed up the works to complete the RoB by the December 31, 2021, deadline. He said the State government had sanctioned Rs 78 crore to construct an RoB parallel to the existing bridge across the Kazipet-Balharsha railway line. "The second RoB will help ease the traffic on the bridge since there is a multi-fold increase in the number of vehicles in the tri-cities of Warangal-Hanamkonda-Kazipet in the last couple decades," he added.

TRS lacks honesty, sincerity: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president and MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy alleged that the TRS lacks honesty and sincerity in opposing the new Agricultural Laws of the Central Government. Uttam, along with AICC Incharge Manickam Tagore, CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka and other senior leaders, were arrested by the police when they went to Raj Bhavan to meet Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan on Monday. Later, they were shifted to Goshamahal Stadium.

Uttam said that the BJP Government passed three contentious Bills in Rajya Sabha by smothering the democracy and violating the established Parliamentary practices. He said that the BJP government had no numerical strength in Rajya Sabha as many partners of NDA were also opposing the Bills. However, the Bills were



TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy at Diluksha Guest House on Monday

passed in an undemocratic manner through a voice vote.

Uttam said that the Bills had nothing new to offer to farmers and they are only aimed at benefiting a few corporate institutions. He said that the new laws would ruin the agricultural sector. He said that the BJP government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was acting as an agent of corporate entities and not as a true representative of common people. He said that the new bills have stripped farmers of security guaranteed by

the Constitution. He said that now the corporates would systematically gain complete control over entire farming operations

and also the farmers' lands. With the implementation of new laws, the farming activity will not be demand-driven, but profit-driven. Neither farmers, nor common people would gain from the new laws. The only beneficiaries would be corporate companies who are enjoying the patronage of Modi government, he alleged.

36 sarpanches placed under suspension

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government cracked the whip on erring sarpanches leading to district Collectors placing 36 of them under suspension for various commissions and omissions and facing serious allegations.

Under the New Panchayat Act-2018, the government has been initiating disciplinary action against sarpanches and not even sparing mandal panchayat officers, panchayat secretaries, who did not act with responsibility.

The state government releases Rs 339 crore every month to panchayats. In spite of the release of funds, there is no progress in works to be executed under the Palle Pragati programme.

Taking a serious view of it, the government has ordered disciplinary action against the

erring sarpanches and officials.

The government insisted that the survival rate of the saplings should be at least 85 per cent.

It said that if the survival rates come down, it said that it would hold the sarpanch and panchayat secretary accountable for the same.

The new Panchayat Act, instead of delaying disciplinary action through serving of notices and calling for explanation, facilitated immediate suspension of those who are responsible for the omissions and commissions.

Apart from misuse of funds, if panchayats lag behind in maintaining sanitation and if the sarpanches and panchayat secretaries fail to discharge their duties properly, they are not being spared and being suspended immediately.

Minister seeks report of Housing Board properties

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Housing Minister Vemula Prashanth Reddy sought a detailed report on the properties belonging to the Telangana State Housing Board from the officials concerned within one week. The report will be submitted to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for further action in an attempt to improve the Housing Board operations.

In a review meeting at the Housing Board's office here on Monday, the Minister wanted the properties to be categorised into vacant lands, plots, buildings, residential, office and commercial spaces as per their locations. He also sought an inventory with details of lands, their extent, value and current status.

Colonies submerged; Cong seeks relief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress party on Monday demanded immediate relief for over 500 families trapped in nearly 300 houses located in Osman Nagar and Saif Nagar localities in Maheshwaram Assembly constituency which are completely submerged in rain water.

TPCC Spokesperson Syed Nizamuddin, along with Hyderabad City Congress Minorities Chairman Sameer Waliullah, Ranga Reddy Minorities Dept Chairman Mohammed Riyaz and other Congress leaders visited the affected areas on Monday and interacted with the local residents. Speaking to media persons later, he said that more than 500 families were completely trapped in over 300 houses in Osman Nagar and Saif Talaab areas.

He said these localities were located adjacent to Firangi Nala and Burhan Cheruvu. Due to heavy rains in the city for the last few days, these low



Over 500 families are in Osman Nagar and Saif Nagar localities which are completely submerged in rain water

lying areas got submerged. He said there were no storm water drains in these areas and therefore, the rain water got stagnated in Osman Nagar and Saif Talaab areas. "The conditions in these areas are highly disturbing with more than 500 families stranded with no food and water," he said adding that these localities could be saved if water is released to Burhan Cheruvu.

Nizamuddin said that the State Government did nothing so far to help the stranded families. He said no efforts were made by the authorities to shift the people of these low lying areas to safer places or at least provide some assistance to hundreds of people, including women and children, trapped in those areas. He said that the submergence problem was not confined to Osman Nagar, but

Congress leaders visited the affected areas on Monday and interacted with the local residents in Osman Nagar and Saif Talaab areas

many other areas like Nabel Colony, Metro-4 Colony, Jubin Colony, etc., were also getting sub-merged due to absence of storm water drainage system. "Instead of helping the stranded people, the authorities are blaming the heavy rains and lack of drainage system in these areas. Instead of helping the people, the TRS Government is running away from its responsibility by cursing nature," he said.

Cong to appoint village in charges in Dubbaka

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In view of by-election to Dubbaka Assembly constituency, Telangana Congress Affairs in-charge Manickam Tagore suggested the party leaders to appoint in-charges for 146 villages in the constituency. He asked the TPCC to appoint one in-charge each to two villages.

While participating in a meeting held to discuss on the prevailing situation in Dubbaka constituency held at Gandhi Bhavan, he asked the leaders to appoint one leader for 10 mandals and 70 leaders from 700 mandals. He said that he would visit the mandals in near future. Tagore suggested the leaders to discuss on all important issues by setting up sub-committees. In a DCC presidents meeting, Manickam Tagore said that he will meet them once in a month.

Meet this Hyderabad running 'Rice ATM' to feed hungry

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Covid-19-induced lockdown saw many heroes emerging in different parts of the country who went all out to feed the hungry and help the needy.

Here is one hero from Hyderabad who is still continuing the work, providing succour to families still reeling under the impact of lockdown. Ramu Dosapati's 'Rice ATM' works round-the-clock and anyone who has nothing for the next meal can reach his residence in L.B. Nagar to get a ration kit comprising rice and few other groceries.

For the last 170 days, this MBA graduate has been distributing ration kits among the needy every day. Men and women can be seen queuing up at a kirana shop in front of his apartment to collect rice. A HR manager in a software



firm, Dosapati has so far helped 15,000 families, spending about Rs 5 lakh from his own pocket. It is only for the last one month that inspired by his work, people have come forward to make some contribution.

"I advise them to start similar work in their respective areas. There is a lot to do in every area because there are people who cover 15-20 km distance to come to our ATM. Hyderabad has over one crore population and I want to see

that no one sleeps hungry," Dosapati said. He recalled that he was inspired by a watchwoman who bought chicken worth Rs 2,000 during the lockdown for distribution among migrant labourers going hungry. "I thought when a watchwoman drawing a meagre salary of Rs 6,000 can do this to help those in distress, why a HR manager earning Rs 1.5 lakh per month should sit at home and bother only about his family."

He was quick to draw Rs 1.5 lakh from his account to start the work on April 13. Later, he also withdrew Rs 3.20 lakh from his Provident Fund account. Dosapati started his 'Rice ATM' on April 13 and initially started distributing the kits among the migrant workers. He used to go around with ration kits and distribute them among families who were starving.

SHORT READS



Kerala MP moves SC against newly enacted farm law

New Delhi : A Congress MP from Kerala moved the Supreme Court on Monday challenging the constitutional validity of various provisions of the contentious new farm Act. TN Prathapan, who represents Thrissur Lok Sabha constituency in Kerala, has alleged that the Farmers' Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 is violative of Article 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution. He said the law, which was accorded presidential assent on Sunday, is "liable to be struck down as unconstitutional, illegal and void". The new law intends to provide a national framework for the farming agreements to protect and empower farmers as they engage with agri-business and food processing firms, exporters and large retailers for farm services and sale of produce at a remunerative price framework in a fair and transparent manner.

DMK, allies protest against farm laws

Chennai: DMK and its allies hit the streets across Tamil Nadu on Monday, protesting the three farm sector legislations with its chief M K Stalin saying his party was ready to challenge the Centre's contentious move in court. Addressing a demonstration at a village in neighbouring Kancheepuram district as part of the state-wide protest, he alleged the new laws would drive farmers away from their lands. "Take back farm laws," "We will not rest until the farmers interests are protected," "farmers betrayed," and "farm laws lead to hoarding," were among the slogans raised during the demonstrations. The DMK-led alliance, which includes the Congress and Left parties among others, on last Monday decided to hold the state-wide agitation against the bills, passed in the recent Parliament session. Kerala was readying to approach the Supreme Court against the laws and Tamil Nadu government should follow suit and if this does not happen, "we (DMK) as an opposition party are ready to go to court on behalf of farmers and the people," he said.

Kerala govt will take action against those abusing women: CM

Thiruvananthapuram: Strict action would be taken against those misusing social media to abuse women and the government would even consider appropriate law if the existing statutes were not sufficient. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said. In a facebook post late Sunday in the backdrop of a youtuber here facing the fury of a group of social activists, including popular Malayalam dubbing artist Bhagyalekshmi, over his alleged derogatory video on women, Vijayan asserted the LDF government stood by the victims of abuse. The youtuber, Vijay P Nair, has recently uploaded a video titled "Why do feminists in India, especially in Kerala, not wear underwear" and targets a number of women, including 86-year-old veteran poet and activist Sugathakumari and Bhagyalekshmi, triggering widespread condemnation.

Rajnath unveils new Defence Acquisition Procedure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday unveiled a new Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) with a focus on significantly boosting indigenous production and turning India into a global manufacturing hub of weapons and military platforms. Singh said the DAP has also included provisions to encourage foreign direct investment (FDI) to establish manufacturing hubs both for import substitution and exports while protecting the interests of Indian domestic industry.



Under the new policy, the offset guidelines have also been revised facilitating preference to defence majors offering to manufacture products in India over relevant components.

"The offset guidelines have also been revised, wherein preference will be given to manufacture of complete defence products over components and various multipliers

have been added to give incentivisation in discharge of off-sets," the defence minister tweeted. He said the DAP has been aligned with the vision of the government's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India) initiative and to empower Indian domestic industry through 'Make in India' projects with the ultimate aim of turning India into a global manufacturing hub. The policy also provides for single stage accord of AoN (Acceptance of Necessity) in all cases up to Rs 500 crore to cut delays in approval of acquisition proposals.

Cong workers take to streets in protest against farm laws

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Stepping up the anti-farm law protest, hundreds of Congress workers here took to the streets on Monday, carrying haystacks on their shoulders, as part of the party's nationwide stir against the legislation. The protesters also submitted a memorandum to Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, urging him to "intervene and ensure" that the laws were immediately repealed. Several of them were arrested near Raj Bhavan for viola-

tion of prohibitory orders. In the memorandum, signed by the Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha and the party's state unit chief, Adhir Choudhury, the agitators said that the agri laws were not in consonance with the country's federal structure. Earlier in the day, the protesters, led by party MP Pradip Bhattacharya and senior leader Abdul Mannan, raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and criticised the Centre for not holding consultations with states before

introducing the bills in Parliament. "Agriculture and mandis come under the purview of the state governments, according to the Constitution. But the Modi government didn't think it was necessary to take the state governments in confidence on this issue," the memorandum said. Mannan alleged that the BJP government at Centre is "hatching a conspiracy to cause distress to the 'annadata' farmer at the altar of a handful of crony capitalists".

2 held with fake RTO smart cards

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Two people were arrested for allegedly making fake registration certificate (RC) smart cards of different regional transport offices (RTOs) in Maharashtra, police in Mumbai said on Monday. Jayesh Gopalji Mehta (50) and Avinash Rajaram Borkar (40), both residents of Kandivali suburb, were held by Unit XII of the Crime Branch on a tip-off while one of them was on his way to Dahisar to deliver one such fake RC card, an official said.

BJP hits out at Cong over tractor-burning incident

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday blasted the Congress over the burning of a tractor near India Gate here, allegedly by opposition party workers, saying it has "shamed" the country with its "drama" aimed at publicity and "misleading" farmers. Senior party leaders, including Union ministers, hit out at the Congress with Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar condemning the incident and accusing the opposition of misleading farmers. "The Congress shamed the country today. Bringing tractor in a truck and then burning it at India Gate is a drama enacted by the Congress and



we condemn it. The party has been trying to do politics in the name of farmers, and it has been unmasked. It has enacted a drama for publicity," he told reporters. Around 15-20 people set a tractor on fire at India Gate on

Monday morning, police said. Five people said to be members of the Punjab Youth Congress have been detained, they said. The incident comes amid protests by farmers and opposition parties across the coun-

try over the contentious farm legislations that were passed by Parliament last week. BJP general secretary Bhopender Yadav dubbed the Congress as "anti-farmers", saying farmers venerate their farm equipment and will not set tractors on fire. This burning of tractors by the Congress and other opposition parties in the name of farmers is shameful, he said, adding that they should not use India's food producers for politics. Another Union minister Gajendra Singh took a swipe at the opposition party, saying it is protesting against farmers' freedom in the name of Bhagat Singh, whose birth anniversary fell on Monday, by burning a tractor.

WB turns down Raj Bhavan's request for additional funds

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The West Bengal government has turned down a request from the Governor's House to increase its budget allocation, a senior official said on Monday. The governor's office had written to the state secretariat a couple of times in the recent past, seeking additional funds of Rs 53.5 lakh to meet everyday expenses.

The state government, however, expressed its inability to allot more funds, claiming that it has adopted austerity measures amid the COVID-19 pandemic. "The governor's office had sought additional funds of Rs 53.5 lakh. As our state has adopted certain austerity measures to handle expenses during this pandemic, the request was turned down," the official at the state secretariat said.

Notably, the state finance department has slashed 50 per cent of the budget allotted to the Raj Bhavan, and set aside Rs 16 crore for its expenditure in 2020-21 fiscal. According to the official, the government had to cut down on budget for all its departments, and not just the Governor's House, as it needed funds to meet "unforeseen expenditure", if any, in the midst of the pandemic.

HC: Treat as representation PIL to waive board exam fees

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Monday asked the AAP government and the Central Board of Secondary Education to treat as representation a PIL seeking waiver of the exam fees for students of classes 10 and 12 in the current academic year in view of the ongoing pandemic.

Anti-Sikh riots: HC tells cops to provide security

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Monday directed the police to continue providing three security personnel round the clock to controversial arms dealer Abhishek Verma, a witness in a 1984 anti-Sikh riots, as he was receiving threats. Justice Yogesh Khanna said

the high court's September 27, 2017 order directing the DCP (South) to provide in three security personnel for the personal security of Verma and his family members be continued till further orders. The high court asked the CBI and Delhi Police to file replies to Verma's petition seeking directions to the

authorities to continue providing round the clock police security cover of three armed PSOs as already provided for the protection of the petitioner (Verma) and his family members from South District Police Lines, Hauz Khas till the examination of the Petitioner is concluded in the riots case before the trial court.

The court said the replies be filed in four weeks and listed the matter for further hearing on November 26. The court said the submission of Abhishek Verma's counsel that his presence may be required at the time of trial cannot be brushed aside lightly and also noted that it has been the CBI's claim that he is

CBI: No conclusion in Rajput case, all aspects being probed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has not reached any conclusion in the death case of actor Sushant Singh Rajput and all aspects are under investigation, the agency said on Monday. "The CBI is conducting professional investigation related to death of Shri Sushant Singh Rajput in which all aspects are being looked at and no aspect has been ruled out as of date," a CBI spokesperson said. Rajput, 34, who made his silver screen debut in the critical-



ly acclaimed 'Kai Po Che' seven years ago, was found dead in his apartment in suburban Bandra in Mumbai on June 14 this year. The CBI had taken over the probe from Bihar Police into the alleged abet-

ment to suicide case filed by the actor's father K K Singh in Patna against Rajput's girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty and her family. Singh in his complaint to Bihar Police had alleged that Chakraborty along with her family members had misappropriated Rajput's wealth, which was denied by Chakraborty in TV interviews. Last week Singh's lawyer Vikas Singh had expressed "helplessness" over the slow pace of the CBI probe into Rajput's death.

Maha: Nagpur University to conduct exams via app

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Nearly 78,000 students of the Nagpur University in Maharashtra will appear for their final year exams online through a mobile app from October 1 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, officials said on Monday. Students can download the 'RTMNU Pariksha' app from the Google Playstore or website of the Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University on Android-based phones, the university's board of examination director said. The online exams will consist of 50 multiple choice questions, out of which students will have to solve 25 questions, the official said. "Each question will carry two marks. Students can solve more than 25 questions, and the best 25 will be selected for evaluation. There is no negative marking," Sabale said.



The app provides students all the necessary instructions regarding the exams and also a mock test, which the students can take for practice. The exams will be held from October 1 to 18. Sabale said the university will conduct 186 exams of four faculties for which the question bank is ready and moderation is almost completed. "Around 1.82 lakh questions in various subjects have been set up by 1,852 teachers," he said. RTMNU Vice Chancellor Subhash Chaudhari said the app will be convenient for students and also work in low internet connectivity.

IPS officer beats wife; relieved of duties after video goes viral

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday said a senior state IPS officer has been relieved of duties, after a video showing him assaulting his wife went viral on social media. In the video, DGP Purushottam Sharma is seen thrashing his wife, while the latter is seen resisting the assault. "The officer has been relieved of his duties. Action will be taken against anyone who holds a responsible position, but indulges in illegal activities and taking law into his hands," the chief minister said. There is no official confirmation to reports that the IPS officer was caught red-handed by his wife of 32 years at a woman's house, after which he assaulted her.

Covid: Parents allege fee hike by top private school

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The parents of students of a top private school in the national capital have alleged that the authorities have increased the fee with effect from August despite a Delhi government order restricting any such raise till schools reopen. The city government had directed schools to not hike fees till schools remain closed due to COVID-19 and also not levy any charges in the name of development fees or annual fees. The parents have approached the Directorate of Education (DoE) against the move by DPS RK Puram and also alleged disparities in fee structure of its two branches. While the school principal has informed parents that their concerns have been raised before the DPS society; Puneet Mittal, the lawyer representing the school, said a petition is pending before the Delhi High Court over the issue of fees. "The school is not charging annual or development fees but they have increased the tuition



fees. There are some dubious heads mentioned in the new receipts such as operational charges and maintenance charges," said a parent on the condition of anonymity. "When the schools are closed what are they maintaining? From Rs 9000, we are now supposed to pay Rs 13,000 just for the tuition fee." Another parent said they sought appointment from the school authorities multiple times to discuss this but there has been no luck. The overall fees had come down during the lockdown after the Delhi government

ordered that only tuition fees can be charged during the period and other heads such as transportation fee, sports fee etc. should not be collected. "If the tuition fee has been ultimately raised to almost the same amount as we used to pay before the lockdown then what is the relaxation?" the parent asked. Another parent alleged, "The school has two junior branches -- one in Vasant Kunj and one in East of Kailash. How can there be two different fee structures for the two branches of the same school. There should be some parity."

‘Will move SC over farm laws’

PNS ■ KHATKAR KALAN

Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Monday said his government would approach the Supreme Court over the issue of new farm laws. Talking to reporters here, he also suggested that Pakistan's spy agency ISI will use farmers' unrest over the new farm laws and will try to

foment trouble in the border state of Punjab. Amarinder Singh, along with AICC general secretary and Punjab Affairs in-charge Harish Rawat, Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar and others, paid tributes to Shaheed Bhagat Singh on his 113th anniversary at Khatkar Kalan village in SBS Nagar district.

INS Viraat dismantling begins after 30 years, 11 lakh km of voyage

BY NAMITA TEWARI ■ ALANG (GUJARAT)

It is an emotional and momentous occasion for Alang on Monday, as the dismantling of the world's longest serving warship, INS Viraat, will begin here three years after it was decommissioned by the Indian Navy. This Centaur-class aircraft carrier of Indian Navy that remained in service for almost 30 years and holds the Guinness record for world's longest serving warship will be dismantled here at Alang, one of the largest shipbreaking

yards globally. "This historic warship has sailed almost 11 lakh kms, enough to travel the globe 27 times over", Shipping Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said addressing an event here to give farewell to the warship. "Today I pay homage to ex INS Viraat at Alang, Gujarat. INS Viraat served our nation for 30 glorious years and after decommissioning, She is moving towards her last journey for recycling at Alang," the Minister said. The Navy's pride has groomed 40 flag officers including five Chief of Naval



Staffs. Mandaviya said Cochin Shipyard is building another huge warship.

He said efforts were made to convert INS Viraat into a museum and several consultations were done but the plan could

not materialise as an expert committee reported that it won't last for more than a decade.

"The government was ready to spend Rs 400-Rs 500 crore to convert it into Museum but an expert committee said its

ferrous won't last and it may result in an accident. Under the circumstances, we had to bid tearful adieu to it," the Minister said. Mandaviya said around 30 per cent of the global ships numbering about 280 are recycled annually at Alang. "Alang provides employment to more than 30,000 people coming from Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Gujarat and other states and supports 3.5 Lakh people indirectly through other business activities," the Minister said. INS Viraat was commissioned in 1959 as Royal Navy's

HMS Hermes and decommissioned in 1984 and subsequently it was sold to India and commissioned into Indian Navy on May 12, 1987. Capabilities of this mighty ship included maritime and land-based missions as well as engagements in anti-submarine warfare, officials said. The ship was extensively deployed for numerous operations notably 'Operation Jupiter' and the Sri Lankan Peace Keeping Force Operations in 1989, 'Ops Prakaram' following the 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, they added.



New look BJP

With an eye on State polls and laying ground for the next general elections, the party recasts itself with 60 per cent new faces



This took some time coming, the recasting of the BJP after JP Nadda became its new president, ostensibly halted by the Government's preoccupation with the pandemic. But nine months down the line, the party has made some key changes. Almost 60 per cent of the office bearers are new, which means that the Modi-Shah duo is now reshaping the party's legacy by putting in place a generation next. The second rung would be ready by the time the next general elections are due, when some of the existing stalwarts would superannuate. The new and younger faces serve two purposes. First, they would feel they have a stakehold-

ership in the larger scheme of things and work zealously, something that would help the party attract the younger demographic and energy in time for the next Lok Sabha verdict. Second, it would make the BJP look like a party which believes in intra-party democracy — although the new office-bearers would be so beholden to the current leadership that they are not expected to break a well-set mould — and expose the Opposition Congress as a fossil in comparison. Many crucial office-bearer posts have gone to members from Bengal and Odisha, an indication that BJP is serious about firmly stamping its footprint in eastern India. But the most significant move has been the dilution of known Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) faces in the party's command structure, with Ram Madhav being dropped as national general secretary along with others, BL Santhosh being the lone RSS presence now. But this doesn't mean that there is a sidelining of the RSS, only an appearance of it. Some of the dropped faces, including Madhav, who has been singularly responsible for the party's Kashmir and North-east strategies and gains, are expected to be rewarded with Central Ministries. And with the Prime Minister himself having risen from the cadre, the probable thinking is that the RSS is now very well ensconced in core governance and doesn't have the pressure to be visibly felt. At the same time, it helps Modi project the party as a broader, accommodative entity with representation of non-RSS cadres and should the new inclusions be successful, also help him fob off the pressure from Nagpur. There is no denying that the party cannot do without the RSS architecture that's needed to build a disciplined and committed pyramid ground up but at the same time, some free-wheeling ideologues have caused it enough embarrassment with their radical thinking. Modi, a highly individualist persona, certainly won't brook more challengers at the moment. The new national general secretaries have been selected to ensure an all-India representation, including as they do Dushyant Kumar Gautam, a Dalit leader, D Purandeswari from Andhra Pradesh, CT Ravi, an MLA from Karnataka, Tarun Chugh from Punjab and Dilip Saikia from Assam. Odisha now has four national office bearers, indicating how aggressive the BJP is about this coastal State. While Baijayant Panda continues as vice-president and Sambit Patra as spokesperson, two first-time MPs have been given a national role: Bisweswar Tudu from the tribal district of Mayurbhanj will be one of the national secretaries while Aparajita Sarangi from Bhubaneswar will be the new spokesperson. Former BJP president Amit Shah couldn't accomplish his "Mission 120" in Odisha last year and the national-level inclusions are expected to tap into the ambitions of the local unit to swing the verdict in the party's favour. The party continues to be deeply invested in the North-east, choosing M Chuba Ao from Nagaland as national vice-president and Mmholunmo Kikon, MLA from Nagaland, as a national spokesperson.

However, the appointment of turncoat leader Mukul Roy from Bengal as a national vice-president has shocked many. A former Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader and one-time confidant of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Roy's elevation shows how desperate the BJP is about Bengal. This at a time when Roy himself was becoming deeply uncomfortable about the little wiggle room he had. It also shows how the local unit hasn't been able to turn the tide of opinion in the BJP's favour as expected and, therefore, the central leadership doesn't mind using imported talent to achieve its purpose. Even Anupam Hazra, who has been appointed national secretary, is a former TMC leader. Roy can clearly help the BJP in countering the booth-level strategies of the TMC and choose candidates wisely. Yet Bengal is messy as the local BJP unit and its leaders are resentful and becoming openly rebellious. The fact that the party dropped its long-time loyalist Rahul Sinha as national secretary to make way for Hazra shows how desperate it is to use TMC rebels to dethrone Mamata. Except, that this could boomerang on itself too. For Bengal operates in binaries. Just as the disgruntled Left cadres joined TMC, nobody can rule out rebel BJP leaders crossing over. The trouble for BJP is that it cannot sit easy on its Lok Sabha performance for it lost three bypoll seats in the State subsequently, including State president Dilip Ghosh's own constituency. Roy has a twin challenge of keeping the State unit together and defeating the TMC in 2021. This could be the BJP's biggest gamble in Bengal. The national overhaul is clearly going "vocal for local" from the BJP's side with a naked ambition to get power in the States it hasn't had a chance to make inroads into historically. But this federalist approach is need-based rather than organic. And therein lies the mismatch.

Implement the rules

If farmers continue to burn stubble in their fields, they will make enemies and lose friends



Agitating farmers in north India might find a lot of fault with the recently passed legislation that dismantled the old system of agricultural commerce even if the Central Government continues to believe in the necessity of these Bills as major reforms. Richer farmers are agast at the Bills as they hurt their well-connected eco-system as well as harm State Government revenues. That's why politicians in Punjab are protesting so loudly whereas marginal farmers in other States are less unhappy with the Bills, considering their exploitation won't end at the end of the day, big corporations just replacing middlemen. But if the

farmers are hoping to sway opinion against the Bills, then they would have to act upon their brethren burning stubble in their fields and not use it as a pressure tactic to get the Centre's attention.

There is no doubt that the Punjab Government has callously thrown its hands up in the air and said it cannot do anything as the overburdened farmers need subsidised equipment and shredders that can help them dispose stubble in an environmentally-friendly way. Possibly this is in order to put pressure upon the Narendra Modi Government. And it is true that the Centre has to use funds at its disposal to subsidise this equipment. However, rules and regulations are in place and the courts have spoken in the past. There needs to be a crackdown on farmers, who willingly and callously burn their fields and are murdering the citizens of their own country as a result. Far from winning sympathy in their fight against corporates, this might even drive popular opinion against farmers to the extent that policy-influencing citizens might want increased corporatisation of the agricultural industry. As it is, the habit of farmers in the north, growing water-intensive crops in a water-stressed region, is quite alarming. Even if the Government can take proactive measures to control the pollution from burning fields this year, we should not forget that this is not the only reason for the poor air quality. Rampant and unmanaged construction activity has also led to severe dust pollution and it would be prudent for civic authorities to better manage that as well. Transport activity is still a bit down due to the Coronavirus, although, without full public transport working, many people are crowding our streets with personal vehicles. 2020 has been a rough year already, let us not make it much worse.



BHOPINDER SINGH

Jaswant Singh fought his last fight, as he always did, with restraint, dignity and rectitude that typified his life. Recently, life had ebbed slowly for the proverbial and literal last of the knights (former cavalry officer from the distinguished Central India Horse Regiment) as he silently passed into his Valhalla. The 82-year-old soldier, statesman, scholar and politician always stood out in public imagination with his ramrod straight posture, sartorial sense, stifled baritone, measured words and Queen's English. Singh was the quintessential "officer and a gentleman" on duty. A pleasant oddity in the mucky world of politics. Part of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's eclectic group of "diversities", Singh brought the mellifluous imprint of his rural desert district, Rajput warriors' ethos and scholarly correctness that won over many hard-nosed diplomats from across the world for his professional profundity and efficacy.

Once touted as Vajpayee's trusted "Hanuman", Singh belonged to a political era when one could be an honourable gentleman, dignified and yet a politician. He is most recognised as Vajpayee's globe-trotting troubleshooter as External Affairs Minister, but he completed a rare "D-E-F" in ministerial portfolios, as he was also Defence and Finance Minister. Vajpayee personally stood up for his friend "Jassu" whenever the knives were out from within, against a man who was clearly uncomfortable with the puritanical section of his party. But the sagacious Vajpayee sought no echo-chamber. Instead, he cherished and valued the former soldier's ability to uplift a simple draft in English into the most sublime expression. They were men of letters who respected each other for their "differences" and not feared the same. Such political large-heartedness was not to last and a very different and distinct strain of political instinct was brewing within his own party. It was clear that the space for independent-minded liberals and intellectuals was diminishing. Like his co-soldier and party colleague, Major General BC Khanduri, the narrow form of nationalism was on the rise. It was an unknown space and anathema for even old soldiers, and soon Singh was banished.

He was an intellectual rebel, not



a rabble rouser, a fine difference and a handicap, one that he would soon discover. He had left the Army as he was sick of "Sir'ing" and "empty posturing." To expect such a man to pander to political insecurities and insensitivities that were rising was unimaginable. In such changing times, there couldn't be a political space for a Jaswant Singh, Arun Shourie, Yashwant Sinha and so on.

Today, when both national security and diplomacy are going through extreme turbulence and relying on hyperbole, jingoism and "economies of truth" — the reassuring and unflinching visage of Singh in the backdrop of a nuclear test, the Agra Summit, Kargil or in the midst of confabulations with Madeleine Albright and Strobe Talbott, is a fleeting memory of the distant past.

A politician's journey is rife with incidents that are both laudatory and fetching. Singh's political life was no different — the perennial question of him accompanying terrorists to Kandahar to secure the release of 160 hostages is the foremost. What is rarely posited in such questioning is if that was an individual decision or one cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), chaired by the Prime Minister, Home Minister and the "D-E-F" ministerial trinity? While no one really stood up and vocally clarified (though, no one denied either) that it was a collective call — Singh was left to

SINGH WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO BLOW THE BUGLE ABOUT HIS PARTY'S CHANGING TENOR, AGENDA AND DIRECTION, AND THEREAFTER SOUGHT A 'SERIOUS INQUIRY.' LITTLE DID HE KNOW OF THE CHANGING AND IRREVERSIBLE WINDS. SOON THE SOLDIER WAS IRONICALLY SLAMMED FOR 'INDISCIPLINE'

carry this can of blemish for posterity, singularly on his hall-mark epaulette-strapped shoulders. On the contrary, the post-incident questioning always left the one-time soldier bemused, saddened and even let down by his colleagues, but beyond a point, he did not stoop to name-calling; he was too much of a thoroughbred gentleman to do that. Singh was among the first to blow the bugle about his party's changing tenor, agenda and direction, and thereafter sought a "serious inquiry." Little did he know of the changing and irreversible winds, and soon the soldier was ironically slammed for "indiscipline." Later, his lettered expression by way of a seminal book, *Jinnah: India, Partition, Independence*, was to be a convenient excuse to get rid of unwanted erudition within the new and rising ranks. Gujarat was the first State to ban the book, an indication of things to follow. Singh's prophetic words then had been that it was tantamount to "banning thinking." A fruition of that political reality plays out today. It was a regrettable political end for the distinguished career of the nine-time parliamentarian, who in his earlier book, *A Call to Honour: In Service of Emergent India*, had invoked the memories of the sun-lit land of his childhood within the four walls of "honour, courage, loyalty and faith" — old fashioned adjectives that sadly don't resonate anymore.

His wood-panelled office was

among the most impressive personal libraries and with Bach playing in the background, it was a statement of class, culture and pedigree that was equally at ease in his desert *dhani* with the hauntingly beautiful music of his native bards, Langas and Mangniyars.

Singh was a man of chivalric codes — a civilisational code, a soldier's code and even an understated feudal code that understood the fine difference between respect and servility — he was gracious and respectful and was always respected back, even by people across the "aisle." Politicians like him acknowledged their political opponents as equal patriots and human beings and he was befittingly conferred the "Outstanding Parliamentary Award" in 2001. More comfortable with his books, writings, horses and an abiding spirit of enquiry — Singh abhorred illiberality, bigotry and the swaggering abuse of power. True to any proud soldier's moral compass, he valued respect more than anything, but as the cavalier once invoked, he was ultimately, "put out to pastures."

Today Vajpayee's "Hanuman," who seldom rested, will be laid to rest, as it were, in a better world — as they say of old soldier's, "they never die, they only fade away." The nation lost a patriot, a statesman, a soldier and above all, a decent man.

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

SOUND BITE

Both the COVID-19 vaccine task force and the immunity task force are doing important work to help us identify the most promising vaccine options and strategies.

Canadian PM
—Justin Trudeau



Punjab, which would be the worst affected by these treacherous laws, would take this fight forward with all its might.

Punjab Chief Minister
—Amarinder Singh



These days Sanju (Samson) is striking the ball cleanly all over the ground. We will have to adapt to bigger grounds but these shots would clear everywhere.

Cricketer
—Steve Smith



It is very crucial for us to support our folk artists — our industry, workers who are keeping our heritage intact.

Singer
—Shaun



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Democracy in danger

Sir — Amid farmers' protests, particularly in Punjab and Haryana, President Ram Nath Kovind approved the three controversial farm Bills. Leaders of 18 parties had also approached the President last week, urging him not to give his assent to the Bills, calling the way in which they were passed "tyrannical" and "unknown to our Constitution". The Government's dictatorial approach in passing the farm Bills, when it didn't have the majority in the Upper House, and now the President's decision to not heed the Opposition on the matter and act against the nation's conscience, only suggests that neither Hariyansh Narayan Singh, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, nor the President are working as independent entities but rather as puppets of the Central Government. Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal rightly called it a "dark day for democracy". The Opposition parties need to come together once again to challenge this cavalier attitude and arrogance and work out a nationwide campaign to make themselves count.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

The world needs a 'people's vaccine'

Globally, more than one million people have died from COVID-19. The real figure could be higher than the official numbers, especially in view of the fact that a lot of COVID-related mortalities outside hospitals are linked to co-morbidities and are not counted as COVID deaths. The casualty toll is growing by the day with a vaccine nowhere in sight. The World Health Organisation's (WHO's) prognosis that there could be another million deaths, even with the vaccine, before the pandemic is eventually brought under control, deepens the gloom.

Data attest that older people and those with pre-existing conditions are more at risk than others. SARS-CoV-2 is virulent and its infective ability varies from person to person. At the same time, it is possible to contain its spread and reduce its fatality by a scientific response. It is a proven fact that poverty increases vulnerability to diseases and this holds good in the case of COVID too. Social and economic conditions co-relate with public health. Obviously, the fight against the ongoing pan-



dem becomes weaker when healthcare professionals are overstretched and hospitals are under-resourced. Given its implications, herd immunity is not an option. A viable vaccine is the need of the hour but only if it is available free of cost to everyone will we be able to vanquish the virus.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

Agricultural Produce Market Committee *mandis*, which will leave them at the mercy of big companies. They also fear that if the *mandi* system comes to an end, so will the minimum support price system. The Government should make necessary amendments and ensure that the farmers do not suffer.

BO Changa
West Bengal

Women's safety

Sir — A 22-year-old woman was allegedly raped by two Railway officers at the Bhopal station. This incident took place just days after a 19-year-old was raped by four upper caste men in Hathras district. The culprits had cut off her tongue and severely injured her spinal cord. Currently, she is on a ventilator fighting for her life at a hospital in Aligarh. The Government must ensure that the women of this country are safe. New laws need to be introduced and a strict and swift justice system should be put in place.


Khushbu Ved
Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

File ITR even for zero income

The benefits of filing taxes are many apart from the fact that we should be responsible citizens of the country



LIONEL CHARLES

Given the havoc that the Coronavirus pandemic has played on the economy of the country and personal incomes of people, the Government has extended the Income Tax Return (ITR) filing deadline for the financial year (FY) 2019-20 to November 30. However, not many people are aware that they may be liable to file their ITR this time around even if their income was below the taxable limit in FY 2019-20. Though this may make people question the intention of the Government in the face of the hardships being faced by them due to salary cuts and lay-offs, but this has been done in a bid to catch tax evaders. In a bind because of the crumbling global and Indian economy even before the outbreak proved to be the last straw that broke the camel's back, the Government last year introduced certain criteria from FY20 that make individuals liable to file ITR. The whole idea behind enhancing the return filing criteria is to catch unscrupulous taxpayers where there is a mismatch between the declared income and the expenses incurred by the assessee.

Even though most people tend to believe that filing an ITR is relevant for assesseees with income above the tax slab, it has multi-layered importance, irrespective of whether the income is above or below the taxable limit or whether there's a tax liability or not. Significantly, if the income is below the taxable limit or is "zero" the return is called "nil" return. But it acts as proof of funds accumulated in bank accounts or investments because, even if a person is earning an income below the taxable limit, over the years they create a corpus. In case there is any scrutiny after a few years, it becomes a tiring and lengthy process to prove the source of earnings, without an ITR, which is a legally-accepted proof of income.

Plus, under the seventh proviso to Section 139(1) of the Income-tax Act, 1961, even if the income is below the exempted limit, an assessee will have to file an ITR if they paid an electricity bill of ₹1 lakh or above during the year; deposited ₹1 crore or more in one or more current accounts and incurred an expenditure of ₹2 lakh or more for travel to a foreign country. An individual travelling or planning to travel abroad requires a legal proof of earning. For salaried people, the employer certificate serves as proof. However, for individuals who are self-employed, the ITR can serve the purpose.

In cases where the assessee incurs capital losses during the financial year, the Income Tax Act allows him/her to carry it forward for eight consecutive years to set it off against any future gains. However, to keep track of the losses, it is mandatory to file the return before the due date even if the ITR is a loss return. Without this the losses of the year cannot be carried forward. So, even if there is no income to show, the Income-Tax Department lays it down that you declare the capital losses in your return before the due date.

In case a person has paid taxes over and above what stands payable, considering all the deductions and exemptions allowed, the assessee becomes entitled to a refund from the I-T Department. However, to get this refund, filing an ITR is mandatory. Salaried people usually believe that filing ITR isn't required because the tax on their income has already been deducted. However, it is possible that the tax deducted and deposited as per Form 16 may be in excess of what should be cut. The employer might not have taken into consideration the actual tax-saving investments, insurances or actual house rent. In that case, filing the ITR helps to claim a refund.

Although, the Motor Vehicles Act does not make it compulsory to give the ITR while arriving at a compensation in case of disability or accidental death, the ITR is needed in case of self-employed people to establish the income of the person and arrive at the compensation amount.

Also, when a person is applying for loans, be it for a house, car or a personal loan, one of the mandatory documents required to be submitted to the loaning entity include the ITR for the last two-three years as proof of income. This is because ITR helps the lender determine the person's income, payment obligations and loan repayment capacity. Plus when an individual intends to buy a high life cover, it is common for the insurance company to ask for proof of income. This is primarily done to assess the value of the cover amount that can be allowed to the person. The proof of income could be the salary slip, bank statement or the ITR of the past three-consecutive assessment years. So, for cases where the person doesn't receive a salary slip or has monthly income disbursed from different groups, ITR serves as the only solid proof of income.

Then there are people who have very small incomes from sources like dividends, bank interest, family pension or tax-free earnings like agricultural income or interest on tax-free bonds. For these people, even though the proceeds are below the taxable limit, filing an ITR serves as proof of income that can be of multi-dimensional use subsequently. The benefits of filing taxes are many apart from the fact that we should be responsible citizens of the country.

(The writer is CEO, IndiaFilings)

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

PROVE IT (CORRUPTION) AND I'LL RETIRE FROM POLITICS. OTHERWISE, YOU RESIGN. SHOULD I ACCEPT WHATEVER YOU SAY OR READ HERE?
—KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER
BS YEDIYURAPPA



GRAFT ALLEGATIONS SHOULD BE PROBED BY A SITTING SUPREME COURT JUDGE OR A SIT. IF THE CHARGES ARE PROVEN WRONG, I WILL RESIGN FROM MY POST.
—KARNATAKA LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
SIDDARAMAIAH

A mixed bag

The labour law reforms are being bandied about as the most crucial second generation amendments that will make it easier to do business but must not compromise workers



UTTAM GUPTA

The Narendra Modi Government recently passed three Bills on labour reforms enshrined in three labour codes, namely The Industrial Relations Code, 2020, The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and The Code on Social Security, 2020. Along with The Code on Wages, 2019, passed by the Parliament last year, these four labour law reforms are being bandied about as the most crucial second generation amendments that will make it easier to do business, improve the competitiveness of the Indian industry, make it a manufacturing hub and pursue the "Make in India" agenda successfully. Even as the landscape of these legislations is vast, there are four areas which will have far-reaching implications for the way the Centre and the States will be regulating businesses and ensuring the welfare of workers. These include (I) consolidation (call it merger) of existing 29 Central Labour Acts into four codes; (II) increase in the threshold for retrenchment, closure or lay-off for a firm (without Government permission) from existing 100 to 300 workers; (III) giving greater flexibility to the States in enacting legislation and (IV) providing for universal social security for workers. At the outset, let us recognise that labour is on the Concurrent List of the Constitution; therefore, both the Union Government and the States have the power to legislate on the subject. Hitherto, there were 29 Central Labour Acts besides 200 State-enacted laws and amendments. This meant that a company was required to take a number of licences, registrations, permissions, renewals and file numerous returns periodically under different Acts. For instance, it had to file one annual return each under the Payment of Wages Act (1936), the Minimum Wages Act (1948) and the Payment of Bonus Act (1965).

Shockingly, even a MSME (micro, small and medium enterprise) is required to maintain at least 10 different formats of wage registers, four formats of accident registers and four of muster rolls under different Acts. The regulations at the State level are even more complex. Each State enjoys the right to formulate specific rules with respect to applicability thresholds, forms, formats, calculations, dates, frequency of submissions, filing types (paper-based vs. digital) and so on. This results in different due dates, multiplicity of forms and formats, duplication in record-keeping requirements, redundancies, complex procedures, ambiguous interpretations and so on. As a result, companies which operate in several States face a nightmare.

Consolidation of the extant 29 laws into four codes should help firms in getting rid off this nightmare. They can look forward to a significant reduction in the number of licences, registrations, renewals, returns and registrations earlier required under different Acts. As a result, the compliance burden will go down. For instance, under The Code on Wages, 2019, a firm needs to file a single annual return against three different annual returns earlier. Correspondingly, at the State level too, businesses will be unshackled.

As regards (II), under the extant law, employers of industrial establishments such as mines, factories, plantations and so on, with at least 100 workers, were required to take prior permission of the Central or the State Governments before retrenchment or closure of workers. Together with a myriad of regulations and compliances, which increase in proportion to the scale of operations, this was a major impediment in the way of firms growing in size and creating more jobs. It also takes away the flexibility of firms to adjust their labour deployment in sync with changing demand conditions. It affects their ability to stay afloat in a competitive environ-

ment especially when the economy is in a downward phase. It also prompts them to hire contract workers, which is not a good sign especially for their social security. This has seriously impacted formalisation of the economy. Out of about 63 million enterprises, only one million or 1.5 per cent are in the formal sector.

This preponderance of the so-called unorganised informal economy (it accounts for roughly 50 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and 80-90 per cent of the workforce) is the inevitable outcome of imposing such restrictions.

The increase in threshold under The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 should come as a big relief, as firms having up to 300 workers will get the much-needed flexibility to adjust to the changing business environment. But what is the sanctity of fixing the threshold at 300? Why should enterprises employing workers in excess of this be subjected to approval?

In the contemporary economic milieu, wherein the ability of firms to compete depends largely on the scale of operations (even start-ups in a matter of few years get into the position of giving jobs to thousands of workers), imposition of such arbitrary thresholds viz. 100 or 300 or even higher — a legacy of the socialist era — is totally out of place. This needs to be done away with.

The Code provides for "fixed-term employment" through contract workers on a pan-India basis. Currently, companies hire contract workers through contractors. With the introduction of fixed-term employment, they will be able to hire workers directly under a fixed-term contract, with the flexibility to adjust its tenure based on the seasonality of industry. These workers will be treated on a par with regular workers. It will be a win-win for both the companies and those aspiring for jobs.

The Code does not take away the workers' right to go on strike. However, it has been made mandatory to give 14 days' notice for giving time to sort out differences through harmonious discussion during this period. Doing away with multiplicity of unions and introduction of



the concept of a "negotiating union" is a welcome move. Coming to (III), under the present law, States have limited powers to exempt factories from labour laws. For instance, The Factories Act, 1948 allowed exemption from its provisions in cases of public emergency only for a period of three months. For making changes or giving exemptions from the law for longer duration, they had to approach the Central Government. Now, the Union Government has given a lot of flexibility to States while implementing these Codes. For instance, The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 empowers the States to exempt new factories from any of the provisions of the new law for more economic activities and employment opportunities. No timeline for giving exemption to factories is prescribed as against three months at present. It also exempts existing establishments from any of the provisions of the new Code in case of an emergency provided that certain conditions are fulfilled.

Under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, States can allow easier retrenchment, or closure norms for more firms through a notification, without the need to seek the Centre's approval. For instance, unlike in the past when they could increase the threshold only after seeking the approval of the President and then getting it passed by the legislature (16 States had hiked the threshold to 300 workers following this lengthy procedure only), now a State can do it by issuing an executive order.

The State can also exempt new establishments from "any or all provisions" of the law dealing with industrial disputes, retrenchment and trade unions "unconditionally" for a specific period of time as it thinks fit. This can be done in "public interest."

Though, prompted by the dire need to press the accelerator for industrialisation at a fast pace, these provisions may have given too much discretionary power to State bureaucrats. They need to use these judiciously and while granting exemptions, they should ensure that workers' interests are not compromised.

As regards (IV), The Code on Social Security, 2020 provides for universal social security for workers by expanding the ambit of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and Employees' State Corporation of India (ESCI) and setting up of a social security fund to cover around 400 million unorganised sector workers. However, some clauses are a bit restrictive. For instance, only sites with 10 or more building and other construction workers are covered. Likewise, for Provident Fund, only establishments with 20 or more workers are covered. This will result in exclusion of millions of MSMEs.

Worryingly, the Code does not stress on social security as a right and does not make any reference to its provision as stipulated by the Constitution of the country. Plus, it does not lay down a clear date for enforcement. This will leave workers vulnerable without social protection. It is vital that social security protection be made universal for the entire nation's workforce. However, the Code makes whimsical categorisations that will deprive millions of working poor of their rights.


While the Code defines multiple categories, most are obscure and have not been revised to determine whether a worker belongs to the organised or unorganised sector. For instance, platform and gig workers are not defined as part of the unorganised workforce, even though lakhs of people are employed as such. Similarly, the word "establishment" in the Code should have been altered to make sure that all workers come under the ambit of social security protection.


To sum up, the enactment of the four Codes is a big leap forward in labour reforms but there still needs to be some more thought put into the protection of workers. As for the outcome, a lot will depend on how the States respond as they are the ones who have to implement, frame and notify the rules and do the follow up. If, they don't and keep the regulations complex, the intended benefits won't percolate down to the last worker. Both the Centre and States have to work towards this.

(The writer is a policy analyst)

Ginsburg's long fight for gender parity will be remembered

Justice Ginsburg's death has caused a political storm in the US. President Trump plans to fill her seat with a loyal, woman conservative. That will be a tragedy






ADITYA MANUBARLAL

HANNAH GHULAM

The tenure of former US President Bill Clinton can best be described as tumultuous. The jury is out regarding many of his decisions except one: The nomination of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as an Associate Justice of the US Supreme Court in 1993. Both, supporters as well as detractors, of Justice Ginsburg do converge on the fact that her tenure was one of the most eventful ones in the Supreme Court in the past 50 years. Justice Ginsburg passed away on September 18, after close to three glorious decades in the US top court. Later dubbed the



Union, and co-founded its Women's Rights Project. Within two years she had taken part in more than 300 gender-related cases. One of her most iconic wins at the Supreme Court was *Frontiero v Richardson* (1973), which decided that compensation and other service benefits cannot be given differently on the basis of gender alone. The case particularly challenged the service rules of the US Air Force prohibiting husbands of women officers from being listed as dependents for the purposes of housing and other benefits. This was based on the assumption that men are the family bread-winners and women the caretakers. Of the total six cases argued in the apex court by Justice

Ginsburg, she won an astonishing five, setting the foundation for a revolution in gender justice-oriented jurisprudence, which has subsequently been emulated across the world.

In her attempts to persuade an all-male Supreme Court, Ginsburg focussed on male applicants. This strategic litigation allowed her to confront the justices with the harmful effects of gender discrimination on men such as themselves. Winning their empathy in this manner, she managed to shake the foundations of the sexist system to the advantage of both men and women.

Ginsburg also landed several teaching positions and became the first woman tenure lecturer at Columbia University. Subsequently, she functioned as a surprisingly moderate federal judge. Her appointment as a Supreme Court Justice was, therefore, met with a great deal of suspicion from feminist activists, who feared that she would not be the most passionate advocate for women's rights.

Justice Ginsburg proved them

wrong. Her years at the apex court were characterised by her staunch belief in gender equality and her support for LGBTQIA+ and minority rights. She was the author of the majority opinion in *US vs Virginia*, wherein the court struck down as discriminatory the practice of male-only admissions in the Virginia Military Academy. This judgment revolutionised the US Constitution's "equal protection of laws" clause (14th Amendment) by adding equality on the basis of gender to the traditional interpretation of equality on the basis of race. Referring to the apex court's decision in *Brown vs Education Board of Topeka*, Ginsburg stated that if racially segregated schools were declared unconstitutional, then so should separate military academies for women for they would not impart the same level of military training as the male ones. Justice Ginsburg's verdict in the *Virginia Military* case in particular served to be a great inspiration behind the Indian Army permitting the commissioning of women officers.

Faced with a conservative-leaning Supreme Court, Justice Ginsburg often had to turn to dissenting opinions as well. She famously disagreed with the majority's view in *Bush vs Gore* that the manual vote recount for the presidential election ordered by the Florida Supreme Court was unconstitutional. In *Shelby County vs Holder*, the majority held the federal pre-clearance for changes in the voting laws of States with a history of racial discrimination to be unconstitutional. Justice Ginsburg vehemently protested, stating that this pre-clearance effectively protected against racial voting discrimination and that the judgment resembled "throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet." Some of her other influential dissents dealt with issues such as gender workplace discrimination and reproductive health.

Justice Ginsburg's death has caused a political storm in the US. President Trump plans to fill Ginsburg's seat as soon as possible by replacing her with a woman, loyal and conservative can-

didate. This would present the conservatives with a "super majority" in the apex court. Democrats met this news with a wave of protests and called to postpone any nomination until after the presidential election in November. Such a super majority would put the right to abortion, among others, on a shaky pedestal. A part of Ginsburg's legacy in the fight for gender equality could, therefore, be at serious risk of being erased. This is a troublesome testimony that the fight against discrimination in the US has not been won yet, but is on the contrary facing a threat of regression. Regardless, it goes without doubt that Justice Ginsburg's was one of the most influential figures in the fight for women's rights and liberal thought in the US. Her highly respected, brilliant mind will be missed in these times of growing insecurity.

(Manubarlal is the incumbent Global Peace Ambassador to India. Ghulam obtained a LL.M with a specialisation in human rights from Ghent University, Belgium. Both are LL.M candidates at the University of Cambridge)

SHORT READS



SBI rolls out festive offers for retail customers

Mumbai: With the upcoming festive season, the country's largest lender State Bank of India Monday announced a slew of festive offers for its retail borrowers including 100 per cent waiver of processing fee for all customers applying for car, gold, and personal loans through Yono. Yono (You Only Need One App) is the mobile banking app of the lender. The bank has also completely waived processing fees on home loans for home buyers in approved projects. It is giving concess sions up to 10 basis points (bps) on the interest rate for the customers based on their credit score and home loan amount, a release said. Additionally, homebuyers can avail 5 bps interest concession if they apply through Yono.



Gulf Oil inks pact with South Korea's S-Oil Corporation

New Delhi: Gulf Oil Lubricants India on Monday said it has entered into a long-term strategic partnership with South Korea's S-Oil Corporation. As per the deal, the company will exclusively manufacture and market S-Oil's entire range of lubricants under the brand - S-Oil Seven - for the Indian market, Gulf Oil Lubricants India said in a statement. It is the first time ever that S-Oil lubricant product will be manufactured outside of South Korea, it added. "Our relation ship with S-Oil gets even stronger with this opportunity as we will work together to launch new products and grow our market shares in India across segments, bringing in a range of technologically advanced products for Indian consumers looking for value-creating solutions," Gulf Oil MD and CEO Ravi Chawla said in a statement.



Ford India launches 'doorstep service' facility

New Delhi: Ford India on Monday announced introduction of its 'doorstep service' facility, giving customers the flexibility of getting their Ford vehicle serviced at a place of their convenience. Through the service, customers can have vehicle serviced at home or office at no additional charge. This latest offering expands Ford's bouquet of consumer-focused initiatives launched under 'Dial-A-Ford', where all sales & service queries get addressed via the helpline, Ford India said. In the first phase, Ford said the doorstep service has been launched in Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Ghaziabad, Lucknow in north India, Bengaluru, Chennai, Cochin, Tiruvandrum and Hyderabad in south, Kolkata and Bhubaneswar in east and Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Aurangabad and Ahmedabad in west.

Digit Insurance sees topline crossing Rs 3k-cr

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Fairfax Financial-promoted online non-life company Digit Insurance expects to break even this fiscal on the back of robust growth across its key verticals despite the pandemic, a senior company official said.

Canadian NRI billionaire Prem Watsa's Fairfax Financial Holdings has pumped USD 140 million into the nearly three-year-old non-life insurer. Other investors of the Bengaluru-based firm, which began operations in December 2017, are A91 Partners, Faering Capital, and TVS Capital which together pumped in USD 84 million.

Kamesh Goyal, chairman of Digit Insurance, said the company had closed the second year of operations (FY20) with



a revenue of Rs 2,252 crore, up from Rs 1,205 crore in FY19, clipping at 87 per cent and expects to cross the Rs 3,000-crore revenue mark this fiscal.

The promoters have so far infused Rs 1,650 crore into the company. It does not need any additional growth capital this fiscal, Goyal said.

Further, premium sales have been growing at over 35 per cent so far this fiscal driven by an 87 per cent spike in motor insurance sales in August alone against the industry average of 1 per cent, he added.

"Month-on-month we are doing well. Since August, we have seen robust demand for

Premium sales have been growing at over 35 per cent so far this fiscal driven by an 87 per cent spike in motor insurance sales in August alone against the industry average of 1 per cent

our flagship motor and health policies. If this sales trend continues, I am hopeful of breaking even this financial year with a small profit. In the first full year of operations, we had a net loss of Rs 425 crore," Goyal told PTI.

His optimism comes from the continuous improvement in the key profitability metric - the combined ratio which has been steadily improving to 117 in FY20 from 124 in FY19.

His optimism also comes from faster growth as he

"expects 33-35 per cent growth in revenue this fiscal over FY20 to Rs 3,000 crore."

Last fiscal, 85 per cent of its revenue came from motor, which may come down to 70 per cent this fiscal as it is shifting focus to health from which Goyal expects to be 8-10 per cent of premium income this fiscal, up from 2 per cent last fiscal. From a market share perspective, in motor insurance, it has 2.6 per cent as of Q1 this fiscal, up from 1.3 per cent in FY19, taking its overall market

share to 1.54 per cent for the quarter to June 2020.

Asked about the concentration risks from heavy dependence on motor segment, he said balancing portfolio is not a priority now as the focus is topline growth. Fire constitutes 10 per cent of revenue growth. Describing the pandemic as a watershed event for the insurance industry, Goyal said even before the virus hit the country, Digit was the first to launch policy for the pandemic on February 27 through the sandbox platform.

He said the company has sold over 1.8 million pandemic policies with an assured sum of varying from Rs 25,000 to Rs 5 lakh and has so far received only 2,100 claims, half of which came in the past six weeks alone.



Lupin launches generic Fosaprepitant injection in US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Pharma major Lupin on Monday said it has launched generic Fosaprepitant injection, used to prevent nausea and vomiting associated with cancer chemotherapy in adults, in the American market. The company has launched Fosaprepitant for injection, 150 mg single-dose vial, having received an approval earlier for it from the USFDA, Lupin said in a filing to the BSE.

The product is a generic version of Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp's Emend for injection in the same strength, it added.

According to IQVIA MAT July 2020 data, Fosaprepitant for injection, 150 mg single-dose vial, had annual sales of approximately USD 136 million (about Rs 1,000 crore) in the US, Lupin said.

The product is indicated for adults in combination with other antiemetic agents for prevention of acute and delayed nausea and vomiting associated with initial and repeat courses of highly emetogenic cancer (HEC), including high-dose cisplatin and moderately emetogenic cancer chemotherapy (MEC), it added.

Shares of Lupin on Monday closed 0.79 per cent higher at Rs 1,005.70 per scrip on the BSE.

Sensex rallies 593 pts; auto stocks take charge

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex rallied 593 points on Monday, driven by intense buying in mainly financial and auto stocks amid strong cues from global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex settled 592.97 points or 1.59 per cent higher at 37,981.63, while the NSE Nifty surged 177.30 points or 1.60 per cent to 11,227.55. In the Sensex pack, IndusInd Bank was the top gainer, soaring around 8 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance, Axis Bank, Power Grid, ONGC, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma and M&M.

On the other hand, HUL, Infosys and Nestle ended in the red. "Key Indices ended high as bulls led the charge backed by financials and well

supported by auto and pharma stocks," said S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities. According to traders, domestic equities traded on a positive note tracking strong buying sentiment in global equities ahead of the first presidential debate.

Global investors are eyeing the first US presidential debate, set for Tuesday, between US President Donald Trump and Democratic candidate Joe Biden. It could influence the course of US policies and is likely to affect share prices across the world, analysts said. Bourses in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended on a positive note, while Shanghai was in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe were trading with strong gains in early deals.

Gautam Adani debunks GDP rhetoric

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani has debunked the narrow fixation on GDP numbers, saying fundamentals are intact and India will be the second-largest economy by 2050 and has an edge over global peers in terms of business opportunities.

Speaking at the JP Morgan India Summit - Future in Focus, the Adani Group chairman said the AatmaNirbhar Bharat programme will be a game-changer.

"I will state without any hesitation - that - in my view - over the next three decades, India is the world's greatest business opportunity," he said.

India's geostrategic position and massive market size give it an edge over its global peers amid the fundamental political realignment of nations taking shape, he said adding opportunities for India are likely to



Gautam Adani

accelerate on the other side of the pandemic.

"For the sake of the fans of the GDP metric, let's look at some statistics. The global GDP in 1990 was USD 38 trillion. Today, 30 years later, this number is USD 90 trillion. Projecting for another 30 years, in 2050 the global GDP is expected to be about USD 170 trillion with India becoming the second-largest economy in the world," he said.

The Indian economy shrank by a record 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter because of

Economy shrank by a record 23.9 per cent in the April-June because of the pandemic

the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown that followed. The economy is projected to contract for the first time in four decades, in the full year to March 2021.

But Adani said short-term setbacks due to a global crisis cannot be used to write off the country as its fundamentals remain intact.

"The current focus on standardised GDP predictions as against truly understanding what a nation could look like over a decade has unfortunately become one of the primary elements for measuring the health of an economy. In my

Sebi slaps Rs 20 lakh fine on Bonanza Portfolio

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has slapped a penalty of Rs 20 lakh on stock broker Bonanza Portfolio Ltd for misusing clients' funds and securities, among other issues.

The regulator carried out a multi-theme inspection of books of accounts of Bonanza Portfolio (noticee) during May-July 2018 and found that the broker misutilised client funds. It was observed that the misutilisation of the clients' funds by Bonanza (broker) is in the range of Rs 9.6 crore to



Rs 45 crore from December 2017 to January 2018, and the average misutilisation amounted to Rs 24.91 crore.

The inspection report has shown a mismatch between the clients' funds available

with the noticee and the total credit balance of clients, indicating that funds of the clients with credit balance were being used for meeting obligations of clients with debit balance which is not permissible under the Sebi's guidelines.

Further, it was revealed that the broker had not segregated securities of clients from own and other clients' securities, and securities of the clients have been used for purposes other than that for respective clients, thereby violating the provisions of Securities Contracts Regulation Act norms.

Delhi NCR among top 10 global trips market

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ride hailing platform Uber on Monday said Delhi NCR ranked amongst its top 10 markets globally based on the number of trips taken in the month of September.

Delhi is the only Indian city to have made it to the top 10, highlighting its strategic importance in Uber's global portfolio, with residents taking more than one million rides each week, a statement said.

"As Delhi residents resume travel after the lengthy lockdown, Uber data reveals that cars have emerged as the most



preferred mode of commuting, followed closely by low cost products such as Auto and Moto," it added. There has been an increase in longer distance trips, with busiest hours weekly being 8 am - 10 am. Also, Mondays and Fridays are the busiest days of the week for drivers, the statement said.

NCLAT may reconsider its bench ruling on debt acknowledgement for insolvency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Appellate tribunal NCLAT may reconsider its own judgement passed by a five-member bench on the acceptability of debt entered in the balance sheet of a company for deciding the time frame for initiating insolvency proceedings.

The issue pertains to whether entries in the balance sheet can be treated as an acknowledgement of debt for the purpose of calculating the three-year period limitation in terms of applicability of Section 18 of the Limitation Act, 1963. Limitation Act is

also applicable for proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

In a rare instance, a three-member bench of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) last week said that the five-member bench's judgement, which was passed in March this year was 'contrary to settled law'.

The three-member bench observed that "judgment in V Padmakumar's case requires reconsideration" as a consistent view of the Supreme Court and High Courts of Allahabad, Calcutta, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala and Telangana is that



the entries in the balance sheet of the company be treated as an acknowledgement of debt for the purpose of Section 18 of the Limitation Act.

"The majority view in V Padmakumar's case is just con-

trary to settled law," it said and directed the registrar to place the "attached reference along with V Padmakumar's case before the Acting Chairperson for constituting appropriate bench".

As per Section 18, a fresh period of limitation shall be computed from the time when the acknowledgement was signed before the expiration of the prescribed period.

It implies that any insolvency plea filed over defaults that occurred over three years prior to the date of filing of the application are barred under Section 137 of the IBC.

Festive season: Amazon scales up delivery network

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amazon India on Monday said it has significantly augmented its delivery network ahead of the festive season by setting up additional delivery stations and scaling up its partnership with kirana stores.

The move, which will also help generate employment opportunities, will enable faster and more efficient delivery of packages during the festive season that sees a major spike in orders.

Amazon India Director Prakash Rochlani said the company has added close to 200 delivery stations, including those operated by delivery service partners across the country, including in many remote northeastern towns such as

Champhai, Kolasib, Lumding and Mokokchung.

Amazon India has close to 250 Amazon-operated and more than 1,500 partner delivery stations run by more than 280 entrepreneurs across the country to enable deliveries across the country.

"We have also strengthened our flagship 'I Have Space' (IHS) program, now comprising more than 28,000 neighbourhood kirana stores in close to 350 cities. Also, the reach of Amazon Flex program has nearly doubled in the last four months to now serve 65 cities," he added.

Under the IHS initiative, Amazon India partners with local store owners to deliver products to customers within a 2-4 kilometre radius of their

Amazon India has close to 250 Amazon-operated and more than 1,500 partner delivery stations



store, allowing them to supplement their regular income and generate more footfalls in their stores. Amazon Flex allows delivery partners to work as per their own schedule and earn supplemental income by delivering Amazon packages.

Rochlani said Amazon India has also introduced 'society pickup points', a delivery format that caters to high-densi-

ty residential societies in Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

This program offers both virtual pickup points and physical locations within housing complexes, either of which can be selected by customers during checkout, and deliveries are consolidated on specific days of the week for convenience of customers.

"Our goal with all these efforts is to ensure customers across the country are able to get what they desire this festive season from the comfort of their home, while prioritising the safety of both our customers and delivery partners," he said. He added that Amazon India has implemented a series of preventive health measures for employees, associates and partners at its sites such as adherence to social distancing norms, use of face covering, and daily temperature screenings among others. E-commerce companies see a large chunk of their business coming in during the festive sales and they make significant investments ahead of time to ramp up their capacity to be able to handle the spike in orders.

Probe against dumping of pharma raw material

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has initiated a probe into alleged dumping of a pharma raw material, Ceftriaxone Sodium Sterile, from China, following complaints by domestic manufacturers.

Nectar Life Sciences and Sterile India have filed an application before the Commerce Ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) seeking initiation of the probe.

According to a DGTR notification, the applicants have contended that material injury is being caused to the domes-



tic industry due to dumped imports from China. They requested imposition of anti-dumping duty on the import. Ceftriaxone Sodium Sterile is an active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) or raw material used for formulation for treating disease like lower respiratory tract infection, skin infection, and intra-abdominal infection.



MPC meeting rescheduled, new dates to be out shortly

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday decided to reschedule this week's meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) and said that the new dates will be announced shortly.

The central bank, however, did not give any reason for rescheduling the meet.

The interest-setting panel was scheduled to meet for three-days beginning Tuesday for RBI's bi-monthly monetary policy review.

"The meeting of the MPC during September 29, 30 and October 1, 2020 as announced... is being rescheduled. The dates of the MPC's meeting will be announced shortly," RBI said in a press release.

RBI is awaiting the government's decision on new external members to the committee.

As per the RBI Act, external members of MPC have a tenure of four years. The MPC came into existence in October 2016.

INDIAN ANIMATION is steadily creating its own niche



With demand for Indian animated content growing among global audiences, especially with children who are a significant consumer group for animations like cartoon shows, a home-grown animation brand Cosmos Maya, the creator of popular children's show *Motu Patlu*, shares that it is an exciting time to be in the animation business.

The animation studio and Arbaaz Khan Productions have recently come together to adapt the blockbuster franchise *Dabangg* into an animated series. This news comes right in line with the tenth anniversary celebration of the film franchise that introduced the character of Chulbul *Robin Hood* Pandey for the first time in 2010. The show will feature animated avatars of all of the franchise's characters. Targeted at kids and family audiences, Season 1 will be launching in summer 2021.

Anish Mehta, the CEO of Cosmos Maya — whose content is airing or streaming in over 150 countries on major OTT or TV plat-

forms in 18 languages, speaks about Indian animation and how promising its future is, globally. **Excerpts:**

Tell us about the making of some of your most popular IPs.

Our idea behind most of our content output is to ensure familiarity with novelty. Implementing insights, we derive from everyday familial and social life that are relevant for kids in a package that adapts to changing sensibilities and requirements of our young audience. For example, naughtiness and clumsy behaviour is something which many kids expect to be reprimanded for and is often the subject of most kids' animation, so *Motu Patlu*, showing on Nick and Voot Kids, subverted the trope by providing a set of adults indulging in such behaviour instead. *Selfie with Bajrangji* takes the fantastical power of invisibility and shape-shifting and provides the lead character a friend in Bajrangji, a junior version of a revered god who is known for such powers. We largely credit our business spread and market share of over 60 percent to this core philosophy. We are always looking out for arenas where we can be first innovators, such as the *Dabangg* animated series coming out on Disney+ Hotstar soon, which will be one of our first projects and a step for the Indian animation business towards working with established Bollywood IPs and provide them a creative and lucrative extension.

How exciting is it to be in the animation business right now? How has it picked up over the years?

Our company is in the remarkable position where we have only witnessed but been a significant catalyst to the growth of the animation and post-production industry in India. We have seen the transition of this market from a solely outsourcing-based service provider sub to and IP-rich industry. Additionally, more and more media outlets and business entities have come to realise that this medium helps them accomplish greater storytelling and advertising potential, as it works perfectly for the zaniest of narratives and visual mandates. Animation is simply fun, being one of the first visual interfaces a child has for the world, and it is a sector that has proved resilient in the

face of global calamities, which reflects in the performance of the industry despite an entire locational shift in the workspace of people involved. The projected growth of the sector is expected to reach almost \$26 billion in FY21, and we strive to make the most of it.

Children are huge consumers of animated content. How do you create content around them?

We have a think tank comprising of people from the creative, business, sales and executive departments and concept artists, who come together to discuss and derive actionable insights from everyday life and how kids are adapting with the times. How life reflects in their worldview and behaviour, and what kind of ideals their parents as the content moderators want to inculcate in them. Our show *Titoo* on Pogo takes the story of an everyday boy akin to *Dennis the Menace*, and delivering it in a tone and language relevant to kids today in a slice-of-life narrative. *Bapu* and *Gadget Guru Ganesha* take a similar setup as *Selfie with Bajrangji* to provide known and respected figures as best friends/role models to the lead characters and helping them navigate through, discussing relevant topics such as social responsibility in a non-pedagogical manner.

Please tell us about animation as an art form.

Two things render animation its artistic status — that it adapts to nearly every creative requirement that a content creator may have of its narrative, and that it's limited only by their imagination. Animation lends itself to the most radically imaginative narratives and visual detail and nearly every genre of storytelling in a manner that is adaptive, conducive and cost-effective.

What's the global appeal of Indian animated content as of now?

Our show *Eena Meena Deeka* can be called to the stand to answer this. A non-dialogue show about three chickens and their battle of wits with a hungry fox, is

THE INDIAN INDUSTRY IS MOVING FAST TO MAKE A FOOTHOLD IN THE LICENCING AND MERCHANDISING MARKET WHICH IS THE LARGEST PROFIT DRIVER FOR THE GLOBAL ANIMATION INDUSTRY

one of our best performing shows in over 80 countries, and is one of the most highly viewed shows in Europe and Latin America. *Vir: The Robot Boy* has nearly 11 billion views globally on our YouTube multi-channel brand WowKidz. From long-format to short-format content, Indian animation is catering to audiences across the world and is steadily creating its own niche. If the demand for Indian animation is going anywhere, it's up.

Some new trends you may be observing in the industry or consumer group?

Thanks to the near simultaneous growth of video-sharing websites, OTT streaming and e-commerce, the issue of piracy is very nearly taken off, with financial losses on that front reducing significantly. Moreover the Indian industry is moving fast to make a foothold in the licensing and merchandising market which is the largest profit driver for the global animation industry. Cosmos-Maya is taking active steps in that direction as well, with advertising-funded modules being discussed with brands. Animation is being explored in detail as an effective communication touch point for business consumers.

The big power shift for actress Pooja Kumar

Best known for her work in the film *Vishwaroopam* and its sequel opposite actor Kamal Haasan, Indian-American actress Pooja Kumar is a recent addition to the OTT platform. Back to showbiz with *Forbidden Love*, the actress talks to *The Pioneer* about her debut on OTT, her plans to foray into the 'behind the camera' business, the attitude of gratitude amid the pandemic, and more

OTT platforms have convinced many actors to be a part of their web series/anthologies ensuring clout of screens. The lockdown has been good for the film industry — no expensive locale shoots, no big travel, and no exorbitant hotel bills. Web series as such is striking a golden deal in itself with these digital platforms becoming a boon for medium and small-budget filmmakers, as well as talent.

Pooja Kumar, an Indian-American actress known for her work in films like *Vishwaroopam* and *Vishwaroopam 2* opposite actor Kamal Haasan, is a recent addition to the OTT panel announcing a huge slate anthology drama acquired by Zee5, the video streaming platform owned by Zee. Gearing up for her OTT debut in the series titled *Forbidden Love*, Pooja Kumar is seen in a romantic thriller directed by an amalgamation of four blockbuster directors.

The web show revolves around an impressive love story in which the society wishes to pull the curtains down. Pooja Kumar's pivotal character as Anamika is seeking that incomplete love from her husband which she never got in her ten years of nuptials. She finally decides to divert her quality time into something productive and goes on to work in a cafe nearby, taking her character through a turmoil of emotions thereon. Struggling between her spouse's attention and her own independence, actress Pooja depicts the various vulnerabilities that come as an unwanted present when a woman turns from a meek housewife into a fierce, independent lady.

The show also features celeb sets like Harsha Chayya, Ali Fazal, Omkar Kapoor, Patralekha, and Aditya Seal. It's been an unusual time for the film industries across India, the movie-obsessed have had to go without the trips to their nearby theatres to watch big-ticket cinema because of the

Coronavirus pandemic. But there's been some relief for families cooped up indoors as streaming platforms stepped up to fill the void.

Pooja Kumar is willing to embrace roles on originals by OTT platforms however misses that tad bit feeling of seeing herself on big screens. "The most exciting part to be working for an OTT platform for me is the ideology that makes art an endless possibility of exploring diverse content. You can do a forty-minute film and still be able to showcase a splendid storyline that reaches directly to your audience's heart yet being a movie-buff I still prefer the communal experience of watching movies in a big cinema hall," shares the actress.

One thing the lockdown managed to do for netizens is help them realise the value of gratitude more than ever and it wasn't any different for this girl of *Uttama Villain* fame — "I am recognising all the little good things in life that we didn't pay

attention to. We are lucky enough that we are around our near and dear ones. Often we are caught in our own myopic orbits that keep us on a spin without making us pause to value small things. We can still get away with materialism while also focussing on spreading cheer, happiness, and gratitude," adds Pooja with immense delight.

Speaking about her things-to-do list as soon as this deadly pandemic is over, she's placing her bets on the entertainment sector, more prominently behind the camera. The increased visibility being provided by OTT platforms is a boost to the cast, thanks to the influx of original content, many of them take this new intervention as an opportunity for creative novelty.



NUTRITION start-up for a healthy choice

You are always conscious of eating habits that are always in trend irrespective of being a gym freak or otherwise! But focussed immunity building habits have pushed Upasana Kamineni Konidela, Managing Director of recently launched platform URLife.co.in, to inspire people to live life to the fullest by harnessing the power of technology and providing access to authentic information from qualified experts to promote healthy lifestyle choices.

With healthcare consumerism reaching its climactic state, people have taken it upon themselves to keep track of their nutritional consumption, the number of calories they take in, the kind of food they eat along with the frequency, etc. Helping them in the journey of becoming healthier, the famous fitness guru is pleased to announce her collaboration with the self-made superstar Samantha Akkineni as a guest editor. "The URLife.co.in platform has been created keeping in mind a few specific philoso-

phies that I deeply believe in — sustainable well-being, holistic health, and mental and emotional harmony. Samantha is someone who embodies many of the beliefs that we do. She encourages sustainability through her organic farming initiatives, embraces a vegan lifestyle, and is passionate about health and fitness. We welcome her expertise and look forward to sharing her curated content with our readers, which will focus on the body, the mind, nutrition, and healing," says Upasana.

URLife's team of certified well-being professionals, fitness experts, and holistic nutritionists provide readers with first-hand access to trending health tips, nutrition expert videos, diet plans, lifestyle hacks, consultations, healthy recipes, fun DIY's, and personalized services that equip readers to live a fit and wholesome life within their desired budget. Many health enthusiasts are looking forward to this splendid collaboration with different facets coming together to create a healthier and happier surrounding!

Joaquin Phoenix, Rooney Mara welcome baby boy River

Oscar winner Joaquin Phoenix and his fiancée, actor Rooney Mara, have become parents to a baby boy, their first child together.

The couple has named their son after Phoenix's late older brother, actor River Phoenix, who died in 1993 at the age of 23 of a drug overdose.

According to US magazine, the news was shared by Russian filmmaker Victor Kossakovsky during a Q&A at the 2020 Zurich Film Festival on Sunday, post the screening of his documentary Gunda , executive produced by Phoenix.

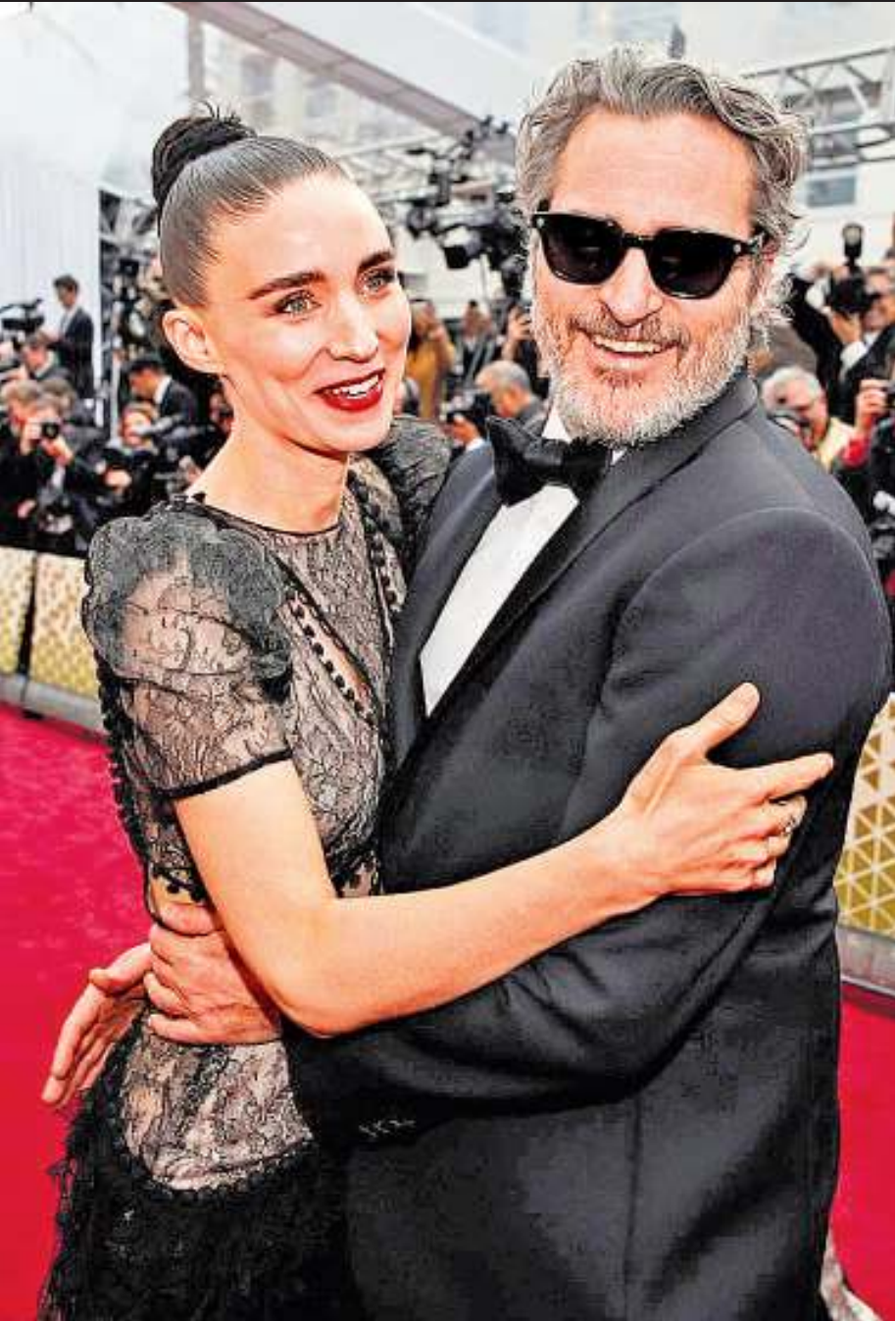
He just got a baby, by the way, his name was a beautiful son called River, so he cannot promote it now, Kossakovsky said when quizzed about the Joker star.

It was confirmed in May that Mara, 35, and Phoenix, 45, are expecting their first child together.

The couple met in 2016 on the sets of *Mary Magdalene*, in which Mara played the title role alongside Phoenix as Jesus.

They started dating soon after and made their red carpet debut at the closing ceremony of Cannes Film Festival 2017.

Months later, Phoenix confirmed in an interview that they were living together in the Hollywood Hills. The duo got engaged last year in July.



Sui Dhaaga maker Sharat Katariya: My characters come from personal experiences

The Varun Dhawan-Anushka Sharma starrer *Sui Dhaaga* director Sharat Katariya, opening up on his creative process, says the characters in his films come from his personal experiences.

The 2018 release *Sui Dhaaga* was Katariya's third directorial after *10ml Love* (2010) and *Dum Laga Ke Haisha* (2015). He also contributed as a writer in films like *Bheja Fry* (2007) and

Titli (2015).

Katariya, who also penned dialogues in *Fan* (2016) and *Befikre* (2016), has carved his niche for crafting critically acclaimed commercial entertainers that celebrate realism, as a writer and filmmaker.

"I was born in Delhi. The characters normally come from personal experiences of growing up. All these characters whether its Prem and Sandhya (*Dum Laga Ke Haisha*) or Mauji and Mamta (*Sui Dhaaga*) or

other characters, like their parents, their family, their neighbours, whatsoever you write or you are influenced from, are people who you come across," Katariya said.

"Most of these people in the films are the characters one has come across in life while growing up," he added.

His films always make a subtle social commentary. Asked if he tries to bring social change through his works, Katariya said, "When

you write you are not thinking about all these things. You write what you feel for, that's the primary thing. Anything that you feel for has a resonance to the social environment and it automatically reflects in the script."

"One doesn't start from there, one starts from an incident or something that inspires or moves you. That's where is the beginning," he added.

Citing the example of *Dum Laga Ke Haisha*,

Katariya says the film's genesis was seeing the character of a wife winning a championship.

"I was not thinking of social relevance or anything like that. I was thinking of a story, but when you are developing characters, a woman is overweight and a man is thin and it's a marriage which is not working, then automatically all the social conflicts and stigmas will automatically come into the story," he said.



Raj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar's ancestral homes to be bought by Pakistan govt

The provincial government in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has decided to purchase the ancestral houses of legendary Bollywood actors Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar to conserve the historic buildings which are in dilapidated condition and facing demolition threat.

The Department of Archaeology there has decided to allocate sufficient funds for purchasing the two buildings, which have been declared as the national heritage and lie in the heart of Peshawar city, an official said. An official letter has been sent to the Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar to determine the



cost of both the historic buildings, where the two greats of Indian cinema were born and raised in their early days before the partition, said Dr Abdus Samad Khan, the head of department of archaeology.

Raj Kapoor's ancestral home, known as Kapoor

Haveli, is situated in the fabled Qissa Khwani Bazar. It was built between 1918 and 1922 by the legendary actor's grandfather Dewan Basheswarnath Kapoor. Raj Kapoor and his uncle Trilok Kapoor were born in the building. It has been declared national heritage

by the provincial government.

Veteran actor Dilip Kumar's over 100-year-old ancestral house is also located in the same locality. The house is in shambles and was declared as national heritage in 2014 by the then Nawaz Sharif government.

Khan said the owners of the two buildings made many attempts in the past to demolish them for constructing commercial plazas in view of their prime location but all such moves were stopped as the archaeology department wanted to preserve them keeping in view their historic importance.

However, the owner of Kapoor Haveli, Ali Qadar, said that he did not want to

demolish the building and made many contacts with the archaeology department officials to protect and preserve this historic structure which is a national pride.

The owner has demanded Rs 200 crore from the KP government to sell it out to the government. In 2018, the Pakistan government decided to convert the Kapoor Haveli into a museum, heading to a request by Rishi Kapoor who died this year in Mumbai. However, the announcement to this effect could not be materialised despite a lapse of around two years.

There are around 1,800 historic structures in Peshawar which are over 300 years old.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

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

ACROSS

1 Someone who keeps pestering you

6 Became taller

7 Sent by post

9 To try a little piece of food to see if you like it

11 Stood (3,2)

12 A book of maps of countries

13 Start a tennis game with this

16 This covers your eye

18 Baby goats

19 Set free from captivity

DOWN

1 A frightening dream

2 Articles

3 Not able to feel anything

4 Part of a serial story

5 Female sheep

8 Feeling sad and fed up

10 A fishing boat

14 Train tracks

15 A worshipped statue

17 Up until now

SOLUTION

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

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

I have been hitting it well for the past one year. So I was just sticking to my routine and feeling confident. I am happy to win a few games

That was something else, wasn't it? What we have seen from Tewatia in the nets is what we saw in that Cottrell over

Five (sixes) in the over, that is amazing. I tried to hit the leg-spinner, but unfortunately I couldn't. So I had to hit other bowlers

The kind of cricket we are playing, the brand of cricket and the plans we are executing, we are quite happy with that



Devdutt Padikkal batting during Indian Premier League match between The Royal Challengers Bangalore and The Mumbai Indians held at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium

BCCI

RCB beat MI in Super-Over

PTI ■ DUBAI

Royal Challengers Bangalore defeated defending champions Mumbai Indians in the tenth game of 2020 IPL. Navdeep Saini helped RCB win a Super-Over thriller against Mumbai Indians after Ishan Kishan helped his side tie-up the scores. Notably, RCB have registered their second victory in the last nine matches and first since 2018 against the Mumbai-based franchise.

AB de Villiers turned the clock back with his magnificent hitting after Aaron Finch and Devdutt Padikkal's stroke-filled half-centuries took Royal Challengers Bangalore's to an imposing 201 for 3 against Mumbai Indians in an IPL game despite another failure from skipper Virat Kohli.

It was De Villiers, who used all his might during the death overs to smash his way to an unbeaten 55 off 24 balls, taking the score past 200-run mark. His innings had four

It was De Villiers, who used all his might during the death overs to smash his way to an unbeaten 55 off 24 balls, taking the score past 200-run mark

sixes and as many boundaries as the swift yet brutal assault of Jasprit Bumrah (0/42 in 4 overs) will be remembered for a long time.

Even James Pattinson (0/51 in 4 overs) received a lot of stick as two speed merchants accounted for 8 off the 10 sixes in the RCB innings. The last five overs produced 78 runs with Shivam Dube scoring 27 not out off 10 balls.

While Australia's white ball skipper Aaron Finch scored 52 off 35 balls to get his team off to a flying start, the extremely elegant Padikkal upped the ante in the later half with some delightful big hits, scoring 54 off 40 balls. The duo added 81 runs for the opening stand.

Padikkal's innings was studded with five boundaries and two sixes and a good stand of 62 runs for the third wicket with De Villiers, who then provided the final flourish as he has been doing for years now.

The tall upright Padikkal's second IPL half-ton will be remembered specially for two sixes off fast bowler James Pattinson. The first was when the left-hander rocked on the backfoot and punched it over mid-off and the next was a stand and deliver straight into the sight screen.

This was after Finch took on the MI attack in the Powerplay overs and attacked both Bolt and Pattinson with great gusto. When leg spinner Rahul Chahar was introduced into the attack, Finch hit him for three boundaries as the 50 came off 31 balls. At that point Padikkal was only on 16.

Once Finch was holed out off a Boult slower, in came Kohli and looked as rusty as the last match during his nine ball stay. MI skipper Sharma changed Chahar's end, it yielded result as a delivery stopped on Kohli and his lazy inside out lofted shot was gleefully accepted at extra cover by Rohit.

DUGOUT

MOTION PICTURE

Rajasthan Royals

@rajasthanroyals

Hoping 2020 does a Rahul Tewatia.

Jaipur, India · rajasthanroyals.com

Joined October 2008

Yuvraj Singh

@YUVSTRONG12

Mr @rahultewatia02 na bhai na 😊 thanks for missing one ball ! What a game congratulations to rr for a spectacular win !!! #RRvKXIP @mayankcricket great knock @IamSanjuSamson brilliant !

11:20 pm · 27 Sep 20 · Twitter for iPhone

Rahul Tewatia

@rahultewatia02

Keep the faith. The most amazing things in life tend to happen right at the moment you're about to give up.

10:00 AM - Jul 10, 2019

DIDN'T GET WHAT I DESERVE: AMIT

His India career never really took wings like it did in the IPL but veteran Delhi Capitals leg-spinner Amit Mishra says he has stopped thinking about why he didn't get what he "should have", content with the name he made for himself. Mishra is second behind Lasith Malinga in the list of highest wicket-takers in the IPL with 157 scalps in 148 matches. "I don't know if I am underrated. I used to think too much earlier, so mind used to get diverted, now I just focus on my job," he said in an online press conference ahead of the clash against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Tuesday." Warne summed it up in a tweet that Tewatia would remember for a long time.

POINTS TABLE						
		P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1	DC	2	2	0	+1.100	4
2	KXIP	2	1	1	+2.425	2
3	MI	2	1	1	+0.993	2
4	RR	1	1	0	+0.800	2
5	KKR	2	1	1	-0.767	2
6	CSK	3	1	2	-0.840	2
7	RCB	2	1	1	-2.175	2
8	SRH	2	0	2	-0.730	0

DC EYE HAT-TRICK

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

Off to the best possible start with two wins on the trot, a confident Delhi Capitals will hope to keep the juggernaut rolling when they take on the winless Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match here on Tuesday.

Both sides have endured contrasting campaigns so far.

Delhi head in to the game after two morale-boosting victories. The Shreyas Iyer-led side edged past Kings XI Punjab in a thrilling Super Over before thrashing Chennai Super Kings comprehensively to jump to the top of the points table.

On the other hand, Sunrisers are the only side yet to register a win in the tournament, having lost both their games and David Warner and his men will be desperate to turn things around.

In their opening encounter, despite opener Jonny Bairstow (61) and Manish Pandey (34) putting Sunrisers in a winning position in a chase of 164, the team failed to cross the line.

Against Kolkata Knight Riders, the middle-order failed to fire and the team settled for a below-par total which the bowling unit couldn't defend.

Wriddhiman Saha was particularly slow and would be expected to play an innings more suitable to the format.

For Delhi, the South African pace duo of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje has looked sharp with the new ball while spinners Axar Patel and Amit Mishra have performed splendidly in the absence of



Ravichandran Ashwin.

Ashwin suffered an injury in the team's first outing and is likely to miss the match against Sunrisers.

"It is not a major injury, he bowled in the nets yesterday, he will comeback very soon. He is being monitored by physio, today again he will bowl at the nets. Maximum, he

might miss one more match," Amit Mishra said in a pre-match presser.

In batting, the onus will be on seniors such as Shikhar Dhawan to lay the foundation, and he will have the talented Prithvi Shaw at the top of the order for company.

Rishabh Pant and Iyer have also looked in good nick, after rescuing the team from a spot of bother in the first game, the two pitched in with valuable runs against CSK.

Australian all-rounder Marcus Stoinis has proved he is handy with the willow while Shimron Hetmyer can also compliment the strong batting line up.

For Sunrisers to do well, they would need to look beyond Warner and Bairstow. The side must click as a batting unit to post its first win of the season on Tuesday.

The 2016 champions replaced the injured Mitchell Marsh with Afghanistan off-spinner Mohammad Nabi, who played a quick cameo with the bat and also bowled an economical spell later.

However, with the batting unit letting them down in both outings, Sunrisers might consider bringing in Kane Williamson, who has recovered from his injury, to provide stability to the line-up. He would be coming in place of Nabi.

Sunrisers spinners led by Rashid Khan continue to impress but the side is lacking an out and out pace bowler who can hit the deck and push the batsman back off a good length.

Australian fast bowler Billy Stanlake is an option but with only four overseas slots available, his inclusion looks unlikely.

IAN S ■ DUBAI

Former India fast bowler Irfan Pathan believes Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) should avoid bowling Shivam Dube at the death in the upcoming matches of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

R C B have so far played two matches in the tournament. In the first match, they registered a 10-run win against SunRisers Hyderabad (SRH) while in the next game, the Virat Kohli-led side suffered a crushing 97-run defeat against Kings XI Punjab.

Look, I think they will get better as soon as Morris comes in. I see Morris

coming in, (Dale) Steyn going out and they are settled. What I don't want from RCB is Shivam Dube bowling the death overs," said Pathan while speaking on Star Sports show Cricket Connected ahead of RCB's clash against Mumbai Indians to be played at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Monday evening.

"They have a better team, they have better batsmen comparatively. They are not just dependent on AB de Villiers or Virat Kohli. This year they have

Aaron Finch as well, (Devdutt) Padikkal started very well," he added. According to the former India all-rounder, Navdeep Saini should bowl a minimum of two overs at the death as "he's the guy who can nail those yorkers as well as he can just bluff the batsmen and bowl bouncers at the death as well".



IAN S ■ SHARJAH

While all the limelight was taken away by Rahul Tewatia during Rajasthan Royals' historic win over Kings XI Punjab, it was the incredible innings from Sanju Samson which laid the platform for the Steve Smith-led side during their chase at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

Samson scored 85 runs as Royals chased down the target of 224 — highest ever in history of the Indian Premier League — with four wickets in hand and three balls to spare. His 42-ball knock was studded with four 4s and seven 6s.

Taking note of Samson's innings on Sunday, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said on Twitter: "What an absolutely incredible win for Rajasthan Royals! I've known Sanju Samson for a decade and told him when he was 14 that he

would one day be the next MS Dhoni. Well, that day is here. After his two amazing innings in this IPL, you know a world-class player has arrived."

However, Gautam Gambhir and S Sreesanth don't want the 25-year-old to be compared with the former India captain.

"Sanju Samson doesn't need to be next anyone. He will be 'the' Sanju Samson of Indian cricket," tweeted Gambhir replying to Tharoor.

"He is not next Dhoni, he is Sanju Samson the one and only. He should have been playing from 2015 regularly in all formats. Please don't compare him, if he had given right opportunities then, he would have been playing like this for India and would have won World Cups," said Sreesanth while replying to



Sanju Samson plays a shot during Indian Premier League

BCCI

the Congress MP. "I am sure he will still keep playing well and it's not just these two innings...He is gonna break a lot of records

too and win many more world cups for our country. So please don't compare him to anyone...he is an amazing

Malayali from our Gods own country. His best is yet to come," he added.

The right-handed batsman had scored 74 runs off just 32 deliveries in Royals' first match of IPL 2020 which his side won against Chennai Super Kings by 16 runs.

Rajasthan Royals brand ambassador Shane Warne had praised Samson and said it was shocking to see that a talent like Samson is not a part of Team India across all formats.

"I have said for a long time and I think Sanju Samson is probably one of the most exciting players I have seen for a long time. I am surprised that he is not playing all forms of cricket for India," Warne had said in an Instagram live session done by the Royals before Sunday's game.

Want to host Eng series in India: Ganguly

PTI ■ KOLKATA

BCCI President Sourav Ganguly on Monday said the Board will do all it can to ensure that India's home series against England remains in the country and domestic tournaments kick off at some point despite the "fluid" COVID-19 situation.

"...Priority is to make this (series against England) happen in India. We will try to make this happen on Indian grounds. The advantage in UAE is they have three stadiums (Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai)," he said in a media interaction here addressing speculation that UAE could be the host for India given the COVID case count here.

BCCI has recently signed a Memorandum of

Understanding with the Emirates Cricket Board for greater cooperation in conducting matches there.

"We also have the same facility in Mumbai — CCI, Wankhede and DY Patil. We also have Eden Gardens. We have to create a bubble. We want to hold our cricket in India, that's where the game is, that's where the heart is. But we are monitoring the COVID situation," Ganguly said after being named brand ambassador of the Bengal Peerless group here.

"Everything is fluid. It's been hard for the last six months to keep everything in order. You want your cricket to happen. You want lives to get back to normal, there are players involved. But you also want to have a close look at the COVID situation," Ganguly

added. On to domestic cricket and under normal circumstances, the BCCI would have already started its mega season with Ranji Trophy and Duleep Trophy, the U-23 CK Nayudu Trophy, Vijay Hazare and Deodhar Trophy, and the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

In 2019-20 it hosted 2036 domestic games across various age groups in the men's and women's category but creating a bio-bubble for so many teams across the country will be next to impossible given the virus threat.

"We are monitoring it. We want to have our domestic season. We have all the combinations, situations ready in our mind. We will try and make it happen as much as we can," he reiterated.

AP ■ MADRID

Luis Suárez quickly made an impact at Atlético Madrid. Former teammate Lionel Messi was his usual impressive self for Barcelona.

Suárez, who had his debut Sunday with Atlético after being told he was not wanted by Barcelona, scored twice and had an assist in the nearly 20 minutes he played in Atlético's 6-1 rout of Granada in the Spanish league.

Messi, who was forced to stay at Barcelona after telling the club he wanted

Wonderboy Fati

to leave, scored once and helped his team beat Villarreal 4-0 in its league opener under new coach Ronald Koeman. It was Messi's first official game with Barcelona since the club denied his request to leave in the offseason. He was outspoken against the club but had promised to give his best in what could be his final season at Barcelona.

Messi celebrated as usual after scoring from the penalty spot in the 35th minute at the Camp

Nou Stadium. He later also played a role in the own-goal by Pau Torres before halftime, as the Villarreal defender tried to intercept a cross by the Argentina great.

Messi missed a few other chances to score in the comfortable opening win for Koeman. The 17-year-old Ansu Fati, one of the players helping to make up for Suárez's absence in attack, put Barcelona on its way to victory with goals in the 15th and 19th minutes.

AP ■ ROME

Even on a night when Juventus was outplayed for long stretches, the nine-time defending Serie A champion managed to salvage a point in a 2-2 draw at Roma.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice, including a second-half equalizer with a towering header after Juventus had been reduced to 10 men, while Jordan Veretout had a brace for Roma.

"We got back into it, even after the red card," Ronaldo said. "By the end of the sea-

son this could prove to be an important point."

Veretout put Roma ahead in the 31st with a penalty following a handball from Adrien Rabiot, who was trying to block a shot from Veretout.

Ronaldo then equalized from the spot after Lorenzo Pellegrini used his arm to block the five-time Ballon d'Or winner.

Veretout scored his second in first-half added time as Roma tore past Juventus' veteran but aging center backs Leonardo Bonucci



and Giorgio Chiellini. Henrikh Mkhitaryan escaped down the left flank and crossed for Veretout, who used one touch to get

away from a defender before shooting past goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny. Juventus was reduced to 10 men in the 62nd when Rabiot picked up his second yellow card for sticking his boot into the left thigh of Mkhitaryan.

Moments earlier, Roma forward Edin Dzeko struck a shot off the post after his marker had already fallen to the ground.

Juve then had a chance to equalize when Ronaldo volleyed directly at goalkeeper Antonio Mirante.

Thiem eases past Cilic

AP ■ PARIS

U.S. Open champion Dominic Thiem advanced to the second round of the French Open by beating former U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic 6-4, 6-3, 6-3.

The third-seeded Austrian won his first major tournament at Flushing Meadows two weeks ago and is among the favorites again at Roland Garros after losing the past two finals to Rafael Nadal.

Thiem broke the imposing Croatian's serve six times in cool conditions on Court Philippe



Chatrier. Cilic led 2-0 in the third set but Thiem reeled off the next five games before Cilic held again.

Thiem will next face American qualifier Jack Sock. He beat Reilly Opelka 6-4, 6-4, 6-3.

DEVERAKONDA AND SUKUMAR JOIN FORCES



Even before his much-talked about next with Puri Jaganandh reaches the 50 percent mark, Vijay Deverakonda is lining up assignments for as late 2022 from now. While he will team up with good friend Shiva Nirvana up next for an out-and-out entertainer after he wraps up Puri's film, followed by a film with Indraganti Mohana Krishna, the actor on Monday announced a new film in the direction of Sukumar. Kedar Selagamsetty, founder and director — M Kitchens, will be making his production debut with the film, which will be made under Falcon Creations. The project was announced marking his birthday on Monday.

Expressing his happiness to be collaborating with a filmmaker of Sukumar's repute and extending his birthday greetings to Kedar, Deverakonda wrote on Twitter, "Sukumar — Vijay Deverakonda The actor in me is super excited The audience in me is celebrating! We guarantee you memorable Cinema.. I can't wait to be on set with Sukku sirrr. Happy birthday Kedar, you've been a good friend and you work extremely hard (sic)."

Taking to Instagram, Sukumar said that he is look-

IN A BLOCKBUSTER PIECE OF NEWS ON MONDAY, VIJAY DEVERAKONDA ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD BE TEAMING UP WITH RANGASTHALAM FILMMAKER SUKUMAR FOR A PAN-INDIA PROJECT THAT WILL TAKE OFF IN 2022, WITH NEW PRODUCER KEDAR SELAGAMSETTY ATTACHED TO BANKROLL

ing forward to all the zeal and energy Deverakonda will bring to the sets.

Kedar said that he personally likes Vijay Deverakonda and Sukumar and to bring them together for a project is something he will cherish for long. "Both of them thrive for new content and freshness. The film will have both their styles," he pointed out.

He further added that the film will have the cameras rolling in 2022 and will be made as a pan-India project.



Bandla Ganesh gets Pawan's nod for the third time

Once a leading producer, who produced films with A-list actors like Pawan Kalyan, Jr NTR, Ravi Teja, Ram Charan and Allu Arjun, Bandla Ganesh's production career nosedived after *Temper*. His financial problems on *Temper* were such that NTR maintained a distance from him on sets. While he later took an unsuccessful plunge into politics, Ganesh has been trying to get back into production space for the past one year but to no avail. Finally, if his latest tweet is taken as a pointer, it seems that his beloved star Pawan Kalyan has come to his rescue. "My boss said okay and once again my dreams come true. Thank you my god @PawanKalyan (sic),"

posted Ganesh on Monday along with a picture of them together.

Interestingly, it was Pawan who took it on himself to launch Ganesh as a successful producer in the market after his first film with him, *Theenmaar*, flopped at the box-office. He then joined hands with the producer for *Gabbar Singh*, which set the cash-boxes ringing.

This time around though, it remains to be seen when Pawan will allot dates to Ganesh, as he has films with Krish, Harish Shankar and Surender Reddy to attend to after he completes *Vakeel Saab*.

There's also buzz that he might do a film for S Radha Krishna. Ganesh also needs to find the right director for the project.

Richa Panai set for T'wood comeback

The model-turned-actress will be playing a meaty role in *Joseph* Telugu remake, starring Dr. Rajasekhara. It will roll from October first week, finds **NAGARAJ GOUD**

The *Pioneer* was the first (on Aug 11) to inform you that Dr. Rajasekhara will be headlining the Telugu remake of Malayalam hit *Joseph*, with Venkata Srinivas Boggaram attached to produce. To this end, the latest we hear is that the film's director Neelakanta has signed on Richa Panai as the leading lady. The untitled

film will mark her staging a comeback to Telugu after *Eedu Gold Ehe* (2016). She filmed for writer Sreedhar Seepana's *Brundavanamadi Andaridi* a couple of years ago but the film is yet to be released.

A source close to the development informs, "Richa has got a performance-driven role in *Joseph* remake and she is excited about it. It's a role which will land her more projects in Telugu."

To go on floors in October first week, Neelakanta is planning to wrap up the project in 50-55 days. The film will tell the story of a retired cop (played by Rajasekhara) who is unexpectedly pulled into a criminal case involving organ harvesting. The director has tailored the script to suit the *Evadaithe Nakenti* star image and Telugu nativity. "Neelakanta has conceived Rajasekhara's character in a different light. There is a lot of layered subtlety that the actor needs to bring in to portray it," adds the source.

Hema's dream is to be a graduate

Popular supporting actress, whose career in the industry spans 25 years, has decided to have a degree to her name. The 53-year-old actress, who entered the industry at a fairly young age, appeared for the degree entrance test of BR Ambedkar Open University exam held at Nagarjuna Government College in Nalgonda over the weekend. Speaking to the media later, she said it has been her dream to be a graduate and she couldn't write the entrance twice in the past due to her tight schedule. She said that she also wants to learn some computer courses.

Spelling out reasons for choosing Nalgonda as her exam centre, she said that

rising number of COVID-19 cases in Hyderabad and her popularity drove her to opt for Nalgonda. She added that she also has a number of relatives in the district and that the place is near to Ramoji Film City, where she is shooting for a film right now.

Known for her outspoken nature, Hema, who hails from Razole in East Godavari district, is the vice-president of Movie Artists' Association (MAA). In 2014, she contested on Kiran Kumar Reddy's Jai Samaikyandhra Party and lost from Mandapeta Assembly constituency.



Sonu felicitated by Prakash Raj



Actor Sonu Sood, who has joined the filming of Santosh Srinivas' *Alludu Adhurs* in Hyderabad on Monday, was felicitated by Prakash Raj with a shawl and a memento. Sonu has become a savior for lakhs of migrants during the lockdown, helping them reach their destinations in different states by paying from his own pocket. Not just that, he is also looking after well being and rehabilitation of people who have lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic.

Interestingly, director Santosh has tweaked Sonu's character in the film and made it larger-than-life, inspired by the latter's achievements in the last six months. The filming is going on in RFC, Hyderabad right now, with Bellamkonda Sreenivas, Nabha Natesh, Brahmaji, Srinivas Reddy, Sathya, Kadambari Kiran, Chammak Chandra and Duvvasi Mohan partaking. Sonu will be shooting for the film in Hyderabad for another six days, after which he will land on sets of Akshay Kumar-starrer *Prithviraj* in Mumbai.

Subrahmanyam Gorrela is bankrolling *Alludu Adhurs*, a Devi Sri Prasad musical, under Sumanth Movie Productions Banner. It is being planned for a Sankranti release.

