

ANALYSIS 7
POWER REFORMS —
A DISTANT DREAM**MONEY 8**
JULY MANUFACTURING
OUTPUT ZOOMS**SPORTS 11**
HISTORYMAKERS

VIJAYAWADA, TUESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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E-RUPI A FUTURISTIC REFORM: MODI LAUNCHES NEW PAYMENT SYSTEM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi today launched e-RUPI -- the government's digital payment solution meant to ensure delivery of welfare services, which, for now, will be used to push vaccination efforts. The platform will go live for the first time at a Covid vaccination centre in Mumbai. Developed by National Payments Corporation of India, e-RUPI is a cashless and contact-less instrument that's based on QR code or SMS-based e-Voucher, which is delivered to the cellphones of beneficiaries. This can be redeemed directly with the service provider.

BABUL SUPRIYO TWEAKS PLAN AFTER NADDA MEET, SAYS HE WILL 'STAY MP'

A day after he announced his decision to quit politics -- and his Parliamentary seat -- former Union Minister Babul Supriyo has rescinded on the second. The Bollywood-singer-turned-politician today said he will "continue to discharge his constitutional responsibility" without being politically active. Supriyo's re-calibrated position emerged following his meeting with BJP chief JP Nadda on Monday. On Saturday in a Facebook post announced he has decided to quit politics. He however clarified that he would not be joining any other party.

SHIV SENA WORKERS VANDALISE ADANI AIRPORT SIGNBOARD IN MUMBAI

A group of Shiv Sena workers allegedly ransacked a neon signboard with "Adani Airport" written on it near the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj close to the airport in Mumbai on Monday afternoon, a police official said. They shouted slogans against the signboard when the airport is named after Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Some of the workers later came on to the Western Express Highway located nearby due to which traffic movement on the city's arterial north-south road was disrupted for some time, the official said.

POWER EMPLOYEES TO HOLD PROTEST OVER ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL

Power sector employees and engineers will be holding a four-day 'Satyagrah' at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi from Tuesday against the Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021. On the call of National Coordination Committee of Electricity Employees & Engineers (NCCOEE), power employees will hold the 'Satyagrah' against the unilateral announcement of central government to pass the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, in current monsoon session of Parliament, All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) Chairman Shailendra Dubey said here.

CJ advises mediation to AP, TS for settling Krishna water row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday suggested mediation to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana for settling their dispute over sharing of Krishna river water, saying it did not want to interfere unnecessarily.

A bench headed by Chief Justice NV Ramana was hearing the plea of Andhra Pradesh which has alleged that Telangana has deprived it of its legitimate share of drinking and irrigation water.

"I don't want to hear this matter legally. I belong to both the states. If the matter can be settled in mediation, please do that. We can help with that. Otherwise I will transfer this to another bench," the CJ, who hails from Andhra Pradesh, observed during the hearing.

"I wish that both of you (lawyers



representing the two states) convince your governments and settle the matter. We do not want to interfere unnecessarily," said the CJ, who was heading the bench also comprising Justice Surya Kant. Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for Andhra Pradesh

along with lawyer Mahfooz Ahsan Nazki, sought time for seeking instruction.

The bench then kept the plea for further consideration on Wednesday and senior advocate CS Vaidyanathan, appearing for Telangana, agreed to this.

In July, Andhra Pradesh government had moved the top court claiming that the Telangana government refused to follow the decisions taken by the Apex Council constituted under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014, the directions of Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) formed under this Act, and the Centre's directives.

The petition said the fundamental rights including right to life of the people living in Andhra Pradesh was "seriously impaired and infringed" upon as they were

being deprived of their "legitimate share of water" due to "unconstitutional, illegal and unjust" acts of the Telangana government and its officials.

"The present petition is being moved because the state of Telangana is refusing to follow decisions taken in the Apex Council constituted under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014, directions of KRMB, and directions of government of India," it said.

"This has caused immense hardship for people of Andhra Pradesh as availability of water has been seriously prejudiced by depletion in the Srisailem Dam project as well as the Nagarjuna Sagar Project and the Pulichintala Project," it added.

2

PAC Chairman seeks probe by CAG into AP's Rs 25,000cr loan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Public Accounts Committee Chairman Payyavula Keshav on Monday demanded the YSRCP government to respond to the Union government's latest comment that there were 'prima facie' Constitutional violations in the 'escrow agreements' signed by Andhra Pradesh to obtain Rs 25,000 crore loan through the AP State Development Corporation Ltd (APSDCL).

Keshav asked whether the AP

government would amend the law to withdraw the escrow account, based on the Centre's letter. In that case, its agreements involving Rs 25,000 crore loans would be in danger of becoming invalid thereby putting a question mark on the legal efficacy of the national banks that were part of these unconstitutional agreements, he said.

Addressing a press conference

here, the PAC Chairman stressed the need for the Union government to order a thorough probe by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India into the unprecedented and large-scale financial irregularities committed by the State government. "If the systems at the national and state levels were not correct and strengthened now, it would lead to more serious financial transgressions in future," he said.

2

Centre releases Rs1,566.6 cr to AP under SDRF

■ State can use 50% of the amount for Covid containment measures

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Union government has so far released Rs 1,566.6 crore under State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) for Covid relief measures to Andhra Pradesh.

During Financial Year 2020-21, an amount of Rs 1,119 crore was released to AP under the Central share of SDRF. In addition, for Financial Year 2021-22, the first

instalment of Central share of SDRF of Rs 447.6 crore was released in advance on April 29, 2021.

Normally, the first instalment of SDRF is released in June. However, considering the immediate need of States due to Covid-19 second wave, the Union government released the SDRF amounts without waiting for the utilisation certificate. Keeping in view the spread of Covid-19, the Union government

allowed States to utilise up to 50 percent of their annual allocation of SDRF for Covid-19 containment measures.

The Centre also advised the States to use the funds to meet the cost of oxygen generation and storage plants in hospitals, procurement of ventilators, strengthening ambulance services as well as Covid-19 hospitals and Covid-19 care centres purchasing consumables, thermal

scanners, personal protective equipment, testing laboratories, and testing kits.

It may be mentioned here that several states like Maharashtra, Odisha and Punjab requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to release SDRF funds so that they could take measures to address the challenges posed by the second wave of the pandemic.

2



Water gushes downstream from the Prakasam barrage after all 70 gates were lifted to release floodwaters into the sea following heavy inflows. Officials said that 2,47,750 cusecs was released from the Prakasam barrage into the sea.

On copious inflows, gates of Sagar, Pulichintala projects lifted

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

With continuous inflows into the projects in Krishna basin, Nagarjuna Sagar project is almost full with water level reaching 587.3 feet as against the Full Reservoir Level of 590 ft.

With inflows at 3.13 lakh cusecs, water was being released downstream at the same rate by lifting 22 crest gates up to 10 feet. As against the full storage level of 312 tmc ft, the present storage is at 305.68 tmc ft.

Pulichintala downstream Nagarjuna Sagar is getting inflows at 3.2 lakh cusecs and the outflow was at 3.54 lakh cusecs. The water level reached 172 ft as against FRL level of 175 and present storage is at 41.24 tmc ft as against full storage capacity of 45.77 tmc ft.

The authorities opened 17 gates of the project on the Guntur-Suryapet border. As much as 8,000 cusecs is allotted for power generation.

Before the gates were lifted,

people living downstream were alerted about rising water levels. The water level at Prakasam barrage also increased as the gates of Pulichintala were lifted.

Copious inflows continue to come into upstream projects of Jurala and Srisailem.

The authorities have opened 36 gates to release water with inflows at 2.9 lakh cusecs and outflow at 2.63 lakh with present storage is at 7.13 tmc ft as against full storage capacity of 9.66 tmc ft. The water level is at 1,040.75 ft as against FRL of 1,045 ft.

Srisailem project too is up to its brim with water level almost reaching the FRL level of 885 ft and at present it is at 883.61 ft with present capacity at 207.85 tmc ft as against full storage capacity of 215.81 ft. The inflows into the project are 3.1 lakh cusecs and outflow at 4.36 lakh cusecs.

The authorities lifted 10 gates to let water out downstream and power generation is on from both right and left bank power houses.

2

All 70 gates of Prakasam barrage lifted

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Authorities on Monday lifted all the 70 crest gates of the Prakasam barrage to release floodwater into the sea.

According to officials, 2,47,750 cusecs was released from the Prakasam barrage into the sea. For agriculture purposes about 9,547 cusecs water was released through eastern and western canals.

A Red Alert continues in the mandals along the Krishna river with over 3.50 lakh cusecs of flood water released from Nagarjuna Sagar on Monday.

2

No Polavaram DPR pending: Centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Monday stated that no proposal for approval of Revised Detailed Project report of Polavaram irrigation project is pending with his Ministry.

In a written reply to Rajya Sabha member V Vijayasai Reddy,

the Union Minister said that the Detailed Project Report (DPR) proposal of Polavaram irrigation project was accepted for

Rs 10,151.04 crore at the price level of 2005-06 by the Advisory Committee on Irrigation, Flood Control and Multipurpose Projects under

his Ministry, in its 95th meeting held on January 20, 2009.

Thereafter, no proposal for revision of DPR for the project has been submitted by the State government, he stated.

However, revision of cost of the project has been accepted twice by the Advisory Committee, in January 2011 and February 2019, Shekhawat added.



TODAY

ALMANAC**Month & Paksham:**Ashadha & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam**Tithi :** Dashami 12:59**Nakshatram :** Rohini 25:44**Time to Avoid :** Time to Avoid (Bad time to start any important work)**Rahukalam :** 3:33 pm - 5:09 pm**Yamagandam :** 9:10 am - 10:46 am**Varjyam :** 4:43 pm - 6:31 pm**Gulika :** 12:22 pm - 1:57 pm**Good Time :** (to start any important work)**Amritakalam :** 10:08 pm - 11:56 pm**Ahhijit Muhurtham :** 11:56 am - 12:47 pm**VIJAYAWADA WEATHER****Forecast:** Partly cloudy**Temp:** 35/28**Humidity:** 54%**Sunrise:** 5:55 am**Sunset:** 06:48 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated AUGUST 03, 2021 5:00 PM



Rajya Sabha Member V Vijayasai Reddy addresses protesters during a protest against the privatisation of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Monday.

YSRCP MPs protest in Delhi against VSP sale

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP MPs on Monday staged a protest in Delhi against the BJP-led Union government's decision to privatise the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

The YSRCP MPs, led by Rajya Sabha Member V Vijayasai Reddy, participated in the dharna at Jantar Mantar in support of the steel plant workers.

2

Fresh cases outnumbering recoveries in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The ongoing second wave of coronavirus is showing no signs of abating in Andhra Pradesh as fresh cases seem to be outnumbering the number of recoveries in many districts, a week-on-week analysis of the Health Department showed.

Old hotspots are giving way to new ones as the infection positivity has been rising, though the overall positivity rate dipped very marginally to 2.67 percent last week as compared to 2.71 percent the previous week, with an average of 1,957 cases per day, the data revealed.

The State, meanwhile, added 1,546 new coronavirus cases, 1,968 recoveries and 15 deaths in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday.

After 2.47 crore sample tests, the cumulative Covid-19 case count mounted to 19,70,008 at an overall positivity rate of 7.99 percent. The total recoveries increased to 19,36,016 and deaths to 13,410, according to the latest bulletin.

According to Health Department data, the overall recovery percent-



age increased to 98.25 percent while the mortality rate remained stable at 0.68 percent. In terms of active cases, the state has now moved one place up, to the fourth, in the national chart, pushing Tamil Nadu down.

AP now has 20,582 active cases. In 24 hours, East Godavari topped with 416 new case additions while Vizianagaram was at the bottom with seven. After sliding below the five percent positivity mark, East Godavari district is

again on an upward spiral registering 6.94 percent infection positivity in the week from July 26 to August 1.

The previous week, the district showed a positivity of 6.36 percent.

The Covid-19 positivity rate jumped up in Krishna district from 2.68 to 3.03 percent last week, in Kadapa from 1.85 to 2.59 percent, Chittoor from 2.48 to 2.76 percent and Visakhapatnam from 2.27 to 2.40 percent.

2

153 Black fungus cases in AP in the last five days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an alarming turn of events, Andhra Pradesh added 153 new Black fungus cases in the last five days, taking the total to 4,446. This is in addition to the gradual increase in Covid infections.

According to Health Department data, 14 more deaths due to mucormycosis were reported, making it a total of 414 so far. The number of active cases was now down by 23 to 765, the data showed.

A total of 3,267 infected patients got cured as of August 1, while surgeries were performed on 2,033 of them.

2

On July 26, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a meeting with Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and Health, Law, Social Welfare and Education Secretaries, asked them to review the quota for the OBCs and economically backward classes in medical education on an all-India basis.

After three days, on July 29, the Centre announced a 27 percent quota for OBCs and 10 percent for EBCs in the All India Quota Scheme for Medical Education. The All India Quota consists of 15 percent of total available undergraduate seats and 50 percent of the total available post-graduate seats in government medical colleges.

In 2007, the Supreme Court introduced a 15 percent quota for the SCs and 7.5 percent quota for the STs in the AIQ scheme.

But no government till the present dispensation paid attention to the quota for

BJP— A ray of hope for the OBCs

OBCs in medical education. The decision paved the way for making available 4,000 seats for the OBCs in medical courses.

The Congress has no regard for the OBCs. Ever since Modi, who hails from OBC category, came to power at the Centre, the Congress, which represented the interests of the upper castes, has made public its jealousy umpteen times.

During the 2014 election campaign, Congress leader Priyanka Vadra accused Modi of practising politics of debasement.

Responding to it, Modi said: "Yes, I hail from a lower caste. But I dream of building a united India. That is why the politics that I practise for the benefit of BCs constitute backward class politics."

"Perhaps many are not aware of the fact that the self-

Of the 18 crore who joined the biggest political outfit in the country - the BJP - 50 percent hail from the OBC category. Moreover, in elections to State Assemblies, the BJP allots the highest number of seats to BCs and other downtrodden sections. Schemes being implemented by the Modi gov t give priority to OBCs.

less sacrifices made by the downtrodden sections play a crucial role in the country attaining dizzying heights," Modi said.

In 2017 elections to Gujarat Assembly, senior Congress leader Mani Shankar Iyer likened Modi with an insect that we find in a ditch.

Those who went through biographic work on Modi are well aware that the PM hails from a OBC community and was one of eight children. His father sold tea at a

small railway station called Vad Nagar and lived in a small house that had no windows and tap connection.

How can the OBCs support the Congress which insulted a person like Modi?

The people of Gujarat rejected the insulting remarks against Modi and voted the BJP to power. OBC leader in Gujarat Alpesh Thakor, prior to joining the BJP in 2019, resigned from all posts in Congress. Thakor set up 'Ekta Manch' to unite OBCs, SCs



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

and STs. He criticised the Congress for insulting him and accused it of backstabbing him.

What does the Congress offer OBCs, who constitute more than 50 percent of the country's population, except insults?

Currently, a majority of the CMs of BJP-ruled states

belong to the OBC category as also a majority of MPs and MLAs of the BJP. In fact, 113 OBCs have been elected to the Lok Sabha on behalf of the BJP.

That was why the PM inducted 27 OBCs into his Cabinet in the recent reshuffle. The BJP started encouraging Kurmis, Kushavaha, Lodhi, Koyiri communities - small non-Yadav BC communities in addition to the OBCs enjoying the fruits of welfare and development schemes in society.

To enable these sub-castes to get more benefits, the Modi government amended Article 340 of the Constitution and appointed a commission too.

Moreover, the National Commission on Backward

Classes was given Constitutional status. The Commission has all the powers of a civil court and is empowered to take action against those who cause damage to the interests of the BCs. It can make suitable recommendations for development of BCs studying their living conditions.

Of the 18 crore who joined the biggest political outfit in the country - the BJP - 50 percent hail from the OBC category. Moreover, in elections held to State Assemblies, the BJP allots the highest number of seats to BCs and other downtrodden sections.

Schemes being implemented by the Modi government give priority to OBCs and other downtrodden sections of society. Soon after coming to

power, Modi reviewed implementation of many welfare schemes and improved the functioning of organisations like BC Development.

He ensured that OBCs get loans, scholarships, hostel amenities etc., and more improved basic amenities are available for them. He gave priority to skill development among the OBCs.

The people are aware of the priority OBCs, Dalits and other downtrodden sections are given by the Modi government.

It is a wonder that the Opposition parties did not realise that it is not easy to face Modi who works for the welfare and development of the poor, BCs and downtrodden sections.

During its rule, the Congress protected the interests of the upper classes, landlords and investors loyal to it. The same Congress regards the BJP as a party that protects the interests of the upper castes because it is not only blind but also deaf.

ZBNF results in less water consumption, lower emissions

SNV SUDHIR
■ VIJAYAWADA

While there has been renewed thrust on Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) that focuses on less usage of chemicals in agriculture the world over, a study conducted in Andhra Pradesh has shown that ZBNF also helped in less usage of water, drop in emissions and less energy consumption that also helps fight climate change.

A study conducted in Andhra Pradesh by gathering information from farmers to observe and understand the practical execution of ZBNF practice indicated that the processes require 50 percent to 60 percent less water and less electricity than non-ZBNF for all the selected crops.

For the irrigated crops, ZBNF requires 45 percent to 70 percent less input energy which is 12-50 gigajoule (GJ) per acre and results in 55 percent to 85 percent less emissions, that is, 1.4-6.6 Metric Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (Mt CO₂e) than non-ZBNF.

For rain-fed crops, ZBNF requires 42 percent to 90 percent less input energy, that is,



1.1 to 16 GJ per acre and results in 85 percent to 99 percent less emissions or 0.5 to 11 Mt CO₂e. ZBNF reduces methane emissions significantly through multiple aeration. It also has the potential to avoid residue burning by practising mulching.

Bengaluru-based Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), a private not-for-profit research corporation, performed an evidence-based comparative life cycle assessment of ZBNF and conventional farming.

The crops selected for the study were paddy, groundnut,

chilli, cotton, and maize. The farm-level comparative assessment considered water consumption, life cycle energy and emissions, yield, revenue, and social outlook.

The results showed that the switch from non-ZBNF to ZBNF can save up to an average of 1,400-3,500 KL of water and about 12-50 GJ of energy, coupled with a 1.4-6.6 Mt CO₂e emission reduction per acre in a crop period in irrigated crops.

Rain-fed crops can save up to 1.1-16 GJ of energy and reduce 0.5-11 Mt CO₂e of emissions.

Cost of cultivation lower in ZBNF

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As per the CSTEP's analysis the cost of cultivation is lower in ZBNF for all crops by Rs 3,000 to Rs 22,000 per acre, except in cotton where it is higher by Rs 9,000, due to greater labour engagement. The difference in yield between ZBNF and non-ZBNF for chilli and paddy is negligible.

For the remaining crops, non-ZBNF exhibits higher yields, with an increase in the range of 0.3 MT per acre-0.7 MT per acre.

The net revenue is higher in ZBNF by Rs 9,000 to Rs 37,000 for all the crops except cotton, because of the lower cost of cultivation.

Furthermore, non-ZBNF-based chilli, maize, and groundnut show higher dispersion than ZBNF crops.

Paddy is one of the largest cultivated crops in AP. It is grown both in Kharif and Rabi seasons and is largely an irrigated crop. The annual production of paddy is

around 120 lakh tonnes. The major fertilisers used in non-ZBNF are urea, SSP/TS/SP, and MOP.

Typically, 10 percent of the residue is left on the field, which is later burnt to clear the field.

It was in 2016-17 that the ZBNF programme was initiated in Andhra Pradesh, with an aim to cover over six million farmers by 2024. This programme has reached 1.63 lakh farmers covering 5.04 lakh acres at present.

The primary data for the study was obtained through a ground-based survey in AP.

The physical survey was conducted in four districts - West Godavari, Prakasam, Vizianagaram, and Anantapur.

The districts were chosen to capture variations in the agro-climatic zones, farming techniques, production, and social aspects. The survey was conducted in the Kharif season of 2019.

NCL Group wins AP Govt contract worth Rs 1,863 cr

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A consortium of NCL Industries Ltd. and NCL Buildtek Ltd. has received Letters of Acceptance (LoA) of bids aggregating to Rs 1,863.19 crore for supply of pre-painted (GI) steel window frame with glazed shutters and GI powder-coated door frames to the Andhra Pradesh State Housing Corporation Ltd.

According to a press release issued by NCL, the selection of bids was made through a rigorous closed bidding process followed by a reverse auction amongst shortlisted bidders.

"We are happy that NCL Group is able to play a small role in the prestigious flagship programme 'Pedalandariki Illu' of the Andhra Pradesh government. Our goal for this project has been to keep the price affordable and provide a quality product. Owning a home is a dream for everyone and I am glad that NCL has an opportunity to contribute to this dream," K Ravi, MD, NCL

Industries Ltd said.

The order for over 8.56 lakh units of window-frames with shutters is valued at Rs 1,402.71 crore to be supplied to six districts of East and West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, YSR Kadapa and Anantapur of AP.

As many as 7.72 lakh door frames for a total value of Rs. 460.48 crore are to be supplied to East and West Godavari, Krishna, Chittoor and Anantapur districts, the release said.

The successful completion of the above prestigious orders is expected to be a turning point in the fortunes of the NCL Group, which has recently completed 40 years of its existence, according to the release.

NCL Group has grown into a one-stop source for a wide range of building materials including cement, RMC, cement bonded particle boards, windows and doors, textures, paints, putties, tile adhesives and AAC blocks.

YSRCP MPs protest in...

Continued from Page 1

Addressing the protest, Vijayasai Reddy spoke about how the Vizag Steel Plant came into being as a result of the hard work and sacrifice of many people. He said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had expressed his solidarity with the Steel Plant workers and promised to resolve the issue.

Reiterating the slogan "Visakha Ukku-Andhrula Hakku", which was the right of the people of Andhra Pradesh, the senior YSRCP leader said that many people have sacrificed their lives for the VSP.

"The steel plant has provided employment to thousands of families and our (YSRCP) stance is clear. We demand that the decision to privatise the steel plant be withdrawn by the Centre," the YSRCP MPs said.

Vijayasai Reddy recalled that the Chief Minister has already written letters to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, suggesting several revival options and that the captive mines should be allocated for the steel plant for it to run.

All 70 gates of Prakasam barrage lifted...

Continued from Page 1

With increasing inflows from Srisaillam reservoir, the irrigation officials are releasing over 3.50 lakh cusecs from Nagarjuna Sagar which is reaching Prakasam barrage.

Officials said that they expect the inflows into the Prakasam barrage to reach 3.50 lakh cusecs by Tuesday as the discharge from Nagarjuna Sagar continues.

Krishna district Collector J Nivas monitored the situation and instructed officials to be on high alert in the low-lying areas along the Krishna river.

Stating that Diviseema region could be flooded, the Collector put officials of the Revenue, Police, Panchayat Raj, Irrigation and Fisheries Departments on high alert in the vulnerable mandals.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹238
Without Skin	₹258
Broiler at Farm	₹131

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	438
HYDERABAD	496
VISAKHAPATNAM	557
RETAIL PRICE (IN VAYAWADA)	₹4.38

On copious inflows, gates of Sagar, Pulichintala...

Continued from Page 1

The projects on Godavari basin - Singur, Nizamsagar, Sriram Sagar, Mid Manair, Lower Manair, Kaddam and Yellamapally have had good inflows and most of the projects are almost full. The inflows however have reduced with Yellampally getting maximum inflows at 8,178 cusecs and outflow at the same rate as the water level reached 483.46 ft as against FRL of 485.56 ft.

Fresh Covid cases outnumbering...

Continued from Page 1

It decreased from 4.02 to 3.06 percent in West Godavari, marginally in SPS Nellore district from 3.81 to 3.63 percent, 3.08 to 2.88 in Prakasam and 2.51 to 2.31 percent in Guntur, the data showed.

Chittoor topped the weekly chart with 2,225 new positives, 1,603 recoveries and 23 deaths. East Godavari logged 2,100 cases, 2,009 recoveries and 10 deaths in the

Centre releases Rs1,566.6 cr to AP...

Continued from Page 1

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in Lok Sabha on Monday that "During Financial Year 2020-21, an amount of Rs 22,262.43 crore was released to the States under the central share of SDRF. In addition, for the financial year 2021-22, first instalment of Central share of SDRF amounting to Rs 8,873.60 crore has been released in advance to all States on April 29, 2021."

Centre decided to treat Covid-19 as a notified disaster for the purpose of provid-

ing assistance under SDRF towards containment measures in the States.

It may be mentioned here that the Union government provides funds for meeting the expenditure on relief provided to the affected people under the (SDRF) to the States for the notified disasters, in accordance with the approved items and norms.

The Centre contributes 75 percent of SDRF allocation for general category of states and 90 percent for special category states including the North-eastern States, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and J&K.

153 Black fungus cases in AP in the last five days

Continued from Page 1

Guntur (690) overtook Chittoor (683) in the number of infections but the latter was on top with the highest toll of 89. Guntur has had only 20 Black fungus deaths so far.

For the second week, Vizianagaram and West Godavari did not report any fresh cases, after touching 23 each in previous weeks, while the former now had a clean slate with no active cases.

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Focus on vaccinating teachers before schools reopen: Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday directed the officials to give priority to teachers in the vaccination programme as schools are set to reopen from August 16.

During a review meeting held on prevailing Covid situation, vaccination and progress of Nadu Nedu works at his camp office here, the Chief Minister asked officials to complete the vaccination process to teachers soon and ensure that Covid protocols are strictly followed.

He directed them to ensure large crowds are avoided and not to allow more than 150 people for marriages. The officials were also asked to create awareness among people on Covid containment measures.

The Chief Minister also directed them to ensure no crowds gather at religious events and directed them to issue guidelines in this regard.

"Please ensure people adopt all precautions since vaccination is on," the Chief Minister said, asking officials to be alert in coming two months. He asked them to conduct only RT PCR tests as they are more accurate compared to other tests. The officials were also



asked to continue the door-to-door survey, testing people with symptoms and monitor the '104' services regularly.

The Chief Minister asked officials to connect village clinics with PHCs through video conference and also link them with labs.

He said that health records of people should be mapped in the villages and that details of patients be available at village clinics through Arogyasri cards. This would help medical personnel obtain all details of the patients using QR code of Arogyasri cards. The net result would be that this would help

the doctors visiting villages as part of 'family doctor' concept.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to complete the works of village clinics by December.

The officials said MLHPs who have completed B.Sc nursing and CPCCH course will be appointed in village clinics along with an ANM.

The Chief Minister said THAT Asha workers also should report in village clinics.

The officials said 12 types of primary treatment methods, 14 types of tests and 65 types of medicine will be available at village clinics. They said 67

types of basic medical equipment will be available there and added that telemedicine services will also be available.

Chief Minister said that Nadu Nedu work of hospitals should be completed in stipulated time.

The officials informed works have been started in medical colleges of Paderu, Vizianagaram, Piduguralla and Machilipatnam and added that PILs were filed on lands of Anakapalli and Nandyala medical colleges. They said the contractor has been preparing to start works in Amalapuram, Rajahmundry, Palakollu, Eluru, Bapatla, Markapuram, Madanpalli, Penukonda Adoni.

The Chief Minister asked officials to pay special attention on Nadu Nedu programme in health sector and directed them to prepare an action plan in this regard.

He said that government hospitals should be on par with corporate hospitals to the extent that employees should chose state-run hospitals over private ones for treatment.

He asked the officials to prepare an SOP defining ownership policies, and to focus on maintenance of hospitals and prepare an SOP in this regard.



Governor takes part in eRUPI launch

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan, participated in virtual mode from Raj Bhavan, in the programme held for launch of eRUPI prepaid e-voucher by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Monday.

Addressing the Governors, Lt Governors, Union Ministers, Chief Secretaries and other dignitaries who participated in the launch programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said eRUPI is an example of digital

governance and futuristic reform. He said with the launch of eRUPI, the digital governance in the country has entered a new era of digital transactions, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system and will play a more effective role in targeted, transparent, leak-proof delivery of services.

The Prime Minister said that the eRUPI system is being utilised for transfer of benefits in health sector initially and will be extended to other sectors in the coming days and

said private organisations, philanthropists and NGOs can also make use of the eRUPI system for transfer of funds to reach out to targeted beneficiaries. The Prime Minister said eRUPI is a purpose-specific, person-specific prepaid e-Voucher for cashless and contactless payment and is the best example of use of digital technology as a tool to empower the poor. "With the launch of eRUPI, India has demonstrated to the world that we are not lagging behind other countries

in adoption of digital technology," the Prime Minister said.

Payment for Covid vaccination at a private vaccination centre in Mumbai given to a beneficiary through the eRUPI prepaid e-Voucher received by him through a QR code on his mobile phone was demonstrated as the first application on eRUPI digital payment platform, during the launch programme.

Mukesh Kumar Meena, Secretary to Governor, also attended the programme.

Lunch break protest by Fin Dept staff

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Employees of the AP Finance Department on Monday sought to exert pressure on the State government to take a decision on the issue of seniority of employees by wearing black badges at the Secretariat.

The employees registered their protest during the lunch break by wearing black badges.

The Finance Department had last year decided to finalise the seniority of employees, but the directions have not been implemented till now, leading to the employees registering their protest.

The employees who took part in the protest said that the seniority of employees in the department has not been finalised since 2016. They said that the State government was not bothered by the fact that workload in the department has increased. Finance Department employees expressed their concern over the delays in filling mid-category posts with replacements.

Kondapalli mining: Vasantha refutes TDP charge over Survey No. 143

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Refuting TDP's allegations that fake documents of Survey No. 143 of Loya village were created during Dr YS Rajasekara Reddy's tenure as Chief Minister, YSRCP MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad has said that the survey number was in existence for a very long time. It has been on lease since 1994, he said.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, the MLA said that TDP leaders, with the support from a section of the media, are enacting a drama to defame the State government. In 1993, a person who had applied for a lease was granted it by the Mining Department on Survey No. 143, he said and added that there has been evidence of the

existence of Survey No. 143, which was mentioned in an RSR record that was compiled in 1943-44.

MLA Krishna Prasad said that mining has been going on in Kondapalli region for the last 45 years, and there is no truth in the allegations that Survey number 142 was created during the YSR regime. He said that lease documents were also renewed in 2005, and even Vijaya Krishnan Survey also stated that the total of 1,252 acres gets tallied only after including Survey No.143.

Furthermore, he said, during the TDP regime, the officials raised objections on mining queries in Kondapalli and to resolve them, it was Devineni Umamaheswara Rao who had approached the then revenue minister KE Krishnamurthy

and got a stay order. However, Umamaheswara Rao is making allegations that it is not revenue land but forest and mining activity there is illegal. Such activity has been going on in the area for the last 50 years, he added.

He stated that Umamaheswara Rao has been trying to defame him for a long time and thus started making false allegations against him. The TDP leader visited the mine and inaugurated a crusher during the Naidu government but said it was just an inspection. He said that people are furious over TDP for betraying them in the name of Amaravati and the graphics. He rubbished the allegations that the government has been digging roads in the capital region of Amaravati.

SCR completes doubling of Umdanagar to Shadnagar line

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As part of the Doubling and Electrification Project undertaken by the South Central Railway, the doubling of a section between Umdanagar-Shadnagar for a distance of 29.7 km was completed and commissioned on August 2. This will enhance the rail connectivity between Hyderabad and cities such as Mahabubnagar, Kurnool, Anantapur, Bengaluru, Kadapa, Tirupati, etc., towa-rds the south. The project is being executed by the Railway PSU, Rail Vikas Nigam Limited.

The project was sanctioned for a distance of 85 km in 2015-16 at an estimated cost of Rs 774 crores. The section between Secunderabad and Umdanagar for a distance of 28 km is excluded in the above project and is undertaken as part of MMTS Phase I and II which has already been completed.

SCR CANCELS FOUR DEMU TRAINS:

Due to non-interlocking for doubling works between Umdanagar-Timmapur-Shadnagar on August 2, the authorities at South Central Railway have decided to cancel four DEMU trains running on the route. To ensure the safety of the passengers, train number 07790 (Mahabubnagar to Kacheguda), 07791 (Kacheguda to Nadikudi), 07792 (Nadikudi to Kacheguda) and 07789 (Kacheguda to Mahabubnagar) scheduled on August 2 has been cancelled.

Perni heaps praise on lyricist Thomas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Transport Minister Perni Venkata Ramaiah (Nani) heaped praise on Dr Thomas on securing a place in International Book of Records who penned more than 3,000 songs and composed tunes and sang without having proficiency in Telugu language.

The minister, during a felicitation programme held in Vijayawada on Monday, said that Telugu is a sweet language and anyone can learn it very easily. He said the government was committed to the development of the Telugu language. He appreciated Dr Thomas who received the international award even without knowing the language, learned Telugu and penned more than 3,000 songs is commendable.



Dr Thomas said that he was born in Tamil Nadu and later settled in Andhra Pradesh and in a very less time he learned Telugu language. He said that the award was received with the support given by the Telugu people. He said he would

work hard to win more awards by composing more songs with the support of the people.

MLA Malladi Vishnu, Corporator B Govind, Machilipatnam Deputy Mayor Noble Thomas and others were present.

Work on Machilipatnam Deep Sea Port to start in 6 months: Bala Showri

PNS ■ MACHILIPATNAM

Works related to the Machilipatnam Deep Sea Port project will start in six months as the judicial preview committee has given the green signal to float tenders, Member of Parliament V Bala Showri said on Sunday.

The Andhra Pradesh Maritime Board will focus on the work for tenders, the Machilipatnam MP told reporters.

The port project would be taken up under the Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode, he said.

The tenders will be finalised by next month and later a greenfield port project at Machilipatnam will be taken up with Rs 4,000 crore investment, Showri said.

After completion of the port's works, the Container Corporation of India will also invest Rs 1,000 crore for more projects in Machilipatnam, he added.

The MP also said that the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had approved the allocation of Rs 196 crore for four foot-over bridges in the Machilipatnam parliamentary constituency in the annual plan 2021-22.



'Weatherman of AP' seeks government support to dish out more accurate info

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

This young software engineer from the temple town of Tirupati has been creating ripples in the realm of weather with accurate predictions. His achievements have come in for praise from none other than Prime Minister Narendra Modi and he rose to fame when the latter hailed him as Weatherman of Andhra Pradesh during his monthly radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' that went on air on July 25. Meet B Sai Praneeth who is passionate about his avocation and has already made worthy contributions on weather analysis, thereby helping the farming community.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Praneeth said that it was a great experience talking to the Prime Minister on the radio programme and said if the State government extends support, he would provide more accurate weather information to the people. He opened accounts on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and began to post weather information and analysis.



The Weatherman of AP whose weather blog and website found a significant following among rural farmers who use the data to make informed decisions daily. He asserted the need for collating and converting complex information into simple and direct messages geared for micro, regional level in Telugu and English.

A gold medalist from Anna

University, Praneeth is a software engineer in Bangalore. He said every day he wakes up at 5.30 in the morning and starts analysing the weather and by 9 am he uploads the weather forecast in his blogs and social media platforms. He said that he can give a more accurate weather reports for short terms.

Praneeth said he had been connected to nature since his childhood and often went out into the fields in free time. He would talk to the farmers about their experiences on the weather, rainfall and cyclones in particular during the crop seasons.

The 24-year-old software engineer said that none of their parents is into agriculture or weather forecasting and he is more passionate towards nature and weather analysis. His father B Venkata Subramanyam is a retired Oriental Insurance company employee and mother B Bhuvaneswari an Andhra Bank employee of SV University branch while younger sister B Lakshmi Pratyusha is pursuing B Pharmacy in Tirupati. He has earned an engineering degree in EEE.

Praneeth has developed a keen interest in meteorology since 2013 and decided to use his passion and his talent for the welfare of farmers and started internet surfing and reading weather blogs. His mentor/guru is R Pradeep John, a weatherman from Tamil Nadu. He said he had observed that people, especially farmers, were suffering losses due to unseasonal rains, sudden changes in weather and natural calamities.

He felt that they could have saved themselves from the losses if they had access to some advanced information about the weather. Last year, he started blogging to provide information to farmers in Telugu.

He said weather data is collected from various sources. He later analyses the data and translates them into local language and disseminates the necessary information to farmers. Apart from providing weather updates, he also gives guidance on the dos and don'ts for different climate conditions, especially for protection from floods, storms and lightning.

24 universities declared fake by UGC, matter regarding 2 more pending in court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has declared 24 "self-styled" institutes fake and found two more in violation of norms, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said on Monday.

Pradhan made the statement in response to a written question in Lok Sabha.

"Based on the complaints received from the students, parents, general public and also through electronic print media, UGC has declared 24 self-styled institutes as fake universities."

"Besides, two more institutes namely Bhartiya Shiksha Parishad, Lucknow, UP and Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM), Qutub Enclave, New Delhi are also found functioning in violation of the UGC Act, 1956. The matters of Bhartiya Shiksha Parishad, Lucknow and IIPM, New Delhi are sub-judice in the court," he added.

Uttar Pradesh has the highest eight such fake universities



-- Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya, Varanasi; Mahila Gram Vidyapith, Allahabad; Gandhi Hindi Vidyapith, Allahabad; National University of Electro Complex Homeopathy, Kanpur; Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Open University, Aligarh; Uttar Pradesh Vishwavidyalaya, Mathura; Maharana Pratap Shiksha Niketan Vishwavidyalaya, Pratapgarh and Indraprastha Shiksha Parishad, Noida.

Delhi has seven such fake universities Commercial University Ltd, United Nations University, Vocational University, ADR Centric

Juridical University, Indian Institution of Science and Engineering, Vishwakarma Open University for Self Employment and Adhyatmik Vishwavidyalaya (Spiritual University).

Odisha and West Bengal have two such universities each. These are: Indian Institute of Alternative Medicine, Kolkata and Institute of Alternative Medicine and Research, Kolkata as well as Nababharat Shiksha Parishad, Rourkela and North Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology.

Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Puducherry and

Maharashtra have one fake university each.

They are Sree Bodhi Academy of Higher Education, Puducherry; Christ New Testament Deemed University, Andhra Pradesh; Raja Arabic University, Nagpur; St John's University, Kerala and Badaganvi Sarkar World Open University Education Society, Karnataka.

Elaborating on the steps taken by the UGC against the fake or non-recognised universities, Pradhan said, "the UGC issues public notices about the list of fake universities/institutes in national Hindi and English newspapers."

He said, "The commission writes letters to State Chief Secretaries, Education Secretaries and Principal Secretaries to take action against such universities located in their jurisdiction".

"Show cause and warning notices are issued to the unauthorised institutes awarding invalid degrees when any self-styled institution is found or noticed functioning in violation of the UGC Act, 1956."



Amzath Basha terms Disha app a 'Vajrayudham' for women

PNS ■ KADAPA

Terming the Disha app 'Vajrayudham', Deputy Chief Minister S B Amzath Basha has exhorted women and girls to download it and get the police help when they are in trouble. A programme was held here on Monday on sensitising women on the Disha app, 'Spandana' and public grievances.

Speaking on the occasion, the Deputy Chief Minister said that the Disha app was launched to provide security to girls and women. "The Disha app works as 'Vajrayudham' against the anti-social elements.

It also gives security to the girls and women from being harassed. All women and girls should download the Disha app and use it when in trouble," he said.

He said that in order to contain crimes and violence against women, officials of the police, women and child wel-



fare, health department and one-stop centre staff should work in a coordinated manner. "If assault takes place against women or girls, action will be initiated within 21 days and the perpetrator will be punished stringently. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is keen on

the effective implementation of Disha app," Amzath Basha said.

Basha said that the government would set up a Disha police station, appoint a DSP, SIs and other police personnel to ensure security and safety of women in the State and asked

women and girls to create awareness on the Disha App.

District Collector V Vijayarama Raju, SP Anburajan, Sub-collector Prudvi Tej and Deputy Mayors Mumtaz Begum and B Nityananda Reddy were among those present.



JNTU-K Registrar dies of stroke

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University-Kakinada (JNTU-K) Registrar Chinta Satyanarayana died of cardiac arrest here on Monday. He is survived by wife and two children.

University sources said that when he was having lunch he suffered a massive cardiac arrest. He was shifted to the Apollo hospital where the doctors examined and declared him brought dead.

Satyanarayana belonged to Khammampadu thanda, located near Tiruvuru, in Krishna district. He had been working as Registrar of JNTUK for one-and-a-half-years. Scholars, educationists and social activists condoled his death.

Bid to lay siege to Guntur civic body office foiled

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The police prevented the opposition parties from lay siege to the municipal corporation office programme protesting against the collecting garbage tax here on Monday.

The TDP, Janasena and CPM took out rallies to the corporation office from various places.

However, the police prevented them before they had reached the office.

A scuffle took place between the agitators and police while the activists were being prevented.

Addressing the gathering, district Janasena party president Gade Venkateswara Rao vehemently objected to imposing a garbage tax on the people.

He demanded that the government repeal the proposal of collecting garbage tax.

TDP leader Butchibabu slammed the YSRCP government for implementing anti-people policies. He warned of intensifying the agitation if the



tax proposal was not withdrawn.

Meanwhile, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) corporators registered their protest against the collection of garbage tax and hike of property tax by squatting on the floor in council hall.

The TDP corporators, holding placards and raising slogans squatted on the flood and demanded the government to withdraw the collection of garbage tax.

The TDP members vehemently opposed the hike of property tax and garbage tax.

Prakasam police always at forefront in solving problems: SP

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district SP Malika Garg has directed the police officers to redress the complaints received through the 'Spandana' programme and ensure that justice is done to the victims.

The Spandana programme was conducted here on Monday at the district police office.

Complainants from across the district submitted their grievances. On the occasion, the District SP interacted with the complainants who submitted their petitions regarding family disputes, husband/dowry harassment, employment/online frauds, land disputes and other issues.

A complainant Ch Srinivasan from BV Peta, said that he got a call from an unknown number to offer him a Tata Capital loan. He had sent his Aadhaar card, PAN card, bank account numbers through whatsapp and sent Rs 2,73,357 cash to various numbers through 'Phone Pe' app.

Later, he understood that he

was deceived. Ithadi Rama complained to the SP that her husband had died in a train accident. Her aunt and uncle were forcing her to go away to her mother's house were and not even giving her the existing property.

The SP assured them that she would thoroughly look into their problems and ensure that justice is delivered to them. She gave the details of the complainants and their problems to the officials of the concerned police stations through video conference and directed them to take appropriate action apart from providing speedy justice to the complainants as per the law.

She also directed the authorities to submit reports to her on 'Spandana' complaints from time to time.

"The main objective of the programme is to provide assurance to the public that the police are always there to listen to the problems of the people and resolve them expeditiously," the SP said.



EG district police to resolve public grievances

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The East Godavari police, for the first time, launched the public grievances forum in the SP's office to receive grievances of the public to resolve them at the earliest.

Though the public grievances are received in the Spandana programme on Monday by the Collector and other officials, Superintendent of Police Ravindranath Babu, for the first time, launched the public grievances forum on

Monday in the SP's office in which he heard the grievances of some persons and interacted with them.

The SP spoke to Additional SPs, DSPs and CIs concerned to resolve the grievances. Some women who came to get their grievances resolved expressed happiness over the SP himself hearing their problems.

The public grievances forum received overwhelming response from the general public on the first day of its launch, police officials said.

Single window system will weed out DWCRA benamis

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The State government is introducing the Single Window system in the DWCRA which is expected to weed out the benamis and do away with difficulties to the DWCRA women in getting loans.

Henceforth, the DWCRA women need not go to the banks for loans. If DWCRA women inform their animator about the loans, she would forward the details of loans to the Project Community Coordinator (PCC) and Assistant Project

Manager (APP) of Velugu project.

The PCC or APP examines the applications of loans and sanction the loans. The money will be credited into the accounts of DWCRA women. The DWCRA women can also send their loan applications from the village secretariat after presenting the biometrics.

Talking to The Pioneer, a group of DWCRA women here on Monday said that they used to depend on the mercy of bank managers for sanction of loans. Moreover, the animators demand

commission, they alleged.

In the new single window system, loans will be sanctioned using the biometric system in which the applicant would be informed about the sanction of loans.

"The single window system will do away with hurdles to the DWCRA women in getting loans and also paying commissions," District Rural Development Corporation coordinator Uyyari Paramesh said.

DWCRA group animator Sadhanala Padma said the single window system would dispel the doubts on them.



Film director Sukumar inaugurates school building

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Noted Telugu film director B Sukumar, along with Razole MLA Rapaka Varaparasada Rao, inaugurated a building constructed at a cost of Rs.18 lakh at Mattaparru village in UP School on Monday.

Talking to the media, Sukumar said he had adopted his native village Mattaparru for development. As part of the development programme, additional classrooms were constructed in the UP school.

He recollected his childhood stating that he used to live along with his mother and sister-in-law near the Razole government school area.

"When my friends proposed to set up an Oxygen



plant in the hospital at a cost of Rs.50 lakh, I agreed to do so," he said.

When asked about his latest Allu Arjun-starrer 'Pushpa', the star director said that the shooting of the film had come to an end and the details would be announced on Tuesday.

Eastern Fleet Ships on overseas operational deployment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In pursuit of India's 'Act East' policy and to enhance military cooperation with friendly countries, a Task Force of Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet having headquarters in Vizag is scheduled to proceed on an Overseas Deployment to South East Asia, the South China Sea and Western Pacific from early August 2021 for over two months.

The deployment of the Indian Navy ships seeks to underscore the operational reach peaceful presence and solidarity with friendly countries towards ensuring good order in the maritime domain and to strengthen existing bonds between India and countries of the Indo Pacific.

The Indian Naval task group comprises Guided Missile Destroyer Ranvijay, Guided Missile Frigate Shivalik, Anti-Submarine Corvette Kadmat and Guided Missile Corvette Kora. The latter three ships are indigenously designed and are equipped with a versatile array of weapons and sensors, and are made in India by Defence Shipyards.

During the deployment in the Indo-Pacific, the ships are scheduled to participate in bilateral exercises with Royal Malaysian Navy (Samudra Laxmana), Vietnamese Peoples' Navy, Republic of Philippines Navy, Republic of Singapore Navy (SIMBEX), Indonesian Navy (Samudra Shakti) and Royal Australian Navy (AUS-INDEX).



Further, they would also participate in multilateral exercise MALABAR-21 alongside

Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, Royal Australian Navy and the United States Navy in

Western Pacific.

The Indian Navy undertakes regular deployments to

'Dial your Collector' to begin on August 9

PNS ■ ONGOLE

District Collector Pravin Kumar has said that the 'Dial Your Collector' programme will begin in Prakasam district on August 9. The programme would be held from 10:30 am to 11 am on every Monday.

People can inform their grievances to the Collector by calling toll-free number 1077.

District Collector Pravin Kumar announced this while releasing a brochure of the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the 'Dial Your Collector' programme is being launched to resolve the grievances at the earliest.

Keeping in view the Covid



pandemic the programme is being launched. People from far-off places need not come to the Collector's office to get their grievances resolved.

"People can dial 1077 and explain their problems directly to the Collector," he said.

The grievances received

through the 'Dial Your Collector' programme would be registered and resolved, he said.

Joint Collector J Venkata Murali, T S Chetan, K S Viswanathan, K Krishnavenu and DRO D Thippe Naik were present.

friendly foreign countries and Indian and the Pacific Ocean regions in furtherance of the Prime Minister's initiative of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region - SAGAR. Further, such engagements build 'Bridges of Friendship' and strengthen international cooperation.

These maritime initiatives enhance synergy and coordination between the Indian Navy and friendly countries, based on common maritime interests and commitment towards Freedom of Navigation at sea. Besides regular port calls, the task group will operate in conjunction with friendly navies, to build military relations and develop interoperability in conduct of maritime operations.

Maha rains: Over 18,700 families affected in Mahad, Poladpur in Raigad

A total of 18,751 families in Mahad and Poladpur talukas in Raigad district were affected by flooding and other rain-related incidents on July 22 and 23, a district official said on Monday. As per the survey done by the state revenue department, 18,000 families belong to Mahad and 751 to Poladpur, while 562 farmers have also incurred losses due to flooding, he said. "While 30 houses in Mahad and eight houses in Poladpur are fully damaged, the number of partially damaged homes stands at 8,121 in Mahad and 552 in Poladpur. A total of 28 cattle shelters were destroyed. So far, 3,082 families have received relief from the state government by way of rice, wheat and kerosene" the official said. He informed that the number of survey teams of the revenue department in Mahad stood at 48, with 30 of them stationed in the non-town areas of the taluka. A release from the Maharashtra State Electricity Board said 1,078 transformers in 345 villages were damaged during the heavy rains that the area witnessed recently, of which 261 had been repaired.



Need to work on permanent solution to flood crisis in Maha: Thackeray

With heavy rains last month causing deluge in parts of Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday said there is a need to devise a "permanent solution" to the frequent flood crisis in the state and take some stringent steps towards it. The chief minister reached the flood-hit Sangli district in western Maharashtra where he visited Bhilwadi, Ankalkhop, Kasbe-Digraj and various other areas to take stock of the situation, and reviewed steps taken by the administration towards flood management. "We have to work on two fronts - providing immediate relief to people affected by floods, and that work is going on. The administration acted in advance and evacuated people to safety," he said. "Besides providing immediate relief, we will have to work on a permanent solution to the frequent crisis of floods in the region and for that, we will have to take some stringent steps," the CM said. Thackeray said if some constructions are causing obstacles to the natural flow of water, they need to be removed.



Spurious pesticide manufacturing unit busted in Delhi, two held

The Delhi Police have busted a spurious pesticide manufacturing plant in the national capital's Mundka area and arrested two men, officials said on Monday. The arrested accused, Mohan Lal and Aman, had rented two godowns at Hiran Kudna village two months ago for manufacturing the fake pesticides. They had made an initial investment of Rs 9 lakh, they said. A complaint was received from the representative of a pesticide manufacturing company alleging that someone was infringing the firm's trademark by producing spurious products in its name, the police said. A raid was conducted on July 30 and a large quantity of spurious material bearing the names of several companies was found stacked at the manufacturing plant in Mundka, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Parvinder Singh said Mohan Lal, Aman, Vijay and Rajender were engaged in manufacturing and selling spurious pesticides and fungicides with the branding of different companies. They also used to sell seeds of different crops treated with these fake pesticides. Fake raw material found at the plant and machinery used for manufacturing these spurious products was seized, he said.



Continued Opposition protests over Pegasus force adjournment of LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day as opposition members continued their protest over the Pegasus spyware controversy and other issues on Monday.

Before Ram Devi, who was in the Chair, adjourned the proceedings till Tuesday morning, the House passed the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill with voice-vote. When the House re-assembled at 3.30 PM, the opposition members continued their protest as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said she wanted to respond to the concerns raised by the Leader of the Congress party, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

As the din continued, the minister sought passage of the bill, and the House approved it by a voice vote.

The proceedings of the House were first adjourned till noon, then till 2 PM and again till 3.30 PM as an unrelenting opposition refused to end its protests.



RS proceedings adjourned till Tuesday morning

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day as Opposition MPs continued their protest over the Pegasus snooping row and other matters.

When Rajya Sabha reassembled at 3.36 pm, the government moved two Bills for consideration, but Opposition members, some of them carrying placards, kept raising slogans in the Well of the House.

Bhubaneswar Kalita, who was in the Chair, tried to pacify the protesting members, but in vain. As sloganeering continued, he adjourned the proceedings for the day. The House will reconvene at 11 AM on Tuesday.

Rahul calls for Oppn meeting over Pegasus row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing stalemate in Parliament, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has invited leaders of opposition parties to a breakfast meeting at the Constitution Club on Tuesday to chalk out a joint strategy on the Pegasus snooping issue.

Sources said the meeting is being held to forge unity among the opposition ranks on the issue. All opposition MPs and floor leaders of various parties have been invited for the meeting. The opposition has been demanding a discussion in Parliament on the Pegasus row and its leaders have been giving adjournment notices everyday. The government has been saying that the opposition is creating a "non-issue" and the IT minister has already given a reply in both Houses of Parliament.

HM trying to find solution to tensions: Guv Haribabu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid tensions between Assam and Mizoram over the recent border clash, Mizoram Governor K Haribabu met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday and said the Centre is trying to find a solution to the issue.

Meanwhile, BJP MPs from Assam, including Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, are also meeting the prime minister in the afternoon.

Babu is scheduled to meet Home Minister Amit Shah later in the afternoon. Talking to reporters in Parliament after meeting the prime minister, Babu said the incident was "very unfortunate".

"The home minister is trying to defuse the tension and he is trying to find the solution. Both chief ministers (of Assam and Mizoram) have committed that peace will be restored," he said.

At least six Assam Police personnel and one civilian were

killed and more than 50 people injured, including the police chief of the district of Cachar, in a fire-fight between the police of the two states on a disputed stretch of their boundary, near Dholai in Cachar district on July 25.

Tension along the border with Mizoram in Cachar and Hailakandi districts of Assam have been escalating since October 2020 with frequent incidents of burning of houses and encroachment of land.

RS lauds Sindhu's bronze

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Monday congratulated badminton ace P V Sindhu for winning a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics, saying that she has scripted history by becoming the country's first woman to win two individual Olympic medals.

When the House met for the day, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu congratulated Sindhu for her gritty performance on behalf of the House and himself.

The members responded by thumping tables when references were made to Sindhu and her family.

"With her spectacular performance, Sindhu has scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman to win two Olympic Medals and that too in successive editions," Naidu said. "This feat of Sindhu highlights the consistency at international levels that are expected of our sportspersons in the international arenas."

Born in a family of

sportspersons, Sindhu took to badminton when she was just 12. She along with her father used to travel 120-km daily for training, he said.

"Personally known to me, I have been witness to her hard work, perseverance and sheer dedication towards her passion," Naidu said. "It is appropriate to take note of the role of Sindhu's parents and family in her spectacular rise and achievements in badminton that brought her laurels for our country," he added.

'Minorities have to be treated as weaker sections'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has told the Supreme Court that minorities have to be treated as the "weaker sections" in the country, where majority community is so "predominant".

The NCM said despite the safeguards provided in the Constitution and the laws in force there persist amongst the minorities a feeling of inequality and discrimination.

"In a country like India where the majority community is predominant, the minorities have to be treated as the weaker sections within the meaning of Article 46," the NCM said in an affidavit.

In 40-page affidavit, it stated that "numerically smaller or weaker classes are bound to be suppressed and overpowered by the dominant majority groups" if special provisions and schemes were not framed by the government.

The submission was made in an affidavit filed in response to a petition which said welfare schemes cannot be based on religion.

Article 46 states that "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

The NCM also contended that it was founded with objective to integrate minority in the main stream to improve their social and economic status.

It also clarified that it does not administer any scheme nor provides grant to any community and in fact it is the government which runs schemes for them.

Earlier, the Centre had told the top court that welfare schemes for religious minority communities are "legally valid" which aims to reduce the inequalities and does

not violate the rights of members of Hindus or other communities.

"It is submitted that the schemes being implemented by the Ministry are to reduce the inequalities among the minority communities and to improve the level of education, participation in employment, skill and entrepreneurship development, reducing deficiencies in civic amenities or infrastructure.

"The schemes are not in contradiction to the principles of equality as enshrined in the Constitution. These schemes are legally valid as they are only enabling provisions so as to achieve inclusiveness and do not suffer from any infirmity. The support given to disadvantaged/underprivileged children/candidates of minorities through these schemes cannot, therefore, be faulted with," the affidavit had stated.

The Centre schemes are meant only for the economically weaker sections/underprivileged, children / candidates / women of the minority communities and not for everyone belonging to a minority community.

In addition, the scholarship scheme, coaching schemes etc have academic merit, as well as earmarking for girl students, it added.

The petition, filed by Neeraj Shankar Saxena and five others, had said the petitioners are being unconstitutionally deprived of benefits available to similarly situated members of religious minorities in violation of their fundamental right.

"The petitioners and other members of Hindu community are suffering because they have been born in majority community. The State cannot promote or give any benefit to any religious community whether minority or majority keeping in view the secular ethos embedded in the Constitution of India," the petition said.

SC dismisses plea of rape survivor to marry assaulter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Monday dismissed the plea of a rape survivor from Kottiyoor, Kerala, who moved the Supreme Court seeking permission to marry her assaulter - a defrocked priest who is now undergoing 20 years imprisonment.

The top court also dismissed a separate plea of the defrocked priest seeking bail on the ground that he wanted to marry the survivor, who was a minor at the time of rape had given birth to a child.

A bench of Justices Vineet Saran and Dinesh Maheshwari told the former priest, "The high court has taken a decision consciously and we would not like to interfere with its finding".

It told the victim that she may knock on the door of trial court with her plea to marry the former priest.

Advocate Amit George, appearing for the former priest, said the high court had passed sweeping directions in the case with regard to the marriage, which is a fundamental right.

The bench asked George what is the age of the victim and the former priest to which he replied that he is 49, while the rape survivor is around 25.

HC expects street vendors to get vaccinated to avoid Covid 3rd wave

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Monday said it is expected that street vendors will take proactive steps to get vaccinated so that the third wave of COVID-19 could be avoided and the national capital is not faced with a surge as witnessed recently.

The high court also asked Delhi government to consider in a right perspective the issue of allowing more weekly markets to operate as there is a strata of society which only purchases things from these markets since they

cannot afford other shops.

Presently, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Delhi government has allowed weekly markets to open but only with 50 per cent of vendors and one market in each municipal zone.

"It is expected that DDMA will consider this aspect in its right perspective. It is also expected that street vendors will also take pro-active steps to get vaccinated so that we can avoid the third wave and the NCT of Delhi is not faced with a surge as faced

recently," Justice Rekha Palli said.

The court made it clear that it was not asking the Delhi government to allow all weekly markets to operate and the authorities shall consider the issue and then take a decision.

It also observed that the government can put conditions so that there is no crowding at these markets.

The court issued notice to the Delhi government and asked it to file reply to the petition by Saptahik Patri Bazar Association which has challenged the author-



Woman trampled to death by tusker in Odisha

PNS ■ BARIPADA

A 60-year-old woman was trampled to death by a wild elephant at a forest in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district on Monday, police said. The incident happened at the Tiakati forest in Badampahad range of the Rairangpur forest division, they said. Sukhi Baskey went to the forest to collect mushrooms when the tusker attacked her, Range Officer Ramakanta Majhi said. The woman died on the spot, he said.

6 held in Gujarat for tonsuring widow, man over alleged affair

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Four men and two women were arrested in Gujarat's Sabarkantha district for allegedly tonsuring a 30-year-old widow after accusing her of being in a relationship with a married man, police said on Monday.

The incident took place in Sancheri village near Himmatnagar town, some 116 kilometres from here, on July 30 and the six accused were held on August 1, a day after an FIR was

registered, Sub Inspector PP Jani of Gambhoi police station said.

"Vadansinh Chauhan, Rajuji Chauhan, Kalusinh Chauhan, Rakeshsinh Chauhan, Surekha Chauhan and Sonal Chauhan were arrested for assaulting a woman with an intent to outrage her modesty, criminal intimidation and rioting. They had accused the victim of having an affair with a married man who has four children," Jani said.

The victim, in her complaint,

said a man who she knew and was married to the sister of the one of the accused, had offered her a lift on his motorcycle when she was returning after some bank related work on July 30.

Four of the accused stopped them near Raigadh village and beat them up, and later took the duo to Sancheri where all six accused hit them and tonsured the widow as well as the man who had offered her a lift, police said quoting the complaint.

Jaishankar likely to attend swearing-in of Iranian Prez

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is likely to represent India at the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran on August 5, people familiar with the development said on Monday.

Raisi, a hardliner and known to be close to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, won the presidential election in June by a landslide.

India has already accepted an invitation by Iran for the event, which is likely to be attended by leaders and representatives of a number of countries.

Last month, the external affairs minister called on President-elect Raisi during a stopover at the Iranian capital on his way to Russia.

Jaishankar also held extensive talks with his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif in Tehran covering a range of key issues including the fast-evolving situation in Afghanistan.

His visit to Iran coincided with Iran's hosting of an intra-Afghan dialogue in the country.

Newly discovered frog species named after plant geneticist

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Researchers from the University of Delhi have named a newly discovered frog species from Western Ghats region after the former Vice Chancellor and renowned Indian Plant Geneticist Prof Deepak Pantali.

University of Delhi researchers Professor S D Biju and Dr Sonali Garg on Monday said they have just discovered a new species of frog belonging to the family Dicroglossidae from the globally recognised Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot and it has been named as "Minervarya Pantali".

The discovery was made during a comprehensive study on a considerably large, common, yet

a confusing group of Indian frogs genus Minervarya (common name: Minervaryan frogs), carried out over a period of nearly 10 years, they said in a release.

The new species was identified based on multiple criteria, such as external morphology, DNA and calling pattern.

The study has also resolved the identity and taxonomic status of all known members of the genus from Peninsular India, in addition to clarifying the geographical ranges of species and providing numerous new distribution records based on morphological and genetically identified samples from a vast region.

The findings are published in a scientific article titled 'DNA



Barcoding and Systematic Review of Minervarya Frogs (Dicroglossidae: Minervarya) of Peninsular India: Resolution of a taxonomic conundrum with description of a new species' in the

international journal Asian Herpetological Research.

"It is a great privilege to name a frog species after Prof Deepak Pantali, the former Vice Chancellor of University of Delhi, in appre-

ciation of his tremendous support and encouragement for setting-up of the Systematics Lab at University of Delhi where research leading to the discovery and description of nearly one-fourth of all known Indian amphibians has been carried out," says Prof Biju, under whose leadership the current study was published.

Biju established the Systematics Lab in 2006, and is the Head of the Department of Environmental Studies and former Dean of the Faculty of Science at University of Delhi. The new species, named Minervarya Pantali, is endemic to the southern Western Ghats, the release said.

"We discovered it from wayside

vegetation at multiple localities in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, while surveying amphibians during the monsoon season. This species is also among the smallest known Minervaryan frogs, which is probably one of the reasons it was overlooked until now," says Dr Garg, the lead author of the study and a postdoctoral researcher at University of Delhi.

This study and the authors were funded by University of Delhi; Department of Science and Technology; Government of India; Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India; Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, USA and Global Wildlife Conservation, USA, the release said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Power play

Ignoring Indian protests, Pakistan is trying to legitimise its occupation of Gilgit-Baltistan

In what India claims is a violation of its natural right over Pakistan-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan, the Imran Khan Government gives shape to a law to award the region the status of a 'provisional' province. Khan had made that promise last November. This is an attempt by Islamabad to legitimise its illegal occupation by applying the provisions of Pakistani law and the election commission to the region. India has lodged a strong protest over the decision, asserting once again that Gilgit-Baltistan, along with the entire Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, is an integral part of India by virtue of its legal accession. The region, or the provisional province which it may soon be, is of immense strategic importance to India, Pakistan and China. It is Pakistan's only territorial frontier with China. It meets China's Xinjiang autonomous region at that point. It is also a land route between the two provinces. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through it. Its neighbours also give Gilgit-Baltistan a vantage location: Afghanistan is to its west, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to its south, and Jammu and Kashmir to the east. Till a decade ago, it was a nameless region — merely called Northern Areas — and administered from Islamabad, unlike Pakistan-occupied Kashmir with its own Constitution and Assembly. That changed with the Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order of 2009 that introduced the legislative Assembly in the region in place of the Northern Areas Legislative Council.



The reason why Pakistan never annexed the region is because it did not want to weaken its international case for a plebiscite in Kashmir by annexing Gilgit-Baltistan or, for that matter, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. It hopes that if ever a plebiscite is held, the votes in Gilgit-Baltistan would become vital to influencing the result. This explains why the region's provincial status is 'provisional'. India has begun to assert afresh its right over the region since Prime Minister Narendra Modi referred to it in his Independence Day speech in 2016. Previously, Indian Parliament passed a resolution in 1994 re-affirming its right over the region. In 2017, the British Parliament also asserted that Gilgit-Baltistan, under Pakistan's control, belongs to India. Gilgit is crucial to China's expansion of its land trade routes across the Himalayas. Without the control of Gilgit, the Gwadar port that establishes a direct access to the Indian Ocean via the CPEC is of little value to China. The whole idea of China's \$46 billion CPEC is to have surface transport and pipeline connectivity between Gwadar and Xinjiang via Gilgit, extending China's sphere of influence to Gilgit-Baltistan and right up to Hormuz Strait. Even as Pakistan makes the region a province, it cannot deny that it ceded control over the region to China and the Chinese Army. The latest development poses a challenge to India's claim to the whole of Jammu and Kashmir and brings closer home the threat of China's presence in Gilgit. Pakistan has made its move and the ball is in India's court now.

PICTALK



People bathe at Prabhatpuri Ka Khola waterfall after monsoon rains in Jaipur

PTI

The Kerala crisis

After the distinction of being the first COVID-free State, Kerala is now caught deep in the quagmire

Kerala wakes up every morning to an eerie silence. The State was the first to declare itself free of COVID-19 on the 100th day of diagnosing the first pandemic case in the country. But the last week saw Kerala diagnosing 20,000 new cases per day with an average Test Positivity Rate of 13. The death toll is surging at an unprecedented rate. When Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan declared on May 8, 2020, that the State was COVID-free, Kerala rejoiced, and sang paeans to former (and then) Health Minister KK Shailaja. But it did not take long for the façade of the success of the "Kerala model" to collapse. "Kerala was known for its good healthcare system at low cost. The colonial masters and the Royal Family of Travancore, who were the rulers till 1947, have to be feted for this. The State's good climate and availability of pure water and air had laid a strong foundation for an excellent public health infrastructure," says Dr SS Lal, an internationally renowned expert on contagious diseases. He has been alerting the authorities about the danger which they were going to face. But the doctor says that the policymakers had become prisoners of their own image.

The Government failed to co-opt the services of private hospitals, where 80 per cent of the State's doctors are employed. The Kerala Government Medical Officers Association's plea to appoint 1,000 doctors on a war footing fell on deaf ears. The unscientific lockdown rules and the failure to operationalise the existing infrastructure worsened the situation. The RTI probes have revealed that the authorities suppressed details about 7,000 COVID-19 related deaths. There were instances of COVID patients committing suicide in these hospitals because of the failure of the authorities to attend to them. An interesting point is the fewer number of cases being reported from Idukki and Wayanad, the districts atop the Western Ghats, apparently because of the hardworking lifestyle of the people there. Vijayan's decision to bring in personalities like filmmaker Adoor Gopalakrishnan and a bishop as members of a committee to advise the Government on how to tackle the COVID menace evoked laughter. No wonder, the State is adding 50 per cent of the new patients to the daily national tally. It once again underlines the fact that we should have the right people for the right job even during the pandemic.



Politics and the military don't gel

It would be in the interest of the political establishment to desist from politicising the military, lest it creates an uncontrollable monster



DEEPAK SINHA

The former President of the United States, Donald Trump, has always had the reputation of being a man of questionable moral and ethical integrity with close connections to the radical right. Yet, there were those who voted for him in 2016 because they genuinely believed that he was the lesser of the two evils, and strongly felt that only an "outsider" like him was capable of draining the "Washington Swamp", a phrase alluding to the seemingly all-pervasive corruption surrounding the Washington power elite. They would certainly have been disappointed by his insipid performance as President, especially the extent of his chicanery and selfishness. These have been laid bare in a recent book by two Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* journalists, investigative staff writer Carol Leonnig and former White House Bureau Chief Philip Rucker, on Trump's final year in power, titled "*I Alone Can Fix It*". A fitting sequel, and as perceptive and illuminating, is "*A Very Stable Genius*".

One of the most fascinating aspects of their latest book pertains to the manner in which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley, responded to President Trump's brazen attempts to overturn the election results by peddling his "Big Lie" that the elections had been "stolen" by the Democrats resorting to widespread fraud. Despite his legal challenges being summarily dismissed, he continues to peddle these allegations to this day. There can be little doubt that his incitement of his supporters culminated in a violent but abortive attempt on January 6 to disrupt proceedings at Capitol Hill to formalise the election results.

Prior to this, one may recall, General Milley had been excoriated by military veterans, politicians and the media for having unwittingly dragged the military into politics by being present, in uniform, at Trump's infamous "Bible photo op" at the St John's Church, immediately after peaceful protestors had been forcefully evicted while demonstrating for racial equality. Indeed, that he then went on to tender a public apology for his error of judgement speaks volumes of his forthrightness, integrity and



strength of character.

He then initiated action to ensure that the military was not dragged into the political sphere, despite Trump having appointed his own lackeys to key positions within the Pentagon. If the authors are to be believed, he went so far as to compare Trump to Hitler and refer to the January 6 insurrection as the "Reichstag Moment" for the US. On Trump's attempts to cling to power through force, he reportedly told his colleagues in the Joint Chiefs: "They may try, but they're not going to f@###g succeed... You can't do this without the CIA and the FBI. We're the ones with the guns."

His actions have lessons that our military leadership would do well to imbibe. It is inconceivable that our senior military hierarchy can, or ever will, adopt such a confrontational attitude towards the leadership of a democratically elected Government, whatever be the provocation, or however unconstitutional be their actions. The aloofness displayed by the military during the 1977 Emergency is a case in point. True, there have been the likes of General Thimmayya, Field

IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT OUR SENIOR MILITARY HIERARCHY CAN, OR EVER WILL, ADOPT SUCH A CONFRONTATIONAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE LEADERSHIP OF A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT, WHATEVER BE THE PROVOCATION, OR HOWEVER UNCONSTITUTIONAL BE THEIR ACTIONS

Marshal Manekshaw and a few more of that vintage who have displayed spine and opposed Government directions, but these have been few and far between, and restricted only to professional matters within their purview. Moreover, till recently, the military's senior leadership has been quite circumspect in ensuring that its actions were completely unbiased, apolitical, secular and within constitutional parameters. In fact, it was their adherence to such behaviour that made the military the most popular and respected institution within the country.

Unfortunately, while the bulk of our military remains apolitical and secular, the actions and public statements of the Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, have created perceptions that the military's senior leadership has become excessively politicised. Then there is the fact that some very senior officers have taken the plunge into active politics immediately on shedding their uniform.

While some within the ruling elite may see this turn of events as advantageous to their ideological cause, and in fact encourage this shift within the military hierarchy

through the process of "deep selection", as some allege, they may well be biting off more than they can chew. If there is anything to learn from history, it is that once the military gets sucked into politics, it will not be satisfied acting as a mere handmaiden of those in power. As General Milley so eloquently put it, they are the ones with the guns! We just need to look closely at our own neighbourhood for examples.

It would be in the interest of the political establishment to desist from politicising the military. Creating an uncontrollable monster, that will go on to bite the hand that feeds it, is nothing but sheer stupidity. The Government and the legislature would do well to put rules in place that prevent members of the military and even the Civil Services from joining politics without an appropriate cooling-off period. That would go a long way in insulating them, especially the military, from politics.

(The writer is a military veteran, who is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HAS DELHI LOST ITS WARMTH AND DIL?

Sir — Nowadays, we often hear about the northeastern people being harassed in the national Capital. These unfortunate incidents pain me somewhere because I have always regarded Delhi as my second home. I was there for the most part of my early childhood, from 1994 to 1999. Since my father used to travel frequently, my mother and I were in a quarter which we can term "Mini India" as there were people from various States.

We used to exchange our local food with their delicacies. The aunties would 'kidnap' me to take me along on their evening walks and sometimes to *mandirs*, gurudwaras and mosques. My mother, who would go to the bazaars alone, never faced any untoward incident; in fact she was helped by people with her bags. What has happened to the Capital now? Has it been hijacked by hooligans? Delhi earned the title of "*Dilwalo ki Dilli*" for a reason but such incidents are bringing shame to it and to the real "*Dilwalas*" of Delhi. I urge the Government to be more strict on this front so that our northeastern people keep feeling safe and loved, like my family did in the national Capital.

Noopur Baruah | Tezpur

BEWARE OF THE THIRD COVID-19 WAVE

Sir — India will witness another alarming rise in COVID-19 cases in the middle of August with the third wave peaking, and nearly 1,50,000 infections a day is the worst scenario. A study by a group of researchers led by Mathukumalli Vidyasagar and Manindra Agrawal at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Hyderabad and Kanpur predicts that if the third wave occurs, it will hit us sometime around the middle or end of August and continue increasing till October.

This peak can be of two types. If the variant is more infectious, the peak can be more like the first wave. If it is not that infectious, the cases will not be that high. India reported 40,134 new cases of COVID-19 and 422 deaths in the last 24

Kerala must not be vilified



The State of Kerala continues to detect over 20,000 COVID-19 cases daily through more than 1.5 lakh tests. There seems to be no let-up in the furious spread of the Delta variant of the virus in the State. Yet, the campaign against the State Government's COVID management using the pretext of the latest surge needed to be contested. Though Kerala's overall tally of 34.11 lakh cases accounts for 10.76 per cent of the total cases reported in the country, the death toll of 16,837 is 3.96 per cent of the total number. Against the country's fatality rate of 1.34 per cent, Kerala's is

hours, as per the Government on Monday. The total number of cases currently stands at 3,16,95,958 and the death toll at 4,24,773. The number of active cases in the country is 4,13,718. Less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported in 36 days, which is the result of sustained and collaborative efforts by the Centre, the States and UTs.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

CAST IN HAPPY BRONZE

Sir — After missing the glorious chance of bagging the gold, Pusarla Venkata Sindhu settled for the bronze medal with a clinical performance at Tokyo Olympics 2020. PV Sindhu fixed her hair, shuffled her feet thrice, leaned forward and muttered "come on" as she took up the challenge and settled for a bronze. She took a deep breath before letting the shuttle sail over the net. The point ended with a thunderous cross-court smash, and she let out a scream.

0.49 per cent, indicative of its success in saving lives. The State has succeeded in keeping the fatalities low through early detection, timely hospital admission and better medical care. Lives do matter more in God's Own Country.

A new study conducted by the researchers in India, Canada and the United States has put India's real death count between 31 and 34 lakh. The studies have also found that the actual death toll in Kerala is 1.4 times the official figure. Computed on the estimate of the uncounted deaths, the national fatality rate would be 9.78 per cent of the total cases reported and Kerala's would come to 0.69 per cent. The shortage of oxygen or non-availability of a hospital bed or ventilator, or shortage of a life-saving drug has never been the cause for any death in the State until now. Pampa, the holy river, has been flowing serenely; it never had to bear the sorrow of carrying bloated, abandoned dead bodies. The Kerala model of COVID-19 management has been successful in saving countless lives.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

She had scaled the mountain of expectations, beating China's He Bingjiao 21-13, 21-15 to clinch the Olympic bronze medal. She is now the first Indian woman to clinch back-to-back medals at the Olympics. Sindhu had her Chinese opponent scrambling around the court and a couple of authoritative shots put the Indian 11-8 ahead and she never looked back.

In the end, Sindhu's power and guile proved just too much. Bingjiao began to engage Sindhu in longer rallies in the second game to control the tempo of the game, but the Indian was prepared. She finished points early and derived great success from her ferocious forehand cross-court smashes. Thus, Sindhu cast her name in bronze in a fierce battle for supremacy.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I have directed the Assam Police to withdraw the FIR against K Vanlalvena, Hon'ble MP, Rajya Sabha, from Mizoram.

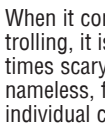


Assam Chief Minister — Himanta Biswa Sarma



What is their (Taliban militants') change? They have become more cruel, more oppressive, more non-Muslim.

Afghanistan President — Ashraf Ghani



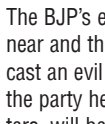
When it comes to trolling, it is at times scary how a nameless, faceless individual could say anything about anybody without getting caught!

Actor — Tiger Shroff



I showed the team a movie about staying in the moment and I think that made a big difference in this match against Australia.

Indian women's hockey coach — Sjoerd Marjine



The BJP's end is near and those who cast an evil eye on the party headquarters, will be found floating in the Worli gutters.

Shiv Sena president — Uddhav Thackeray

FIRST COLUMN

EDUCATION IS NEXT CALAMITY IN MAKING

The current learning gap and reduced social skills can lead to a widening knowledge gap



SHUBHANG RATHI

There is a calamity in the making in the field of education, especially school education, in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected every stake holder, be it the parents, teachers, students, and school administrators. Innovative ways and technical tools are being developed to make students come close to get the feel of classroom teaching. According to *Azim Premji Foundation*, more than 60 per cent of children cannot access online education and around 90 per cent of students with disabilities are unable to participate in online classes. Delhi-based NGO, Child Fund India, says as many as 64 per cent of children in rural India are facing the prospect of being dropped out of school. For students, the biggest challenge is the absence of physical interaction with peers and teachers. Primary school students cannot even comprehend what is happening to them. Not only are learning standards affected, physiological pressure on senior students is becoming immense. There



is little physical activity because local parks and school playgrounds are also shut. Students in X, XI and XII are irritated about the new methodology of exam evaluation. For parents, it is challenging to teach different concepts and methods to their children every day. Parents are juggling between house chores, office work, and handling the education needs of their children. One parent of my school said: "If this year it is online classes, I am shifting back to my village as I am here in the city only for my children's studies." Parents who have suffered financially due to COVID-19 are taking extreme steps to cut down on education expenses. Unfortunately, it is also their first response, resulting in a heavy blow to the child's future. For teachers, the biggest challenge is teaching by using technology and understanding students' body language. Old and experienced teachers face issues related to online teaching. Teachers are dissatisfied with learning outcomes after putting in extra effort.

I see a calamity coming: Many students have left any formal form of studying in 2020-21. Something needs to be done to rectify the situation. For instance, when we return to work after a gap of 10 days, we feel we have to start work from scratch even though we have been doing the same work for the past several years. Imagine how will a child in the 5-10 age group cope with a break of over 18 months and still attain previous academic levels? Even though we have the infrastructure to teach children, what we lack is continuity. It might become difficult for students to remember the past concepts and relate them to the new ones. It is a challenging task to bring the students back to their previous academic levels. There is already a fear of many small schools closing down because of the spiraling running costs. The administrators are bogged down by unpaid fees in spite of the Supreme Court's verdict. The current learning gap, reduced social skills, and poor handling by educators can lead to a widening knowledge gap of students when offline classes commence again. This can create an educated but unskilled and incapable workforce in the future. We are also looking at an education divide between the rich and the poor and urban and rural. We require the government's intervention to come up with a plan to allow students to visit their schools once or twice a week while continuing their online classes. A hybrid model to clear doubts and reduce the physiological pressure of the students will be most welcomed by schools.

(The writer is the owner of a private school in Morena, Madhya Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

Power reforms — a distant dream

Unshackling of discoms will take away the leverage parties enjoy to serve their populist goal of giving cheap/free power to people at election time



UTTAM GUPTA

Since last year, there have been several announcements regarding the reformation of power distribution companies (discoms). They include the Electricity (Amendment) Act, 2020, Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution (RLRBSD), and a special loan of ₹90,000 crore (subsequently raised to ₹130,000 crore) to discoms in 2020, and the new draft National Electricity Policy, 2021.

The key reform measures included (i) developing an efficient market for electricity distribution; (ii) de-license the distribution business, bring in competition, and give the consumer power to choose supplier (or "open access"); (iii) direct benefit transfer (DBT) of subsidy; (iv) putting a cap on the hike in power tariff; (v) linking payments by discoms to letter of credit (LoC); (vi) denying grants or loan to loss-making discoms, etc.

An overwhelming share of power generated by PSUs such as the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), etc., independent power producers (IPPs), besides generating stations of State electricity boards (SEBs) is procured by discoms (these are mostly owned and controlled by State governments) under power purchase agreements (PPA). Most of these PPAs are long-term contracts up to 25 years. A mere five per cent of the electricity is traded.

The State governments order discoms to sell electricity to some preferred consumers, viz., poor households and farmers, either at a fraction of the cost of purchase, transmission, and distribution, or even free. On the units sold to these groups, they incur colossal under-recovery. This is aggravated by aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses - most of it is plain theft. In flat tariff allowed to IPPs/PSUs under a cost-plus formula (under the PPAs) adds to the revenue shortfall.

A deadly cocktail of these three factors contributes to persistent and increasing losses of discoms. In 2015-16 it was ₹52,000 crore, Ts. 17,000 in 2017-18 (this reduction has to do with a massive bail-out given in November 2015 under Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana), ₹30,000 crore in 2019-20, and ₹58,000 crore in 2020-21. In this backdrop, let us analyze the reform measures: (i) A pre-requisite for the development of an efficient market for electricity distribution is that a major chunk of power should be available for sale in the open market. But, with 95 per cent of electricity tied to PPAs, that too long-term, this is unthinkable.

About (ii), considering that the entire distribution network — transmission lines, feeder lines, transformers (that caters to households), industries, etc. — is owned and controlled by discoms, any talk of letting in private entities is a misnomer.

As for 'open access', a provision was made even under the amended Electricity Act (2003). Under this policy, to be imple-



BY FIXING THE SURCHARGE AT A HIGH LEVEL AND NOT BOTHERING TO REDUCE IT (AS MANDATED UNDER THE ACT), THE STATE GOVERNMENTS ENSURED THAT POST-SWITCH, THE EFFECTIVE COST OF POWER TO THE CONSUMER — TARIFF CHARGED BY THE NEW SUPPLIER PLUS OAC — IS HIGHER THAN WHAT THEY PAY TO SEBs. THAT RENDERED THE SWITCH UNECONOMICAL

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)



mented within five years of its enactment, i.e., by 2008, the choice was given to the bulk consumers (having consumption more than 1 megawatt) to choose their supplier. But another provision in the Act required such customers to pay an 'open access surcharge (OAC)' to the concerned SEB they wanted to leave.

State governments used this lacuna to the hilt to shield the SEBs who are prone to charging exorbitant tariffs from industries. By fixing the surcharge at a high level and not bothering to reduce it (as mandated under the Act), they ensured that post-switch, the effective cost of power to the consumer — tariff charged by the new supplier plus OAC — is higher than what they pay to SEBs. That rendered the switch uneconomical.

They have not even spared the Railways which spends over ₹12,000 crore annually on the purchase of electricity. Under the Railways Act, it is allowed to distribute and supply power and is a "deemed" licensee as it is buying electricity for its consumption and is exempt from payment of the surcharge. Yet, it has to pay OAC as States will not give 'NOC' - a requirement for availing exemption.

Coming to (iii), under DBT, the State Government gives subsidies directly to the target beneficiaries, even as discoms fix tariff in a manner as to fully recover their cost of purchase, avoiding, and distribution, thereby wheeling any under-recovery on such sale. They also need not charge more from industries and businesses which they have

to do under the present regime to cross-subsidize supplies to preferred users. With direct cash transfer, discoms can be freed from state control which will help them reduce costs including by reining in theft. Under this regime, it will also be easier to implement 'open access'.

Despite these positive spin-offs, the Union Government has not shown the gumption to implement the DBT. In fact, following strong protests from farmers' leaders on its inclusion under the Electricity (Amendment) Act, 2020, it has even promised that the status quo will continue. If the existing system of supplies at heavily subsidized tariff or even without charge to farmers has to continue, then, logically, the same should apply on supplies to households as you cannot have two different methods of delivering subsidy to different sections of the society. So, there is no hope of the DBT ever seeing light of the day.

As for (iv), discoms can recover only up to 15 per cent of under-recovered power supply cost from other consumers. Simply put, if their under-recovery from supplies to farmers/households is say, 'X', then they will be allowed to recover only 0.15X by hiking tariff on supplies to industries and businesses. This will end up further bloating the losses of discoms (though industries will face a modest hike in tariff vis-à-vis the existing scenario of no cap). But this will not prompt them to set their house in order all the more when they know that eventually, the Government will bail them out.

As for (v), under the LC

arrangement, the banks guarantee that a buyer's payment to a seller will be received on time and for the correct amount. If the buyer is unable to pay, the bank will be required to cover the full or remaining amount, which, in turn, it will recover from the buyer using all available legal means. Here, the buyer being the discom - owned by the State - it will be a daunting challenge for the bank. As for (vi), denial of loan to loss-making discoms will not make them feel the heat as experience shows that help reaches them by hook or crook.

To conclude, measures such as those mentioned under (iv), (v), and (vi) are merely cosmetic while the political brass does not have the gumption to act on other measures — as discussed under (i), (ii), and (iii) — which are real reforms. This is because it will require the unshackling of discoms and that will take away the leverage that all parties currently enjoy to serve their populist goal of giving cheap/free electricity to the people who matter at election time. No wonder that we hear proclamations about reforms only to justify mammoth capital infusion whenever discoms need salvaging.

Under UDAY (2015), discoms were given a package worth ₹400,000 crore but are still saddled with under-recovery of ₹0.42 on every unit of electricity sold and a debt of about ₹450,000 crore as on March 31, 2021. Under RLRBSD, the government will be spending another ₹300,000 crore but with no hope of trimming under-recovery. The vicious cycle will continue.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THESE PEOPLE (CONGRESS) WERE THE JAMES BOND OF SPYING (WHEN IN POWER). THEY SPIN A WEB OF SPYING WHEN IN GOVERNMENT.
— UNION MINISTER
MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI



NO GOVERNMENT ALLOWS OTHERS TO SNOOP ON ITS PEOPLE, BUT THIS WAS ALLOWED TO AN ISRAELI COMPANY. IS SECURITY OF THE COUNTRY SAFE?
— CONGRESS LEADER
MALLIKARJUN KHARGE



Thirty years later, 'reform' yet to happen

Liberalisation was not voluntary but was egged on by global lenders who would not lend without a firm Indian commitment on 'reforms'

Thirty years and India is still waiting for the dream to become real. The liberalization of the economy in 1991 is erroneously taken as being limited to divesting government assets and holdings in industry.

Liberalisation was not a voluntary decision but was nudged by major lenders, the IMF and World Bank, who threatened to stop lending without a firm commitment to "reforms". The country went through a foreign exchange crisis in the late 1980s and 1990s and family jewels were pawned because forex reserves plunged to unexpected lows. In July 1991, the RBI pledged 46.91 tonnes of gold with the Bank of England and Bank of Japan to raise \$400 million to meet its international obligations. The



SHIVAJI SARKAR

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reforms that meant losing government assets to the private sector started with a "bang" but did not bring the private sector to par with the government. The reforms initiated by the then finance minister, Manmohan Singh, were not a roaring success but a piece of confusing policy that has dumped subsequent governments into a policy quagmire.

While liberalizing the society from licence-permit raj was welcomed, the process of doing so gradually became complicated. Changes were made in industrial policy, monopolies law was annulled, import licensing was abolished, India joined WTO and TRIPS, quantitative restrictions on import of manufactured goods and farm products were removed, and current



account convertibility was introduced, business processes were eased, and the GST was introduced.

But disinvestment of public assets caught all attention. Every government took pride in selling assets or being seen doing that. Still, the private sector is suspect in the eyes of the bureaucracy.

It is still a mystery why a partial opening up was considered revolutionary. India is still not free of its socialist

mindset and a preference for government control on the pretext of "concern for people's welfare".

The "reforms" worked a bit. But the pandemic impoverished 80 crore people. Growing joblessness during the lockdown pushed the middle class to the edge of poverty. This is reflected in the slow growth of the GDP. In 2020-21, India's economic growth slowed and contracted by 7.3 per cent, the NCAER says.

Liberalisation in 1991 was followed by a series of ₹7 lakh crore scams - Harshad Mehta to Ketan Parekh, UTI, LIC (about ₹2 lakh crore), and a series of banks, leading to a JPC probe. The top scams are coal allocation (₹1.86 trillion), 2G spectrum (₹1.76

lakh crore), Waqf Board land (₹1.5 lakh crore), Commonwealth Games (₹70,000 crore), Telgi stamp (₹20,000 crore), Satyam (₹14,000 crore), and Hawala scandal (₹100 crore).

Scams of such magnitude had never happened since Independence. Every divestment deal was also questioned. While the large private houses acquired these assets with loans from public sector banks, it also opened up an era of high bank losses (NPAs) particularly after the Lehman meltdown in 2007-08. The RBI Financial Stability Report (FSR) says despite banks writing off ₹23,786 crore loans in 2019-20, enabling the PSU banks to show lower NPAs, banks could go into severe stress as it fears the NPAs may

escalate to 16.2 per cent by September 2021 as borrowers are saddled with unpaid dues.

Repeated reorganization and mergers of banks have not boosted confidence. The latest move to sell four major banks and LIC is not being seen as a happy event. Many buyers could be from the list of 50 major defaulters.

Since 1991, government assets worth ₹3.63 lakh crore were divested. During 2014-19, ₹2.79 lakh crore worth assets were divested. The target set for 2020-21 is ₹2.1 lakh crore. The money received is adjusted in budgetary expenditure and is not known to have been used for building assets.

In 2016, demonetization shook the economy. The cash flow was severely hit, affecting

sales of goods and commodities. People's purchasing power collapsed, delaying the post-pandemic industrial, real estate, and market recovery. It might lead to years of moderate to slow post-pandemic growth and that means a severe resource crunch. Thirty years since the reforms, the power sector is in a mess again and agriculture remains the mainstay of the economy.

Have we made progress? Prime Minister Narendra Modi says his government is working for a targeted \$5-trillion economy. But former PM Manmohan Singh says that the future economic path is tougher than in 1991. Either way, the country must bite the reforms bullet and recast its policies keeping in mind growth in the next 30 years.

July manufacturing output zooms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector activities witnessed the strongest rate of growth in three months in July amid improved demand conditions and easing of some local COVID-19 restrictions, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose from 48.1 in June to 55.3 in July, pointing to the strongest rate of growth in three months.

In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"It's encouraging to see the Indian manufacturing industry recover from the blip seen in June. Output rose at a robust pace, with over one-third of companies noting a monthly expansion in production, amid a rebound in new business and the easing of some local COVID-19 restrictions," said Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit.



Lima further noted that "should the pandemic continue to recede, we expect a 9.7 per cent annual increase in industrial production for calendar year 2021."

On the recruitment front, there was a marginal increase in employment in July that ended a 15-month sequence of job shedding.

"Although marginal, the rise in employment was the first since the onset of COVID-19. With firms' cost burdens continuing to rise, however, and signs of spare capacity still evident, it's too early to say that such a trend will be sustained in coming months," Lima said.

On the inflation front, there was a softer but still sharp

increase in input costs. Output charges rose only slightly, however, as several companies absorbed additional cost burdens amid efforts to boost sales. "Policymakers will welcome evidence that inflationary pressures are starting to abate. Firms signalled the slowest increases in input costs and output charges for seven

months. "Hence, we expect the RBI to keep interest rates unchanged in its August meeting as it continues to support growth," Lima said.

The RBI is scheduled to announce its bi-monthly monetary policy review on August 6 at the end of the three-day meeting -- August 4-6 -- of its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

Experts believe, amid fears of a third wave of coronavirus pandemic and hardening of retail inflation, the Reserve Bank is likely to maintain status quo on interest rate and watch the developing macro-economic situation for some more time before taking any decisive action on monetary policy. The survey further noted that, Indian firms foresee output growth in the year ahead, with the end of the pandemic and rising sales expected to support the upturn.

"The overall level of positive sentiment rose from June's 11-month low, but remained historically subdued as some companies were concerned about the path of the pandemic," the survey said.



No proposal under consideration to waive farmer loans, says Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Monday said there is no proposal under consideration to waive loans of farmers, including Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe farmers. In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Finance Bhagwat Karad said the Centre has not implemented any farm loan waiver scheme since 'Agriculture Debt Waiver and

Debt Relief Scheme (ADW-DRS), 2008'.

"There is no proposal under consideration of the Government of India to waive off the loans of farmers including Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes farmers in the country," the minister said.

Karad also listed major initiatives taken by the government and the Reserve Bank of India to reduce the debt burden of farmers and for welfare

of the people engaged in agriculture, including those belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

He cited schemes like interest subvention for short-term crop loans of up to Rs 3 lakh, RBI's decision to raise the limit for collateral-free agriculture loan from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1.6 lakh, and direct income support of Rs 6,000 per year to farmers under Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi.

MONEY MATTERS

Bliss GVS Pharma gets GMP certificate for Palghar facility

Drug firm Bliss GVS Pharma on Monday said it has received good manufacturing practice (GMP) certificate from the Ministry of Industry & Trade of the Russian Federation for its facility in Palghar in Maharashtra. The Russian GMP certificate is for the company's manufacturing unit in Palghar in compliance with the requirements of the rules of Good Manufacturing Practice, Bliss GVS Pharma said in a regulatory filing. "Russia being a key member of Eurasian Economic Union, this GMP approval opens the access for Bliss GVS to Russian Pharmaceutical market along with other member CIS countries," Bliss GVS Pharma Managing Director Harsh Sharma said. The company intends to launch products in Gynaecology, Urology, and Anti-Haemorrhoidal segments across these markets, he added. Shares of Bliss GVS Pharma closed at Rs 126.80 per scrip on BSE, up 17.84 per cent from its previous close.



Ashok Leyland sales up 81 pc at 8,650 units in July

Hinduja Group flagship firm Ashok Leyland on Monday reported 81 per cent increase in total vehicle sales at 8,650 units in July. The company had sold 4,776 units in July 2020. Total domestic vehicle sales stood at 8,129 units last month as against 4,283 units in the year-to-date period, registering an increase of 90 per cent, Ashok Leyland said in a statement. Medium and heavy commercial vehicles (M&HCV) sales in the domestic market were at 3,473 units last month as compared to 1,500 units in July 2020, it added. Light commercial vehicle sales in the domestic market last month stood at 4,656 units as against 2,783 units in the same month last year, the company said.



TVS registers 10 pc growth with sales of 278,855 units

TVS Motor Company registered a growth of 10% with sales of 278,855 units in July 2021 as against sales of 252,744 units in the month of July 2020. Two-Wheeler Total two-wheelers registered a growth of 8% with sales of 262,728 units in July 2021 as against sales of 243,788 units in July 2020. Domestic two-wheeler registered sales of 175,169 units in July 2021 as against sales of 189,647 units in July 2020. Motorcycle registered sales of 138,772 units in July 2021 as against sales of 106,062 units in July 2020. Scooter sales of the Company registered 74,351 units in July 2021 as against sales of 78,603 units in July 2020. The Company's total exports registered a growth of 65% with sales of 103,133 units in the month of July 2021 as against 62,389 units in July 2020. Two-wheeler exports registered a growth of 62% with sales of 87,559 units in July 2021 as against sales of 54,141 units in July 2020. The demand in the export market continues to be robust, and container availability is improving.



Policybazaar files Rs 6,017.5 crore IPO papers with Sebi

PB Fintech, which operates online insurance platform Policybazaar and credit comparison portal Paisabazaar, has filed preliminary papers with market regulator Sebi to raise Rs 6,017.50 crore through an initial public offer (IPO). The IPO comprises a fresh issue of Rs 3,750 crore worth of equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 2,267.50 crore by existing shareholders, according to draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). As part of the OFS, SVF Python II (Cayman) will sell shares worth Rs 1,875 crore, Yashish Dahiya will sell shares worth Rs 250 crore and some other selling shareholders will also offer shares. The firm may consider raising around Rs 750 crore by way of a private placement of equity shares ahead of the IPO. Proceeds of the fresh issue will be used towards enhancing visibility and awareness of the company's brands to look for new opportunities to expand growth initiatives to increase the consumer base including offline presence.



Birla offers to hand over VI stake to government

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aditya Birla group Chairman Kumar Mangalam Birla has offered to hand over his stake in debt-laden Vodafone Idea Ltd (VIL) to the government or any other entity that the government may consider worthy to keep the company operational.

The billionaire businessman made the offer in June in a letter to Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba.

According to official data, VIL had an adjusted gross revenue (AGR) liability of Rs 58,254 crore out of which the company has paid Rs 7,854.37 crore and Rs 50,399.63 crore is outstanding.

VIL alongwith Bharti Airtel had approached the Supreme Court for correction in the government calculations but their plea was rejected.

In the letter, Birla, who holds around 27 per cent stake in VIL, said investors are not willing to invest in the company in the absence of clarity on AGR liability, adequate moratorium on spectrum payments and most importantly floor pricing regime above the cost of service.

Without immediate active support from the government on the three issues by July, the financial situation of VIL will come to an "irretrievable point of collapse," Birla said in the letter dated June 7.

Construction of 6L housing units valued at Rs 5 L-cr facing delay

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Construction of over six lakh homes valued at over Rs 5 lakh crore is either fully stuck or delayed across seven Indian cities as of mid-2021, as per a report by a realty consultant released on Monday. These units are in projects in seven cities, which were launched on or before 2014, the report by Anarock Property Consultants said.

The report classified 1.74 lakh homes valued at Rs 1.40 lakh crore as "totally stuck" and added that two-thirds of these units are priced below Rs 80 lakh. It said the government's



SWAMIH fund has come to the rescue of several projects but did not specify the exact help tendered by the scheme. Delhi-National Capital Region leads the chart with

Markets march higher on global cues

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks opened the week with robust gains on Monday as strong corporate results, supportive macro-economic data and a bullish trend overseas turbocharged sentiment. Auto stocks were propelled by recovery in July sales numbers, while IT counters also saw brisk buying.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 363.79 points or 0.69 per cent to finish at 52,950.63, while the broader NSE Nifty surged 122.10 points or 0.77 per cent to 15,885.15.

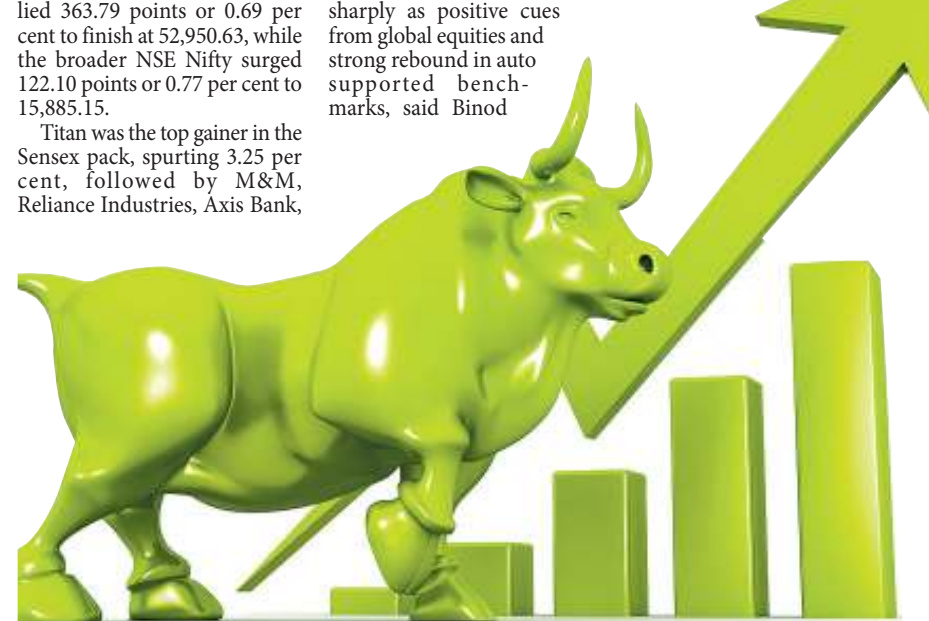
Titan was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring 3.25 per cent, followed by M&M, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank,

TCS, Maruti and Infosys. HDFC gained 0.88 per cent after the country's largest mortgage lender reported a 31 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs 5,311 crore for the June quarter.

On the other hand, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Dr Reddy's and HDFC Bank were among the laggards, shedding up to 1.66 per cent. Domestic equities recovered sharply as positive cues from global equities and strong rebound in auto supported benchmarks, said Binod

Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Further, modest recovery in financials, IT and pharma also supported market, he said, adding that realty stocks were in focus after sharp improvement in property registrations in Mumbai for July, while decent improvement in monthly auto sales volume



aided original equipment manufacturers (OEMs). He noted that most key sectoral indices traded in green, while volatility index broadly stood flat.

On the macroeconomic front, India's manufacturing sector activities witnessed the strongest rate of growth in three months in July amid improved demand conditions and easing of some local Covid restrictions, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose from 48.1 in June to 55.3 in July -- the strongest rate of growth in three months.

"Tracking global sentiments, vibrant domestic sectors like realty, auto, IT and chemicals provided an edge to Indian equities. Recovery is seen in July auto sales and an improved outlook for real estate due to a surge in property registrations helped these sectors to trade higher. "USD 1 trillion infrastructure spending package in the US provided better prospects to the core economy, aiding global markets to start the month on a strong footing," said Vinod Nair.

NHAI's borrowing rises to Rs 3.06 L-cr in March

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The total borrowing of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) increased to Rs 3,06,704 crore in March 2021 from Rs 74,742 crore in March 2017, Parliament was informed on Monday.

Replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said Since 2017, NHAI has availed external borrowing to the tune of Rs 3,000 crore.

The minister informed that the amount of interest paid by NHAI in 2020-21 was Rs 18,840 crore.

He also said that as of



date, there are 140 arbitration cases pending before various arbitral tribunals, wherein an amount of Rs 91,875.70 crore of the contractors/ concessionaires claims and Rs 44,600 crore of NHAI's counterclaims is involved for adjudication.

Rupee gains 8 paise to close at 74.34 against \$

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained 8 paise to close at 74.34 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, supported by a firm trend in domestic equities and a weak American currency. Forex traders said the rupee is trading in a narrow range as investors are awaiting the RBI's monetary policy meeting outcome for further cues.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.38 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.30 and a low of 74.43.

High GST, acquisition cost slowing down car demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

High cost of acquisition due to a variety of reasons, including higher GST than all other major countries, is slowing down car demand in the country and unless the Centre and states take steps to reduce it, the industry is unlikely to experience reasonable growth, according to Maruti Suzuki India Chairman R C Bhargava.

Addressing shareholders in the company's Annual Report for 2020-21, he said after the devastating second wave of the coronavirus pandemic hitting the first quarter of FY22, the performance in the next three quarters will largely depend on how effectively people get vaccinated and observe safety protocols.

"In March 2021, we were quite optimistic about the outlook for FY2021-22. The suddenness and ferocity of the second wave of the pandemic was a surprise to all, and led to



lockdowns and restrictions in most parts of the country," he wrote.

Production and sales again dropped and the recovery that had started in the previous quarter suffered a set-back. Q1 sales were limited at 3,53,600 units, Bhargava added.

Emphasising that the future outlook hinges on how the virus is contained, he said, "The performance in the next three quarters largely depends on how effectively all our citizens follow the government's advice to get vaccinated and observe safety protocols."

Bhargava further said, "If we can avert the third wave, or substantially reduce its effect, and there are no further waves, economic activities and sale of cars can improve significantly over what was achieved last year." He also attributed the slowing down in the demand of

cars to "largely because the cost of acquisition by consumers has increased due to various reasons like regulatory changes, depreciation of the rupee, increase in cost of raw materials and taxes imposed by State governments".

"The GST on cars, based on the past rates of excise duty, is much higher than the GST (or equivalent) in all other major countries of the world. It is unlikely that the car industry will experience reasonable rates of growth unless the central and state governments consider how to reduce the initial acquisition cost of car," Bhargava asserted.

Yet, Maruti Suzuki India Managing Director and CEO Kenichi Ayukawa said in the second half of 2020-21 there was growth after a big contraction in Q1 due to COVID-19 as "the demand for cars also followed the path of economic recovery". "The demand for cars was driven by pent-up

demand, increasing customer preference towards personal mobility and a good demand from non-urban markets," Ayukawa wrote in his address.

On the road ahead, he said, "Although the country is navigating through tough times, its economic prospects appear to be promising over the medium term. With support from SMC in terms of relevant products and technologies, the company will continue to work on all the enablers to cash-in on the opportunities."

Moreover, SMC, in its recent mid-term plan, indicated to offer relevant products such as Utility Vehicles (UV) to strengthen MSI's product lineup, promote the penetration of hybrids and introduce EVs, Ayukawa added.

"The partnership between Suzuki Motor Corporation and Toyota Motor Corporation will help the Company in gaining access to hybrid technology," he said.

Lung cancer: Diagnosis, treatment

Lung cancer is still the leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide. In India, alone, lung cancer accounts for a majority cancer burden, with 1 in 68 males falling victim to it. Moreover, several sources state that around 80 per cent of lung cancers are diagnosed at an advanced stage. Having said that, medical science and the healthcare fraternity has done a lot of progress to reduce the burden of lung cancer and to save as many lives as possible. There has been a rapid and exponential development in the modalities to manage lung cancer. Right from tools to augment early diagnosis, to targeted chemotherapies, to minimally invasive procedures to treat cancer, healthcare today has a plethora of intervention that can help patients with lung cancer.

EARLY DIAGNOSIS OF LUNG CANCER IS INSTRUMENTAL

Smoking is gauged with the number of packets a person smokes per day, for the number of years smoked. In India, as the number of cigarettes per packet are less, a different tool like 'smoking index' is estimated. A low dose CT scan of the lungs is approved for screening of lung cancer in the west, as it has shown to improve survival by detecting the cancer early. In India, people with high smoking



index can discuss with their healthcare providers to see if they qualify for a screening CT scan. People suffering from COPD due to smoking are at higher risk and can discuss the timing and need for getting a CT scan for lung cancer screening. Surgery or in some cases Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy (SBRT) cures the lung cancer when detected early.

STAGING OF CANCER IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO DIRECT TREATMENT LINE

Once lung cancer is diagnosed, the next important step which guides the treatment appropriately is accurate staging. There are imaging techniques which can guide when and how a tissue can be acquired through biopsy for staging and molecular testing. Stages in lung cancer range from stage one to four, with multiple substages as well, to prognosticate and optimally treat the cancer.

A minimally invasive procedure called Endobronchial Ultrasound Guided Transbronchial Needle Aspiration (EBUS-TBNA) is now widely available around the country which helps in accurate staging with minimal risk. This procedure is done by a Pulmonologist usually after a PET CT. It can also help in restaging of cancer during the entire treatment course and after.

There is molecular profiling carried out for the type of Lung cancer. That includes checking for different genetic mutations that the tumor exhibits in the tissue acquired by biopsy. They can be EGFR, ALK, PDL1, ROS and so on. These help in guiding oral targeted chemotherapy to a particular mutation. These are better tolerated drugs which have shown to improve survival in patients with advanced lung cancer. The survival when treated appropriately has improved from months to years.

TACKLING COMMON PROBLEMS IN LUNG CANCER

A common problem in advanced lung cancer is fluid accumulation in the pleural space. It is the space between lungs and the chest wall. This fluid prevents lung expansion and presents with breathlessness, a very uncomfortable symptom. There are multiple modalities to tackle this menace. Pleuroscopy — a medical Thoracoscopy can help in diagnosis and treatment of the Pleural Effusion in the same setting. It is carried out under sedation and local anesthesia in an endoscopy suite. A procedure known as Pleurodesis where the space is obliterated by using an external agent helps prevent refilling of the fluid and improves the quality of life tremendously. Also, small indwelling pleural catheters are available which stay secured in the chest wall and help in ambulatory drainage of

pleural fluid when refilling of the fluid occurs. These have replaced a lot of primitive more morbid modalities of treatment, helping the patients lead a better quality of life even with cancers in an advanced stage.

At the end, it is important to note that prevent is better than undergoing the pain and process of treatment. Quitting tobacco consumption is effective and there are different ways in which healthcare providers help people quit and lead a healthy life. But if you are smokers and experiences symptoms like a long-standing cough that gets worse, chest infections that keep coming back, coughing up blood, pain when breathing or coughing and persistent breathlessness, you must speak to your doctor.

(Preyas Vaidya is Consultant-Pulmonologist & Sleep Medicine Expert, Hiranandani Hospital, Vashi-A Fortis Network Hospital)



Skincare tips to follow during rainy season

Monsoon is a welcome change after the scorching summer heat but it comes with its own set of challenges.

Increased humidity causes breakouts, dullness, and greasiness on one's skin. Increased use of face masks to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus also leads to moisture being trapped under the mask thus giving way to acne-causing bacteria and fungal infections.

A change in season calls for a change in skincare to adapt basis the new weather conditions. Making small, quick customisations would be key in ensuring healthy, glowing skin. Plabita Sharma, National Training Manager, The Body Shop India, tips to combat dullness during the rains:

Cleansing: Due to the increased humidity there is a great chance that the skin will produce more oil thus attracting more dust, grime which in turn will lead to clogged pores that cause the breakouts. Choose a gentle, effective cleanser that suits your skin type always limit the washing to twice in a day — this will help avoid over washing and

stripping away the natural oils and compromising the skin's natural moisture barrier.

Moisturising: Monsoon season tends to confuse the skin which changes the skin's type to the combination — this can be easily identified with an oily T-zone but dry or normal cheeks, chin and jaw. Choosing a lightweight gel or water-based moisturiser would be key in such cases. This will help maintain the balance between the varied regions on your skin. Check for ingredients that have antioxidant properties like vitamin C, aloe, vitamin E etc. That will help fight free radicals while also soothing the skin. Hydrating the skin regularly can be a game-changer that helps to achieve plump and supple skin.

Weekly care: Take out a little extra time for your skin and care for it by following a weekly routine of exfoliating and masking the skin to get a healthy glow. Exfoliation helps to remove dead skin cells and adds life back into the skin. A clean and fresh layer of skin also absorbs products much more easily thus making them much more effective. Choose a mask based on your skin types like clay, peel off or sheet

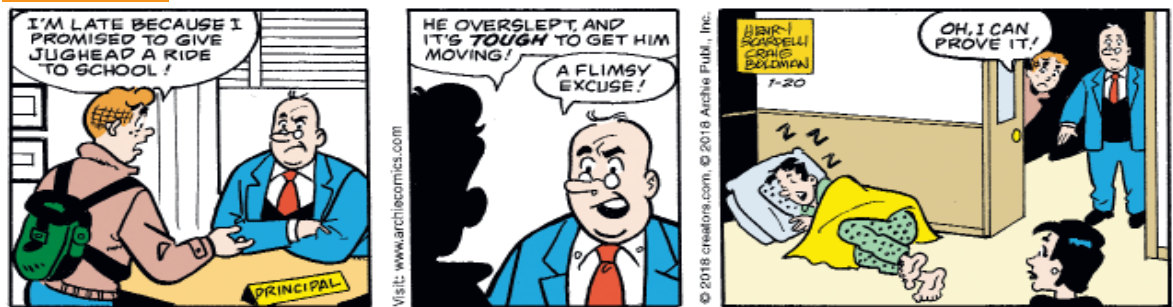
masks and you are set to welcome the change in season.

Sunscreen: Though the weather looks pleasant and cloudy one must not avoid the protective shield. Modern sunscreen comes with a variety of textures and spray formats ranging from SPF 15-50. Ensure to opt for one that prevents the skin from harmful effects of the sun because skincare is always incomplete without SPF. It is a must-have despite the season or your exposure to the sun.

Minimal makeup: Different seasons may come and go — but less is more always. Keep your makeup to the minimal and still look presentable with a dash of kohl and lip balms. Opt for subtle colours and just the right kind of texture that helps to enhance your features without the addition of extra ingredients that can react poorly with the environmental conditions. And that's it, now you are well equipped to handle the comings and goings of the rainy season. Skincare in this season is simply dependent on balancing the pH levels of your skin and switching products as required. Follow these simple rules and ensure healthy, happy skin all year round!

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



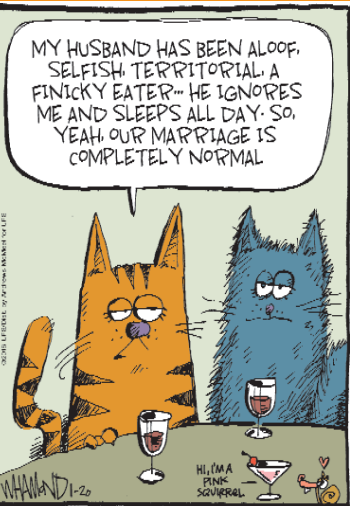
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



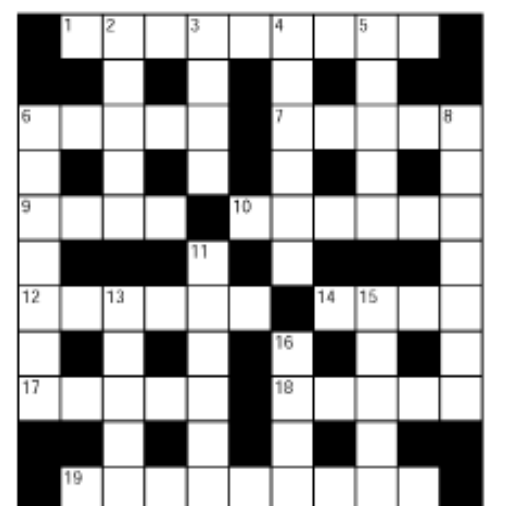
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Not sure
- Meadow
- A measuring stick
- The colour made by mixing black and white
- Nearly
- Say again
- A hired car
- A feared sea creature
- Telling fibs
- Carried on

DOWN

- A female relation
- Comes to a finish
- An animal with a shell
- A house made of snow

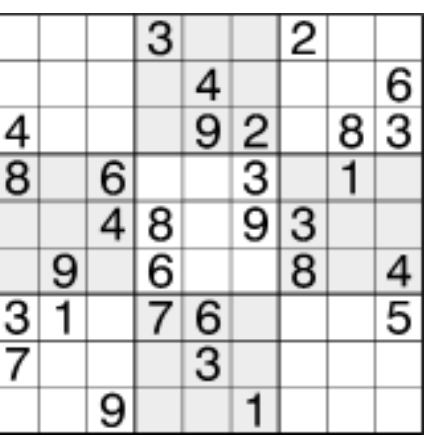
6 Numbers

- Decaying
- A short type of coat
- A keyboard instrument
- Similar
- A drawing of a building showing all the rooms

SOLUTION



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution



Rules

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

OTT TRUMPING TV?

SHIKHA DUGGAL

OTT platforms in India are growing rapidly in terms of subscribers mainly due to digital media; the youth, especially, have led to the increase in OTT viewership. In fact, the drop in prices of smart phones has also enabled a large chunk of the population to gain more access to online platforms. However, all of this had a substantial impact on the television industry.

On one hand, there was the pandemic delaying the production of television programs while on the other hand, there was the boom of OTT content that lured every consumer to actually switch to key OTT players for unsullied content! From negative impact on revenues to employment issues, both — struggling actors as well as the established ones — had to face evils at that point in time. With digital revolution on our heads, will television take an exit from the backdoor? Telugu television actor Syed Anwar, known for his roles in serials like Mr Mallanna, shares, “Every medium has its own spectators; it has taken years to build that. TRPs are key evidence here, that our audiences haven’t gone down. Currently, many shows, at the moment, are gaining immensely high TRP, it shows viewers are definitely hooked onto television masala, despite the arrival of OTT. Other than *Aha Video*, I don’t think there is another medium that our telugu audiences will shift to, in terms of sitcoms. Telugu television serials or reality shows run purely on the number game, OTT may have a dissimilar approach, but we’re inclined towards the indispensable form of content. Absolutely, societal changes are happening but that can be adjusted online. For example, the star group has both its satellite channel and OTT platform. Every subject also draws some cons with it. OTT has probably turned out to be a boon for many of us. Now, we have the alternative of a new medium to explore our acting abilities. Another instance I would like to highlight is the petty politics that occur amid local television industries. I don’t think that will be the case with online streaming platforms, with commitment to only one channel because you’re the lead there when it comes to TV! It’s a fortune, if my show runs for more than five years straight, will I be able to discover more characters on television at the same time? I’ll have to think about it.”

The audience is hungry, they constantly want entertainment



Meghna Raami



Kaushik

fitting around their increasingly hectic lives. Now, the concept of television may have become an old practice for many, but popular television artist Kaushik of *Aadadhey Aadharam* fame resolutely believes that even today, people in South India wait till Friday for the episodes to finish and

then are very curious to know what’s going to happen in the episode that airs on Monday episode!

“Are the rural audiences used to something like *Amazon Prime Video*? No. ETV and Gemini are the channels they can easily access and relate to! OTT could be damaging the business of the movie indus-

try a bit, but for home-makers, watching television is a still must activity, while going about their chores.

What the television industry can do is take a diverse content route because many a time, today’s population gets sick of the similar ‘saas-bahu’ saga. We’re seeing television channels up north, trying out new concepts, we must too! That’s more relevant these days; we should take a break from showing women as ‘damsels in distress’ or the vamps that we see. That doesn’t happen in real life! Television will always hold a place in everyone’s hearts.”

Even though, in this digital world, where we have the flexibility of consuming content anywhere and anytime, the relationship with television will always remain unchanged. It’s not totally proven that digital content will supersede television content and that we’ll lose our good old friend in the form of television daily soaps. Mostly, the actors we spoke to, feel that TV cannot fade away! However, we did see the dominant medium come to a halt when the pandemic tried to

destroy the lives of television stars.

Actress Meghna Raami of *Kalachakram* fame informed, “One more lockdown, trust me, we would have been on the roads. According to me, our daily soap actors are also daily wage workers and we couldn’t have survived another lockdown. I’m only preparing to be extra cautious on the sets and outside, too. I got my parents and myself vaccinated, focussing on having healthy food and being responsible when I’m heading out to work. I blame the sheer negligence and stupidity of people for the surge in the cases earlier. Honestly, we were serious and cautious for only a few days after the lockdown. We were given Covid-19 insurances, sanitisers, masks and what not! But throwing the masks all around, neglecting sanitisers and other safety protocols, being overconfident and then blaming the government will not help.”

It may appear that the audience is moving away from television, however people in the business believe that’s not the case. In fact, according to a recent report, there has been a massive television audience base while the lockdown was on.

Therefore, one may switch between apps but chances are they’ll return to their television sets.



Syed Anwar



Good parenting can put smoking at bay

We’ve always known through experience that good parenting and opinion-shaping can ensure children grow to be responsible adults, and keep away from harmful habits. A recent study has confirmed something very similar. Children who set goals for their future and those with strong parental support are less likely to use e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, revealed a study by UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh and the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine physician-scientists.

The research suggested that strategies to prevent youth vaping may be different from what works to dissuade youth from smoking cigarettes. “The use of e-cigarettes by young people is at epidemic proportions, with 27 percent of youth surveyed saying they’d vaped in the last 30 days,” said lead author Nicholas Szoko, MD, a fellow in the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at UPMC Children’s.

“And a lot of the traditional methods we think of for counselling youth on the dangers of tobacco and drug use may not apply to vaping. Paediatricians and parents need a better understanding of what motivates adolescents to eschew e-cigarettes,” added Szoko.

Szoko and his colleagues analysed anonymous questionnaires administered in partnership with the Allegheny County Health Department and completed by 2,487 high school students in Pittsburgh Public Schools. The surveys asked questions to ascertain if and how often the students used e-cigarettes or other tobacco products, and to determine if any of four “protective factors” validated by previous research were associated with a lower likelihood of vaping or smoking.

In the study, positive future orientation and high levels of parental monitoring were both linked with a 10 percent to 25 percent lower prevalence of recently or ever vaping, compared to peers with lower scores on those protec-



tive factors. There was no link between social support or school connectedness and the use of e-cigarettes. All four protective factors were associated with a lower prevalence of smoking or use of other tobacco products, but none were linked to intent to quit using tobacco products. This suggests that once young people begin to use tobacco, quitting may be more difficult to promote. The researchers note that these findings should be explored to develop improved youth tobacco prevention efforts, but that it isn’t surprising that the results for vaping weren’t exactly the same as for smoking.

“E-cigarettes are positioned and marketed differently than tobacco cigarettes. They’ve been popularised as tools for smoking cessation, and previous research has found the various flavors and trendy ads for vaping are attractive to youth,” said Szoko. “We also know that vaping primes adolescents to transition to smoking cigarettes and other substance use. So, it stands to reason that we may need different approaches to keep kids from vaping, than we use to stop them from smoking,” added Szoko. Senior author Alison Culyba, M.D., PhD, M.P.H., assistant professor of paediatrics, public health, and clinical and translational science at Pitt, noted that frameworks already exist to help clinicians use future orientation and encourage parental monitoring when providing health care to young people, which bodes well for developing e-cigarette intervention programs to strengthen these protective factors. “And we can help parents to navigate their roles as their children become pre-teens and teens and help encourage open conversations with their kids about what they’re encountering,” concluded Culyba.

GREENER ROOFTOPS TO KEEP THE COOL QUOTIENT HIGH

YAMINIKRISHNA
BANDLAMUDI

With the increasing concern of global warming and environmental destruction, the citizens of

Vijayawada, especially women, are enjoying embracing greener lives and are rushing to nurseries to bring their favourite plants home. They prefer to grow gardens on their rooftops that resist heat, bring shade, and even provide food, medicinal benefits, and if not anything, beauty for sure.

According to experts, growing plants on the terrace will control about 5 to 8 degrees celsius heat.

“Growing plants is just like bringing up kids. Neglecting the plants even for a few days doesn’t fetch. Especially terrace gardening demands utmost care and a systematic way of growing plants. Two major reasons for the present generation to opt for a terrace garden are, to save



space and grow organic food. People’s outlook towards this has drastically changed. Earlier, people would fear water sinking into the roofs but now, one can repurpose flower boxes, sand, and planter boxes. You can hang these on an existing railing or just set them on the floor. It’s better to not use ordinary garden soil in these planter boxes, use either quality potting mix or compost-rich soil. Fertilising is the major factor to

improve productivity but it varies according to plants: peppers and tomatoes are heavy feeders, whereas green leafy vegetables do not need much fertiliser. A terrace vegetable garden will take care of your family’s need for veggies like Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Radishes, Beans, Potatoes, Onions, Carrots, Beetroot, Lettuce, Garlic, Chillies, Peppers, and Melons,” informs Adi Lakshmi, plant-lover, and professor at Velagapudi



Sidhartha Engineering College, in Vijayawada. Gardening is a good exercise for both physical and mental health. The beautiful look your terrace will have is just an added bonus. The benefit of cooling makes everything better. Plants and the clay in the soil absorb heat from the sun which increases the heat inside, expanding its rays on the terrace of your home, or the other commercial buildings. Various kinds of arrange-

ments help block heat and offer shade — shade net, shell designs, wall embossing, a pond, lawn, toy house, rock shell work as heat resistants. “It was I that introduced Vijayawada to Heliconia, a rare plant that I got all the way from Kolkata twenty years ago. Initially, I started growing it in a pot. As that didn’t work, I planted it beside the compound wall and it did well. It grows up to 12 feet. It attracted quite a few viewers. I’m also



growing 100 bonsai plants in my garden. I used to maintain a huge terrace garden before my retirement. I’ve been a member of ‘Harita Priya’ and ‘Udyanavana Premikulu’ associations of Vijayawada. Gardening has always served as a stress buster for me,” says retired Ophthalmologist, Dr Krishna Rao, a passionate lover of plants.

Usually, people buy rectangular or square-shaped frames filled with mud which helps plants grow better on the terrace. One can also use old shelves, and racks to keep pots, or buy pot holders, and put them around the corners of your home. In the vertical spaces, you can grow herbs to enhance the taste of salads and cuisines. You can also

grow a lot of flowers to appease ornamental views. They add such peace and calm to people in the home and those who visit too. Without personal care and interest, nobody can tend a roof garden well. To develop the roof garden, one will have to shell out anywhere close to 1 or 5 lakhs, depending upon the kinds of plants and interests one has. However, start with planting in simple containers — big and small, build raised beds, or cover your terrace with proper soil beds like traditional gardens. If you choose to build a fully planted green roof then you need to ensure your rooftop will not cause any potential damage to the building,” shares Kandula Sarada Vani, a landscape designer based in Vijayawada. If you are looking for a stylish way of growing a terrace garden, raised beds are a great option to start with. The raised bed on the terrace does not differ fundamentally from those you see in a regular garden. If you fill the raised bed with soil, consider preventing voles and pests from entering the bed. To make fertile soil, mix quality garden soil, ripe compost, and manure. Probably the most significant advantage of a raised bed is the height and width on the terrace.



MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Hockey:** India beat Australia 1-0 in women's quarterfinal.
- **Athletics:** Dutee Chand 7th and last in women's 200m Heat 4; fails to qualify for semifinals. Kamalpreet Kaur sixth in women's discus final with a best throw of 63.70m.
- **Shooting:** Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar 21st and Sanjeev Rajput 32nd in men's 50m rifle 3 positions qualification; fail to qualify for final.
- **Equestrian:** Fouaad Mirza 25th in eventing jumping individual qualifier; 23rd in final.

IN ACTION TODAY

- **Athletics:** Annu Rani in women's javelin throw Qualification Group A. (5:50am)
 - **Hockey:** India vs Belgium in men's semifinal. (7:00am)
 - **Wrestling:** Sonam Malik vs Bolortuya Khurelkhuu (Mongolia) in women's 62kg. (8:30am onwards)
- Live on SONY TEN & SIX Network

PTI ■ TOKYO

A brave and determined Indian women's hockey team etched its name in the history books by entering the Olympic Games semifinals for the first time, stunning three-time champions and world No 2 Australia 1-0 in an intense last-eight tie here on Monday.

A day after the Indian men's team entered the Olympic semifinals following a 49-year gap, the world No 9 women's side also produced a phenomenally gritty performance to make it way into the last four.

Drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur rose to the occasion when it mattered and converted India's lone penalty corner in the 22nd minute to surprise the Australians.

"We are so happy, it is the result of hard work that we put in for several, several days. In 1980, we qualified for the Games but this time, we made the semifinals. It is a proud moment for us," Gurjit said after the match.

"This team is like a family, we have supported each other and found support from the country as well. We are very happy," she added.

But the Indians, determined to prove a point, produced a strong and brave performance to eke out the narrow win over the Hockeyroos.

How much it meant for the team and Indian hockey in general could be gauged from the

HISTORYMAKERS

In a first, Indian women's hockey team enter Olympic semifinals with a stunning 1-0 win over Hockeyroos



Indian players celebrate after Gurjit Kaur (jersey No 2) scores India's only goal against Australia during women's hockey quarterfinal match

@Tokyo2020hi

A movie on self-belief & staying in the moment did trick: Marijne

Tokyo: Watching a movie on self belief after three consecutive losses rebuilt the Indian women's hockey team's shattered morale and helped it to 'aim for the clouds', the side's Dutch coach Sjoerd Marijne revealed on Monday after Rani Rampal and Co entered their maiden Olympic semifinals here.

The Indian team bounced back tremendously in the tournament after successive losses and Marijne said the movie helped psychologically ahead of the must-win pool game against Ireland but did not reveal its name.

"The difference is believing in ourselves and believing in their dreams and then it's about going back to reality focussing on your past. I think that is the main thing and that's what we did," Marijne said after upsetting Australia in the quarterfinals.

"If you lose you don't stop

believing and that's what I told the girls. The most important thing is to stay in the moment. I showed them a movie and that movie is about being in the moment and I think that was really helpful. Against Ireland we kept on referring to that movie," he said.

He said all he asked the team to do was to aim for the highest.

"In India you must think big and that's what I said to the girls. If you aim for the high-est, for the clouds, you will fall on the highest mountain. If you aim for the mountain you will fall on the ground," he explained.

"We went for the clouds and I said whatever happens after it doesn't matter, but that's where we have to aim for."

India captain Rani Rampal too credited the movie for the turnaround of fortunes. PTI

emotions that were on display

after the final hooter went off.

The players screamed, hugged each other, and got into a huddle with their Dutch coach Sjoerd Marijne with tears of joy rolling down their faces.

India's best performance in the Olympics came way back in

the 1980 Moscow Games where they finished fourth out of six teams. In that edition, women's hockey made its debut in the Olympics and the sport was played in a round-robin format. The Rani Rampal-led side will play Argentina in the semi-final on Wednesday.

Kamalpreet finishes 6th in discus final

Tokyo: Discus thrower Kamalpreet Kaur finished a creditable sixth in her first Olympics in a rain-interrupted final while sprinter Dutee Chand ended her campaign on a disappointing note by failing to qualify for the 200m semifinals here on Monday.

The 25-year-old Kaur, who has qualified for the final as second best on Saturday, was never in the running for a medal in the eight rounds of competition which was interrupted by rain for more than an hour.

Her best throw of 63.70m in the third round saw her finished at sixth and equal 2010 Commonwealth Games Gold medalist Krishna Poonia's performance in the 2012 London Olympics.

Throughout the competition, Kaur looked nervous and short of confidence as she lacked international exposure. She has taken part in World University Games in 2017, her lone international competition.

It was a tough competition for all the participants as rain started pouring down towards the end of the second round and a few throwers taking their attempts in spite of slippery circle.

Rain stopped after an hour but the humidity seemed to have affected the throwers' performance and they have to be cautious as the approach area to the circle was wet. With her right shoulder heavily

strapped, Kaur began with a 61.62m effort before fouling her next attempt. That put her under pressure and on the verge of being eliminated as she was ninth just before her third throw.

But she gave her best and came up with a 63.70m, that saved her and put her in the sixth position as the bottom four out of the 12 finalists were eliminated after three rounds.

Not much changed in the position of the throwers in the final three rounds. Kaur fouled the fourth throw and then had a 61.37m in her penultimate attempt before sending the discus out of sector in the final one.

American Valarie Allman took the Gold with a first round throw of 68.98m while Kristin Pudenz (66.86m) of Germany and reigning world champion Yaime Perez (65.72m) of Cuba won the Silver and Bronze respectively.

In the morning session, sprinter Dutee ran her season's best in 200m but that was not enough for a semi-finals berth as she made a disappointing exit from the Olympics after finishing last in her heat race.

The 25-year-old clocked 23.85 seconds to finish seventh and last in Heat 4 and 38th overall out of 41 competitors.

Tokyo: Handling the immense burden of expectations would perhaps be the key when the Indian men's hockey team takes on world champion Belgium, aiming to secure a place in the Olympic finals and with it, a medal for the first time in 41 years here on Tuesday.

With 11 Olympic medals, eight of them Gold, in its kitty, India has a rich history in the Games and the Manpreet Singh-led side seems on course to resurrect that glorious past.

The Indians achieved the semifinal slot by beating Great Britain 3-1 in the quarterfinals on Sunday, and are now in touching distance of a medal.

The Graham Reid-coached current side knows very well that another good outing against Belgium on Tuesday would etch its name in the history books in golden words no matter the colour of the medal.

The Indians are on a four-match winning streak after the 1-7 drubbing against Australia

Belgium stand b/w India & final



in their second pool match and come Tuesday, Manpreet and his teammates would look to continue the momentum.

But it would be easier said than done as in Belgium, India face a tough opponent, which has improved leaps and bounds in the last few years.

Besides being current world champions and world No 2 side, Belgium are also the reigning European champions.

Going by rankings, however, there is hardly anything to separate between the two sides as India are currently

ranked third in the world.

The recent head-to-head record also favours India.

India and the Red Lions played each other three times in 2019 during their tour of the European nation and the Asian side came out victorious in all the matches. India

Sonam to begin India's wrestling campaign



Tokyo: Young Indian wrestler Sonam Malik was on Monday placed in the challenging bottom half of the women's 62kg draw, where she will open her Olympics campaign against Asian Silver medalist Bolortuya Khurelkhuu from Mongolia.

The 19-year-old will be the sole Indian wrestler in action on Tuesday. Relatively new to the big stage, every single bout will be a test of character for Sonam, who qualified for the Tokyo Games by making the final at the Asian Qualifier in April in Almaty.

Khurelkhuu is more experienced than Sonam and has stood on the podium on both the occasions she took the mat this season but the Indian is not intimidated.

Sonam came into Olympics after recovering from a right knee injury that did not let her fly to Russia for training in build-up to the Games.

"I am fine. There is no pain in my knee. It's neither tough nor easy draw for me," Sonam, who earned a name for herself by defeating Rio Bronze-medallist Sakshi Malik four times, said after the draw ceremony.

If Sonam manges to cross the first hurdle, she will most likely find 2018 world champion Taybe Mustafa Yusein from Bulgaria in the quarterfinals.

The draw is such that the repechage route may open up for Sonam if she does not go deep on her own. PTI

Mirza 23rd in individual eventing



Tokyo: Equestrian Fouaad Mirza on Monday finished a creditable 23rd in eventing after he became the first Indian to reach the final of the event here on Monday.

Mirza and his equine Seigneur Medicott sneaked into the top-25 in the morning to make the jumping finals and become the first Indian to do so.

In the final, Mirza incurred

12.40 penalty points for an overall 59.60 that included the points from the three rounds of qualifying events — dressage, cross country and jumping.

It was a creditable performance for the 29-year-old Bengaluru rider Mirza, who was the first equestrian to qualify for the Olympics since Imtiaz Anees in Sydney 2000.

Mirza started off the three

qualifying eventing rounds with a spectacular dressage round by taking the ninth place on Saturday.

On Sunday, Mirza picked up 11.20 penalty points in the challenging Sea Forest Cross Country Course to be placed 22nd.

Mirza and Seigneur finished the cross country run in just over eight minutes after starting a bit late owing to a technical issue.

In the final qualifying event, Mirza knocked two fences in the jumping round to incur eight penalty points en route to finishing 25th with an overall 47.2 penalty points.

The final was once again a jumping round where the top 25 competed.

Germany's Julia Krajewski won the Gold in the event, making her the first female Olympic champion in eventing's history. PTI

Shooters finish without medal

Tokyo: Indian shooters Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar and Sanjeev Rajput failed to qualify for the finals of the men's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the Tokyo Olympics here on Monday.

Tomar finished 21st in the qualification while Rajput was placed in 32nd position at the Asaka Shooting Range as the Indian shooting team returned without a medal for the second straight time at the Olympics. Only the top 8 athletes qualify for the final.

Tomar shot a total of 1167 with 63 inner 10s in the qualification over the stages of kneeling, prone and standing, while Rajput, appearing in his third Olympics, aggregated 1157 with 55 inner 10s.

The cut was made at 1176. With this, Indian shooters failed to win a medal for a second successive Olympics. PTI

I was blank, my coach was in tears: Sindhu after win

Tokyo: Reigning world champion P V Sindhu on Monday said she was completely blank after winning a second successive Olympic medal and it took her a while to realise the enormity of her historic achievement in the ongoing Games.

The 26-year-old Indian on Sunday etched her name among the all-time greats after winning badminton's women's singles Bronze medal to add to the Silver she won at Rio de Janeiro five years back.

"...I was blank, my coach was literally in tears, it was a big moment. I hugged him and said 'Thank you'. I didn't know what to do for 5-6 seconds, I shouted, so all emotions came together at that moment," she said during a virtual press conference.

In the third-place play-off, Sindhu beat China's He Bing Jiao. The win came after a painful loss in the semifinals to world No 1 Tai Tzu Ying.

Sindhu said coach Park Tae-sang's encouragement helped her to recover from the semi-final loss and claim the Bronze for the country.

"After semis, I was really sad, I was in tears but my coach said it is not over yet. There were mixed emotions, if I should be sad or happy but Park told one thing. He said 'there is a lot of difference between a fourth position and a Bronze' and that really hit me," she said.

"I went with the mindset that I have to give my 100 percent and get that medal."

A lot of questions were raised when Sindhu



PV Sindhu hugs her coach Park Tae-sang after winning women's singles badminton Bronze medal match

PTI

decided to move out of the Pullela Gopichand Academy and train at the Gachibowli indoor stadium which had bigger halls similar to the

Park felt pressure after being assigned to train Sindhu

Tokyo: His phone hasn't stopped buzzing ever since P V Sindhu claimed the Bronze medal at Tokyo Olympics but India's foreign badminton coach Park Tae-sang says he did feel 'little pressure' after being suddenly asked to train the star shuttler for the Games.

The 42-year-old from South Korea was initially

venue in Tokyo. Sindhu said it was one of the best decisions, especially since drift played a role during the Games at the Musashino Forest Plaza.

"Yeah, from the beginning there was no controversy, I mean, we had this opportunity to play in conditions similar to Olympics, so from February we have been playing there, it has really helped us because drift played a big role and I learnt a lot in Gachibowli, I learnt to control the shuttle better.

"It had international standard courts with air conditioners, which was important. So I feel it was the best decision..."

hired to train the men's singles players but started working with Sindhu after the abrupt departure of Kim Ji Hyun, following the World Championship in 2019.

"I'm really happy because this is the first time my player has got a medal in my coaching career," Park, who competed at the 2004 Athens Olympics before taking up

coaching the national Korean team, said during a virtual press conference.

"When I first started teaching Sindhu, she was already a big Olympic star. I felt little pressure but I tried. My Korean players also didn't get an Olympic medal, so I thought I can try to get her a Gold. We failed but Bronze is also a very big medal. PTI

GOPI SIR CONGRATULATED, SAINA 'NO'

P V Sindhu said she received congratulatory message from chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand but she has not got any such gesture yet from senior shuttler Saina Nehwal.

Asked if she received any communication from Gopichand and Saina after her win, Sindhu said: "Of course, Gopi sir wished me congrats. That's all. I haven't seen the social medal. I am slowly replying to everybody.

When further probed, Sindhu said: "Gopi sir messaged me, Saina no. We don't talk much, so..."

Concussed Mayank out of 1st Eng Test

Nottingham: India's opening batsman Mayank Agarwal was on Monday ruled out of the first Test against England after being concussed by a short ball from teammate Mohammed Siraj during a training session here.

While facing Siraj, Agarwal saw the ball thudding into his helmet when he took his eyes off a short delivery.

The first Test starts here on Wednesday.

"Opening batsman Mayank Agarwal was hit on the helmet while batting during India's nets session at Trent Bridge in Nottingham on Monday," BCCI secretary Jay Shah was quoted as saying in a media release.

"The BCCI Medical Team assessed him, and a concussion test was conducted. He has shown signs of concussion and is ruled out of the opening Test against England. The 30-year-old is stable and will remain under close medical observation," Shah further stated.

When vice-captain Ajinkya



Mayank Agarwal leaves the field after he gets injured during nets

@BCCI

Rahane was asked about the fitness of all players, he did say that Agarwal sustained a head injury. "Mayank Agarwal got hit on the head. The medical team is looking after him. All others are fit," Rahane told mediapersons.

After being hit by Siraj's delivery, Agarwal was seen in some discomfort as he removed the helmet and sat on the ground with physio Nitin Patel attending to him. He was then seen pressing the back of his head while leaving the nets, escorted by Patel. PTI

NUMBER GAME MATTERS TO ADIVI SESH

Actor Adivi Sesh, known for giving hits like *Kshanam*, *Evaru*, and *Goodachari*, is currently gearing for the final touches of his upcoming bilingual film *Major*. The actor, who has so far had a string of commercial successes, feels money matters of any film are important to a certain extent.

Major is a biographical drama based on the life of 26/11 martyr Sandeep Unnikrishnan. Reports have suggested that the film's international rights and satellite rights have been sold at a whopping amount already.

"For me, numbers matter as much as it reflects on how you keep your producers safe. Today, I am an actor because some producer chose to bet on me. I think a film begins with the producer and ends with the audience. For the audience to see that end product, it takes a producer to

bet on you," Sesh shares. Reacting to *Major*'s money game, Sesh adds, "*Major* is made on large scale and a much bigger budget than my previous films.

I am happy that the sales on which the film is doing are on par, if not better, and are safeguarding the emotional and financial investment. Beyond that, the number game doesn't interest me."

Once he finishes shooting for this bilingual film, he will dive straight into the shooting of *Hit 2*, post which the much-awaited sequel to *Goodachari* should get rolling.

The 2018 action thriller *Goodachari* had made Sesh's game stronger.

Ever since, movie buffs have been eager for the sequel to release, with some even guessing where M. Gopi (Sesh)'s mission goes next.

While the internet is afloat fan theories, Sesh, who is also the writer for

the film and its upcoming sequel, does not feel any pressure of writing the story in any kind of hurry. Do these theories about *Goodachari 2* affect how he shapes up the story? He answers, "The Indian audience largely tends to call films either commercial or noncommercial. I don't know if *Goodachari*, in any way, is a mystery film. If you look at *Kshanam* or *Evaru*, I look at those more as mystery and suspense.

Goodachari for me is like a spy franchise. It's sort of like a fun action film. So, I don't feel any sort of pressure for *Goodachari 2*." *Major* is being made in Telugu and Hindi and will be dubbed in Malayalam.



Rakshasudu 2 to be made with Rs 100 cr

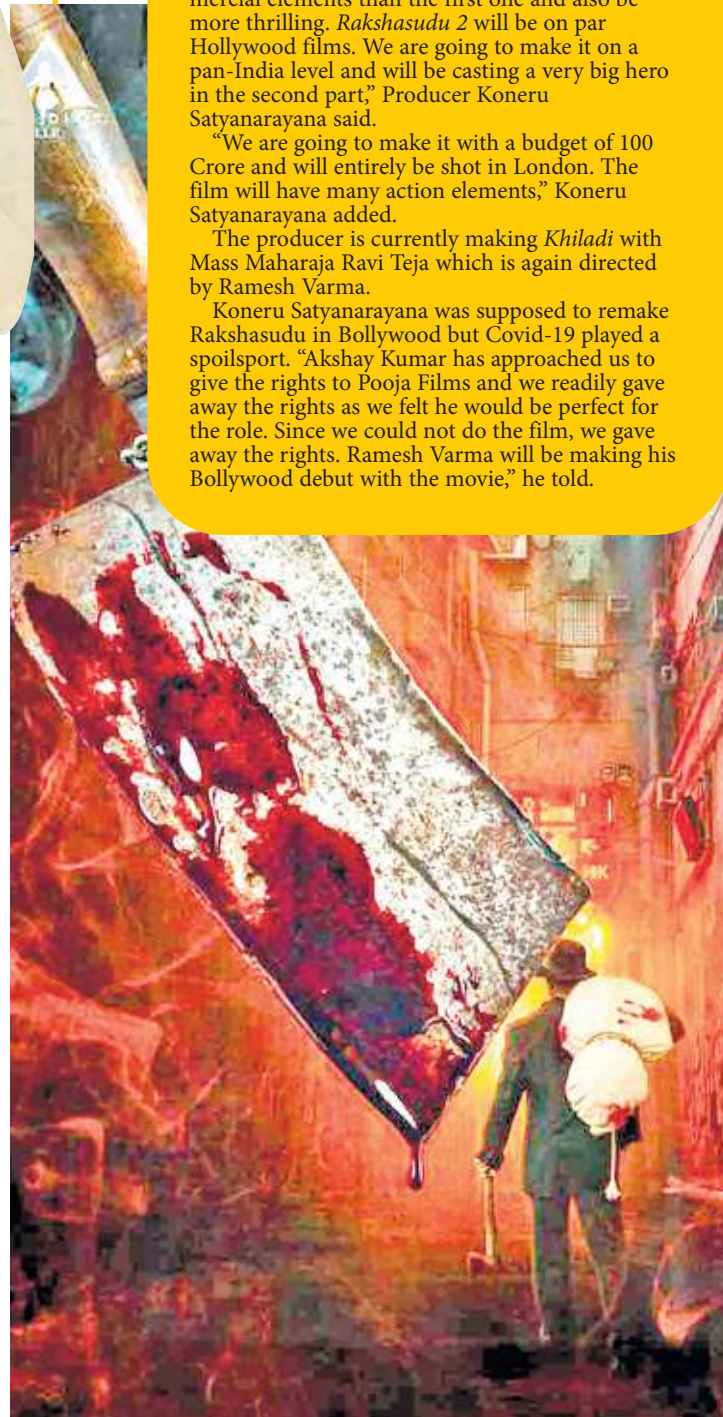
Bellamkonda Sreenivas and Ramesh Varma's *Rakshasudu* was released in 2019 and minted huge money at the box office. Nearly two years after its release, producer Koneru Satyanarayana announced *Rakshasudu 2* with the same director.

On Monday, the producer revealed that *Rakshasudu 2* will be made at a mammoth budget of Rs 100 crore. "The idea of *Rakshasudu 2* is as good as the first one. It will have many more commercial elements than the first one and also be more thrilling. *Rakshasudu 2* will be on par Hollywood films. We are going to make it on a pan-India level and will be casting a very big hero in the second part," Producer Koneru Satyanarayana said.

"We are going to make it with a budget of 100 Crore and will entirely be shot in London. The film will have many action elements," Koneru Satyanarayana added.

The producer is currently making *Khiladi* with Mass Maharaja Ravi Teja which is again directed by Ramesh Varma.

Koneru Satyanarayana was supposed to remake *Rakshasudu* in Bollywood but Covid-19 played a spoilsport. "Akshay Kumar has approached us to give the rights to Pooja Films and we readily gave away the rights as we felt he would be perfect for the role. Since we could not do the film, we gave away the rights. Ramesh Varma will be making his Bollywood debut with the movie," he told.



Pushpa's first song to be out on Aug 13

Tollywood music icon Devi Sri Prasad turned 42 on Monday. The composer is currently busy rendering tunes for his dear friend Allu Arjun's pan-India film *Pushpa*, directed by Sukumar. The director-composer duo has struck gold 7 times in the past.

On Monday, the birthday boy DSP announced the release of the first single of *Pushpa* and details of the song. The first song will be released on August 13. As the film follows the life of a smuggler from tribal people, the glimpse of the song sounds much like a primitive tribal music-based song.

"5 Languages, 5 singers & One Rocking Tune by @ThisIsDSP Icon Staar @alluarjuns"

#PushpaFirstSingle on AUG 13th, (sic)" tweeted the makers. *Pushpa* is set to release in five languages.

Following RRR's *Dosti*, this song *Odu Odu Aadu* from *Pushpa* will also feature the vocals of five different singers in the five languages. Benny Dayal, Shivam, Vishal Dadlani, Vijay Prakash, and Rahul Nambiar will croon the song in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi, Kannada, and Malayalam respectively.

This song will be aired in all five languages on August 13. Last month, the *Pushpa* star Allu Arjun has surprised DSP with a lovely name board of neon lights. The stylish star might have gifted him after hearing the *Pushpa* soundtrack. Fans are eagerly waiting to lend ears to the first single.



RRR team flies to Europe

SS Rajamouli has nearly wrapped up the shooting of his period drama *RRR*, except for one song.

A few days ago, the production house DVV Entertainment shared an update about the movie's filming. The makers also announced that lead actors Ram Charan and Jr NTR have completed their dubbing portions in two languages. According to the latest report, the team of *RRR* left for East Europe on Monday to shoot the final song.

RRR is a pan-Indian film

that is being made on an extravagant budget. Producer DVV Danayya is said to have spent Rs 300 crore on the film. *RRR* also stars Alia Bhatt, Ajay Devgn, Samuthi Rakani, Olivia Morris, Alison Doody, and Ray Stevenson. The upcoming much-hyped movie is a fictional story set in the 1920s pre-independent era and it is based on the lives of two celebrated freedom fighters — Alluri Sitarama Raju and Komaram Bheem. The first song *Dosti* released on Sunday clocked 20 million views in just a few hours of its release.

Love Story gets a new release date

Akineni Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi starrer, *Love Story*, directed by Sekhar Kammula, has postponed its release in theatres multiple times and it was made clear that the film will release only on the big screens. After *Thimmarusu* and *Ishaq*'s positive response, the latest we hear is that the makers of *Love Story* have locked the release date. As

the theatres have reopened across the state, the makers of *Love Story* are planning to release the film on September 10. An official confirmation regarding the same is yet to be made. *Love Story* is produced by Amigos Creations in association with Sree Venkateswara Cinemas. The teaser of Sekhar Kammula's directorial venture *Love Story* was released on January 10, and it has received an

overwhelming response from movie lovers. *Saranga Dariya*, a Telangana folk song from the film has achieved a unique feat. The peppy fold number has crossed 100 million views on YouTube. *Love Story* also stars Posani Krishna Murali, Rao Ramesh, Rajeev Kanakala, Devayani, Easwari Rao, Satyam Rajesh, and Thagubothu Ramesh in important roles.

SETHUPATHI-SUNDEEP KISHAN'S OFF-SCREEN ROMANCE



Vijay Sethupathi and Sundeeep Kishan have teamed up for an exciting project, to be directed by Ranjith Jeyakodi. The two are coming together for a big-ticket pan-India film and amidst the excitement, Sundeeep Kishan shared a few photos with Vijay Sethupathi that have taken social media by storm. One can see Sundeeep Kishan giving Vijay a tiny adorable peck on the cheek and we cannot get enough of their picture. Sharing the photos, Sundeeep tweeted, "The Big Brother Love...The one and one 'Makkal Selvan' @VijaySethuOffi Loading Soon..." The film will reportedly be presented by The Family Man makers Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK, and produced by Bharath Chowdary.

