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BACK ON
RRR SETS

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INDIA'S HOMEGROWN GUIDED ANTI-TANK MISSILE TEST-FIRED SUCCESSFULLY

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully conducted the flight test of an indigenously developed man-portable anti-tank guided missile, providing a major boost to the Indian Army, the defence body said Wednesday. The low weight, fire and forget, anti-tank guided missile was launched from a man-portable launcher integrated with a thermal sight, news agency ANI quoted the DRDO as saying. The missile hit the target, a dummy tank, in direct attack mode and destroyed it with precision, the DRDO said. "The test has validated the minimum range successfully," it said.



COVID DELTA VARIANT TO DOMINATE WITHIN MONTHS: WHO

The highly contagious Delta variant of COVID-19 is expected to become the dominant strain of the virus over the coming months, the World Health Organization said Wednesday. Delta, which was first detected in India, has now been recorded in 124 territories -- 13 more than last week -- and already accounts for more than three-quarters of sequenced specimens in many major countries, the WHO said. "It is expected that it will rapidly out-compete other variants and become the dominant circulating lineage over the coming months," the UN health agency said in its weekly epidemiological update.



FARMERS' PROTEST AT JANTAR MANTAR GETS DELHI GOVERNMENT NOD

Delhi's Arvind Kejriwal government has given permission to farmer groups to hold a Kisan Sansad -- farmers' parliament -- tomorrow at Jantar Mantar but following the Covid protocol, sources said today. The police, too, have okayed the protest and made arrangements to stop things from going out of hand like on January 26. The farmers plan to first march in groups of 200 every day from the national capital's Singhu border point towards Parliament. The police will then escort them to the venue to carry on their agitation. To facilitate the protest, the state government is making changes to its order imposing Covid restrictions under the Delhi Disaster Management Act (DDMA), sources have said.



CAA, NRC NOTHING TO DO WITH HINDU-MUSLIM DIVIDE: RSS CHIEF

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, who is in Assam on a two-day visit, said on Wednesday that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) have nothing to do with Hindu-Muslim divide and communal narrative surrounding the two issues were being peddled by some to gain political mileage. He further emphasised that no Muslim will face any loss due to the citizenship law. "After independence, the first prime minister of the country had said that minorities will be taken care of, and that has been done so far. We will continue to do so. No Muslim will face any loss due to CAA," Bhagwat said after launching a book here, titled 'Citizenship debate over NRC and CAA-Assam and the Politics of History'.



First human death from bird flu in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An 11-year-old boy has died in India from a bird flu virus of the H5N1 strain, the first such fatality in the country, highlighting a potential new risk for the world's second-most populous nation battling the coronavirus pandemic.

The boy was admitted at New Delhi's premier All India Institute of Medical Sciences on July 2 and died on Tuesday after a multi-organ failure, a government statement said.

Health workers treating the patient and the boy's family have been kept in isolation, and authorities have launched contact tracing, the statement said.

In Haryana, the boy's home state in India's north,

2

Schemes not for votes, but for downtrodden: KCR

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has asserted that the Telangana Rashtra Samiti government has been working with the singular goal of economic development of every community and caste in the State.

The TRS government was not implementing schemes for the sake of votes like previous rulers; but for public welfare, he told representatives of the State Kuruma Sangham, including its president and MLC Egge Mallesam, general secretary Bandaru Narayana and other leaders, who met him at Pragathi Bhavan to thank him for launching the second phase of the sheep distribution scheme at a cost of Rs.5,000 crore.

KCR said that after the TRS was



Chief Minister and TRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao with Kaushik Reddy, former Congress leader, who joined the pink party on Wednesday.

voted back to power for the second time, the state government decided on sheep rearing scheme. "What elections were there then?" he asked and observed that the government's

intention was never vote bank politics, but welfare of all communities, especially the Backward Classes.

2

KCR welcomes Kaushik Reddy

Predicts bright future for young leader

- Calls upon next generation leaders to strive to take Telangana forward
- Dalit Bandhu will become successful like Rythu Bandhu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister and TRS president K Chandrasekhar Rao on Wednesday welcomed into the pink party fold Kaushik Reddy, young former Congress leader and in-charge of the Huzurabad constituency, who recently quit Congress party under dramatic circumstances. Earlier, Kaushik Reddy reached the Telangana Bhavan amidst fanfare with his followers and joined the TRS party in the presence of KCR and Ministers T Harish Rao and Koppula Eshwar Rao,

2



IMD issues red alert for north Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for north Telangana with a warning of heavy to very heavy and extremely heavy rain very likely to occur at isolated places in

Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem Asifabad, Mancherial, Jagtial districts for Thursday

A red alert indicates moderate flooding and inundation in low-lying areas, apart from water pooling on roads.

2

Pending LRS applications to be cleared in 15 days

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There is some good news for lakhs of people who had applied last year for regularization of plots in unauthorized layouts and been waiting for the process to go forward.

The Telangana government on Tuesday issued guidelines for processing of applications received under LRS 2020 scheme in a time-bound manner.

- Govt issues guidelines for processing
- About 25 lakh applications were received under LRS -2020

MA&UD Principal Secretary Arvind Kumar in a memo said that about 25 lakh applications received under the LRS -2020 should be processed within 15 days and the status report on all LRS applications submitted to the District Collectors



and to the Government for issue of further guidelines. The sooner the

process is completed, the faster the government could mobilise additional revenue through regularization and individual applicants too would get relief, it was pointed out.

The processing of LRS applications was put on the backburner due to GHMC elections, Graduate MLC elections and then lockdown due to the second wave of pandemic.

2

'Will probe any credible proof of misuse': Pegasus maker NSO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Israel's NSO, the developer of military grade spyware Pegasus which has allegedly been used by multiple nations for snooping on politicians, judiciary, officials, activists and journalists, today said it will no longer respond to media inquiries. The expose by 17 news organisations across the world since Sunday, it said,

2

Rural Telangana deprived of vaccines?

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

Rural areas in Telangana are facing acute shortage of vaccines, with several centers turning away people approaching them stating that they haven't received vax supplies.

Officially it is being claimed that in rural areas vaccination is low due to hesitancy. However, it appears that supply has been kept deliberately low.

Highly placed sources said that the state cannot afford any kind of outbreak in urban areas and therefore the strategy has been to saturate urban areas first and then think about rural areas. Sources indicated that the density of population being



high in urban areas, should something go wrong; the eventualities and casualties will be high, leading to a very big outbreak. When it comes to rural areas, outbreaks can be contained, and in any case it won't be

as massive as in urban areas.

Sources indicated that the supply will be augmented in rural areas only after saturation levels are reached in urban areas.

2

NREGS field assistants to file papers for Huzurabad by-poll

To highlight their demand for re-appointment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hundreds of field assistants under the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme are getting ready to file their nomination papers to contest in the Huzurabad Assembly bye-election as a mark of protest against the government for removing them from their jobs.

The contracts of field assistants who did not meet targets in providing stipulated days of work to job card holders under the NREGS have not been renewed. So, these field assistants have been representing to the government to take them back into jobs. They have demanded that 7,600 field assistants work-



ing in the State should be taken back into service and appointment letters issued to them again. Otherwise, they would enter the fray in Huzurabad with the objective of defeating the ruling party candidate.

BC Welfare Association president R Krishnaiah has extended his

support to the field assistants.

The state government, which had promised to "do justice" to the field assistants before the Nagarjuna Sagar and other elections, did not fulfil its promise, they alleged. About 10,000 field assistants and their families also decided to campaign in the field.

2

City hub of luxury cars import scam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Sleuths of the Directorate of Intelligence Revenue, Mumbai Branch have reached Hyderabad to probe a big scam involving tax evasion by a multi-city gang that had been purchasing swanky imported cars in the name of diplomats.

Codenamed 'Operation Monte Carlo', the team is hunting across seven cities for the persons involved. One car has already been seized by the team. It has been estimated that 20 more such imported cars are in Hyderabad,

out of the 50 cars delivered at Mumbai Port.

The scam, involving tax evasion totaling Rs.112 crore, was detected a few days back at Mumbai by the DRI team. They found that almost 50 cars were brought to Mumbai in the name of diplomats working in India on behalf of different countries. When the DRI sleuths zeroed in on one of the suspicious transactions, it was found that the car was booked through Big Boy Toyz agency of Delhi.

2

Priyanka slams Centre over 'no oxygen deaths'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday attacked the Centre over its statement that there were no deaths due to lack of oxygen during the Covid second wave, alleging that the fatalities happened because the government increased oxygen exports in the pandemic year and did not arrange tankers to transport it.

2

Babus not cut out for politics in Telugu states

SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD

After film stars, ace bureaucrats are making a transition from civil service to politics. RS Praveen Kumar, an IPS officer, having taken voluntary retirement, is likely to take the plunge into politics. Some retired IAS officers are likely to join hands with him.

However, going by several examples of bright babus trying their luck in politics, it is clear that bureaucrats are not cut out for politics. Maybe they lack the killer instinct.

In the combined Andhra

- Ex-IPS officer Praveen Kumar likely to take the plunge into politics
- Retd IAS officer Murali and others to join hands with Praveen Kumar

Pradesh and even post bifurcation, some bureaucrats (both IAS & IPS) entered the political arena but faded before making a mark.

In the combined Andhra Pradesh, former CBI director K



Vijaya Rama Rao joined the Telugu Desam Party and contested from the Khairatabad Assembly constituency and defeated Congress mass leader P Janardhan Reddy in the 1999

Assembly elections. Later, Vijaya Rama Rao became a minister in former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu's cabinet. During the 1999 Assembly elections, Chandrababu did an experiment calling neutrals (Thatasthulu) into TDP and in the process retired IPS officer K Vijaya Rama Rao joined TDP and became a minister. But it was a one-time affair for Vijaya Rama Rao, who later unsuccessfully contested from the Khairatabad Assembly constituency. Congress leader P Janardhan Reddy defeated Vijaya Rama Rao.

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Ashadha & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam

Titthi : Trayodashi 13:32

Nakshatram : Mula 16:25

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

Rahukalam : 1:59 pm - 3:35 pm

Yamagandam : 5:56 am - 7:32 am

Varjyam : 2:57 pm - 4:25 pm, 12:00
am - 2:41 am

Gulika : 9:09 am - 10:45 am

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 10:34 am - 12:02 pm

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:56 am - 12:48 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Rain
Temp: 24/22
Humidity: 97%
Sunrise: 5:52 am
Sunset: 06:52 pm
Current Weather Conditions
Updated JULY 21, 2021 5:00 PM



‘Will probe any credible proof of misuse’. Pegasus...

Continued from page 1

Was a "planned and well-orchestrated media campaign lead by Forbidden Stories and pushed by special interest groups".

"NSO will thoroughly investigate any credible proof of misuse of its technologies, as we always had, and will shut down the system where necessary," a spokesperson said.

Since Sunday, NSO has been denying that the leaked list on which the media investigations are based, is related to possible targets of surveillance.

But media houses which conducted the investigations on the leaked lists accessed by Amnesty International and Paris-based news non-profit Forbidden Stories, said forensic tests on some of the targeted phones and found traces of Pegasus activation.

NSO -- which claims it supplies its software only to "vetted" governments for control of terrorism and crime -- today reiterated that the list is "not a list of targets or potential targets of Pegasus. The numbers in the list are not related to NSO group. Any claim that a name in the list is necessarily related to a Pegasus target or Pegasus potential target is erroneous and false".

The company said "Enough is enough" and that it would no longer "play along with the vicious and slanderous campaign".

The statement follows a news report by Reuters that the Israel government has set up a senior inter-ministerial team to look into the allegations of abuse of the spyware.

Balayya trolled for comments on Bharat Ratna, AR Rahman

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Netizens had a field day on Wednesday, after an interview of Telugu star and MLA Nandamuri Balakrishna went viral.

In the interview, the actor says he doesn't know who Oscar-winning music composer AR Rahman is, and adds that Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, is equal to the "toenail" of his father, late actor-politician NT Rama Rao.

"I don't know who AR Rahman is. He won an Oscar and I don't even know who he is. He gives a hit once in a decade," said Balakrishnan, in an interview.

Rahman, incidentally, had composed the background score of Balakrishna's 1993 film, "Nippu Ravva".

Speaking about Bharat Ratna, the actor, also known as Balayya to fans, said, "I feel that Bharat Ratna is equal to my father's toenail. No award can compen-

sate for the contribution of my family to Tollywood. So, only the awards should feel bad. Not my family or my father."

Soon, a Twitter war erupted, with Rahman fans mercilessly posting memes, and hashtag #whoisbalakrishna started trending.

A fan tweeted, "How can a senior actor like #Balakrishna talk about Indian legend #ARRahman? Will people accept if a similar thing is being spoken by a Tamil actor

on #Rajamouli?"

While another one tweeted, "Who is balakrishna the funny actor #whoisbalakrishna."

"Born to spoil is DAD good name.. #whoisbalakrishna this head weight attitude is the biggest reason for people to hate him.. funniest part is he is MLA."

Soon, Balakrishna's fans were out defending him, saying he was a hero of the masses and a charitable personality.

Pending LRS applications to..

Continued from page 1

The Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department had issued a GO on August 31, 2020 for regularization of plots in unauthorized and illegal layouts, including in gram panchayats, on payment of regularization charges and issued Rules under the LRS 2020. It also stipulated eligibility criteria for regularization.

The State government issued a GO again in September 2020 with some clarifications and declared that only those layouts and sub-division of plots with registered sale deed/title deed existing as on August 2020 would be considered for regularization.

The scheme was announced as a one-time opportunity for regularisation of unauthorized layouts and plots, mandating that only regularized plots would be eligible for registration hereafter to ensure planned and sustainable development.

The regularization charges have

been fixed based on the extent of land and its registration value. However, irrespective of the plot area or land value, plots in slums would be considered for regularisation on payment of nominal charge at Rs.5 per sq.metre. Upon approval, the applicants were supposed to pay all the prescribed charges before January 2021.

However, for various reasons, the MA&UD could not process about 25 lakh applications that were received for regularization under LRS 2020. Subsequently, the financial year 2020-21 was disrupted due to Covid-19 pandemic and the government could not proceed with processing of applications.

The MA&UD department came out with guidelines for processing of all applications seeking regularization on Tuesday. Under Stage-I, all LRS applications received by each Gram Panchayat/municipality/municipal corporation will be grouped into different clusters i.e. village-wise, survey

No.wise, locality-wise, colony-wise, depending on the number of applications received and kept ready for site inspection.

Under Stage-II, each cluster would be inspected by a team constituted by District Collector with the officials of Revenue, Irrigation, Panchayat Raj and Local Town Planning officials/DTCPD. The teams will inspect each cluster and upload their remarks in the checklist whether the application is as per LRS guidelines or not and submit the same to M u n i c i p a l Commissioner/District Collector.

Arvind Kumar said that the District Collectors should constitute the teams with officials of Revenue, Irrigation, Panchayat Raj and Local Town Planning officials. The entire Stage I and II process should be completed within 15 days and the status report on the applications submitted to the District Collectors and the Government for further guidelines.

City hub of..

Continued from page 1

The car was imported from the UAE at Mumbai Port. It was booked in the name of an African diplomat who resides in Delhi. But, the car ultimately went to a showroom at Andheri and there it was on display for sale.

Nipun Miglani, CEO of Big Bos Toyz, and two others were arrested by the DRI officials. The key person who is coordinating the import of the cars is in the UAE. After investigating further, the DRI team came to know that most of these cards were sold at Hyderabad. The accused submitted fake papers of diplomats to avoid paying import tax of 204%. They have been selling these cars to big people at a huge discount. The DRI team is investigating this scam across seven cities, including Hyderabad, in the country.

On Tuesday, the DRI team recovered and seized a Nissan luxury car from a real estate business person at Malakpet, Hyderabad.

SHE Teams nab 18 in three days for harassing women

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In the last three days, 18 persons were nabbed by the Cyberabad SHE Teams for harassing women at various locations during night hours.

Following frequent complaints from women on harassment in Kukatpally, KPHB, Madhapur, Gachibowli and surrounding areas, the SHE Teams conducted decoy operations during the night. Officials said working women,

IT professionals and other young girls who were returning from work during late evening or night were being harassed by men at public places. The SHE Team personnel who were present there as part of a decoy operation, videographed their acts and warned them. They were further handed over to the local police stations for necessary action.

The Cyberabad SHE Team had in the last six months

caught about 50 persons for harassing women. The police have requested women to approach SHE Teams through WhatsApp on 9490617444 or Dial 100 or by sending an e-mail to sheteam.cyberabad@gmail.com or tweeting to @sheteamcybd on Twitter, or by visiting the Facebook page Woman and Children Safety Wing, and while on Instagram, they can be found at womenandchildrensafetywingcybd.

IMD issues red alert for north..

Continued from page 1

the city.

There will be a need for traffic regulation of rail/road/air and congestion will be witnessed at many locations. Apart from social disruptions of water/electricity, there will be crop damage.

The IMD issued orange alert i.e. heavy to very heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in Nirmal,Nizamabad, Rajanna Sircilla, Karimnagar,Peddapalli, Khammam, Mahabubabad, Warangal (Rural),Warangal (Urban), Jayashankar Bhupalapally, Mulugu and Bhadradri Kothagudem. Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gusty winds (speed up to 30-40 KMPH) very likely to occur at isolated places in all districts of Telangana.

In Hyderabad, generally cloudy sky, light to moderate rain or thundershowers are very likely to occur in parts of

IMD Director Naga Ratna said, "Southwest monsoon has been active over Telangana. Heavy to very heavy rain and extremely heavy rain occurred in Kumaram Bheem, Asifabad, Mancherial, Jagtial, Peddapally, Jayashankar Bhupalapally, Mulugu, Bhadradi Kothagudem district on Wednesday. A cyclonic circulation lies over northwest Bay of Bengal & neighbourhood and extends between 3.1 km & 7.6 km above sea level. Under its influence, a low pressure area is expected to form over the northwest Bay of Bengal & neighbourhood."

State average cumulative rainfall from 1st June to 21st July, 2021 is 430.1 mm against the normal 283.5 mm with deviation of 52%. GHMC average cumulative rainfall from 1st June to 21st July, 2021 is 368.1 mm, against the normal 219.2 mm with deviation of 68%.

Panel to study TTD's hereditary archaka system

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State government on Wednesday appointed a one man committee to suggest steps to carryout effective implementation of the hereditary Archaka system in TTD.

The government issued orders appointing the one man committee with former High Court judge and also head of AP Judicial Preview (APJP), Justice Dr B Siva Sankara Rao to examine the service issues involved in the hereditary Archakatvam of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams.

The state government said it was receiving several representations from arch-akas, devotees, spiritual leaders regarding strengt-hening and streamlining of hereditary Archaka system in the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams and to see that there was no age of superannuation of the archakas.

TS registers 691 new cases, five fatalities

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has reported 691 new Covid infections and five fatalities on Wednesday taking the cumulative number of deaths to 3,771 and the total number of positive cases to 6,38,721.

The number of active cases in Telangana, as on Wednesday was 9,908. On Wednesday, authorities conducted 1,14,260 Covid tests of which results of 594 samples were awaited. A total of 565 individuals recovered on Wednesday with a recovery rate of 97.85 per cent.

So far, a total of 2,08,68,791 tests have been conducted in the State of which 6,38,721 have tested positive and 6,25,042 persons recovered.

The positive cases reported from the districts included two from Adilabad, 23 from Bhadradi

Kothagudem, 85 from areas under GHMC, 26 from Jagtial, 10 from Jangaon, nine from Jayashankar Bhupalpally, three from Jogulamba Gadwal, 55 from Karimnagar, 56 from Khammam, seven from Kumram Bheem Asifabad, eight from Mahabubnagar, 19 from Mahabubabad, 37 from Mancherial, one from Medak, 30 from Medchal-Malkajigiri, nine Mulugu, five from Nagarkurnool, 38 from Nalgonda, two from Narayanpet, three from Nirmal, seven from Nizamabad, 42 from Peddapalli, 19 from Rajanna Sircilla, 29 from Rangareddy, seven from Sangareddy, 18 from Siddipet, 47 from Suryapet, five from Vikarabad, nine from Wanaparthy, 25 from Warangal Rural, 41 from Warangal Urban and 14 from Yadadri Bhongir.

KCR welcomes Kaushik Reddy

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Party whip Balka Suman and other TRS leaders.

Although there has been much speculation that Kaushik Reddy's prospects to contest as TRS candidate in the Huzurabad bypoll had been blighted by the leaked audio clip (in which he purportedly claimed that he would be the TRS party candidate from Huzurabad), KCR put a stop to such talk and announced that Kaushik Reddy would have "a bright political future in the TRS and not only in the Huzurabad constituency, Karimnagar or State, but with God's grace he could even go to higher level".

KCR, who draped party 'pink kanduwa' on Kaushik Reddy and his followers personally at Telangana Bhavan, recalled his relations with Kaushik Reddy's father Sainath Reddy, with whom he was associated in 2001 during the second phase of the Telangana movement. He said Kaushik Reddy and other

youth joined TRS with a strong determination to be part of Telangana's development and progress, and to continue the ongoing good programmes launched by the TRS government.

KCR said that in a parliamentary democracy, success and defeat of political parties were continuous processes, but what would endure were good programmes implemented by political parties in power to bring lasting change for the better in people's lives.

The TRS chief said that Kaushik Reddy was a cricket player and he would have had a good career as a cricketer but he chose public life and politics. "I am happy to welcome next generation leaders like Kaushik Reddy and his followers as the future of Telangana State is their responsibility. KCR would give a programme and it is for the young leaders to take it forward," he observed.

KCR said that joining a political party was a social responsi-

bility and it would give strength to an individual. In the reconstruction of Telangana, several programmes had been launched and the State was on track. So, it was for the youth to take them forward, he said.

KCR said, in spite of the good that the government had done, there were some negative forces which would always criticize. Still, it would not deter constructive leaders from achieving their mission. The Chief Minister said there was a time when people did not expect Telangana would be achieved when the second movement was launched in 2001, but Statehood became a reality. Similarly, when he conceived programmes like Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bhima by crediting cash directly into farmers' accounts so that they would use it to buy inputs they needed, people were sceptical. But the programme became a huge success.

Similarly, the newly proposed 'Dalit Bandhu' would give Rs.10

lakh to the Dalit youth who were among the most poor and oppressed communities in the country and they could use the amount to start any of the vocation in which they were good and straight away earn income and improve their economic status. A protection fund would also be part of the Dalit Bandhu that would help the family in the event of accident or illness and prevent the family from slipping into poverty again, should something happen to the beneficiary. A support structure would be the best feature under the Dalit Bandhu, he said and called upon youth to play an active role for the success of Dalit Bandhu.

KCR said the TRS government had implemented schemes for BCs, minorities and changed the face of villages with focus on basic amenities, greenery, sanitation, Vaikuntha dams to give decent final resting place in all villages. None of these could be done by the previous governments, he pointed out.

Heavy inflows..

Continued from page 1

The Tungabhadra project inflows are at 44,616 cusecs, while the outflow is 4,486 cusecs. While the FRL is 1,633 ft, the present level is 1,620.5 ft with a storage capacity of 59.59 tmc, against the full storage capacity of 100.86 tmc. It is likely to be filled soon, given the rain forecast for the next few days.

Farmers of Karnataka, Andhra and Telangana are happy with increased inflows to Tungabhadra and farmers in the two Telugu States are optimistic the project will provide water to two crops this year.

The Srisailem project storage has been steadily increasing and on Wednesday it received flood water inflow at 1,15,412 cusecs and the outflow is at 28,252. Against its FRL of 885 ft, the present level is at 842 ft and storage is at 65.73 tmc, as against the full stor-

age capacity of 215 tmc. The water level downstream of Srisailem at Nagarjuna Sagar project touched 533.8 ft, against FRL of 590 ft. Its present storage capacity is at 175.66 tmc ft, as against the full storage capacity of 215.81 tmc. The inflows and outflows are at 500 cusecs.

Projects on the Godavari River too continue to get inflows and the Sriram Sagar Project in Nizamabad district received inflows at 14,797 cusecs. The FRL of the project is 1,091 ft and the present level is 1,087 ft. Against the full storage capacity of 90 tmc, it now has storage capacity of 73.22 tmc.

The other projects on the Godavari basin- Singur, Nizam Sagar, Mid Manair, Lower Manair, Kaddam, SripadaYellampally are all getting inflows and the storage level is nearing its full capacity.

First human death from...

Continued from page 1

The Animal Husbandry Department has not found any suspected cases of bird flu and has stepped up surveillance, it said.

India has seen more than half a dozen bird flu outbreaks in poultry in the past two decades, all of which were brought under control, with no human cases reported in the country previously.

Schemes not for votes...

Continued from page 1

Schemes introduced for the Backward Classes practicing hereditary vocations had been designed in such a way that they would continue forever. Every village in the State was now green with crops, he said. KCR said the government was planning construction of sheds for sheep rearing in villages.

Mobile veterinary clinics had been set up for the first time in the country. Telangana had attained No.1 position in the country in sheep population. The State government was working for the progress of artisans and backward communities practicing caste-based vocations and it would continue its development path in spite of any number of hurdles.

Priyanka slams Centre over ‘no oxygen deaths’

Continued from page 1

The Centre on Tuesday told the Rajya Sabha that no deaths due to lack of oxygen were "specifically reported" by states and union territories during the second COVID-19 wave that hit the country.

Hitting out at the government, Priyanka Gandhi said, "No death due to lack of oxygen": Central

Government. The deaths happened because -- in the pandemic year, the government increased oxygen exports by about 700 per cent."

The Congress general secretary alleged that the deaths happened because the government did not arrange tankers to transport oxygen and ignoring the advice of the empowered group and a parliamentary committee, no arrangement was

made to provide oxygen.

"No initiative was shown in setting up oxygen plants in hospitals," she said.

The Congress on Tuesday accused Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar of misleading Parliament by giving "false information" that there were no deaths due to lack of oxygen during the second wave.

In a written reply to a question, Pawar had said, "Detailed guidelines for reporting of deaths have been issued by the Union Health Ministry to all states and UTs. Accordingly, all states and UTs report cases and deaths to the Union Health Ministry on a regular basis. However, no deaths due to lack of oxygen have been specifically reported by states and UTs".

Rural Telangana deprived of vaccines?

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So far, major outbreaks in rural areas have been traced to funerals, marriages, festivals or events which would impact hundreds. An outbreak in urban areas would create another wave of sorts. Consequently, supply to rural areas is reportedly calculated on a daily basis and sent.

Incidentally, officials are persuading beneficiaries in urban areas to get inoculated, while officials in rural areas are turning down beneficiaries due to

shortage.

Out of the 1.35 crore vaccines administered so far in the state, 30 lakh were done in Hyderabad, 18.43 lakh in Ranga Reddy, 17.3 lakh in Medchal and 5.34 lakh in Warangal urban.

Besides, there has been shortage of vaccine supply from the Center as well. The Center sends just about 20 lakh doses per month and that too in phases. The Telangana government has requested the Center to replenish vax stocks.



Cases are increasingly being 'registered' in the city by fake police, who are collecting money illegally from their victims by posing as real cops. In the last one week itself, four such fake cases were 'registered' in different areas of Hyderabad. Two cases under the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate limits and two in the Hyderabad Police Commissionerate limits were registered until now within this week.



Observers say that these fake police cases are actually ramifications of corruption in the police department itself. The fake police act as fronts of some corrupt police officials to extort money, they alleged.

A victim had complained to the Sultan Bazaar Police that a person had taken his bag forcibly and took away Rs 6 lakh in cash. He said that the accused introduced himself as a cop and alleged that there was ganja in his bag. Despite the victims' denial, he forcibly searched his bag and decamped.

In the last one week, number of these fake police cases has increased. Nellore Swamy of Kamareddy district had acted as a DSP and cheated many people. He had collected crores

On July 11, three fake police officers went to Bodha Beauty Parlour located at 6th Phase of KPBB Colony under Cyberabad Police Commissio nerate. They demanded money from the owner of the beauty parlour. The owner however had a doubt and informed the police. The police reached the spot and arrested two fake police officers, Kavela Abhilash Gowdara and Ranga Bhanu Prasad. The key accused Gampa Sriharsha

Observers say that these fake police cases are actually ramifications of corruption in the police department itself. The fake police act as fronts of some corrupt police officials to extort money, they alleged. Commissioner of Police, Hyderabad, Anjani Kumar, however, has a different opinion, "There is no scope of any bribe taking in the department. We are taking action against such police personnel. I appeal to the people not to follow instructions of police, who ask for money and not to follow any illegal procedures."

Rains, virus couldn't dampen festive spirit of Bakrid in Hyd

Bakrid was celebrated with fervour across Telangana on Wednesday with Muslims offering prayers at various Eidgahs in the city and other places in the state.

Miralam Eidgah, hockey ground at Masab Tank, military ground at Mehdiapatnam and others here witnessed major congregations, though rain (since morning hours) and Covid pandemic appeared to have had an impact on the celebrations.

State Home Minister Mohd Mahmood Ali performed prayers at a mosque in Azampura in the city.



He said the message of showing mercy, compassion, sacrifice and patience towards others should be learnt from Bakrid.

Man arrested for murder of Dalit girl friend in Nalgonda

On July 12, the 17-year-old victim, who was sleeping with her grandmother in her house, was found missing around 11.45 pm. The next day, the girl's dead body was found in an open field on the outskirts of Koppole village. She was

The officials have cracked the case and arrested the accused. The police investigation revealed that the accused Pavan has made a phone call to his friends to discuss whether to kill the victim or not. The friends of the accused, who tried to convince him on the phone, rushed to the spot and were shocked to witness that Pavan has hanged her by then.

The police have arrested the accused after backlash from the anti-caste activists in the village and produced him in the court with all the evidence.

Smooth-coated otters spotted at N Sagar

A group of seals are resting on a concrete pier that extends from a rocky shore into the ocean. The water is choppy with small waves. The pier is a light-colored concrete structure, and the seals are dark-colored, likely California seals. They are positioned along the edge of the pier, some facing the water and others facing the shore.

Zoologist and professor Srinivas said, "In Telangana,

Youth dies after bike crashes into railing on flyover

He was immediately shifted to a nearby private hospital, where the doctors declared him dead. The Balanagar police are investigating.

CUSTODIAL DEATH OF DALIT WOMAN Three cops dismissed from service in T'gana

Mariamamma, 45, a native of Chintakani in Khammam district, who used to work as a maid at a pastor's house at Addagudur in Yadadri district, on June 15 was brought to the police station for questioning along her son and friend in connection with a theft case.

After it was alleged by Congress' Telangana SC cell chairman N Preetham that Mariamma, her son Uday and his friend Shiva were badly beaten by the station officers, the Rachakonda police commissioner had suspended the three police officers for negligence in handling the investigation. The Telangana High Court then ordered a judicial probe in the matter and directed a second autopsy of the deceased after exhumation. Meanwhile, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao announced a government job for Mariamma's son Uday Kiran.

Munsif court directs cops to register case against Praveen

While serving as the secretary to the Society of Social & Tribal Welfare Gurukulas, Praveen Kumar has started an organisation called Swaeroes (Social Welfare Aeroes) and has built a strong network with students and youngsters. As part of the Swaeroes programme, Praveen Kumar took part in Bheem Deeksha along with all other organisers at Dhulikatta Buddhist Shrine in

At present, Praveen Kumar is planning to join in politics, which he didn't deny. According to the sources, he is going to be chief of BSP for Andhra Pradesh.

Hyd surgeon first Indian to receive ASGBI honour

Neil Welch, president of the surgical body bestowed the honour on Raghu Ram during the centenary annual general body meeting which was held on Tuesday virtually. "Raghu Ram is the first surgeon of Indian origin to have this honour conferred on him in the 100 years of history of ASGBI and we are delighted to welcome him as an honorary fellow of ASGBI," said Welch.



SCR braces for monsoon challenge

Identifying vulnerable locations, including bridges, needing special attention,

Around 1,900 tanks have been identified to potentially affect the railways in this season. Railway officials and state government authorities

liaising on this as well. The SCR has also put in place a system with respective meteorological departments receiving weather warnings, to ensure field officials have prompt information and 30 anemometers have been installed on station buildings close to bridges to turn about wind speed. The SCR General Manager, Gajanan Mallay, trusted officials to be extra cautious during this period to tackle any kind of situation. He also instructed officials to implement safety precautions strictly.

Taxi and Drivers JAC provided the details of the survey conducted on 800 respondents, Chandra Sekhar has written to RBI on behalf of Telangana State Taxi and Drivers Joint Action Committee to consider the hardships faced by the taxi drivers.



Help desk to record grievances of taxi drivers

Considering the hardships faced by taxi drivers and vehicle owners due to the Covid pandemic, a help desk has been set up by additional industrial adviser, MSME Development Institute Dr Chandra Sekhar at Balanagar

This help desk has been set up as per the request of

They thanked TRS
Malkajigiri Constituency

Parliamentary in-charge
Marri Rajasekhara Reddy and
S D Chandra Sekhar for pro-
viding guidance and support
to the Telangana State Taxi
and Drivers Joint Action
Committee for fighting for
the rights of the drivers and
vehicle owners of Telangana.
After the Telangana State

Taxi and Drivers JAC provided the details of the survey conducted on 800 respondents, Chandra Sekhar has written to RBI on behalf of Telangana State Taxi and Drivers Joint Action Committee to consider the hardships faced by the taxi drivers.

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RISING RETIREMENT AGE FOR SINGARENI WORKERS TO 61 CM KCR's decision 'historic'

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR
BHUPALA PALLY

The decision of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to increase the retirement age of Singareni employees and workers to 61 is historical, Jayashankar Bhupalapally MLA Gandra Venkataramana Reddy said on Wednesday. As a people's representative of the Singareni zone, Chief Minister KCR has taken a challenging decision, he said.

Addressing the media here on Wednesday, Gandra Venkataramana Reddy thanked Chief Minister KCR and said he had increased the retirement age of government employees soon after he took reins of the Telangana state and he also increased the retirement age of Singareni employees and workers now. The Chief Minister's decision will be a historical milestone in the annals of Singareni. He said the decision was delayed due to some unavoidable reasons for Singareni workers. The Chief Minister spoke to Singareni



Chairman and Managing Director Sridhar on Tuesday at a meeting and ordered him to take steps to increase the retirement age to 61 at the Singareni board meeting to be held on July 26. The decision of the Chief Minister will be useful as there are many Singareni workers in Bhupalapally town, the MLA said.

Gandra Venkataramana Reddy said the plantation drive will be taken up massively on the birthday of Minister for IT and Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) working president

Kalvakuntla Taraka Ramarao as it is proposed to plant three crore saplings in a single day for the best of the society and provide a clean environment to the future generations. He said an action plan was prepared to this effect for the massive programme.

The MLA said distribution of ration cards will be launched for the first time in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district at the hands of Minister for Civil Supplies Gangula Kamalakar and Minister for Tribal

Development Satyavathy Rathod and Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao. Stating that the Chief Minister has said at a meeting with the Yadava people held on Tuesday the distribution of sheep programme was delayed, he said he has fixed Rs 1.75 lakh as a unit price of sheep because of the increase in its prices. The MLA thanked the Chief Minister on behalf of the Yadava community for fixing the unit price at Rs 1.75 lakh to the eligible beneficiaries.

Zilla Praja Parishad Vice-Chairman Kallepu Sobha Raghupathi Rao, municipal chairperson Seggam Venkatarami Siddhu, vice chairman Kotha Haribabu, town and mandal party president Sambamurthy, Ravinder Reddy, Katti Sampath, Manohar Reddy, Youth president Burra Raju, ZPTCs Gorre Sagar, Puli Tirupati Reddy, Joruka Sadaiah, MPP Methuku Tirupati Reddy, Davu Veera Reddy, councillors Muralidhar, Renuka, Ravinder and others were present.

Speed up modernisation of power looms: BJP chief Sanjay

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

BJP state president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar has requested the Centre to speed up the modernization of power looms in Siricilla town which is the largest textile hub in Telangana.

He called on Union Textile Secretary Upe3ndra Prasad Singh in New Delhi and submitted a memorandum to this effect on Wednesday. He explained to him that Siricilla town is growing as a biggest textile hub in Telangana with more than 40,000 power looms. Because the looms are outdated and their generation power has come down.

MLA Sithakka wants health camps in villages to check seasonal diseases

PNS ■ MULUG

Congress National Women General Secretary and Mulug MLA Sithakka on Wednesday requested DM&HO to set up health camps in every village and medical examinations should be conducted in the wake of incessant rains and a possible outbreak of seasonal diseases.

Sithakka visited agency villages in Mulug district to over the reports of seasonal diseases during this rainy season. She said more corona cases are being registered across Mulugu district and appealed to the people of agency areas to use masks and maintain physical distance. The MLA visited Gonepalli village in Thadwai zone.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that the third wave of the corona has intensified and people should be vigilant by



maintaining physical distance and using masks. She urged the health officials to visit villages and conduct health camps. Tests should be conducted and take appropriate measures to prevent malaria, dengue and other water-borne diseases.

Former ZPTC Bollu Devender and former co-operative society chairman Paka Sambayya were present on the occasion. District leaders Arrem Lachu Patel, Thadwai sarpanch Irapa Sunil, Thandla

Srinu, Youth Congress mandal president Ganta Sai Reddy, village committee president Paka Rajender, co-operative society director Yanalasiddireddy, village committee president Makkashreenu, Anumandla Razi Reddy, Pittala Mahender, Enganti Nares, Chinta Errayya, Satish, Alivel Kannayya, Ramulu, Durgayya, Sai, Sammayya, Kursam Kannayya, Youth Leaders Sandeep and Suresh participated in the programme.



AI FARMING

Agriculture officials implementing AI-based Pest Management Solution to benefit the cotton farmers from their crop loss due to pink boll worm pest attack in Adilabad on Wednesday. It will alert the farmers when infestation happens in the crop and also give them advisories.

All 16 gates of Yellampally project lifted, water released

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

The irrigation officials Wednesday released the flood water by lifting all the 16 gates of the Sripada Yellampalli project on Wednesday following the incessant rains in the upper stream of Godavari.

The project's Full Tank Level is 147.87 meters and it has a water storage capacity of 20.75 cusecs. About 19.73 TMCs of water is reaching the project from the upstream areas of the Godavari river. About 87,440 cusecs of was



released downstream by lifting the 16 gates of the Yellampally project. Godavari river was brim on the downstream till the Sundilla bar-

rage with heavy inflows of floodwater. The officials sounded alert to the Godavari river bank villages and low-lying areas.

Soaps, masks distributed

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

Continuing its fight against the Covid-19, NTPC in association with Deepthi Mahila Samithi in Ramagundam on Wednesday distributed masks and soaps to the needy.

At a programme held at Deepthi Mahila Samithi premises on Wednesday, Usha Kumar, President of the Ladies Club distributed 300 masks and 100 soaps to the vendors, shopkeepers and security personnel in the township.

Speaking on the occasion, Usha Kumar appreciated the associations for their selfless services during the Covid pandemic and asked them to continue their fight while following the Covid regulations.

She also distributed prizes to the winners of different competitions organized during Swachh Pakhwada held from May 15 to 31. Organized by the CSR section, the essay-writing and drawing competitions received a huge response from students of Class-III to X.



Minister extends Bakrid greetings

PNS ■ MAHABUBNAGAR

Extending greetings to the Muslim brothers and sisters on the eve of Eid-ul-Adha, Minister for Excise, Sports and Tourism Dr V Srinivas Goud said all castes and religions are living with secular feelings after the Telangana state is formed.

The Minister greeted Muslims at Edga Darga at Kotha Gunj in Mahabubnagar on Wednesday on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha (Bakrid). He said the state government is giving equal treatment to all the castes and religions and steps were being taken for the growth of all castes and regions. The Chief Minister is striving for the development of all sections of people, he said all people should maintain communal harmony with Ganga Jamuna Tahajeeb.



District SP R Venkateswarlu, municipal chairman KC Narsimhulu, District Library Association chairman Rajeswar Gowd, DM&HO Dr Krishna, Municipal Commissioner Pradeep Kumar and others were present on the occasion. After the special prayers, the Minister extended Bakrid greetings to all the Muslims.

Muslims greeted

PNS ■ GADWAL

MLA Bandla Krishnamohan Reddy has extended Eid-ul-Adha greetings on behalf of Chief Minister KCR and TRS Working President KT Ramarao on Wednesday and prayed that the blessings of Allah be an usher in on the Muslims and their family members. The Muslims offered special prayers on the occasion of Bakrid in Gadwal town on Wednesday and MLA Krishnamohan Reddy

embraced the Muslim brothers and extended greetings.

Speaking on the occasion, MLA Krishnamohan Reddy said the Bakrid is the day to share our smiles with love and time for praying for our close associates before Allah. He said with the blessings of Allah, all the obstacles shall be removed. The Telangana government is committed to the welfare of the Muslims and appealed to the people to utilise the welfare schemes such as Shadi Mubarak and minority gurukul schools were established in every constituency.



ASI takes over 800-year-old Shiva temple of Palampeta

PNS ■ MULUG

An ancient Lord Shiva temple popularly known as Gollalla Gudi, believed to be built 800-years ago at Palampeta village was handed over to the Archaeological Survey of India, District Collector Krishna Aditya said on Wednesday.

It is learnt that proposals have been forwarded to get UNESCO recognition for the temple and the Ramappa Archaeological Survey announced that it was built during the Kakatiya period in the 12th century in the village of Palampeta in the



Venkatapur zone of Mulugu District. One of the two Shiva temples in Ramappa is the Ramalingeswara Swamy temple and the other is the 'Gollalla' temple which has magnificent architecture.

In a statement on Wednesday, Collector Krishna

Aditya said the temple has been handed over to the Archaeological Survey of India for protecting the structure as a historical monument. Built during the Kakatiya period, the temple is said to be 800-year-old and still attracts visitors from all over the state. He said it was handed over to the Archaeological Department with an intention to develop it as a tourist spot.

The Collector expressed hope that the Lucknavaram and Ramappa lakes in Mulugu district would be developed as an attractive tourism centre, if recognized as UNESCO's world-class treasure.

Maoists release 7 villagers abducted in Sukma district

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR
BHUPALA PALLY

Seven people, who were allegedly abducted by Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district on Monday night, have been released and they have

safely returned to their village, police said on Wednesday.

Before releasing them, the Maoists warned the villagers "not to support police or development works" in the area, the police said.

"These people reached their

village Kunded under Jagargunda police station limits on Tuesday night and all of them are safe." Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P said. On July 18, Maoists had forcefully taken the seven people along with them towards

Puvarti village, the native place of dreaded Maoist commander Hidma, and allegedly kept them in captivity, he said.

When they did not return, a group of villagers from the area went into the forest in search of them.

Double bedroom houses unable to overcome troubles!

MALLEPALLI GOVERDHAN
■ NAGARKURNOOL

Taken up prestigiously by the Telangana government to provide shelter to the homeless poor people, the double bedroom housing scheme is still lagging behind with the teething troubles.

In contrast to the Central government's subsidy housing construction scheme, the State government moved a step forward to provide houses to the poor living in the urban and rural areas by adding it in the election manifesto. The government proposed a total of 5.72 lakh houses and allocated two lakh houses for Greater Hyderabad.

It has identified slums in Nagarkurnool, Mahabubnagar, Wanaparti, Siricilla, Madak, Siddipet, Nizamabad, Yadadri, Adilabad, Manchiryal, Nirmal,



Jagityal, Karimnagar, Pedapally, Nalgonda, Suryapeta, Kamareddy and other areas. It was included in the 2014 election manifesto and decided to build 2.72 lakh houses by 2024 against the additional target of 3 lakh. Rs 3.5 lakh has been estimated for constructing each house.

With the increase in the

prices of raw materials and changes in the designs, the cost of each house escalated to Rs 7.50 lakh by 2017. Though it had entered into an agreement with the cement companies to supply cement for the housing scheme, the iron prices had increased more than triple times. Lakhs of applications have poured in

from the beneficiaries by March 2019. According to an estimation, there are around 20 lakh shelter-less poor people in the 31 districts in the state and an estimated Rs 2 lakh crore may be required to complete the project.

As of now, only 22,529 double bedroom houses have been built and the scheme is not moving forward owing to various issues to complete 2.72 lakh houses by March 2024. The main issues daunting the project are lack of funds at the state government, issues between the project contractors and other issues. The ruling party leaders claimed that there is an abnormal delay in the construction because of various issues. Even the leaders faced the wrath of the people when they visited the areas to hand over the already built houses to the beneficiaries.

Many houses developed cracks and roofs are falling, the dust billowing from the walls and low-quality slabs, iron rods exposing pillars, poor electrical works and leaking roofs with poor quality construction. The beneficiaries expressed deep concern as they are staying in the houses as there is no other option left. Moreover, the middlemen played havoc by squeezing money from the beneficiaries in the name of sanctioning the houses. Many beneficiaries sold out the houses allotted to them. All these issues are throwing a challenge to the government.

The construction was stalled at the basement level itself in some districts. The double bedroom houses stood as a testimony for the negligence of the government as many hous-

es in the majority of districts are pending at various levels.

The officials proposed 2.37 lakh houses and 1.97 houses have been finalised for construction of which 53,000 houses were at various stages of construction. The works are going at snail's pace at Siddipet, Khammam, Rajanna Siricilla and Suryapet districts, while construction was yet to begin in Nagarkurnool and Komaram Bheem districts. Though foundation stone was laid in Mahabubnagar and Devarakadra areas, construction is yet to commence. About 447 houses are waiting for inauguration in Adilabad district.

If the government wanted to achieve the target of completing the construction by 2024, it has to go in a steadfast to realize the dream of the poor people to have a shelter.

Maoists' call to observe 'Martyrs memorial week'

PNS ■ MULUG

CPI Maoist party JMWP, Division Committee Secretary appealed to the people of Jayashankar Bhupalapally, Mahabubabad, Warangal and Peddapally districts to commemorate the revolutionary martyrs memorial week.

In a press release on Wednesday, Maoist division secretary Venkatesh asked all sections of people to observe memorial week. He said hundreds of villages had been liberated with the relentless efforts made by revolutionary fighters like Charu Mujumdar and Kanhai Chatterjee. The saffron party Government at the Centre has been resorting to suppressive steps on the Adivasis and Muslim

minorities, he said.

The Modi government was also undermining the rights of singers and writers, he observed. After the TRS government came to power for a second consecutive term, it was also colluded with the Centre and resorting to suppressive acts on democratic people.

Alleging that they have links with the Maoist party, the TRS government has arrested so many people against the democratic set-up. Venkatesh said and adding that it is very undemocratic to impose a ban on 16 people's associations. Rythu Bandhu scheme was meant for feudal landlords. Maoists leaders Yapa Narayanan, Kathi Mohan Rao, Sarakka and Abhilash Vijender had sacrificed their lives, he added.

INDIA CORNER

Professor held for making derogatory remarks against Smriti

A professor, who allegedly made derogatory remarks against Union Minister Smriti Irani on Facebook, was sent to jail after he surrendered in a court here. Shaharyar Ali surrendered to Additional Sessions Judge Anurag Kumar and moved an interim bail application on Tuesday. The judge cancelled the bail plea after which the professor was sent to jail. Firozabad Police had booked Ali, head of History department at SRK College, in March for an alleged obscene Facebook post against the women and child development minister. The college had then served him with a suspension notice. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court refused to grant protection from arrest to Ali. An anticipatory bail plea filed by the professor was also rejected by the Allahabad High Court in May. Refusing to grant Ali protection from arrest, Justice J J Munir said there was no material on record to show that the professor's account was hacked.



First transgender candidate in Kerala Assembly polls found dead; Govt to probe

Noted trans activist Ananyah Kumari Alex, Kerala's first radio jockey from the third gender community, was found dead at her apartment in Ernakulam district, following which the government ordered an immediate inquiry into the incident. The 28-year-old trans-woman was found hanging from the fan in the bedroom of the apartment near Edappally on Tuesday night and a case of suicide was suspected, police said. Health Minister Veena George asked the medical director to carry out a probe into the incident as the organisation of the third gender community alleged that the deceased trans-woman was suffering from severe pain for some time following a sex reassignment surgery. Meanwhile, the health minister's office here also said an expert panel would be set up soon to study the issues related to the gender reassignment surgery. Also a celebrity makeup artist, a TV news reader and an established stage show anchor, Ananyah recently grabbed media attention as the first transgender candidate in the assembly elections in the state when she became the candidate of the Democratic Social Justice Party in Vengara in the April 6 polls.



Former UP CM Kalyan Singh's health condition critical: SGPGIMS Hospital

The health condition of former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Kalyan Singh is critical and he has been put on life support, the Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) said on Wednesday. "Kalyan Singh ji's health status is critical. He was intubated and put on life-saving support system on Tuesday evening. His clinical parameters are being closely monitored by the expert consultants," the hospital said in a statement. The senior faculty of the critical care medicine (CCM), cardiology, nephrology, neurology and endocrinology departments are keeping a close watch on all the aspects related to Singh's health, it added. SGPGIMS Director R K Dhiman is closely monitoring the former chief minister's treatment on a daily basis, the statement said. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited the hospital and inquired about Kalyan Singh's health from the doctors.



'People whose kin died due to O₂ shortage should go to court'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut on Wednesday said people whose relatives died due to oxygen shortage during the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic should "take the Union government to court".

Raut's comments came a day after the central government said in the Rajya Sabha that no deaths due to lack of oxygen were specifically reported by states and UTs during the second COVID-19 wave. Reacting to it, Raut said, "Many people have died due to oxygen shortage in several states. Those whose relatives (COVID-19 patients) died due to oxygen shortage should take the Union government to court."



"The Union government is running away from the truth. It seems it is the effect of Pegasus (Israeli spyware)," the Rajya Sabha member said sarcastically while talking to reporters.

The Sena's chief spokesperson further said it needs to be found out whether the people whose relatives died due to lack of oxygen supply believe in the Centre's response in Parliament over the issue.

Change in oxygen distribution policy by Centre led to disaster

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday said all deaths reportedly caused due to shortage of oxygen during second wave of COVID-19 in the city will be probed if the Centre allows the Delhi government to form a panel. He also charged the Centre with trying to "hide its fault" and alleged that its "mismanagement" and change in oxygen distribution policy after April 13 caused shortage of the life-saving gas in the hospitals across the country, leading to a "disaster". In an online briefing, Sisodia accused the

BJP-led Centre of not allowing the formation of a committee for probing deaths caused due to oxygen shortage during second wave of COVID-19 in Delhi. "The government shamelessly told white lies in Parliament. There was utter chaos due to oxygen shortage after April 15 till May 5 and there is no big deal that people would die due to oxygen shortage," he said. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said the Kejriwal government, by taking responsibility, tried to form a committee to audit all the deaths that happened reportedly due to oxygen shortage but the Centre prevented it through the LG.

'Completely false to say no one died due to O₂ shortage'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Wednesday said there have been many deaths due to oxygen shortage in Delhi and other places across the country and it was "completely false" to say no one died for want of the life-saving gas.

"If no deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage, why did hospitals move high court one after another every day? Hospitals had been saying that oxygen shortage led to deaths. The media, too, flagged this issue daily," Jain told reporters here.

"Television channels and newspapers reported how hospitals ran out of oxygen. It is completely false and wrong to say that no one died due to oxygen shortage," he said.

"There have been many deaths due to oxygen shortage in Delhi and many other places across the country. It was really sad and unfortunate," Jain said.

The minister said the Centre did not ask for data related to such deaths but the city government had tried ascertaining the number on its own by setting up the panel.

BJP hits back at oppn-ruled states over O₂ deaths row

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Noting that opposition-ruled states claimed in courts that there was no death due to shortage of oxygen during the second COVID-19 wave and made similar assertions in their response to the Centre, the BJP on Wednesday hit back at its rivals amid a row over the Modi government's reply in Parliament on the matter.

The government had told Rajya Sabha on Tuesday that no deaths due to lack of oxygen were specifically reported by states and UTs during the second COVID-19 wave, drawing sharp criticism from opposition leaders.

Deaths of patients in hospitals due to lack of the life-saving gas were reported from several states during the peak of the second wave in April-May as the demand for medical oxygen zoomed.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra noted that the central government's reply was based on the figures provided by states and UTs as health is a state subject.

No state sent any data about patients dying due to oxygen shortage, he asserted.

He accused opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi of the Congress and Arvind



He accused opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi of the Congress and Arvind Kejriwal of the Aam Aadmi Party, of doing politics on the matter.

Kejriwal of the Aam Aadmi Party, of doing politics on the matter, and said the states where these parties are in power have claimed that no one died there due to lack of oxygen.

Hitting out at Gandhi, he said, "You have acted as a Twitter troll throughout the pandemic by writing two-line lies frequently. It is painful that a former president of one of the largest parties has behaved so irresponsibly."

With the AAP also targeting the Modi government over its

reply in Rajya Sabha, Patra noted that a Delhi government committee had told high court that there was no evidence to suggest that around 21 people had died due to shortage of oxygen in Jaipur Golden hospital on April 23-24 night after the hospital management reported the matter.

The Maharashtra government also told Bombay High Court that no one died due to the oxygen shortage and Chhattisgarh Health Minister T S Singh Deo has also made similar claims, the BJP spokesperson said.

Gandhi should speak to the chief ministers in the states where his party is in power instead of "lying" on Twitter and spreading confusion, he said.

These opposition-ruled states had spoken about patients dying due to the oxygen crisis when the second wave was peaking as they wanted to target the Modi government but have taken a different stand in writing and their submission to courts, he said, adding that it shows they want to politicise the whole issue. It is not that the central government has tied their hands, and they should have spoken truth when they were asked to submit their response in writing, he asserted.

Landslides leave 150 people stranded

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Landslides triggered by heavy rains along the Tanakpur-Ghat national highway in Uttarakhand's Champawat district have left around 150 people stranded, an official said on Wednesday.

As traffic remained blocked

at Vishramghat on the highway till late Tuesday night, the district administration made arrangements for the stay of the stranded people in Champawat, District Disaster Management Officer Manoj Pandey said.

Landslides occurred at eight points along the high-

way on Tuesday bringing mounds of debris onto the road.

Though the debris was cleared at seven points by Tuesday evening, the rocks and boulders in Vishramghat could not be cleared till midnight despite efforts, Pandey said.

Efforts to clear the rubble on the road in Vishramghat were resumed on Wednesday morning with the help of earth moving machines and a loader he said.

Some of the stranded people, who were headed for Haldwani, are being sent there via Devidhura, he said.

Modi govt wants to establish 'surveillance state': Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Latching on to the Pegasus snooping row, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday accused the Modi government of trying to establish a "surveillance state".

She also asked the Supreme Court to take cognizance of snooping scandal that purportedly targeted politicians, activists, journalists and even judges using the Pegasus spyware, and asked Opposition parties to come together to defeat the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"BJP wants to convert a democratic country into a surveillance state rather than a welfare state," she said addressing the Martyrs' Day rally in Kolkata online.

The TMC observes Martyrs' Day on July 21 every year to commemorate the killing of 13 people in police firing on a rally of Youth Congress workers against the then Left Front government in 1993 when Banerjee was in the Congress.

The TMC supremo also accused the Centre of spending the money collected through tax on fuel and other commodities for spying using a "dangerous software" instead of funding welfare schemes.



"I know my phone is being tapped. All opposition leaders know that our phones are being tapped. I can't speak to NCP leader Sharad Pawarji or other opposition leaders or chief ministers because we are being snooped and spied on by the Centre. But snooping on us won't save them in 2024 Lok Sabha polls," Banerjee told the rally.

Slamming the BJP-led NDA government for its "monumental failure" in handling the second wave of the COVID crisis, the TMC supremo termed the saffron party a "highly loaded virus party" which needs to be defeated at any cost.

Aviation Ministry forms advisory groups to resolve challenges facing sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Civil Aviation Ministry has formed three advisory groups comprising airlines, airport operators, cargo carriers, ground handling companies, flying training organisations and maintenance, repair and overhaul companies to deliberate and resolve challenges faced by the sector, an official statement said on Wednesday.

India and its aviation sector were badly hit by the coronavirus

pandemic's second wave in April and May. Many aviation stakeholders are not in a good financial shape currently. The ministry said on Twitter: "Under the chairmanship of the Honourable Minister of Civil Aviation, Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia, the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has formed three advisory groups comprising airlines, airport operators and MRO, cargo carriers, FTOs and ground handling companies." "The groups shall meet regular-

ly to deliberate upon issues and resolve challenges facing each sector. Orders have been issued for the same," it added.

Scheduled domestic passenger traffic was suspended in India for about two months between March 25 and May 24 last year due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

Since June 2020, the domestic traffic had been on a path of recovery when the second wave of the pandemic hit India during April and May this year.



Tremors felt in parts of Rajasthan

PNS ■ BIKANER

Tremors were felt in Bikaner and nearby areas in Rajasthan on Wednesday after a medium intensity quake struck Pakistan. J.L. Gautam, Head of Operations of the National Centre for Seismology, said the epicentre of the quake measuring 5.3 was in Pakistan. According to the NCS, the quake occurred at 5.24 AM at a depth of 110 kilometres.

The tremors lasted a few seconds and no damage was reported in the state.

India, Pak security forces exchange sweets along LoC, IB on Eid-ul-Adha

PNS ■ JAMMU

Security forces of India and Pakistan exchanged sweets along the International Border (IB) and the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha on Wednesday, officials said.

Officials of the Indian and Pakistani armies exchanged sweets at Poonch-Rawalakot and Mendhar-Hotspring crossing points along the LoC in Poonch district.

They said the ceremony is seen as an enhanced confidence-building measure in the backdrop

of a ceasefire between both countries. Greetings and best wishes for peace and harmony were conveyed to the Pakistani Army representatives. The gesture was appreciated by both the armies and is expected to further promote goodwill and mutual trust, they said.

On the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha, troops of the Border Security Force (BSF) and Pakistan Rangers greeted each other and exchanged sweets in Hira Nagar, Samba, Ramgarh, R S Pura, Arnia, Pargwal sectors of the International Border of Jammu, officials said.

Leopard kills boy in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh

PNS ■ UTTARAKHAN

A 10-year-old boy was mauled to death by a leopard in a village in this district, a forest official said on Wednesday. The boy was returning to home along with his sister from a shop in Latrari village on Tuesday evening when he was attacked by the leopard from behind, Pithoragarh Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Vinay Bhargava said. As his sister cried for help, the leopard fled, leaving the boy behind after dragging him for a few metres, he said.

Universities should discuss global challenges: V-P

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday asked universities to become thought leaders in finding solutions to global challenges such as climate change, poverty and pollution.

He also wanted the universities to discuss various socio-economic and political issues facing the world and come up with ideas that can be implemented by governments as per their requirements.

Virtually addressing the inaugural session of World Universities Summit, the vice president said universities should produce good academicians, economists and politicians who have good conduct, capacity, character and caliber.

Referring to the theme of the summit, "Universities of the Future: Building Institutional Resilience, Social Responsibility and Community Impact", Naidu called for promoting multi-disciplinary approaches and emphasised on collaborative academic effort to create sustainable and scalable solutions to the challenges around us.

According to an official statement, he opined that sustainable development was the answer to



many challenges faced by the world today and universities can play a major role towards this end.

"Universities need to embed sustainability as an underlying mission across all activities they pursue in various fields," he said.

Noting that virtual education cannot be a substitute for conventional classroom learning, the vice president said there was a need to develop a hybrid teaching model for future by combining the best elements of offline and online education.

He said such a model should be both interactive and interesting for the learner as well as the teacher to ensure the optimum learning outcomes.

'India's excess deaths during Covid pandemic may be between 3.4- 4.9m'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's excess deaths during the Covid pandemic could be between 3.4 to 4.9 million, according to a new report which suggests millions more may have died from the SARS-CoV-2 virus than the official count.

The report, which was released on Tuesday, is co-authored by India's former chief economic adviser Arvind Subramanian, Justin Sandefur from the US-based think-tank Center for Global Development and Abhishek Anand from Harvard University.

"Estimating COVID-deaths with statistical confidence may prove elusive. But all estimates suggest that the death toll from the pandemic is likely to be an order of magnitude greater than the official count of 400,000," the authors said.

"True deaths are likely to be in the several millions not hundreds of thousands, making this arguably India's worst human tragedy since partition and independence," the authors added in their report.

Excess deaths between January 2020 and June 2021 are between 3.4 million to 4.9 million, they esti-

mate. Excess deaths are additional deaths recorded during a pandemic, as compared to a corresponding period in pre-pandemic years, and could be a potential indicator of undercounting in India's Covid toll.

India's official COVID-19 tally on Wednesday was 4,18,480 (4.18 lakh), the third highest in the world after the US and Brazil.

Noting that India lacks an authoritative estimate of the death toll from Covid, the researchers based their estimate of excess mortality on three different data sources from the pandemic's start



through June this year.

First, the extrapolation of state-level civil registration of deaths

from seven states. This suggests 3.4 million excess deaths.

Second, the researchers applied

international estimates of age-specific infection fatality rates (IFR) to Indian seroprevalence data. This implies a higher toll of around 4 million.

IFR assesses the proportion of deaths among identified confirmed cases and allows estimation of excess deaths.

Third, the researchers analysed data from the Consumer Pyramid Household Survey (CPHS), a survey of over 800,000 individuals across all states. This yields an estimate of 4.9 million excess deaths.

The researchers said they don't favour any one estimate because

each has merits and shortcomings.

India is still emerging from a devastating second wave that started in March and is believed to have been driven by the more transmissible Delta variant.

The analysis also suggests the first wave was more lethal than believed. By March-end this year, when the second wave started, India had an official death toll of over 1,50,000 (1.5 lakh).

Several experts have cast doubts on India's official toll, blaming the way deaths are counted in the country rather than deliberate misinformation.

Since official figures don't rep-

resent the reality, there is need to use indirect methods such as an estimation of excess deaths due to all causes over the pandemic period, said Gautam Menon, professor, Departments of Physics and Biology, Ashoka University, Haryana.

"The analysis leads to a broad range of possible values, of an undercounting by a factor of 3 at the lower end to an undercounting by a factor of 10 at the upper end. All evidence suggests that the actual value lies within this range," Menon, who has been a part of several COVID-19 modelling studies, told PTI.

Still opaque

Are the immunity of a fully vaccinated person and the antibodies in a recovered person equal?

The COVID-19 situation in India continues to be enigmatic as ever. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) says that two-thirds of the Indian population above six years has had SARS-CoV-2 infection and developed antibodies against the virus. The highest sero prevalence of 77.6 per cent has been found in the age group of 45-60 years. The lowest prevalence has been in the six- to nine-year category, of 57.2 per cent. The ICMR has said the results offer a ray of hope amid gnawing fears of a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Adding to the hope, the country is yet to report a spike in daily positive cases. The latest daily case figure stands at 41,279, of which a whopping 26,000 come from Kerala and Maharashtra. Leaving aside these two States, the overall situation is not yet alarming. Thirdly, India is going through a graded easing of lockdown restrictions. There is a general complaint of the casual approach of people and the States to respecting the safety protocols. Yet, there is also growing awareness among the States and the courts to prevent assembly of large crowds at tourist spots and religious events. Thousands of tourists have been turned away from hill stations while potential super-spreader events like the Char Dham Yatra and the Kanwar Yatra have been deferred. Do all these factors mean that the third wave need not be inevitable?



If the ICMR survey says over 66 per cent of the people have antibodies, should we be rushing to the conclusion that the country is at the threshold of herd immunity? Is it a scientific, rational assumption that the immunity of a fully vaccinated person and the antibodies present in a recovered person have the same potency to ward off future infections? Answers to these questions are necessary before either the States or the people jump to wrong conclusions and embrace complacency. The ICMR should have clarified this while revealing the sero survey details. At no point should there be a doubt in the mind of anyone that the antibodies can be a substitute for the vaccine. The vaccination drive, which has reportedly slowed down for want of doses, should not be allowed to slacken. In fact, a national campaign is necessary to drive home the point repeatedly that there is no alternative to full vaccination. There are reports coming from the United States that the new round of infection is being reported from the poorly vaccinated regions. The Indian COVID task force officials have named four things that can lead to a possible third wave; namely, lowered levels of immunity acquired in the first two waves, the possibility of a new variant that can bypass the acquired immunity, faster transmissibility of a new variant among the population and premature easing of COVID-19 restrictions. It is important to remember that 400 million Indians without antibodies are vulnerable while only 6.3 per cent of the population is fully vaccinated.

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PICTALK



Devotees offer prayers on the occasion of Eid al-Adha at the Badi Masjid in Chennai

PTI

Spoke in wheel

The Supreme Court has rightly pulled up the Kerala Govt over relaxing COVID restrictions for Eid

After ticking off the Uttar Pradesh Government over its reluctance to cancel the Kanwar Yatra this year, the Supreme Court has taken another similar, welcome step and castigated the Kerala Government over its ostensible appeasement policy in granting a three-day relaxation from COVID-19 restrictions ahead of the Eid al-Adha (Bakrid) festival. Hinting that its pliable stand emanated from the vote bank and



economic concerns, the court stated that the State Government bowing to traders' pressure by granting the relaxations shows a "sorry state of affairs" and was "wholly uncalled for". Observing that the "pressure groups in the market" can't be allowed to affect the general public's right to health, the apex court lamented: "Can't quash the Kerala Government's notification. The horse has already bolted." However, the court didn't let the matter pass based on the time elapsed since the notification and, rightly pointing to its recent order passed in the Kanwar Yatra case, warned the State Government that it would invite strict

penal action if the relaxations so granted lead to another spurt in the cases of COVID-19 pandemic. It also stated categorically that pressure groups of all kinds, religious or otherwise, cannot in any manner interfere with the most precious "Right to life".

Hearing the UP Kanwar Yatra matter on July 16, the top court had observed that all sentiments, including religious, were subservient to the right to life. For its part, the UP Government fully deserved the rap on the knuckles as it kept insisting that the restrictions be eased for the Kanwar Yatra, which had all the potential of turning into a super-spreader. Its neighbour, Uttarakhand, had prudently ordered against allowing the Kanwar Yatra and even halted the Char Dham Yatra this year, too, as it feared that the pilgrims and tourists arriving from other States could cause the number of COVID-19 positive cases in the hill State to shoot up. However, Uttar Pradesh, also ruled by the BJP, tried to cajole it into allowing its pilgrims to enter Uttarakhand for collecting holy water from the Ganga at Haridwar. Its exigency can be attributed to the fact that the State is headed for Assembly elections next year, so rather than jeopardising its chances at the hustings, it wanted to give these a boost. However, the Supreme Court has taken a sensible stand in both the cases and sided with the right to life.

Fresh challenges await Deuba in the hot seat

It's as much about providing political stability and shoring up economy in Nepal as it is about undoing Oli's wrongs and repairing relations with India



RISHI GUPTA

After a series of thunderbolts hit Nepalese politics, Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba was appointed the 13th Prime Minister of the democracy on July 13. The Supreme Court had the previous day overturned the dissolution of the House of Representatives by former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli on May 21 and ordered the appointment of Opposition leader Deuba within 24 hours under Article 76 (5) of the Constitution. Deuba managed to poll 165 votes in the 275-member House and secure clear majority. With Maoists and the Janata Samajbadi Party supporting the Government, a total of 22 members of the Nepal-Khanal faction of Oli's UML party voted in favour of Deuba, including eight Oli loyalists. It was another eye-opener for the arrogant Oli, who had been misusing the Constitution and the Office of the President to cling to power.

Ensuring stability: During his one-and-a-half-year term, Deuba will have to ensure political stability and address the challenges of economy and employment amidst COVID-19. Although a no-confidence motion can be moved against the Deuba Government for two years under the Constitution, he will also need to put his own house in order as three major parties are supporting the Government. While a five-member Cabinet has been appointed and significant portfolios awaiting a Minister, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deuba will have a tough time keeping the Maoists calm, especially Prachanda, who continues to aim for the top post. Noteworthy, Maoists had aligned with the UML for the 2017 parliamentary and local body elections despite being in the Government with the Nepali Congress. Therefore, power-sharing with Prachanda will be an important element to look for in the months to come.

Rejuvenating ties with Delhi: Soon after Deuba won the vote of confidence on July 19, a congratulatory message was tweeted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi added: "I look forward to working with you to enhance our unique partnership in all sectors further, and strengthen our deep-rooted people-to-people ties."



The tweet was followed by a telephonic conversation. For many in India, it is a good start for India to engage with Nepal as bilateral ties have seen the lowest point under Oli. In the last one year, Oli had used anti-India manoeuvring to his political benefit, including unilaterally adding sovereign territories of India in the Kalapani region into the official political map of Nepal. Even though Oli was claiming that issues with India have been resolved, the border dispute remains a contention, whether Deuba wishes or not.

The Nepali Congress had supported the constitutional amendment moved by Oli to include Indian territories into Nepal's political map. Therefore, India will have to make its diplomatic endeavours in Nepal carefully as on the border row, the Nepali Congress does not differ from what Oli had stood for. Also, with anti-India ultra-nationalistic elements working as catalyst in influencing the political mandate in Nepalese politics, Deuba might be seen taking that road. Meanwhile, with Oli gone, India has every reason to celebrate. However, India's policy towards Nepal will need a more proactive

INDIA'S POLICY TOWARDS NEPAL WILL NEED A MORE PROACTIVE INSTANCE THAN MERELY NOTING THE EVENTS THERE. THE EXISTING TRADE DEFICIT HAS OFTEN WORKED AGAINST INDIA'S GOODWILL, AND A COMPETITIVE INVESTMENT ON A PAR OR MORE THAN CHINA WILL BE NEEDED

instance than merely noting the events there. The existing trade deficit has often worked against India's goodwill, and a competitive investment on a par or more than China will be needed.

Interestingly, Modi has promised to provide COVID-19 vaccines to Nepal during the telephonic conversation with Deuba. India had halted the vaccine supplies to Nepal after the second wave hit India in April. Thus, it should be seen as a welcome shift in India's policy towards Nepal during such challenging times.

Overcoming coalition compulsions: Further, Deuba has a better chance to shed Chinese heavy-handedness into Nepal's political and foreign affairs and mend ties with India. Against the popular image of Oli befriending China to serve Beijing's interests in matters related to Tibet and India, Deuba does not come with the baggage of communist ideology. Therefore, he can work with India on the path to cooperation and development in Nepal. Meanwhile, his alliance partner Prachanda is known for his China leaning.

It was a similar coalition in 2017 with Nepali Congress

when he persuaded Deuba to sign the Belt and Road Initiative, much to India's unhappiness. On July 6, Prachanda was seen making overtures to Xi Jinping and the Communist Party of China during the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties Summit to mark the 100 years of its establishment. Prachanda had given a clean chit to China, claiming it as the most generous nation in "contributing to global prosperity and peace as well" and an advocate of "rule-based international order, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and global equity and justice are highly commended by developing countries, including Nepal".

Hence, Prime Minister Deuba has a challenging tenure to ensure political stability, keep Prachanda in confidence, mend bilateral ties with New Delhi, ensure a smooth arrival of vaccines from India and wither away Chinese elements in Nepal's internal politics.

(The author is an ICSSR Doctoral Fellow at the JNU and Visiting Fellow at the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs, Kathmandu. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PEGASUS AS AN ALBATROSS FOR THE GOVT

Sir — An Israeli cyber surveillance company, NSO, whose Pegasus spyware enables the remote surveillance of smart phones, has come under heightened scrutiny after an international alliance of news outlets reported that the Indian Government used the software to target journalists, dissidents and Opposition politicians. No Indian is surprised to read the Modi Government's hand in the sordid affair.

Don't forget, spying is an ancient concept in India; only the technology keeps changing. If we read Chanakya's 'Mudra Manjusha', we come across a number of plots and spying for installing Chandragupta. Moreover, phone tapping is an established 'custom' the world over.

As per the BJP's tradition, to help Modi save face, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar targeted the Congress and *The Wire* for trying to derail the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament. But who knows, with the help of the judicial system, it is likely that the Pegasus taint too will not stick to the Modi Government.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

PREPARE BEFORE OPENING PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Sir — The suggestion made by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) that children can handle viral infections much better than adults though the antibody exposure is similar and, therefore, primary schools must be opened before secondary schools, can be done only after the teaching and non-teaching staffers are vaccinated as well as depending on the public health situation in any particular district. It has been seen that young children have fewer ACE2 receptors in their lung cells.

However, the antibody exposure we have been seen in this sero survey among children is very similar to adults. According to the findings of the fourth national sero survey, over half the kids in 6-17 age group shows the presence of antibodies. The sero positivity was 57.2 per cent in the 6-9 age group, whereas 61.6 per cent in the 10-17 age group showed presence of antibodies.

No deaths by oxygen shortage?



We were reminded of the Tamil saying 'Muzhu pusanikkaaye chottai maraithal pole' (It is like trying to conceal a full pumpkin in rice on a plate) when the Union Government denied any COVID-19 death due to the lack of medical oxygen during the second wave of the pandemic. The claim that the Government took steps to enhance oxygen supply is not the same as the claim that nobody died for want of oxygen. The question for the Government to answer is whether it made available sufficient quantities of oxygen to save the lives of all those who needed oxygen for clinical treatment. And, it cannot answer in the affirmative. Anyone who kept his eyes open would bear witness to the frantic attempts of the fam-

ily members and friends of COVID-19 patients for oxygen in a desperate bid to save their loved ones. We saw with our own eyes how people were driven from pillar to post trying to arrange medical oxygen. The disturbing visuals of those days must be shown to the death deniers. Hospitals treating COVID-19 patients ran out of oxygen and doctors broke down when they had no oxygen to treat their gasping patients. In this context, it is worth mentioning that many COVID-19 deaths occurred in non-hospital settings where clinical care by using medical oxygen was simply non-existent.

The only plausible explanation for the Government's denial of deaths due to oxygen shortage is its preoccupation with protecting its image, if need be by being economical with truth. Rubbing salt into the wounds of families that lost their loved ones by providing misleading information does the Government no great credit. Great leaders own up to their mistakes and make amends. But in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we have a leader who whitewashes his reputation and there lies the rub.

G David Milton | Kanyakumari

have compromised the fortunes of other Governments too in this manner to usurp power. Allegations and counter-allegations of this nature are very common without any proof and people need not take it seriously.

After a few days, the matter will automatically die down. After all, the Opposition is only trying its best to upset the applecart at the Centre with such allegations. Previously, it was claimed that money power was used for horse-trading after complaining about EVMs and now it takes an altogether different turn. The Opposition is trying to buy time and make news only to gain the upper hand but the BJP Government is firmly saddled at the Centre and it's hardly possible to shake it away.

MR Jayanthi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Everything is recorded in the tears of those who lost their loved ones (farmers who died during agitation). #Farmersprotest



Former Congress president — Rahul Gandhi



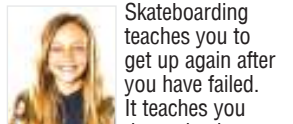
The economic situation with which our country was confronted, has been changing now.

Pakistan Prime Minister — Imran Khan



I can't even WT* this man was really luring people. We literally thought it was spam when he sent that DM to me.

YouTuber — Puneet Kaur



Skateboarding teaches you to get up again after you have failed. It teaches you determination and perseverance.

Germany's 14-year-old Olympian — Lilly Stoephasius



West Bengal has a tradition that when the ruling party fails to govern, it starts trying to become a national party.

West Bengal BJP chief — Dilip Ghosh

FIRST COLUMN

ECI AND PANDEMIC POLL BLAME

Is ECI alone to blame for holding elections during the pandemic?



ABHINAV NARAYAN JHA ABHINAV K SHUKLA

It is over two months since the results for assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala were declared. The polls were conducted amidst the second wave of COVID-19. The Election Commission faced much criticism for holding the polls when the pandemic was at its peak. The Commission faced the worst criticism when the Madras High Court in course of the hearing on a writ on the elections orally observed that “the EC is the institution that is singularly responsible for the second wave of COVID-19” and that the EC “should be put up for murder charges”. These remarks, though not part of the order of the High Court, were reported in all media. Aggrieved by these observations of the Madras High Court, the Election Commission approached the Supreme Court through a Special Leave Petition seeking a gag on media reportage on the court’s oral observations. It is not against the law to hold elections during a pandemic. However, it cannot be the justification for thousands of people to gather and assemble at



rallies or other political functions like road shows, without wearing masks and violating social distancing protocols.

The Madras High Court observed that the EC was “the most irresponsible over the last few months in not stopping political parties from wanton abuse of the COVID-19 protocol” and, to quote the media, said: “You should be put up on murder charges probably.” The court did not mean to charge the constitutional body with the offence of murder. According to section 300 of the Indian Penal Code, the offence of murder is committed if the act by which the death is caused is done to cause death or such bodily injury as the offender knows to be likely to cause the death or an act which is so imminently dangerous that it must, in all probability, cause death. In the given circumstance, the EC cannot be said to have committed any such intentional act which caused the death(s). The High Court made the comments metaphorically to make the EC realise the gravity of the situation and also to express its displeasure with its actions. The Supreme Court termed the High Court’s “murder charge” remarks against the Election Commission as “harsh” and the “metaphor inappropriate”. The Constitution of India and the Representation of Peoples Act empower the ECI to conduct free and fair elections for which the latter issues instructions under the Model Code of Conduct for political parties to follow. To its constitutional duty, the EC cannot become a ‘Super-Government’ by taking over the administration of law and order in a poll-bound state amid the pandemic. The commission is liable for issues related to the Model Code or the Prevention of Defacement of Properties but not for every remote mishap. Moreover, the current approach of the EC to conduct the assembly elections has to be analysed in consonance with the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The responsibility to handle the pandemic and ensure compliance with safety protocols lies with national and state Disaster Management Authorities and their associated departments and not solely on the Election Commission. Furthermore, in August 2020, the Government of India in consultation with also the EC had issued guidelines for the conduct of elections in COVID times. Moreover, the blame for the second wave’s severity lies not just with the government but the people as well. In current times when all news is magnified by the media, the high court judges may perhaps need to be extra cautious while making their observations concerning constitutional authorities in order also to preserve the sanctity of such authorities.

(Abhinav Narayan Jha is a Law Scholar & Political Analyst. Abhinav Shukla is Assistant Professor of Law in HNLU, Raipur. The views expressed are personal.)

Indian black money in western white banks



PRASHANT TEWARI

India’s financial fraudsters find a safe haven for their loot and sanctuary for themselves in Britain as its regime skilfully breaks international laws

Despite its traumatic past, India is the only country in the East that rejoices in having a “special relationship” with Britain. But the British have never adequately responded to the gesture.

British governments continue to traumatize India by offering a safe haven to the latter’s economic offenders. These fugitives have looted huge public money from Indian banks, siphoned off the funds to overseas destinations, and when the law enforcement agencies nailed them to get back the ill-begotten money, they ended up going to Britain to safely enjoy their looted wealth.

Fugitive billionaire Vijay Mallya of Kingfisher Airlines fame is a glaring instance. He remains on bail in Britain until and unless UK Home Secretary Priti Patel orders his extradition to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering. Mallya has applied to Secretary Patel for considering “another route” to be able to stay in the UK. This has raised widespread speculation that Mallya plans to seek asylum in that country.

Priti Patel has, however, done something big for India: She has approved the extradition of Nirav Modi, the billionaire diamondaire accused of bank fraud in India. Modi is being investigated by India’s Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) for laundering money in the region of \$2 billion and involving loans from public sector Punjab National Bank (PNB). On February 25, Westminster Magistrates’ Court said there was prima facie evidence against Modi, and that there was no reason to suggest that the jeweller would not get justice in India if he was extradited. The judge said there were links between Modi and others conspirators, including PNB officials and top ruling elites in India.

There is another side to this story. It is that many in the present Indian Government and several Indian banks seeking to bring back the looters and prosecute them may be chasing a mirage because of the complexities in the UK legal system. The UK Government trumpets its human rights laws, but how fair is the British justice system? What about human rights and fair justice for Julian Assange? Why is he not out on bail and why does he not have the right legal team to represent his case against his extradition to the USA? The UK has over the years become the most preferred tax haven destination for economic offenders like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, murder-accused Indian music director Nadeem, Sanjay Bhandari, the Rana Kapoor family, the Sandesara family, just to name a few.

The Hinduja Brothers, one of India’s richest families and their Hinduja Group of Companies remain the most preferred Indian family in the UK, aided and promoted by various British governments in the past. The Hinduja Group is right now fac-



THE UK IS OFTEN CITED AS ‘THE MONEY LAUNDERING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD’, WITH AN ESTIMATED £100BILLION CLAIMED TO BE LAUNDERED THROUGH THE CITY OF LONDON EVERY YEAR, ACCORDING TO FIGURES FROM THE UK’S NATIONAL CRIME AGENCY. LONDON HAS NOT BECOME THE ‘GLOBAL CAPITAL OF MONEY LAUNDERING’ BY ACCIDENT

(The writer is Editor-in-Chief, Opinion Express. Inputs from Jo Birring, head of World Homeland Security based in London.) The views expressed are personal.)



ing major legal problems in Switzerland in connection with a charge of forging a document at a bank. The Swiss authorities believed that there were enough grounds to proceed with their prosecution. The names of the three Hinduja brothers originally cropped up in the Bofors scam as the main middlemen but they managed to get British citizenship in the nick of time. It became a scandal in the UK at that time and a senior British minister had to resign over rumours he helped one of the brothers, Srichand Hinduja, acquire British citizenship.

Back in India, Aikant Bhatti, a minority shareholder in the Chennai-based Ashok Leyland company and in Hinduja Global Solutions, where Ashok P Hinduja is the Chairman Emeritus, claims that billions of rupees in company funds were used to benefit the promoters. Bhatti has already filed a complaint with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to intervene and probe the controversial activities in the Hinduja Group of Companies. Still, the British government continues to prefer to accord them preferential status.

The case of India’s biggest financial debtor, Anil Ambani’s Reliance Group, is not much different. The entire business has collapsed and the hard-earned taxpayer’s money has scandalously evaporated into thin air. A few months ago, Anil Ambani deposed before a UK court, in connection with a case filed by a Chinese banking consortium, that he has no money left. The UK Court had

earlier asked Anil Ambani to pay \$770 million to some Chinese banks for non-payment of loans. It is learned that after the London court’s order, Anil Ambani has limited his foreign travels fearing Chinese banks might seek the help of Interpol to issue red alerts for him in foreign airports.

The UK is often cited as “the money laundering capital of the world,” with an estimated £100billion claimed to be laundered through the City of London every year, according to figures from the UK’s National Crime Agency. London has not become the “global capital of money laundering” by accident. Money launderers and those financing terrorist activities have two main requirements. The first, in a city crowded with financial transactions their wheel-dealings will easily go unnoticed. The second, it’s a country where the antecedents of businessmen offering to invest by setting up businesses and opening bank accounts are blissfully ignored. Maintaining the secrecy of the ownership of beneficial companies is the main criterion of money laundering. Contrary to what one might think, it is many times harder to obtain an untraceable shell company in tax havens than in rich, developed countries.

At the moment, the UK is a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which routinely publishes the list of countries considered a “danger to the international financial system” as well as a “high risk” where money launder-

ing is concerned. The UK, the US, and Switzerland have never been blacklisted. Instead, the usual pariahs of the west-Cuba, North Korea, Iran, and so on, regularly appear on that list along with small states such as Antigua, St Kitts, and Nevis.

These smaller countries are powerless to fight their inclusion on the blacklist. The Caribbean nations have, in the meantime, lost ties with many international banks. We prefer to think that the financial standing of the City of London owes its success to the skills of market wizards honed at the ancient British universities and not the banking brains of nouveau riche criminals.

The politicisation of the black-listed small islands has enabled London to become the global centre of money laundering. Clever British lawyers and corrupt bankers twist the truth to save criminals across the globe. The British offshore banking tax evasion is negating the infrastructural growth and prosperity of the countries in the East by facilitating the flight of illegal capital from East to West. Today, India is an emerging global superpower while the United Kingdom is a glorious story of the past. The Narendra Modi government must tell its British counterpart in clear terms that the human rights cover over financial deception will not be tolerated by India and shelter offered to fugitives who have looted billions of Indian taxpayer money will have serious consequences for bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

NO STATE SENT ANY DATA ABOUT PATIENTS DYING DUE TO OXYGEN SHORTAGE. THE CENTRE’S REPLY WAS BASED ON FIGURES SENT BY STATES AND UTs.

— BJP SPOKESPERSON SAMBIT PATRA



THERE WERE FLOODS OF COMPLAINTS FROM HOSPITALS, PATIENTS’ FAMILIES... REGARDING OXYGEN SHORTAGE.

— DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA

Coming out of the shadows

Adolescents across socio-economic groups are struggling to adjust to a life without the familiar environment that a traditional school day provides

Emerging from the waves of COVID-19, more than ever, we must prioritize the mental health of children and adolescents. Their well-being should be at the forefront of the preparations for dealing with future pandemic waves.

Generation Z is quietly perceiving the layers of changes in people’s lives since the virus encroached on their spaces in early 2020. Now, while the much-awaited return to school is exciting for many, there would be children anxious or even frightened to go back to regular school.

This is a time of the year when adolescents would have spent days at schools and colleges in the company of hundreds of others, but in the last one and a half years they have got used to a dreary, new nor-



SURAVI SHARMA KUMAR

(The writer is a regular columnist with The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)

mal of being home alone. The virus brought in many stressors to the psychological environment, the impact of which is yet to be played out in statistical data charts and graphs to analyze the repercussions on society and the upcoming generation. The pandemic control measures have definitely contributed to new mental health issues or a worsening of existing ones in all, but the impact ripples are far and wide or even beyond immediate comprehension.

Some children or youth may be grieving the loss of a parent or a loved one, others may be living in fear of the disease or losing a job. There are millions in our country who have actually dropped out of school for want of a digital device or internet connectivity.



Adolescents across all socio-economic groups are struggling to adjust to a life without the familiar environment that a traditional school day provides. Amid social isolation and lack of peer support, the need for personal or real-world connections is growing. The absence of the demands of school life and regular examinations to keep the learning minds occupied are affecting the psychological environment of every

child. The children of essential workers and homeless children are at an increased risk: the former confined to their homes without adult supervision and the latter lacking in basic amenities and security.

Across socio-economic situations, there are children trapped in dysfunctional homes suffering all types of abuse, even sexual, or resorting to substance abuse to escape the wrath of stressed-out adults. Growing cyber dependency is alarmingly on the rise.

With increased stress comes an increased risk of developing mental health problems or re-emergence of dormant diseases at a time when fewer options to relieve stress are available. Early experience of such problems increases their risk of mortality or lifelong

morbidity. When schools begin to reopen, we will need to implement more formal structures for mental health screening. We must take precautionary measures against stigma and superstitions affecting care giving, and there should now be social laws in place to minimize the stigma around mental health conditions.

We all know the law is the most efficient tool for blunting the effects of prejudice and stigma by protecting the diseased person from the negative impact of societal ignorance. The authorities must propagate strong messages to create an inclusive environment for those needing psychiatric help. India’s mental healthcare system needs strengthening. The authorities should proactively implement the Mental Healthcare Act,

2017. This is also the time for an integrated mental healthcare policy covering all aspects of helping a sick mind.

We also need to enhance mental health awareness and stigma-busting programs in local dialects or languages through government and private sector initiatives. We should expand social-emotional learning programs to help build resilience in the growing minds. Capacity building for mental health management is an immediate must to meet a looming calamity, and suicide prevention programs should be revamped in preparation for a possible epidemic. There is a serious shortage of mental healthcare workers in India and it needs to be addressed. Tele-psychiatry may possibly be an immediate solution for the

patients living in less efficient conditions.

Authorities must support schools and behavioral health care agencies in working together to ensure that when schools reopen, students will have necessary mental health services on the campuses to provide screenings, interventions, and referrals.

Our young people are the future of our country. We must remember that the period between ages 10 to 25 is a critical time for brain development and maturation. Both the experiences our young people face today and the support they receive from us in coping with and navigating the challenges will have a profound impact on their ability to be successful adults, parents, and citizens in the years to come.

Global stock markets mostly higher after W Street rebound

PNS ■ BEIJING

Global stock markets advanced Wednesday after Wall Street rebounded as investors tried to figure out how increasing coronavirus cases will affect the global economy.

London and Frankfurt opened higher while Shanghai, Tokyo and Sydney advanced. Hong Kong and Seoul declined.

Investor optimism has been buoyed by higher US corporate profits despite a rise in cases of the virus's more contagious delta variant.

Overnight, Wall Street's benchmark S&P 500 index gained 1.5 per cent, recovering much of the previous day's loss.

"Defensive flows eased. However, gains are likely to be capped by lingering concerns over COVID-19's delta variant," Anderson Alves of ActivTrades said in a report. "A new wave of infections could delay the reopening of global



economies." In early trading, the FTSE 100 in London surged 1.6 per cent to 6,989.90 while the DAX in Frankfurt rose 0.7 per cent to 15,322.69. The CAC in Paris jumped 1.4 per cent to 6,438.83.

On Wall Street, futures for the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were up 0.7 per cent.

On Tuesday, the Dow and

the Nasdaq composite both gained 1.6 per cent.

In Asia, the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo rose 0.6 per cent to 27,548.00 after Japan's June exports jumped 48.5 per cent over a year earlier, beating forecasts.

The Kospi in Seoul shed 0.5 per cent to 3,215.91 after South Korea reported a daily high of 1,784 new coronavirus cases.

Markets to remain under valuation pressure

PNS ■ MUMBAI

High valuation along with fears over rising Covid cases globally (is/are) expected to subdue the domestic equity indices in the remaining trade session of the ongoing week. According to market watchers, inflationary and growth concerns will continue to impact investors' sentiments. The key equity indices were closed on Wednesday on account of Eid.

For the week so far, NSE Nifty50 is down 1.83 per cent after making multiple tops on weekly charts in the 15,901-15,962 band. Besides, market watchers, expect some mild

recovery till the 15,962 level is not breached, however, possibility of a correction still remains.

Over the last three sessions, the NSE Nifty50 fell from a high of 15,962 to a low of 15,578, which is a fall of 2.4 per cent.

At the same time, BankNifty has fallen from a high of 35,977 to a low of 34,357, down by 4.5 per cent.

"Over last 3 days, we have seen the markets to be under pressure led by weak global cues coupled with weak results by banking major HDFC Bank," said Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at CapitalVia Global Research.

Online consumers don't want govt to ban heavy discounts by retailers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 72 per cent of online consumers do not want the government to ban or intervene in sales offered on e-commerce platforms, according to a survey.

Online purchasing has become mainstream in India with 49 per cent of consumers taking to this channel in the last 12 months, according to the survey conducted by community social media platform LocalCircles.

The survey received over 82,000 responses from consumers in 394 districts of India. Of which, 62 per cent of the participants were men, while the rest were women.

A sizable number of consumers have been using this channel increasingly because they have found it to be safe and convenient and it offers competitive prices with the ease of return, it added.

"The survey also brings clarity to the issue of sales, where 72 per cent of consumers do not want the government to ban or restrict or intervene in



sales on e-commerce platforms," the survey said.

The reason being is that these sales make purchasing more affordable and allow them to save more, which is of great importance during these difficult times, it noted.

The survey comes amid consumer concerns that the government's proposed amendments to the Consumer Protection (eCommerce) rules 2020 may restrict sales on online sites.

On June 21, the government had released draft e-commerce rules under which it banned the fraudulent flash sale and mis-selling of goods

and services on e-commerce platforms, and also made registration of these entities mandatory with the Department for Promotion of Industry.

Among other findings, the survey said about 47 per cent of consumers expect COVID-19 uncertainty to last 6-12 months and it may have an impact on their household budget planning and therefore seek maximum value from every penny they spend.

The survey also found that about 43 per cent of consumers sought the 'country of origin' details while shopping online in the last six months.

Consumer durables industry to witness growth: Whirlpool India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the coronavirus pandemic bringing a fundamental shift in the relationship between consumers and appliances as people spend more time at home, the consumer durables industry is expected to witness sustained growth over the next few years, according to Whirlpool of India.

The 'work from anywhere' culture is expected to be the 'new norm' in the post-pandemic world, the company said there will be a greater emphasis on making the home comfortable and pro-

ductive, leading to a focus on the role of home appliances to enable the same.

"With people spending more time at home, we have seen a fundamental shift in their relationship with their home and their desire to improve life at home," Whirlpool of India Managing Director Vishal Bhola wrote in his address to shareholders in the company's annual report for 2020-21.

Acknowledging that home appliances have moved from a passive space

to an active one, he added, "They are no longer seen as luxuries or discretionary spend but as basic necessities to ensure the safety and comfort of the family."

The increased adoption of appliances augurs well for the consumer durables industry in India, Bhola said.

The company's management in its discussion and analysis in the annual report pointed out that the pandemic has "reset the relationship between the consumers and home appliances".

'Passage of key bills crucial to move forward'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Passage of key bills such as the Deposit Insurance Bill and amendments in the Limited Liability Partnership Act in the monsoon session of Parliament will be crucial to move forward with continued pace of reforms and facilitate trade and industry, PHDCCI said on Wednesday.

Industry chamber PHDCCI President Sanjay Aggarwal said that discussions and decisions on these bills are crucial at this juncture, when there is a need to facilitate trade and industry.

The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2021 would strengthen the framework to protect the depositors and ensure safe, easy and time-bound access to savings through deposit insurance cover, he said.

Amendments in the Limited Liability Partnership Act would help promote ease of doing business, he added.



Maruti crosses 50L sales milestone in rural India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India on Wednesday said it has crossed the 50 lakh cumulative sales milestone in rural markets of India. With over 1,700 customised outlets in rural parts of the country, nearly 40 per cent of the total MSIL sales come from rural markets today, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) said in a statement.

The company's total sales in the April-June period of this fiscal stood at 3,53,614 units. In fiscal 2020-21, it had sold a total of 14,57,861 units, down from 15,63,297 units sold in

2019-20. Commenting on the feat, MSIL Senior Executive Director (Marketing & Sales) Shashank Srivastava said, "We are proud to announce that with the support from our customers and local dealer partners, we have achieved 50 lakh sales in rural India cumulatively." Stating that rural markets have a very special place in the company's business, he said, "over the years, we have carefully studied the needs of this segment... We remain committed to deliver products and services that match the customer needs in rural India."

MONEY MATTERS

Growing investments in wearables segment: Qualcomm

Mobile chipset company Qualcomm is significantly growing its investments in silicon, platforms, and technologies and plans to roll out new Snapdragon Wear platforms for wearables over the next year, according to a senior company executive. The company has also announced its new Wearables Ecosystem Accelerator Program (WEAP), and said more than 60 wearable industry leaders such as Arm, BBK, Fossil, Oppo, Verizon, Vodafone, and Zebra will participate in the program.

Qualcomm's Snapdragon Wear platforms are driving the industry, powering smartwatches for kids, seniors, and adults and smart trackers for pets and accessories, Qualcomm Technologies Senior Director and Global Head (smart wearables) Pankaj Kedia said in a statement. "We are significantly growing our investments in leading edge ground-up silicon, platforms, and technologies and plan to roll out new Snapdragon Wear platforms across segments over the next year to meet our long-term vision," he added.



YouTube adds Super Thanks to help creators earn more

YouTube on Wednesday said it has added a new 'Super Thanks' that will offer a new monetisation mechanism for creators on the platform. Fans watching YouTube videos can now purchase 'Super Thanks' to express their gratitude and show support, a statement said. "They will see an animated GIF and, as an added bonus, get a distinct, colourful comment to highlight their purchase, which creators can respond to. Super Thanks is currently available at four price points between USD 2 and USD 50 (or local currency equivalent)," it added. The feature was in beta testing and will now be available to thousands of monetising creators. "The feature is available to creators and viewers in 68 countries on desktop and mobile devices (Android and iOS). Creators can check if they have early access by following the instructions here. If they don't yet have access, fear not -- we will be expanding availability to all eligible creators in the YouTube Partner Program later this year," the statement said.



Handicraft exports may record 10-15 pc growth

The country's handicraft exports are likely to record a growth rate of 10-15 per cent in the current fiscal on account of healthy demand in key destinations such as the US and Europe, Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPC) said. EPC Chairman Raj Kumar Malhotra, however, said that the growth may get impacted in the case of the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic. "Going by the current trend, we are expecting 10-15 per cent growth this fiscal. Order books of exporters are good and there is a good demand in our major markets of the US and Europe," he said. The exports during April-June 2021 have increased to Rs 3,447.71 crore from Rs 1,259.34 crore in the same period last year. Malhotra said that the government support such as release of funds under Merchandise Export from India Scheme (MEIS) will help in boosting the outbound shipments.



Glenmark IPO to open on July 27th

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Glenmark Life Sciences on Wednesday said it has fixed a price band of Rs 695-720 a share for its initial share-sale.

The three-day initial public offer (IPO) will open on July 27 and conclude on July 29, the company said in a statement. The public issue will have fresh issue of equity shares worth up to Rs 1,060 crore and sale of up to 63 lakh equity shares by Glenmark Pharma. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used towards payment of outstand-

ing purchase consideration to the promoter for the spin-off of the API business and for funding the capital expenditure requirements.

At the upper end of the price band, the IPO will fetch Rs 1,513.6 crore.

Glenmark Life Sciences, a subsidiary of Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, is a leading developer and manufacturer of select high value, non-commoditized APIs in chronic therapeutic areas, including cardiovascular disease, central nervous system disease, pain management and diabetes.



Securitised pool collection ratios dip during Covid 2nd wave: Crisil

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Rating agency Crisil Ratings Wednesday said collection ratios in securitised pools have seen a dip during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The agency said unlike in the first wave, the decline in the second wave has not been as sharp for two reasons - localised restrictions limited the impact on business activity, and lack of moratorium from lenders meant that borrowers could not postpone their debt repayments.

Its Senior Director and Deputy Chief Ratings Officer Krishnan Sitaraman said in the first wave, collections fell as the majority of borrowers availed of moratorium relief and collections staff were unable to move around due to the stringent lockdowns. "This prompted many financing entities to explore



digital collection - an avenue that has played an important role in preventing a similar fall in collections during the second wave," he said.

Securitisation is the process of pooling and repackaging of homogenous illiquid financial assets into marketable securities that can be sold to investors.

Non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have been also reworking their

collection process since the onset of the pandemic by increasingly adopting electronic modes such as auto-debit, payment gateways and dedicated applications, the agency said in a report.

Such productivity enhancement was one of the reasons for the sharp recovery in collection ratios of securitised pools during the second half of last fiscal, it said.

Contributed Rs 30.5 cr for Covid relief in India: KKR

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Global buyout major KKR on Wednesday said it has contributed Rs 30.5 crore for COVID relief in the country.

The firm established a 'KKR Relief Fund' last year and over the past 15 months offered assistance on a variety of medical and humanitarian programmes, as per an official statement.

It also included funding for oxygen concentrators arranged by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, contributions to the non-profit ACT Grants India along with investee companies, long-term development assistance to International Justice Mission and Teach for India, it said.

Property mkt to touch US\$ 1 tln by '30: Housing secy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian real estate market is estimated to touch USD 1 trillion by 2030 driven by rising demand and various reforms in the past seven years like new realty law RERA, Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said on Wednesday.

The number of people employed in the sector is also expected to rise to 7 crore in coming years, from 5.5 crore in 2019, he said while addressing a CII event on the real estate sector. The secretary further said that the states have been asked to soon implement the Model Tenancy Act, which was passed by the Union Cabinet in June this year.



Mishra also clarified that the law once implemented by the states will be prospective in nature and all disputes related to rent agreements will be

dealt under the old laws of respective states.

He pointed out that the real estate sector suffered a "setback" during the first and second

wave of the COVID-19 pandemic but said the housing demand has revived. "The size of the real estate sector was around USD 200 billion 2-3

years ago. We expect the real estate market to touch USD 1 trillion by 2030," the housing secretary said.

"It is not mere talk and guess work. The trend clearly shows that the real estate sector of our country will touch the figure of USD 1 trillion in the next 7-8 years," Mishra said, while emphasising the importance of this industry in the Indian economy. Citing various reports of property consultants, the secretary said housing demand in the first quarter of this fiscal year has risen as compared to the year-ago period. Talking about the importance of this sector in employment generation, he said: "Around 5.5 crore people were employed in the sector as per 2019 figure. Our predictions for

the future is that around 7 crore people will be employed in this industry."

That apart, Mishra said the real estate sector creates demand for about 270 other industries, including cement and steel. "Therefore, real estate is an important sector of the economy. Nobody should have any doubt about it," he stressed.

Hence, Mishra said, the government has given a lot of focus on this sector in the past seven years and has taken measures in every budget since 2014.

The secretary said it is estimated that around 88 crore people will be living in urban areas by 2051 as against the current 46 crore, creating huge potential for real estate development.



Bengaluru airport signs 10-year partnership with IBM

Bengaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL) -- operator of Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru -- has signed a ten-year partnership with IBM to create an "Airport in a Box" platform, which transforms technology, operations and customer experience. IBM Hybrid Cloud capabilities, Red Hat

Automation and Kyndryl managed infrastructure services will help BIAL improve productivity, automate IT and reduce costs, an IBM statement said on Wednesday. BLR airport needed a nimble, scalable and cost-competitive technology and operations environment that can increase its agility and operational flexibility to handle future growth in passenger traffic, it said. To achieve this goal, BIAL has selected IBM Global Business Services, IBM hybrid cloud capabilities and Kyndryl, the new, independent company that will be created following the separation of IBM's Managed Infrastructure Services business, to design and implement a next generation architecture with robust and dynamic delivery model, the statement added.

HOME AMID THE GREENERY

Come monsoon, the menace of slushy roads, a variety of insects and diseases they bring are a trouble everyone fears. But not the residents of a community in Miyapur. *The Pioneer's* K RAMYA SREE writes about how the residents have been tackling such issues with plants as their weapon.

Imagine walking into lush green gardens in your backyard where you can both enjoy the scenic view and pick some leaves off plants with medicinal value. If you think this kind of living is possible only in the suburbs or in the woods, you got it wrong. SMR Vinay City, Hyderabad's first herbal gated community located on Bollaram Road, Miyapur, developed across 5+ acres of land, comprising 512 flats, is home to over 37 species of plants that have medicinal values. Surrounded by open spaces on its three sides and a man-made lake on one side, there was a rampant increase in



mosquito breeding, which worsened during the monsoons and winters. "As soon as team Parivartan entered into SMRVC Management Association, we requested Mr GBK Rao, CMD of Pragathi Resorts to make our community free of mosquitoes. He immediately entrusted this job to his expert Makkala Ramarao. He, along with his other members like Dr Vijay, Venugopal, and others visited our community, and conducted a detailed survey of it. They demarcated several areas and clearly suggested what and where we should plant the saplings. Finally, we have decided to plant 3,700 saplings in our entire community, which includes herbal, medicinal, aromatic, mosquito repellent, and leaf decoction plants," shares King Johnson, a resident of the community.

Although it is easy to plant saplings, the bigger task is to maintain them and keep them



alive, which is a hectic job indeed! To take this up, the society has invited like-minded homemakers from the community. "Six women came forward from the community and started a green group which was led by architect and interior designer K Himabindu, under my supervision. The group members actively took part in

the programmes and ensured the plants stayed healthy. Within two months, the group could plant all 3,700 saplings in over five acres of land," he tells us.

It sounds exciting to live in a community that has medicinal-rich plants, unlike other places where saplings are just there to enhance the beauty of

the place. However, having over 3,700 saplings comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Explaining the same, Johnson shares, "Planting herbal plants is a wonderful way to enjoy the sights, smells and also taste of a wide variety of plants. In the olden days, we could cure many ailments with the help of these medicinal plants. Old is gold. Those remedies were practiced by generations to cure problems such as stomach infections, strengthening the immune system, and more. Herbal plants can enhance our health in many ways. It is a stress reliever and mood enhancer for treating minor disorders. Some plants can treat digestive problems like constipation and abdominal spasms, enhance the respiratory system to treat cold and cough, sinusitis, etc. Some plants can improve or lower blood pressure, treat cancer and kidney problems. Some plants can be used to treat diabetes, etc. The only disadvantage is we must use them under proper guidance. Some herbal plants are toxic in nature, if not cultivated under proper care and guidance. One must be aware of its uses. To understand this, we have arranged name boards for major plants."

Dr Poonam Singh and Tulasi Konidela, residents of SMRVC shares, "These plants release a refreshing aroma while we take a stroll in the community. This aroma is so therapeutic that it instantly refreshes one's mind. The elderly in the community enjoy the sunrise and sunsets, just sitting at the temple in the community and watching these plants shine bright. After the plantation drive, the mosquito menace reduced to a great extent. Earlier, during the rainy season, mosquitoes wouldn't let us live in peace, but it drastically reduced due to the green plantation programme."

The community is home to plants like costus speciosus, plectranthus amboinicus, pimenta dioica, piper betle, piper longum, cymbopogon flexuosus, and many more.

Residents of the community have been an inspiration to many around them, they request fellow community beings to come forward and plant saplings that are aromatic, and medicinally rich.



TIPS TO LIVE A POCKET-FRIENDLY SUSTAINABLE LIFE

Do you remember the time when you saw the amount of waste you're generating and decided that you wanted to lead a more eco-conscious life? However, the concern regarding a complete lifestyle overhaul and the added expense deterred you from the path.

What we tend to forget about sustainability is that it starts with small, inexpensive, and impactful steps.

A proponent of the sustainable lifestyle, Malavika R said, "I started my eco-conscious journey by learning more about it. It can get very daunting and you may feel guilty that you aren't doing enough for the environment. But, it is important to take baby steps and feel comfortable with the tiny change before moving on to the next."

Natasha Anand is another sustainability enthusiast and on discovering her starting point, said, "Going green is a lifestyle choice, but one that can make a huge impact on the kind of life you lead. There is an opportunity to practice sustainable living in everything you do on a regular basis. Be it the way you commute, eating habits, how much garbage you create and so much more. A habit that I have adopted while taking care of my surroundings is using an eco-friendly and natural action floor cleaner like Nimyle that ensures I lead an eco-conscious life."

Taking small steps will help you in making a big difference. Some of the points below can aid you in your journey:

Eat local: When you eat local, you reduce the carbon footprint of the produce. For instance, if you are in Delhi and you're craving to eat an Avocado, remember that the fruit does not grow around your city, it's either being imported or traveling from the foothills of the Himalayas or from southern India. It has to travel all the way to Delhi, thus increasing pollution and carbon footprint. Also, when you eat local, you support the local economy.

If possible, try your hand at growing a vegetable garden as well.

Carry stainless steel glass and cutlery: Once the lockdown is lifted and the pandemic is over, carry a stainless steel glass while you are traveling. A long road trip will always make you wish for a cup of steaming hot tea/coffee to keep you energised, instead of accepting tea in the plastic/paper cups, which would be used only once and will end up in the garbage. Let the steaming beverage be poured into your steel cup. Drinking in a stainless steel cup is healthier as compared to a plastic/paper one.

Waste to compost: Find ways to reduce your waste by composting a lot of the organic waste.

Whether it's coffee grounds, vegetable peels, eggshells, you don't need to let it rot in your dustbin. Instead, invest in a composting bin, which will help in decomposing organic matter and turning it into manure for your plants. If you do not tend to any plants, distribute the manure to plant parents or a nursery.

Fix that tap: In each home, there will be one tap that leaks incessantly. Not attending to it, could cause a loss of many liters of good water. Learn basic plumbing, so it's easy to fix taps if a washer bolt is loose. If that seems like a task, don't delay in calling a plumber who will be able to fix it for you.

Use products that are certified environmentally friendly: If you find it time-consuming to create DIY solutions at home, find natural alternatives in the grocery store by checking if they are certified natural by industry bodies/independent agencies. For instance, a floor cleaner like Nimyle has been certified by TUV India as a green product.

If you start switching to environmentally safe products and inspire others to do so, businesses will innovate to fulfill the needs of a niche audience, thus creating an even bigger market for environmentally safe products.

Using steroids carefully



Steroids spike glucose levels by making the liver more resistant to insulin — insulin resistance in which the body responds less effectively to insulin and that leads to higher blood sugars.

What diet do I follow when I am on steroid medications?

Steroids can increase blood sugar levels in people who have diabetes. It can also increase blood sugar levels in people who do not have diabetes.

A few tips that will help avoid further complications and have your sugars under check:

- Eat small and frequent meals at regular intervals
- High protein, low carbohydrate meal
- Avoid sugars, carbonated beverages, sweets, and sweetened

beverages like preserved or canned juices.

- Restrict high glycaemic index fruits such as mangoes, grapes, jackfruit, and banana instead opt for citrus fruits.
- Take a minimum of 3 servings of vegetables per day including a salad freshly prepared.
- Include Millets instead of rice even in your dosa, idly batter.

Always remember:

- Steroids should not be stopped suddenly
- Steroids should be tapered off
- Steroids should never be self-prescribed
- It should be used and stopped only when recommended by the doctor
- All patients, not just diabetics, need to be careful with steroids and follow a diabetic diet.
- Self-monitoring of blood glucose is extremely important (The writer, Apeksha Ekbote, is the Chief Dietician, at NephroPlus.)



Steroids are wonder drugs if administered correctly, carefully, and appropriately. The names of many steroids have become common these days with the Covid-19 pandemic, and are being used by anybody and everybody catching the virus.

Experts have time and again said they are only effective if and only if the steroids are given in the right dosage and at the right time.

What is a steroid?

Steroids are a man-made version of chemicals similar to natural hormones in our bodies.

Steroids are basically designed to reduce the amount of inflammation in the body, which might happen when the body's own natural immune system tries to fight any virus, infection, or bacteria.

Do steroids raise blood sugar levels?



● Annapurna



● Heerall Trivedi



● Laxman Aelay



● Priyanka



● Saraspathi

PARTY

INK & INSPIRATION

Laxman Aelay's 'Inked Image', a collection of exquisite new works are on display at the Kadari Art Gallery, Jubilee Hills. The exhibition will be open for public till August 22. The contemporary artist who previously brought out the beauty in tribal women on his canvas, returns with observational paintings of elephants and other animals of Hyderabad's very own zoo.

Photos by SV Chary



● Dr.Lakshmi



● K.Laxma Goud



● Nagesh



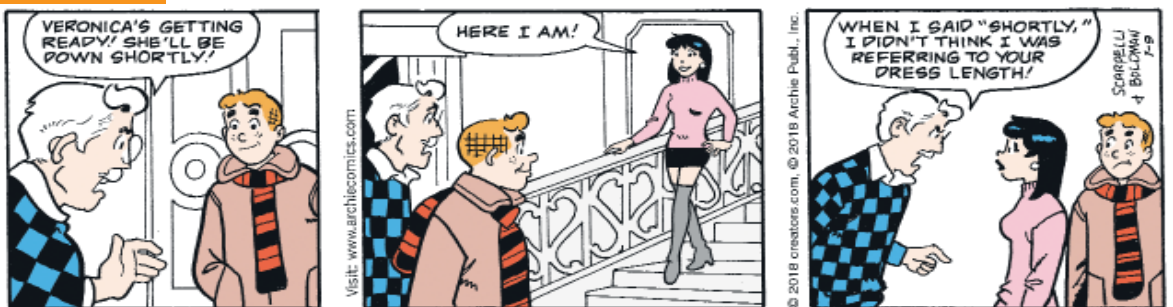
● Rathna




● Supraja Rao

FUN

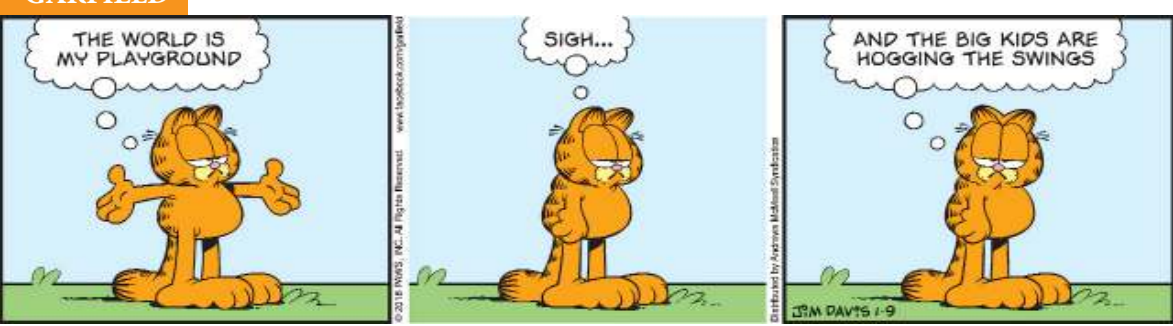
ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS



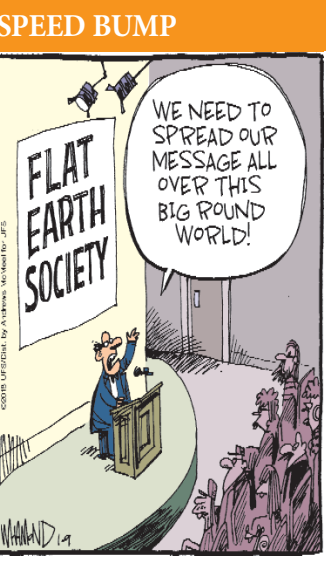
GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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

ACROSS

- This type of word describes something
- Circular
- A boat you paddle along
- A throbbing pain
- The USA's coldest state
- Assistant
- A round mark
- Move in time to music
- A pale purple colour
- Smashed into small pieces


DOWN

- Uncooked bread
- Comes to a finish
- Use a leather to make someone laugh
- A planet

SOLUTION

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

NANCY



SUDOKU


Yesterday's solution

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

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.

GINGER MEGGS



CROSSWORD

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

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A	O	R	I	O	I	
L	E	M	O	N	C	A
U	E	O	K	I	S	
N	I	N	E	R	S	
A	N	O	N	C	A	
I	C	I	R	E	T	
U	N	C	L	E		
M	E	D	A	L		
P	R	O	P	E	R	

ALIA BHATT BACK ON RRR SETS



Bollywood actress Alia Bhatt is back on the sets of pan-India movie *RRR*, which is being directed by SS Rajamouli. The actress confirmed that she is going to start the shoot and teased her fans with pictures from her *RRR* diaries on Wednesday morning. She posted a selfie from her car and wrote in her caption: "And finally, Team *RRR* here I come." Rajamouli's directorial venture *RRR* stars Jr NTR, Ram Charan, Ajay Devgn, Olivia Morris, Shriya Saran, Samuthirakani, Alison Doody, Ray Stevenson. *RRR* which is bankrolled by DVV Danayya, is SS Rajamouli's first project after the 2017 blockbuster *Baahubali 2: The Conclusion*. *RRR* will release across the globe in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam simultaneously, on October 13. *RRR* was earlier slated to hit theaters on July 30 but the shooting came to a brief halt due to the pandemic. The film's director SS Rajamouli too had contracted the virus last year. *RRR* marks Alia Bhatt's debut in Tollywood and she plays Sita, the love interest of Ram Charan. *RRR* narrates the fictional tale of the freedom fighters Komaram Bheem essayed by Jr NTR and Alluri Seetharama Raju played by Ram Charan.



Vishal injures self while performing stunts



It is known that Vishal has teamed up with debutant Thu Pa Saravanan, known for his short film *Edhu Thevaiyo Adhuvu Dharmam*, for their next film, tentatively titled *Vishal 31*. According to the latest update, Vishal injured himself while performing the stunt for the climax scene. Vishal suffered a severe back injury on the sets of this upcoming film. Sources say that when he was performing the climax stunt sequence, his back was badly hurt, like it happened earlier too. Varma, his therapist who took care of the treatment last time fixed it this time too.

Vishal and Dimple Hayathi are playing the lead roles in the film and some big names from Kollywood too have been roped in to essay some crucial roles. Touted to be an action thriller, Vishal has performed some risky stunt sequences for the film. Earlier he luckily escaped with a minor injury while shooting for an action scene. Vishal will next be seen in *Enemy*, which is being directed by Anand Shankar. The shoot of *Enemy* has been wrapped up and is all ready to be released. Vishal also has work to complete for his debut directorial *Thupparivalan 2*, and it has been on hold for a long time.

Rajamouli-Mahesh film to be set against backdrop of Africa



After wrapping up *RRR*, SS Rajamouli will start working on a new film with Superstar Mahesh Babu. This will be the first project in the combination of Rajamouli and Mahesh. The film's writer and Rajamouli's father, K. Vijayendra Prasad has spilled some beans about this film. Speaking in an interview with the Film Companion, Vijayendra Prasad hinted that Mahesh's film will be set in an African backdrop and will be an adventure thriller. He said that the only thing Rajamouli had to say to him during the pandemic and lockdown period was, "I want the film set against the back-

drop of Africa and it should be adventurous." When asked if he had completed writing the story, Vijayendra Prasad said that he is still working on the idea. Apparently, both Prasad and Rajamouli are big fans of South African novelist Wilbur Smith. The former is now researching through Smith's books to write a large canvas story set in Africa. With Prasad's statements, it is quite evident that the project will be bigger than *Baahubali* and *RRR* for sure. But we will need to wait for a few years to witness it on the big screen. This untitled project is expected to go on the floors in 2022.



Teja's *Ishq* to hit theatres on July 30

Young sensation Teja Sajja has been garnering the attention of all with his performance in his debut film as the lead in *Zombie Reddy*. He has various interesting projects like *Ishq*, *Adhutam* and *Hanuman*, lined up. According to the latest, the makers of *Ishq* confirmed the film's release.

The makers released the poster announcing the film release date. The film will finally hit theatres on July 30. The film comes with a tagline 'Not A Love Story', adding to the curiosity among movie lovers. Teja Sajja is playing the role of Siddharth and Priya Varrier is playing the role of Anasuya aka Anu, in the film. The poster showed Teja Sajja and

wink beauty Priya Varrier in a romantic angle. SS. Raju is directing the film produced by NV.Prasad, Parasa Jain, and Vakada Anjan Kumar. RB. Chowdhary is presenting the film on Megaa Super Good Films banner. Mahati Swara Sagar is the music director while Sam K Naidu and A.Vara Prasad are handling cinematography and editing departments in the film.

Khushbu's Twitter account hacked



South actress Khushbu Sundar's Twitter account has been hacked. This news has been confirmed by the actress herself as she said, "I would like to let you know that my Twitter account Khushbu Sundar, was hacked three days ago. We have been trying to follow up with the Twitter Administration Office regarding this matter. Any activity or tweet done from this account in

the last few days was not by me." She has requested her fans not to respond to posts which originate from her Twitter account. The *Tagore* actress also requested her fans to help her out as she is unable to change the password for the last 48 hours. After hacking in, the hacker changed the display photograph, banner image, as well as, the name, which was changed to Briann. All her tweets, except

those with pics and videos, have been deleted. The actress and politician Khushbu Sundar was shocked when she came to know that her social media account has been hacked once again. This is not the first time her Twitter account has been hacked. The actress-turned-Bharatiya Janata Party leader had also sought help from her fans in the month of April 2020 when her Twitter account was hacked.

Arulnithi's next a mystery thriller titled *Dejavu*



Actor Arulnithi, who is known for choosing unique scripts in the Tamil film industry, is currently working on a

film titled *Dejavu*. Madhubala, Achutha Kumar, Smruti Venkat, Mime Gopi, Kali Venkat, and Chetan will be seen playing vital roles in this mystery thriller. The film is directed by debutant director Arvind Srinivasan and is being produced by K. Vijay Pandey, on behalf of White Carpet Films. PG Muthiah, on behalf of PG Media Works, who co-produces a movie, is also handling the cinematography of the movie. Ghibran is composing Music for the film and Arul E

Siddharth is working as the editor. On the occasion of Arulnithi's birthday, the first look of the film was released today by actor Vijay Sethupathi, director Venkat Prabhu, music director Thaman and it has attracted the attention of many and increased the curiosity for the film. The film is being simultaneously made in Tamil and Telugu, where Naveen Chandra plays the lead role in the Telugu version. The post-production of the film is currently underway.

'India responded like champions'

PTI ■ COLOMBO

With its back to the wall, Team India responded like champions, said coach Rahul Dravid in an inspiring dressing room speech after his young side registered a series-clinching win in the second ODI against Sri Lanka here.

Chasing 276 for victory on Tuesday, India were reduced to 193 for seven in 36th over but Deepak Chahar (69) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (19) shared an unbroken 84-run stand to take the visitors home with three wickets in hand and five balls to spare.

"Obviously we finished on the right side of the result, which is incredible and fantastic but even if we didn't finish on the right side of the result, it is the fight all the way through was absolutely brilliant, so well done to all of you," Dravid said in a video posted on *bcci.tv*.

"We said they were going to respond, we knew we had to respect the opposition. The opposition was going to respond, they're also an international team. They responded, and we responded back like a champion team.

"With our back to the wall, we found a way to break them. So really well done to all of you. Fantastic job."

Bhuvneshwar (3/54) and Yuzvendra Chahal (3/50) snared three wickets each, while Chahar claimed two to restrict Sri Lanka to 275 for nine.

India found the going tough with Suryakumar Yadav anchoring the chase with a 44-ball 53 but once he was gone, the visitors slipped to 193 for seven.

However, Chahar smashed his maiden ODI fifty and in the company of Bhuvneshwar took the team home.

"It is not the right time to talk about individuals at this point, obviously there were some fantastic individual performances, especially towards the end," said Dravid.

"We had talked about that,



we acknowledge and recognise every player's contribution in this game. If you look at the whole game, there were some very good team performances.

"So many good performances in our bowling, batting, even at the start, fantastic team performances from all of you."

The video also featured Suryakumar, Bhuvneshwar, and Chahar talking about their experience about the match.

"I don't have words, I think it is one of the best games which I have been part of, I have seen Live... It is an unbelievable victory," Suryakumar said.

"*Bhuv*, our vintage man and DC, we have been talking about his batting, and today he has proved himself, it was a

complete team effort. It was something special from Deepak Chahar."

FORGOTTEN HOW TO WIN

Legendary spinner Muthiah Muralitharan feels the current Sri Lankan cricket team has forgotten how to win matches over the years, insisting that the sport is currently going through a tough phase in the island nation.

"I told you before, Sri Lanka didn't know the winning ways, they have forgotten the winning ways for the last so many years. It has been tough for them because they have not (known) how to win a match," Muralitharan told *ESPNCricinfo*.

Dravid sir's belief in my batting pushed me to perform: Chahar

Colombo: India pacer Deepak Chahar, who was an unexpected hero with the bat in the second ODI against Sri Lanka, said coach Rahul Dravid's belief in his batting inspired him to produce a match-winning knock for his team.

"No better way to win the match for the country. Rahul sir told me to play all the balls. I've played a few innings with India A (when Dravid was coach) and I think he has belief in me.

"He told me he thinks I'm good enough to be a No 7 (but he batted at 8). He has belief in me. Hopefully in the coming matches I don't have to bat. When we came under 50 that's when I believed we can win. Before that it was ball by ball. I took some risks after," said Chahar at the post match presentation.

Prior to this game, his highest scored in international cricket was 12.

"Only one thing that was going on in my mind: this is the kind of innings I've been dreaming of. No better way to win the match for the country,"



he said talking about his mindset in the middle.

'JUSTIFIED PROMOTION'

India vice-captain Bhuvneshwar Kumar said it was coach Rahul Dravid's decision to send Deepak Chahar up the order and he justified it with an "amazing" knock.

"...Our aim was to play till the last ball, last over, so we wanted to take it as deep as possible, so we can score runs. The only plan was to play till the last, and the way Deepak batted was amazing,"

Bhuvneshwar said at the post-match virtual press conference.

"He has played under coach Rahul Dravid before in India A or some series and he had scored there as well. So, Dravid knew that he can bat and he can hit a few balls, so that was his Dravid's call.

"And the way he batted, Chahar proved it right. We all know that he can bat, he has batted in Ranji Trophy many times, so it wasn't a tough call but it is good to see the way he scored the runs."

"The only chat and plan was to play till the end. We never said to each other that from here on, we can win. Even when we needed 1 run (3 runs), we were taking one ball at a time. Deepak never let the run rate go above six," Bhuvneshwar said.

"He almost played risk-free shots, where he got few boundaries and brought the required rate to under six. At no stage did we think that we are going to win or lose. We were playing according to the situation and taking it ball by ball."

Injured Avesh all but out of Eng tour



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Young fast bowler Avesh Khan's tour of England is set to end abruptly after being ruled out of India's warm-up First-Class game against County XI due to a left-thumb fracture he sustained on the opening day of the match in Durham.

Khan, the right-arm fast bowler represented the County XI side after a few of their players went on mandatory isolation for coming in contact with Covid-19 positive people.

A senior BCCI official informed that Khan, who was a stand-by player, could be out for a considerable period of time due to the injury and the Indian team management will have at least one net bowler short going into the Test series, starting August 4 at Trent Bridge in

Nottingham.

"Avesh is not likely to take any further part in the series leave alone this game. It's a thumb fracture. He will not be bowling for at least a month and after that rehabilitation is likely to start. In another three days, the picture is supposed to get clearer," the BCCI source said.

The BCCI on Wednesday didn't elaborate on the exact nature of the injury but stated: "Fast bowler Avesh Khan remains under observation of the Medical Team. He will not be taking any further part on Day 2 and Day 3 of the warm-up game."

VIRAT BACK IN NETS

India captain Virat Kohli, who skipped the First-Class warm up game due to a slight back niggle was back to the nets and enjoyed a full-fledged batting session on the day.

GILL BACK HOME

Young opener Shubman Gill, who was earlier ruled out of the five-Test series with shin splints, has returned home after enjoying a break in the UK.

Shubman is back home in Mohali and after spending some time with his family, the cricketer will be off to National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru for an intensive rehabilitation programme.

Stokes, Buttler, Bairstow, Sam back for India Tests

London: Star all-rounder Ben Stokes on Wednesday returned to the 17-member England squad for the first two Tests against India, along with pacer Ollie Robinson, who was earlier suspended for his seven-year-old racist tweets.

Opener Haseeb Hameed, whose last Test was against India in 2016, was also named in the squad.

The first Test starts in Nottingham on August 4 while the second match will be played at the Lord's from August 12-16.

Jofra Archer, recuperating



from elbow surgery, and Chris Woakes, suffering from bruised heel, are still not match-fit to be

included.

Pacers Mark Wood and Sam Curran are the other fast bowlers in the line-up, apart from the veteran duo of James Anderson and Stuart Broad.

The seasoned keeper-batsmen Jonny Bairstow and Jos Buttler are back in the Joe rooted team after being rested for the Test series against New Zealand. The team also has Rory Burns, Ollie Pope, Zak Crawley, Dom Sibley and Dan Lawrence in the batting unit.

However, one of the notable comebacks is certainly that of 24-year-old

Lancashire opener Hameed, who is currently playing against India in the warm-up game at Durham.

Hameed was termed as 'Baby Boys' during his teenage years for his defensive game resembling Geoffrey Boycott's dogged defence.

Squad: Joe Root (captain), James Anderson, Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow, Dom Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Sam Curran, Haseeb Hameed, Dan Lawrence, Jack Leach, Ollie Pope, Ollie Robinson, Dom Sibley, Mark Wood.

Sindhu will be among favourites for Gold in Tokyo: Gopichand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand expects Indian athletes to claim an unparalleled double digit medal haul at the Olympics and has declared world champion P V Sindhu as one of the favourites to win a Gold.

"I do believe that this time around, we would have, hopefully, India's biggest medal tally till now. We could surpass what the Indian team did in London which is six medals and hopefully get to double digit is what I am hoping for," Gopichand said.

"Whether it is shooting, wrestling, boxing or Mirabai Chanu in weightlifting, I think they have a lot of chances," he said.

Gopichand, who had guided Saina Nehwal and Sindhu to a Bronze and Silver respectively in the last two Olympics, believes Indian badminton

players have a good opportunity to better their performance.

"In badminton, we have chances, definitely to better what we did in Rio and London. So I am hoping that Sindhu can pull off, she is definitely going to be one of the favourites in the Olympics

with the venue as well," he said.

"And also Chirag and Satwik, although, have a tough draw but I do see them as potential hopefuls for a medal. For Sai Praneeth, it is going to be tough. But he has done well at the World Championships and I hope he can repeat that performance.



Starc Carey Oz to win

AFF ■ BARBADOS

Australia's pacers demolished the West Indies batting lineup to claim a comprehensive 133-run victory by the DLS method in the rain-affected first ODI of the three-match series at Kensington Oval on Tuesday.

After stand-in captain Alex Carey led from the front with a topscore of 67 to lift his side to 252/9 batting first, only his Caribbean counterpart Kieron Pollard (56) stood firm against the tourists' pacers as the home side were routed for 123 off 26.2 overs in reply.

Set a revised target of 257 in a match reduced to 49 overs per side, West Indies were reduced to 27/6 with opening bowlers Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood sharing the wickets. It took Mitchell Marsh to end a 67-run stand between Pollard and Alzarri Joseph.

That breakthrough opened the door for Starc to finish the job with a haul of 5/48 which earned him the Player of the Match award. Hazlewood had the impressive returns of three for 11 in his opening burst and was not required to return for a second spell.

Brisbane picked to host 2032 Olympics

Brisbane was awarded the 2032 Olympics on Wednesday, triggering celebratory fireworks as it became the third Australian city to host the Summer Games after Melbourne and Sydney.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach confirmed the widely expected result after a vote at the IOC session in Tokyo.

"The International Olympic Committee has the honour to announce that the Games of the 35th Olympiad are awarded to Brisbane, Australia," Bach said.

The announcement was greeted by cheers from the Brisbane delegates in Tokyo, while fireworks lit up the skies above the Australian city thousands of miles away.

Brisbane's victory looked a certainty after it was unanimously proposed as the single candidate for 2032 by the IOC's 15-strong executive board in June.

"It's a historic day not just for Brisbane and Queensland,



but for the entire country," said Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

"Only global cities can secure the Olympic Games, so this is fitting recognition for Brisbane's standing across our region and the world."

Australia has already hosted the Olympics twice, in Melbourne in 1956 and Sydney in 2000, widely considered one of the most successful Games in recent history.

Venues will be spread across Brisbane and nearby towns in Queensland state, including the Gold Coast which hosted the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Indian athletes' participation in opening ceremony to be bare minimum

PTI ■ TOKYO

The participation of Indian athletes in the Olympic Games opening ceremony will be kept to a "bare minimum" in view of the Covid-19 threat, while only six officials from the contingent will be allowed to take part in the event on Friday.

The athletes who have competitions lined up the next day will be discouraged from attending the event, the country's deputy chief-de-mission Prem Kumar Verma said on Wednesday.

Indian Olympic Association secretary general Rajeev Mehta, who is in the city, said not many will be there keeping in mind the risk of infection.

"We will try to have a bare minimum group out there. *Kam se kam athletes ko utara jaega*. The chef-de mission and the deputy chef-de mission will decide on the numbers tomorrow but our view is that the bare minimum should attend to ensure their safety in this crucial period," Mehta said.



India is being represented by more than 120 athletes in the Games with the overall contingent size being 228, including officials, coaches, other support staff an alternate athletes in view of the Covid-19.

"Six officials (from every country) are allowed at the ceremony but there is no cap on athletes. However, we have advised the athletes who have events the next day to skip the ceremony and focus on their game," Verma said after a meeting of the chef-de-missions here but did not specify which officials from India will be there at the event.

"The ceremony is likely to last till midnight so it is better

that they rest for their events the following day," he added.

The likes of 10m air pistol shooters Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma, Apurvi Chandela and Elavenil Valarivan, who have events on the first competition day, will skip the ceremony along with Manu Bhaker, Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Deepak Kumar and Divyansh Singh Panwar will be shooting on the second day.

Chef-de-mission B P Baishya said a call on the number of Indian athletes who will participate will be taken on Thursday.

Boxers, archers and the men's and women's hockey teams are also scheduled to

World leaders from 15 nations to attend Games opening

PTI ■ TOKYO

Leaders from around 15 countries are expected to attend Friday's opening ceremony of the Covid-hit Tokyo Olympics.

Reports in Japan have suggested that those attending the ceremony in person could be as low as 1,000 due to the pandemic.

Around 70 cabinet-level officials are also set to visit

Japan, adding that there is still uncertainty over the number of VIPs attending the opening ceremony.

World leaders who have already promised their attendance in the opening ceremony are French President Emmanuel Macron, Mongolian Prime Minister Luvsannamsrai Oyun-Erdene and US first lady Jill Biden among others.

While Mary Kom is not scheduled to compete the next day, Manpreet will be leading the side out for the first Pool A game against New Zealand

on Saturday.

"Those who are quarantining are also not allowed," Verma said about the athletes and officials, who have recently landed in the Japanese city.

On Wednesday, media reports came in that Britain will have no more than 30 athletes taking part in the ceremony due to Covid-19 fears. Great Britain has 376 athletes in fray at the Games.



England players pose for photo with the T20I series trophy after win

AP

Eng sneak home to take T20 series

AFF ■ MANCHESTER

A dil Rashid took a career-best haul before England just did enough in a nervous chase to seal a thrilling and series-clinching three-wicket win over Pakistan in a T20 decider at Old Trafford on Tuesday.

Victory gave England the three-match contest 2-1 in their last white-ball fixture of the 2021 home season.

Leg-spinner Rashid took 4-35 as Pakistan were restricted to 154-6 after winning the toss, with Mohammad Rizwan batting through the innings for 76 not out.

England opener Jason Roy, the player of the match, got the chase off to a brisk start with a dashing 64.

But the hosts kept losing wickets before returning captain Eoin Morgan made a useful 21.

Liam Livingstone, the player of the series after scoring England's fastest T20 hundred in the opener at Trent Bridge, struck one six and then holed out before Chris Jordan hit the winning runs with two balls to

spare.

"This win means a huge amount," Morgan told *Sky Sports*. "This was the worst possible pitch for the way we play, and we have won on a wicket which is slow and spins so I am very proud."

Pitches in the United Arab Emirates, the venue for October's T20 World Cup, are renowned for taking turn but Morgan said: "I genuinely don't think the ball will spin like that in UAE having played a full season in the IPL there last year, but we are ready for any surfaces that do spin."

Pakistan captain Babar Azam, whose side also lost the preceding ODI series against England, was left lamenting a lack of runs.

"We were 10 to 15 runs short today," he said. "The partnership between myself and Rizwan, if it had developed a bit better, maybe we would have the extra 10 or 15 runs."

"We need to do better against spinners, we haven't struggled as much but haven't batted as well as we could. Some days we have good days and some days we have bad days."

shortpasses

BOXERS TRAINING AT VILLAGE

TOKYO: With the Olympics boxing venue 'quite far', Indian pugilists have decided to train at the facilities available at the Games Village to avoid exertion and Covid-19 risk.

AUS EQUESTRIAN BANNED

TOKYO: Australian showjumper Jamie Kermond was provisionally suspended from the Tokyo Olympics on Wednesday after testing positive for cocaine.

3 +VES OUT OF OLYMPICS

TOKYO: Chilean Taekwondo player Fernanda Aguirre, Dutch skateboarder Candy Jacobs & Czech TT player Pavel Sirucek were ruled out of the Olympics after testing Covid +ve.

DD SPORTS TO BROADCAST

NEW DELHI: DD Sports will broadcast the Tokyo Olympics Live daily while other channels of Doordarshan and the All India Radio (AIR) will air special programmes.

JHINGAN WINS TOP PRIZE

NEW DELHI: Defender Sandesh Jhingana on Wednesday was named the AIFF men's Footballer of the Year, while midfielder Suresh Singh Wangjam was picked as the Emerging Player for 2020-21 season.

SWEDEN STUN US

DUBAI: Stina Blackstenius scored a brace and Sweden once again stunned the US at the Olympics with a 3-0 victory Wednesday in the women's football tourney. **Agencies**