

ANALYSIS 7
CAIRN LOOKING FOR
ARBITRATION MONEY?**MONEY 8**
INDIA WITNESSING SIGNIFICANT
IMPROVEMENT IN UNESCAP SCORE**SPORTS 12**
LET THE
SHOW BEGIN

HYDERABAD, SATURDAY, JULY 24, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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RADHE SHYAM
INCHING
TOWARDS
COMPLETION

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US SECRETARY OF STATE BLINKEN TO VISIT INDIA FOR TWO DAYS FROM JULY 27

US Secretary of State Antony J Blinken will visit India on July 27 and 28 to discuss a range of issues including the recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and the situation in Afghanistan and the Indo-Pacific, the Ministry of External Affairs announced on Friday. It will be Blinken's first visit to India after assuming charge as and the second by a high-ranking official of the Biden administration since it came to power in January. "US Secretary of State, Antony J Blinken, will visit India on July 27 and 28," the MEA said. A statement by the US State Department said Blinken will also meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

**CUMULATIVE VAX DOSES ADMINISTERED IN INDIA EXCEED 42.75 CRORE: CENTRE**

The cumulative Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has exceeded 42.75 crore, the Union health ministry said on Friday. Nearly 38,87,028 vaccine doses have been administered on Friday, according to the 7 pm provisional report. The ministry said 18,09,954 vaccine doses were administered as first dose and 1,92,363 vaccine doses given as second dose in the age group 18-44 years on Friday. Cumulatively, 13,52,21,119 persons in the age group 18-44 years across states and union territories have received their first dose and total 57,54,908 have received their second dose since the start of phase-3 of the vaccination drive.

**NO PLANS TO SUSPEND NEET, OTHER COMMON ENTRANCE EXAMS: GOVT**

The Union government does not have any plans to suspend NEET and other common entrance examinations, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar informed Lok Sabha on Friday. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (PG) and NEET (Undergraduate) 2021 examinations are scheduled to be held this year on September 11 and 12, respectively, she said in a written reply. The examination shall be conducted with all due precautions and following all protocols, including maintaining Covid-appropriate behaviour, Pawar said. Further, the additional protective measures for candidates and examination personnel are proposed towards the safe conduct of the exam, she stated.

**CONG SAYS HUGE RISE IN NSC GRANT IN 2017-18, ASKS IF IT WAS FOR 'PEGASUS'**

Amid the Pegasus snooping row, the Congress Friday claimed the grant allocation to the National Security Council secretariat went up to Rs 333 crore in 2017-18 from Rs 33 crore the year before, and asked if this hike was related to "purchasing" the Israeli spyware. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara said the UPA government in 2011-12 had allocated Rs 17.43 crore to the National Security Council Secretariat in terms of grants. This amount was marginally increased to Rs 20.33 crore in 2012-13 and further to 26.06 crore in 2013-14, he said, noting that National Security Council Secretariat is largely concerned with administration and co-ordination.

**'FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER TOGETHER'**

The magnificent opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics 2020; (left) empty chairs instead of spectators, courtesy Covid; and (right) entering 21st is the Indian contingent at the Parade of Nations.

**60.1% of TS population has antibodies: ICMR-NIN**NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

About 60.1% of Telangana's population, including 55% of children aged 6-9 years, had a silent prior exposure to SARS-CoV-2.

These findings were disclosed by the Indian Council of Medical Research- National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN) as part of the report on the 4th Covid sero survey conducted in June 2021. TS' figure is less compared to the overall sero-prevalence in the country put at 67.6%.

The sero-prevalence in Telangana went up from 24.1 per cent in the first round to 60.1 per cent; while, at the national level, it went up from 24 per cent in December 2020 to 67 per cent in June 2021.

About 61 per cent of adolescents



had COVID-19 antibodies. The survey was conducted in Nalgonda, Janagana and Kamareddy districts.

Only 30% of the required vax doses supplied to TS

The Center has so far provided 1.06 crore vaccine doses to Telangana. As on 20th July 2021, a total of 1.59 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines were supplied to the State, including 1.06 crore doses free of cost, by the Government of India. The remaining 9.25 lakh doses have been procured by the State Government and 43.59 lakh doses have been procured by private hospitals.

Bharat Bio ends MoU with Brazil after graft claims

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Biotech on Friday said it terminated the Memorandum of Understanding entered with Precisa Medicamentos and Envixia Pharmaceuticals LLC for its COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin for the Brazilian market. The termination of the MoU came after the deal with the Brazilian government for supply of 20 million doses of the vaccine in a controversy and attracted investigation by authorities in that country.

Precisa Medicamentos is Bharat Biotech's partner in Brazil, providing assistance, guidance and support with regulatory submissions, licensure, distribution, insurance and conduct of phase III clinical trials, among others.

KTR and Harish Rao combo for Huzurabad?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Huzurabad will change the way TRS campaigns for and faces the election battle in what has become a key constituency. Unlike in the past, the pink party has put the responsibility on two big leaders this time. While on the one hand troubleshooter and Finance Minister Harish Rao has already started working, recently IT Minister K T Rama Rao's team began getting involved.

After Eatala Rajender's exit, KTR went silent even on social media and took enough time before responding to the controversies. Sources in the party said that this would be a different election as there would be two 'top guns' handling the scene.

While the Dubbak bypoll was handled by Harish Rao and the GHMC elections by K T Rama Rao, very rarely both of them ran into each other's work area.

Sources indicated that fighting with the Bharatiya Janata Party implied that the pink party had to compete both offline and online. Sources pointed out that each of them had their own strengths and this would be a big add-on for cracking a heavy weight like Eatala



While the Dubbak bypoll was handled by Harish Rao and the GHMC elections by K T Rama Rao, very rarely both of them ran into each other's work area

Rajender. On the ground, Harish is doing poll management, while KTR has reportedly been tasked with assessing public mood.

Visit RLIS independent of AP govt, submit report: NGT to KRMBML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

In what can be construed as a shot in the arm for the Telangana government, the National Green Tribunal's southern zone bench at Chennai on Friday directed the Krishna River Management Board to visit the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (RLIS) project site "independent of the AP government" and submit a detailed report upon inspection of the works taken up there.

Till date, there had been no progress on the petitions filed in the National Green Tribunal, including the contempt of court petition filed by the Telangana government against the ongoing work on the RLIS taken up by the Andhra Pradesh government in violation of Tribunal's orders.

The Contempt of Court petition came up for hearing in the NGT, Chennai on Friday.

The Tribunal, in its previous



order on July 12, directed the Krishna River Management Board and the Central Environment Department to visit RLIS project site and submit a report if indeed work was going on without any approvals as complained initially by the individual petitioner G Srinivas and subsequently by the Telangana government.

On Friday, KRMB submitted an affidavit stating that the Andhra Pradesh government was not cooperating for their proposed visit to the project site. The Central Environment

Department, however, did not file its response on Friday.

However, the Andhra Pradesh government on Friday submitted an affidavit against the Contempt of Court petitions denying that it had violated the NGT orders and stated that only works related to Detail Project Report had been taken up.

Telangana Additional Advocate General Ramachandra Rao then submitted to the NGT that it should send its own team to the controversial work site,

KTR not to meet anyone on his birthday

- ❑ Appeals to party cadre, leaders to remain in constituencies, help rain-hit people
- ❑ Plant trees, the TRS working president reiterates

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TRS party working president K.T.Rama Rao has called upon the party cadre, leaders and supporters not to come to Hyderabad on Saturday, which happens to be his birthday, to wish him at a time when the State is reeling under heavy rains and flood situation.

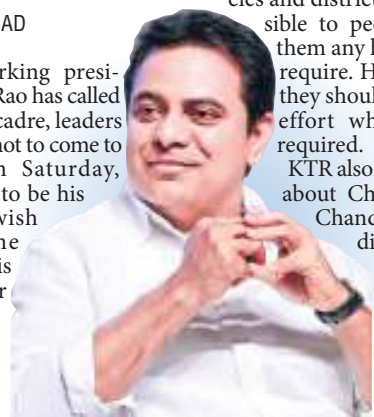
To lay it on thick, KTR

said that he would not meet anyone on his birthday, and appealed to party workers to respect his decision and understand the situation.

As heavy rains are likely to continue for two to three more days, KTR directed all TRS people's representatives to remain in the field in their respective constituencies and districts and be accessible to people to extend

them any help they might require. He also said that they should join the relief effort wherever it was required.

KTR also reminded them about Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's directive to all the people's representatives, from Ministers to sarpanches,

**TODAY****ALMANAC****Month & Paksham:**

Ashadha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Purnima 08:05 Pratipada 29:49**Nakshatram** : Ultra Ashadha 12:40**Time to Avoid** : Time to Avoid (Bad time to start any important work)**Rahukalam** : 9:09 am - 10:46 am**Yamagandam** : 1:59 pm - 3:35 pm**Varjyam** : 4:26 pm - 5:57 pm**Gulika** : 5:56 am - 7:33 am**Good Time** : (to start any important work)**Amritakalam** : 6:44 am - 8:13 am**Abhijit Muhurtham** : 11:56 am - 12:48 pm**HYDERABAD WEATHER****Forecast**: Mostly cloudy**Temp**: 28/22**Humidity**: 88%**Sunrise**: 5:52 am**Sunset**: 06:52 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated JULY 22, 2021 5:00 PM

**Tata Boeing delivers 100th fuselage from Hyderabad facility**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited on Friday announced the delivery of the 100th fuselage for the AH-64 Apache combat helicopter to Boeing from its state-of-the-art manufacturing facility here.

2 Telugu academicians among 12 VCs appointed to central universities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

There are two Telugu teachers among 12 full-time VCs appointed to 12 Central Universities by President Rama Nath Kovind on Friday. They were identified as Prof Battu Satyanarayana and Dr Basotkar Jagadishwar Rao.

Prof Satyanarayana was appointed

as Karnataka Central University Vice-Chancellor. He retired as the head of the department of chemistry in Osmania University. He held the post of President of OU Teachers' Association (OUTA) for about 15 years. He was unanimously elected to the post for three terms.

Plastic sticks used in candies, ice-cream to be prohibited by Jan 1

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Candy sticks and ice-cream sticks made of plastic may get phased out from January 1, 2022, the Centre informed Parliament on Friday.

Responding to a query on the phasing out schedule of single-use plastic, Minister of State for Environment Ashwini Choubey said as per the draft notification issued earlier this year, manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of some of the identified single-use plastic items are proposed to be prohibited by January 1, 2022.

Earbuds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, poly-



styrene (thermocool) for decoration are proposed to be phased out by January 1, while single-use plastic

(including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene) items – plates, cups, glasses, forks, spoons, knives,

Mothkupally quits BJP; spits fire at Eatala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As expected, former minister Mothkupally Narsimhulu resigned from the BJP on Friday and expressed his willingness to join the Dalit Bandhu scheme for the sake of Dalits. He termed KCR as 'Ekaika mogadu' for giving Rs.10 lakh to Dalit families in the state. Mothkupally also described KCR as "a real heir to Dr BR Ambedkar". He called upon Dalits of the state to stand by KCR.

his resignation from the BJP, Mothkupally targeted former minister Eatala Rajender, while showering praises on KCR for announcing the Dalit Bandhu scheme for the sake of Dalits. He termed KCR as 'Ekaika mogadu' for giving Rs.10 lakh to Dalit families in the state. Mothkupally also described KCR as "a real heir to Dr BR Ambedkar". He called upon Dalits of the state to stand by KCR.

Mothkupally questioned as to what was the need to bring Eatala Rajender to carry the BJP flag. He called upon the people of Huzurabad constituency to boycott "the corrupt" Eatala Rajender. He said that the BJP should have inducted Eatala Rajender into the party fold only after making him give back land of the Dalits and the temple lands.

Several low-lying areas face inundation in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Several low-lying areas faced inundation and road links were disrupted in Telangana on Friday following heavy rains that lashed the state during the last two days.

Relief operations were taken up in Nirmal and other districts as several residential localities faced inundation, official sources said.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel rescued a group of seven people who were stuck at an ashram in Nizamabad district.

Bharat Biotech to supply 500 mn doses of Covaxin to Centre

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Biotech on Friday said it has committed to supply over 500 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin to the Centre under the country-wide immunisation programme.

Speaking at a virtual conference organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry, Suchitra Ella, joint Managing Director of the city-based vaccine maker, said the company's facilities in four cities - Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Pune and Ankalashwar - are currently producing Covaxin. "In a nut-

In a nutshell if I have to tell you, this is the journey of Covaxin from April 2020 until June 2021



shell if I have to tell you, this is the journey of Covaxin from April 2020 until June 2021.

And it is still ongoing as we continue to manufacture, taking

a commitment of more than 50 crore (500 million) of doses to be submitted to the government of India for its immunisation programme," she said narrating

the journey of Covaxin.

Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar had said in Parliament on Tuesday that from January to July 16, 5.45 crore (54.5 million) doses of Covaxin by Bharat Biotech and 36.01 (360 million) crore doses of Covishield have been supplied by the Serum Institute of India to the Centre.

Suchitra Ella said the data of Phase 3 trials has been submitted to the Drug Controller General of India for its perusal and efficacy of the vaccine against many of the coronavirus variants was also tested. Covaxin demonstrated 77.8

per cent effectiveness against symptomatic COVID-19 and 65.2 per cent protection against the B.1.617.2 Delta variant, Bharat Biotech said recently, while announcing the final analysis of the jab.

It had said the Efficacy Analysis demonstrates Covaxin to be 93.4 per cent effective against severe symptomatic COVID-19 cases.

The MD further said that when it comes to vaccines not only for COVID-19, India, when compared to some other countries, has more capacity to produce vaccines in large numbers.

Dasoju appeals to CS to audit Covid death reports

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC official spokesperson Dasoju Sravan has appealed to the Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar to constitute an apex-level committee to audit death reports, including the hospital medical treatment records and arrive at the actual number of deaths in Telangana, which will provide a basis of receiving the financial relief from Government of India as per the Supreme Court directions. He appealed to Somesh Kumar to provide compensation to all those needy spouses and orphaned children, who lost their bread earners due to Covid-19. He also appealed to the CS to issue formal document wherein the cause of death of those, who succumbed to the Covid-19 virus is stated as "death due to Covid-19".

On Friday, Dasoju Sravan addressed a letter to the Chief Secretary alleging that the state government indulged in under-reporting of innumerable deaths that occurred in Telangana due to Covid-19 between April, 2020 and now, thereby violating the fundamental right to die with dignity, ICMR guidelines for Covid

deaths registration and principle of natural justice. He requested the CS for the re-audit and rectification of death records/ reports and provide justice by enabling the deceased families to get compensation or compassionate appointment or any ex-gratia by the Government of India in view of the orders of the Supreme Court.

He mentioned in his letter that in the State of Telangana, a large number of people died during the first and second waves of the Covid-19 pandemic. In every locality and in every village, there were deaths due to both the waves of Covid-19, he said. It is a known fact that during the second wave of Covid-19, a greater number of deaths have happened in rural Telangana. In every village and every ward, several people have died due to Covid-19. Thousands of children were orphaned as their parents succumbed to the virus and several families severely suffered due to the death of their sole bread earners, he said.

Particularly, during the second wave of Covid-19, countless people died not only in the

hospitals, both public and private, but also at their homes while taking self-treatment due to lack of access to beds in hospitals, oxygen and other life-saving drugs.

However, ironically, the government of Telangana in order to create a camouflage and mislead people into believing that "all is well" and further, to cover up their colossal failure in handling the Covid-19 pandemic, seems to have completely underreported the number of deaths in entire Telangana. The Government of Telangana has falsely reported 6,29,054 Covid-19 cases with 3,710 deaths from March 14, 2020 to June 30, 2021, he said.

If only the Government of Telangana would have strictly adhered to the above-mentioned ICMR guidelines, most of the deaths that occurred during the pandemic would have been reported as "deaths due to Covid-19". However, for reasons better known to them, the government of Telangana willfully made an unlawful attempt to underreport the deaths and kept the families of the deceased persons in the dark about the cause of their death, he alleged.

KTR not to...

Continued from page 1

To participate in relief activities and said that the party cadre should support the relief operations. KTR reiterated his call to party leaders and cadre to take up social service as per their choice and participate in the plantation of saplings programme.

KTR's office stated that the proposed distribution of two-wheelers to physically challenged persons by KTR under the 'Gift a smile programme' scheduled for Saturday had been postponed in view of the rains. It would be organized once the inclement weather improved in the State. A special programme would be organized later to distribute the two-wheelers to the beneficiaries, it said.

Only 30% of the required vax doses...

Continued from page 1

The Telangana government procured 4,90,590 doses in May and 4,34,630 doses in June.

Vaccine allocations have not improved for Telangana, considering that 12 states have seen better allocations than it. From January to April - 48,96,700 vials were supplied. In May 12,43,060 vials were supplied, while in June 29,56,710 vials were made available. Up to 20 July, 15,04,090 vials were given by the Center to the state. Apart from vaccines, the Center allocated 1,400 ventilators, 2.93 lakh Remdesivir, 42.5 lakh HCQ 1.06 lakh

60.1% of TS population...

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The sero-positivity was as high as 82.4 per cent among healthcare workers. This is attributed to early vaccination of the frontline workers. It may be mentioned here that in the first round of the sero-survey, the sero-prevalence was 0.33 per cent, while the second survey found 12.5 per cent antibodies and 24.1 per cent sero-pervallence.

Amphotericin B and 1,113 Tocilizumab to Telangana.

According to the Central government, the vaccine wastage is 1.99%.

Responding to a question raised by BJP MP Bandi Sanjay, Minister of State Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar said, "Between 1st May 2021 and 13th July 2021, a total of 60.29

lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccine were administered in Telangana, of which 1.20 lakh doses were extra doses extracted from the vials which constitute 1.99% of the total doses administered".

Dismissing claims of shortage of vaccine, the Center said it did not face any difficulty in procuring vaccines.

The Minister said, "Advance visibility of these allocations i.e. the total doses of vaccine that would be available to a State/UT, is provided to States/UTs 15 days in advance so as to enable States/UTs to plan for acceleration of vaccination coverage while being cognizant of the available vaccines."

The Government of India allocates vaccines to States/UTs based on criteria such as pro-rata target population, the progress of vaccination in the State/UT, and vaccine wastage. As per the latest Supply Order, the Center is purchasing Covishield at Rs. 205 per dose and Covaxin at Rs 215 per dose.

TS clocks 643 new Covid cases, 4 deaths

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana on Friday reported 643 fresh COVID-19 cases, taking the tally to over 6.40 lakh while the death toll rose to 3,778 with four more deaths.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation accounted for the highest number of cases with 77 followed by Karimnagar at 68, a state government bulletin said.

Active cases stood at 9,729. The infection caseload was at 64,012, while with 767 people being cured, total recoveries climbed to 6,26,505.

Over 1.20 lakh samples were tested on Friday and cumulatively, over 2.11 crore samples have been tested.

The samples tested per million population were over 5.67 lakh, the bulletin said.

Tata Boeing delivers 100th fuselage from Hyderabad...

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According to a press release issued by Tata Advanced Systems Limited, the fuselage will be transported to Boeing's AH-64 Apache manufacturing facility in Mesa, Arizona, USA, for integration into the final assembly line.

Telangana Minister KT Rama Rao, and senior officials from Boeing and TASL were present to mark the delivery milestone.

Salil Gupte, president, Boeing India, said, Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited is an example of Boeing's commitment towards "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" and the co-development of integrated systems in aerospace and defence not just for India, but for the world.

"We have quadrupled our sourcing from India in the past two years to more than USD 1 billion. Skilled talent, robust

infrastructure, ease of doing business, and a highly responsive government administration make Telangana an ideal destination for the high-end manufacturing work that the aerospace and defence industry demands," Gupte said.

Rama Rao, said, "This is a proud moment for Telangana, and a noteworthy step in the growth of India's aerospace and defence manufacturing. Our government is committed to providing all support necessary to make the state a preferred destination for global aviation and defence manufacturers. I congratulate Boeing and Tata for this milestone." Sukaran Singh, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, TASL said, "The achievement of 100th fuselage delivery for AH-64 within three years of the facility being operational reflects our strong ability to industrialise and

ramp up complex aerospace programs and deliver with highest levels of quality."

Tata Boeing Aerospace, Boeing's first equity joint venture in India, is the result of a 2015 partnership agreement with TASL.

Spread over 14,000 square meters, the facility has been producing aero-structures for Boeing's AH-64 Apache helicopter, including fuselages, secondary structures and vertical spar boxes for customers worldwide.

Recently, Boeing announced the addition of a new production line to manufacture complex vertical fin structures for the 737 family of airplanes.

Customers globally operate more than 1,200 Boeing-made Apache helicopters.

The helicopter has been fielded or selected for acquisition by the armed forces of 16 countries, including India.

Mothkupally quits...

Continued from page 1

He asked what would have gone wrong had he attended the Dalit empowerment meeting as a representative of the BJP when Chief Minister KCR had invited him personally by making a phone call. He said that the BJP made a 'historic mistake' by not attending the path-breaking Dalit empowerment meeting.

Speaking to media persons on Friday, Mothkupally made it clear that he had quit the BJP as he failed to take the insults heaped on him in the party. No leader, who joined the BJP from other parties, was happy in the saffron party, he said. He said that BJP leaders did not allow him to sit on the dais during party meetings, though he had served as an MLA for 30 years. The BJP was trying to malign him though he had joined the BJP to help it, he said.

Thanking KCR for announcing the Dalit Bandhu scheme, Mothkupally said that he tendered his resignation from the BJP being confident of the fact that KCR would implement the Dalit Bandhu scheme across the

state. He said that he had bravely joined BJP at a time when there were no Dalits in the party. Time would tell what future holds for him. He said that KCR was the leader who provided economic and social security to Dalits in the state.

Leaders in the BJP and political analysts expected that Mothkupally might quit the BJP any time when he attended the Dalit empowerment meeting held on June 27 at Pragathi Bhavan under the leadership of KCR though the Telangana BJP had officially announced that it was boycotting the meeting. The BJP had also expressed anger over Mothkupally's action and had started to keep Mothkupally away from party activities from then onwards. However, Mothkupally said that he informed the Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay before attending the meeting and also said that he protected the BJP interests in the state by attending the Dalit empowerment meeting.

It may be recalled that Mothkupally joined BJP last November in the presence of BJP national president JP

KTR and Harish Rao combo for Huzurabad?

Continued from page 1

By stating that "Huzurabad is a fight among parties", KTR has hinted that, irrespective of the candidate to be fielded by TRS, the who's who of the party would be at the helm of affairs in the constituency. Apart from Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's public address, having these two ministers would boost the morale of party leaders, sources said.

CM conveys best wishes to Indian sports contingent at Tokyo Olympics

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As the 32nd edition of world's greatest sporting spectacle, Olympics -2020, geared up for its opening ceremony at Tokyo on Friday, Chief Minister K.Chandrasekhar Rao has conveyed his good wishes to the Indian sportspersons participating on behalf of India.

Mr.KCR said that Olympics in which all the nations would participate symbolized the grand message of world peace, harmony and brotherhood.

He wished that Indian sports persons would register successes and win several gold and other medals at the Olympics games. He desired that the Indian flag should be hoisted on the world stage to bring name and fame to the nation once again.

Mr.K.T.Rama Rao, Minister for IT, Industry and Municipal Administration and Urban Development and also President of Telangana Badminton Association, con-



veyed his best wishes to the 120-strong contingent of India taking part in Tokyo Olympics.

The sportspersons endeavoured hard for the last few years to keep themselves fit to win medals for the country though the pandemic has dampened the spirits of many countrymen. "But I believe you can make sure that Indian flag will continue to fly high. Congratulations, all the very best and bring home some medals," he said in his message shared on Twitter.

Plastic sticks used in candies, ice-cream to be...

Continued from page 1

The Ministry of Environment had issued a notification containing draft provisions on March 11, 2021 for amending Plastic Waste Management (PWM) Rules, 2016, inter alia prohibiting the use of identified single-

use plastic items by 2022 for public consultation.

Replying to another query on the steps taken to strengthen the implementation of Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 and also to reduce the use of identified single-use plastic items, the minister said the states/UTs have

been requested to constitute a special task force under the chief secretary or the administrator.

"Already, 14 states/UTs have constituted the special task force till date. A national level task force has also been constituted by the ministry for taking coordinated efforts to eliminate iden-

tified single-use plastic items and effective implementation of Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016," he said.

The state and UT governments and the central ministries and departments concerned have also been requested for the development of a com-

prehensive action plan for elimination of single-use plastics and effective implementation of the rules in a time bound manner, he said, adding that the government has been taking measures for awareness generation towards elimination of single-use plastics.

In rejig of bureaucrats, spotlight on Vizag

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government late on Friday affected transfers of several IAS officers, the significant ones being the reshuffle of officials handling crucial posts at Vizag, the soon-to-be executive capital. Both the Vizag district Collector and VMRDA chairman have been changed.

The government swapped the posts of V Vinay Chand, Collector, Visakhapatnam district, with that of Mallikarjuna A, the Chief Executive officer of the Dr YSR Aarogyasri Health Care Trust.

Several low-lying areas...

Continued from page 1

State Roads and Buildings Minister Vemula Prashant Reddy supervised the operation and those stranded at the ashram were rescued in the early hours of Friday, they said.

Several rivulets and other water bodies were in spate following the heavy rains leading to disruption of road links in various villages in the state. State Women and Child

Welfare Minister Satyavati Rathod, who held a meeting with Mahabubabad district officials on Friday, directed them to take measures to strengthen bunds of tanks and other water bodies to prevent breaches.

Wankidi in Kumuram Bheem Asifabad district received 39 cms of rainfall, followed by Asifabad (30 cms), Sarangapur in Nirmal district (21 cms), official sources said.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**
ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
e-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

NTT. No. 16/E-in-C(R&B), SR & CRN/CRN/2021-22 **DT: 22.07.2021**

1. Online tender is invited under e-procurement platform for One (1) Road work under Non Plan, in Rangareddy District's coll. vide E-in-C(R&B), State Roads & CRN, "A" NTT. No.16/E-in-C (R&B), SR & CRN/CRN/2021-22, DT.22.07.2021.

2. Tenderers can download the tender schedules and have further details from e-market place i.e., www.tender.telangana.gov.in. The last date of receipt of tenders is 04.08.2021 up to 3.30 pm.

Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief (R&B)
S/O. No. 487-EP/CL-AGCM/AYDVT/11/0201-22



Be on vigil to help flood-hit people: Guv

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan has directed the functionaries and volunteers of the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) to be on high alert and help the flood-affected people in the State.

Interacting with the Raj Bhavan officials and the IRCS district units through a video conference from Puducherry on Friday, the Governor expressed concern over the loss of property and crops and inundation of low lying areas due to heavy rains in different districts.

She has also instructed the Raj Bhavan officials to coordinate with the State Government in extending relief activities to the needy through IRCS. Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan suggested that all the district units of the IRCS establish control rooms and coordinate the relief activities in the rain-affected areas. The Governor emphasized the need to distribute medicines, food, blankets, utensils and other essential material to the needy.

Ex-TDP leaders now in BJP may follow Mothkupally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana BJP may experience shock after shock in near future. Already, former TDP MLA and Mahabubnagar BJP president Erra Shekar joined the Congress meeting TPCC Chief A Revanth Reddy by quitting the BJP. On Friday, former Minister from TDP Mothkupally Narsimhulu also announced his resignation to the BJP. Mothkupally not only quit the BJP but also stated that many leaders joined BJP from other political parties are not happy in the BJP.

Already another former TDP leader and former Minister E Peddi Reddy had opposed Eatala Rajender's entry into BJP. He openly made criticism against the BJP leadership for inducting former Minister Eatala Rajender into the party without informing him. According to sources, the TRS and Congress are seriously trying to attract E Peddi Reddy



towards them. Peddi Reddy has not yet made his mind to quit the BJP, however, Peddi Reddy has been looking towards the TRS party only. According to sources, Peddi has been waiting for the assurance from the TRS Chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. On the other hand, BJP leaders—from Telangana BJP Chief Bandi Sanjay to former governor Vidyasagar Rao, have been convincing Peddi Reddy to

stay in the party. However, Peddi Reddy may quit the party if he gets an assurance from the TRS party.

Besides these developments, former TDP leaders, who were in the BJP now, are getting ready to follow suit Mothkupally to quit the BJP and join their former colleague KCR's party TRS. The leaders like Boda Janardhan and Chada Suresh Reddy were unhappy with the treatment they were getting in the BJP.

They were bemoaning to their close associates that the BJP is not using their experience and not giving due respect to them. According to sources, the former Minister Mukhesh Goud's son and former Congress leader Vikram Goud was also not happy with the BJP. Most of the leaders joining BJP from other political parties are in a suffocating feeling in BJP. They were lamenting that they have to take permission from the small leaders in the party to do any program.

It may be recalled that many leaders from other parties particularly from Congress and TDP joined BJP in a big way. BJP was in full swing after the victory of Dubbak and GHMC elections and many leaders have shown interest to join BJP and some leaders joined with huge enthusiasm. However, the same leaders were now expressing dissent now and then against the party as the party is not using their services seriously, it is learnt.



After two days of heavy rain, Telangana gets a let-up on Friday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After receiving heavy rain for two days, there was let up in the downpour in Telangana on Friday and no major incident of loss of human life or property was reported.

No report of casualty had been received from the districts though an incident of a man being washed away in a swollen rivulet was reported in the media, a senior official told PTI here.

Three hundred people in Nirmal town and another 100 in Bhainsa town were evacuated on Thursday night and they had since returned to their homes, he said.

No relief camps had to be set up. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel rescued a group of nine people who were stranded at a temple in

Nizamabad district.

In a separate incident, seven persons who were stuck between two streams in Asifabad were also rescued, he said.

Water levels receded from the inundated localities in Nirmal and Bhainsa towns, he said. Road networks suffered damage in Nirmal, Asifabad, Jagtial, Vikarabad and other districts.

The state had a let up in the heavy rainfall on Friday except for Asifabad, Mancherial and Adilabad districts, the official said.

Kothapalli-Dharmaram in Karimnagar district received 40 mm of rainfall, followed by 39 mm of rain at Kolvai in Jagtial district, official sources said, citing rainfall data during 0830 AM to 4 PM on Friday.

The Met Centre of IMD here in its heavy rainfall warning (Red) issued at 1600 hours on

Friday, up to 0830 hours on Saturday, said heavy to very heavy with extremely heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in Adilabad, Kumram Bheem Asifabad and Mancherial districts.

It said heavy to very heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in Nirmal, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla and other districts during the same period.

It also said heavy rain is very likely to occur at isolated places in Bhadradi Kothagudem, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Siddipet and other districts.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, who held a meeting with officials on Thursday on the rain situation, directed them to be on alert and ensure that people living in low-lying areas do not face any hardships following the heavy rains.

Hasan appointed as VC of Urdu University

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Renowned Persian scholar Syed Ainul Hasan has been appointed as the new Vice Chancellor of the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) in Hyderabad. According to a communication received from the Ministry of Education, the President of India, in his capacity as the visitor of MANUU, is pleased to appoint Professor Hasan as the VC, the varsity said in a statement. Hasan will be the fifth VC of the university located in the heart of Hyderabad's IT district and will serve for five years.

A Professor of Persian and Central Asian Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, he was also the Dean for its School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies.



Seven killed in road accident

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Seven people were killed when two cars collided in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana on Friday, police said. The seven died on the spot, they said. One person, who was seriously injured, was

taken to a nearby hospital.

The accident occurred near Achampet in the district Friday evening. Some bodies lay scattered, while others could be brought out from the cars with great effort and both vehicles suffered heavy damage.



Eatala's aide gets post as SC Corp chief

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Friday issued a GO appointing the close aide - Banda Srinivas - of former health minister Eatala Rajender as Chairman of the Telangana State scheduled castes development corporation.

He belonged to Huzurabad in Karimnagar district and belongs to the Madiga community. He as a student leader took part in several social activities. He worked at a different level when in Congress and was Karimnagar district secretary of the student wing. He was also a hockey player. He is working as Huzurabad Hockey Club president and vice president of Karimnagar district hockey club.

Earlier, he held the posts of Huzurabad agricultural mar-



ket committee director, district telecom board member. He was elected MPTC from Huzurabad twice. Responding to a call given by K Chandrasekhar Rao, he joined the TRS in 2001. He took an active part in the movement for Telangana.

He was the Huzurabad mandal president of the TRS. TRS district secretary, TRS state joint secretary. He takes an active part in party and government programmes.

PD Act invoked against human trafficking offenders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Commissioner of Rachakonda Mahesh Bhagawat has invoked PD act against two human trafficking offenders on Friday, who were arrested on June 15 at Saroornagar. Chandana Naga Ravi Raja and his wife Chandana Sunita were used to procure girls from Andhra Pradesh and ran a clandestine business of brothel houses at Saroornagar.



Projects on Godavari and Krishna get good inflows

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With incessant rains across Telangana and extensive rains in Maharashtra and upper riparian States, the Godavari River is in spate with the water level rising steadily at Bhadrachalam.

Ministers in the districts in the catchment areas of the Godavari and Krishna rivers are constantly monitoring the situation as directed by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

State Transport Minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar and Women and Child Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod monitored the situation in Bhadrachalam and Mulugu districts and coordinated with the respective District Collectors.

An alert was sounded for Godavari basin as the IMD has predicted heavy rainfall over the next two days.

Meanwhile, the intensity of flood inflows into the Sri Ram Sagar Project continued at 2.15 lakh cusecs and the outflow at 2 lakh cusecs, while the present storage capacity is at 84.29 tmc ft as against full storage capacity of 90.31 tmc ft.

On Thursday, 35 gates of SRSP were opened as the water level in it reached almost its capacity and on Friday 33 gates were lifted to let water flow downstream.

Sripada Yellampally received inflows at 4.78 lakh cusecs and the outflow was at 4.78 lakh cusecs, with the water level reaching 480.32 ft as against FRL of 485.56 ft. The present storage level is at 15.88 tmc, as against the full capacity of 20.18 tmc.

Singur project in Sangareddy continued to get inflows on Friday at 4,385 cusecs and the outflow was at 386 cusecs. The present storage capacity is at 20 tmc, as against the full storage capacity of 29.91 tmc at FRL of 1717. The present water level at the project is 1,711 feet.

In the Krishna basin, Jurla continued to get heavy inflows at 1.5 lakh cusecs and the outflow was at 1.59 lakh cusecs. The storage level on Friday was at 6.46 tmc, as against full capacity of 9.66 tmc.

Water level at Tungabhadra touched 1,623 ft as against 1,633 ft and the present storage capacity is at 67.18 tmc (full capacity 100.86 tmc).

Srisailem reservoir received inflows at 1.57 lakh cusecs and the outflow was at 31,783. The water level reached 848.6 ft as against FRL of 885 ft. The water storage is at 77 tmc, against the full capacity of 215.81 tmc.

Pulichintala is almost filled to the brim with the storage capacity at 43.6 tmc, as against 45.77 tmc.

Green India Challenge plans unique gift to KTR on his birthday



ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

Organisers of Green India Challenge who gave a call for planting over three crore saplings in one hour in various districts on the occasion of TRS Working President and IT and Industry and MA&UD Minister K.T.Rama Rao on Saturday has relaxed the stipulation in view of heavy rains across the State.

MP Joginapalli Santosh Kumar has given a call to the people to plant the saplings whenever there is a respite from the rain in different districts and as per their convenience during the day and make the unique 'Mukkoti Vriksharchana' programme a grand success. Planting saplings will be a special gift to KTR on his birthday, he said.

Santosh Kumar urged public representatives from all the levels, TRS cadre and people to become part of the programme to plant as many saplings as possible in their respective areas and

take the responsibility of protecting the plants thereby becoming partners in the Telangana Haritha haram programme. The aim of the programme is to spread the spirit of the Green India Challenge all over the country and people's support for this cause will be valuable.

Meanwhile, the organisers said all arrangements have been made to plant 3.30 Crore plants all over the state on Saturday. Sarpanches across the State will ensure planting of 2.5 Crore saplings, GHMC Mayor and Corporators in Hyderabad will plant 10 Lakh saplings, Chairmen and Councillors in all the municipalities plant 25 Lakh saplings.

All resident colony associations and others have come forward to plant 20 Lakh saplings, while 50 lakh saplings will be planted by people's representatives in the vacant lands under the Forest department and another 20 lakh saplings will be planted the jurisdiction of HMDA.

They said Panchayat Raj

nurseries in the villages; forest and Municipal nurseries were all integrated for the supply of the saplings for the programme. They requested everyone who participated in

the programme and planted the saplings send their photos with the sapling they planted to WhatsApp number 9000365000.



GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA, DEPARTMENT OF HORTICULTURE
Dir. Director of Horticulture Public Gardens, Municipal, Hyderabad - 500004
Contact: mhc@hort.tn.telangana.gov.in Phone: 040-2332253/797774955

Ms. NER/2017/16 Supply Chain/353371 **01.07.2021**

Expression of Interest for Implementation of 'Integrated Supply Chain for Fruits & Vegetables in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC)'

Expression of Interest (EOI) is invited from Farmer/Trainer Group/PO and their Federations/Co-operatives and Self Help Groups, existing Suppliers/Traders of fruits & vegetables, Retailers and Wholesalers, Supply Chain Operators and any other Government/Private entity with suitable experience in procurement and trading of horticulture produce can apply for availing Special assistance towards implementation of 'Integrated Supply Chain for Fruits & Vegetables in Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC)' under the scheme Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH). Whenever necessary, the State & Central Government agencies/Institutes, Allotting Federations and Large Cooperatives engaged in supply chain operations may also be involved in creation of large infrastructure and distribution network as per implementation requirement. The EOI shall be submitted to the Director of Horticulture, Telangana State, Hyderabad on or before 15.08.2021 by 5.00 PM. The detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) for submission of EOI, Operational guidelines of MIDH and Model template can be downloaded from <https://chris.tn.telangana.gov.in>. This is purely an Expression of Interest and does not guarantee any source for award of project.

Sd/- Director of Horticulture
Telangana State, Hyderabad.

R.O. No. - 413-BP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22 **Date: 23-07-2021**

HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
1st Floor, Swarnajayanti Commercial Complex, Ameerpet, Hyderabad.

Public Notification U/s. 15 (3) of HMDA Act, 2008.
(G.O. Ms. No. 98 MA&UD Dept., dated 21.06.2021)

In exercise of powers conferred by Sub-Section (1) of Section 15 of Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority Act 2008 (Act No.8 of 2008), the Government hereby makes the following variation to the road network envisaged in the notified Revised Master Plan for RC Puram zone segment wide G.O. Ms.No.286 MA&UD dt.03.04.2008 as required by sub-section (1) of the said section. Existing road from Narsapur Highway to Medchal High-way passing through Kompally village, Dullapally Village and Telangana Forest Academy which is proposed as 250 feet (75mtrs) wide Master Plan road in the notified Master Plan-2021 for Yamrali zone segment & Shamspur zone segment issued in G.O.Ms.No.286 MA&UD Dept., dt.03.04.2008 is now designated as 100 feet (30mtrs) road. The details of the above are available in Websites <http://www.telangana.gov.in> and <http://hmda.gov.in/>.

Sd/-
R.O. No. 1995-PPICL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22 **for Metropolitan Commissioner, HMDA**

Godavari river in spate, normal life badly affected

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

The heavy downpour across the state caused flash floods to River Godavari, pushing the people living in the catchment areas of the river into a danger zone. The normal life in Adilabad, Jagtial, Mancheril, Asifabad, Peddapalli, Jayashankar, Bhupalapalli, Mulug, Khammam, Bhadradi Kothagudem district has been paralysed.

Villages have been flooded and crops submerged. The streams and minor water bodies are overflowing their banks. Authorities are releasing floodwater through the crest gates as inflows into various irrigation projects increase.

The water level in the Kaleswaram reservoir reached 121.5 meters mark, leading to authorities hoisting the first cautionary signal.

The water level in the Annaram Saraswati barrage has increased as the authorities lifted the gates of Sundilla reservoir and Pravati barrage gates. Out of the 66 gates, 60 gates of Annaram Saraswati



Barrage have been lifted on Friday. Inflow into the barrage is put at 8,02,300 cusecs and the outflow was put at 9,02,300 cusecs. The capacity of the barrage is put at 10.87 tmc. The water quantity in the barrage was put at 4.29 tmc.

The irrigation department officials have also lifted 85 gates of the Medigedda barrage. The capacity of the barrage is put at 16.17 tmc. But the water level in the barrage is put at 8 tmc. The officials predict more floodwater entering the Medigedda barrage as the authorities lifted SRSP project gates.

If the inflows into the Kadem project increase, other gates of



the Yellampalli project are also likely to be lifted. During the past three days, the district received 512.2 mm (July 21), 330 mm (July 22) and 658 mm on July 23 were recorded.

The officials lifted Saraswati barrage's 60 gates simultaneously flooding Pranahita river,

whose backwaters are affecting Vilasagar, Damera Kunta, Gundaratpalli, Mahadevpur, Annaram, Chandurapalli, Maddulapalli villages in Mahadevpur mandal. Standing crops in hundreds of acres have been inundated. Flood water is entering the villages. The people living there are in the grip of fear. Tahsildar who set out to reach the villages in his car was caught in the floodwaters. Authorities have managed to pull the car out of the floodwaters with the help of ropes. The Medigedda project is full of water up to the brim.

The floodwaters have inundated crops in Yedapalli, Kudurpalli, Mahadevpur, Brahmanapalli, Begulur, Suraram, Ambatpalli limits.

District Collector Krishna Aditya on Thursday night visited the Medigedda project and inspected the flood level. He asked the authorities to take all precautions to rule out any untoward incidents.

The rain threat to the state continues for the next 48 hours. Therefore, the officials should not show any slackness, the collector said.

Special teams deployed in flood-hit areas

PNS ■ MULUG

District Collector S Krishna A d i t y a F r i d a y inspected the over-flowing waters at Godavari Mullakatta Bridge in Eturu Nagaram. He also visited flood-hit villages in the district following the torrential rains that battered the district for the last two days.

The Collector said that heavy rains lashed the district under the influence of low pressure and hence people should be on high alert. He directed the officials to depute special teams for emergency duties in advance to rescue the people.

The Collector said a control room has been set up at the collectorate and the staff has been deputed round the clock to monitor the flood situation. A toll-free No: 1008-4250 -520 has been set up to receive grievances.

Revenue officials, tehsildars and concerned officials will be available 24 hours a day, he said.



BJP dared to implement TS schemes in BJP-ruled states

PNS ■ HUZURABAD

Civil Supplies Minister Gangula Kamalakhar has sought to know from the BJP who stopped it from implementing the scheme prevalent in Telangana in the rest of the 28 states.

He distributed Kalyana Lakshmi cheques worth more than Rs 68 lakh among 68 beneficiaries at the Huzurabad City Centre hall.

Addressing the gathering there, Gangula sought to know the reason for not implementing the schemes like Kalyana Lakshmi, Rytu Bandhu, residential schools for minorities, round the clock power to the agriculture sector, Aasara pensions, Mission Bhagiradha scheme supplying tap water to all households, development of hospitals, Rs 13000 worth KCR kit and so on.

Like a maternal uncle, KCR gives over Rs 1 lakh under Kalyana Lakshmi and provides all amenities in government hospitals for institutional deliveries besides giving KCR kits to pregnant women. As the child grows, the government provides residential schools on a par with corporate schools. Even casual workers getting



their wards admitted to government schools instead of taking them to their workplace. In Telangana, Telangana is developing in all respects under the leadership of KCR.

He appealed to people to support KCR who is standing by them through thick and thin.

Excise Minister Srinivas Goud said that the Chief Minister does not want the poor to become debt-ridden. Therefore, he takes care of the poor providing drinking water to KCR kits to lactating mothers. He provided residential schools for the children's education and offering benefits under Kalyana Lakshmi to the girl child. He said the government has increased employment opportunities manifold

and hunger has been driven out from the soil of Telangana. Therefore, he appealed to people to lend support to KCR.

Welfare Minister Koppula Eswar observed that KCR is unparalleled in providing welfare-oriented administration to the people of the state. The welfare and development schemes being implemented in the state have set an example for the whole country to emulate.

The people taking part in the programme responded hailing whenever government schemes' names were uttered by the ministers. MLA Kasamayi Balkishan, MLAs Naradasu Lakshman Rao, Baswaraj Saraiah, ZP Chairman Kanamalla Vijaya and a large number of people took part in the meeting.

MLA rescues 30 workers stranded in floodwater

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

Ramagundam MLA KorukantiChander along with the rescue teams managed to bring those who were marooned in floodwaters and bring them to the bank. The people have been hailing the MLA as their hero.

Later addressing the gathering, the MLA appealed to people to remain on the alert and declared that his rescue team is ready to solve the people's problems. He appealed to the people to give him information if flood relief and rehabilitation measures are needed.

As the government authorities lifted Yellampalli project crest gates, floodwater entered Malkapur outskirts. The MLA's rescue team, police authorities and others took relief measures.



The MLA and the rescue team saved the lives of marooned 30 workers.

Also, the MLA rescued the people who gathered near the elevated platforms where the idols of Sammakka and Sarakka are placed, with the help of a boat.

On the directions of the CM, the MLA said that he is reviewing

the flood situation in the region. The police, municipal and revenue authorities have been put on a high state of alert. On learning about 30 marooned workers, he along with the rescue team saved them at 5 am on Friday.

Besides the MLA, city mayor DrBangi Anil Kumar, ACP Umender, RG-1 general mines KalwalaNarayana, CLS Lakshmi Narayana, Ramesh Babu, Srinivas Rao and others were present.

Students' protest at TS Bhavan in Delhi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Delhi University students from Telangana state have staged a dharna in front of the Ambedkar statue located in the Telangana Bhavan in New Delhi on Friday demanding the authorities to give Telangana Bhavan jobs to only Telanganites. They alleged that the Telangana Bhavan resident Commissioner has been behaving unilaterally and expressed anger over the recruitments in Telangana Bhavan during their protest. They raised slogans saying 'Our jobs will be given to us only'. They alleged that officials are transforming the Telangana Bhavan into a North India Bhavan. They demanded the government to remove the present Telangana Bhavan resident commissioner immediately.

Farmers stage protest, seek ex gratia over submersion

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

The farmers organized a sit-in dharna in front of the Saraswati barrage irrigation office on Friday, demanding compensation for the loss due to submersion of their crops here on Friday.

The farmers alleged that cotton and paddy fields in thousands of acres in Kaleswaram, Ippalipalli, Palugula, Kuntlam, Maddulapalli, Chnudrupalli, Nagapalli and Annaram in Mahadevpur mandal of Jayashankar Bhupalapalli district and Gundrathpalli, Vilasagar, Lakshampur and other villages in Kataram mandal have been inundated with Kaleswaram project backwaters due to the heavy rains that lashed over the past three days.

They demanded the government should take up the



land acquisition of submerged lands after a thorough investigation and pay compensation to the farmers. The farmers and Congress leaders squatted on the road in front of the irrigation office to express their protest over the submersion of their standing crops. Additional Collector Rizwan Basha and revenue officials spoke to the agitators and convinced them. The farmers submitted a memorandum to the Additional

Collector. Rizwan Basha promised them that a report will be submitted to the Government, if they can furnish details of crop loss.

Bhupalapally district Congress president Ayitha Prakash Reddy, ZPTC Gundala Aruna, mandal Congress president Akbar Khan, block Congress party mandal president Kota Rajababu and farmers from Annaram participated in the agitation.

Man swindles Rs 5 lakh Rythu Beema claim

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Rythu Bandhu Coordinator of Puttapahad village of Kulkacharla mandal of Vikarabad District has manipulated the records and grabbed Rs.5 lakhs. He has shown Chandramma (58) as dead and drawn Rythu Beema (Insurance). After receiving the complaint from the son of Chandramma, the Officials have found the manipulation.

The Accused Raghavendra Reddy, working as a Rythu Bandhu coordinator, has cheated Chandramma and her son. He has taken documents for Rytu Beema and signatures of Chandramma's son in the name of some other purpose. He has processed everything by creating the death record of Chandramma and withdrawn Rs.5 lakhs without the victim's knowledge.

Case filed against IPS officer Praveen Kumar

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Three town police of Karimnagar on Friday registered a case against IPS officer Dr RS Praveen Kumar, following a complaint by a lawyer Bethi Mahender Reddy over his pledge insulting the Hindu Gods.

Mahender Reddy said he had complained against Praveen Kumar and another person in the Karimnagar district court and based on the court directives, the police filed a case against him.

A case has been registered with a crime No 144/2021, 153A, 295A, 298 read with 343 IPC sections. The complainant alleged that at a Sweroes pledge programme, Praveen Kumar and its member Nyathari Sankar Babu administered a pledge insulting the Hindu Gods. As the video has gone viral, the lawyer filed a petition alleging that his sentiments have been hurt with the pledge insulting the Hindu deities in the Principle Judicial Magistrate court on March 22. He said in his complaint that he lodged complaints at the three town police



stating on March 16 and Police Commissioner on March 20. As they failed to take action against the IPS officer, he filed a petition in the court, he said.

As the court declared holidays in view of the corona pandemic, Justice Saisudha issued directives to the police on Thursday to probe into the matter. Following the court order, the police filed a case against Praveen Kumar and Sankar babu on Thursday. Lawyer Mahender Reddy urged the police to conduct a thorough investigation against them.

Mahender Reddy also demanded that the government should prohibit the Sweroes institute which is spreading hatred against the Hindu religion among the gurukul students.

Collector travels on tractor for site inspection

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Vikarabad District Collector Pousumi Basu on Friday travelled on a tractor to inspect works of a graveyard being constructed at Sangam Kurdhu village in Yalala mandal in Vikarabad district. As there is another mode of transport not available to reach the village as her car is not suitable due to bad condition of the road, the Collector asked the local officials to arrange a tractor to reach the village.

According to reports, Pousumi Basu came to know that the construction of the graveyard at Sangam Kurdhu village in Yalala mandal is not yet completed.

Then she decided to visit the under-construction graveyard. However, the road is not conducive to travel in her car to the spot.



'Revanth brings new enthusiasm in Cong'

PNS ■ MEDAK

Medak district Congress Committee president Kanthareddy Tirupati Reddy said the Congress party will certainly come to power soon as there is a new wave of enthusiasm among the youth after Revanth Reddy took over as PCC chief.

He participated at a meeting where a number of youth joined Congress under the leadership of Youth Congress leaders Padma Manoj and Siva at GKR Gardens in Medak on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, the DCC president said party cadre is a key strength for the Congress party and the future of the party relied on the youth. The

ruling TRS party is shivering after Revanth Reddy has taken the reins of the party in the state. He said youth and leaders from other parties are ready to join the Congress in a massive way in Medak constituency and priority will be accorded to youth in the party. He will be always with the youth if they spearhead an agitation for development.

Recalling that 10 per cent of party seats had been given to youth in the municipal elections, Tirupati Reddy said youth will be given top priority in the days to come in the Congress party.

He came down heavily on the TRS government for the poor maintenance of roads in Medak and the road dividers are getting damaged even for the rains.

DC warns of imposing fine if tractor driven with cage wheels

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

District Collector L Sarman has warned of taking action against anyone found driving tractors on roads with cage wheels causing damage to the roads. He was addressing officials of the police, R and B, Panchayat Raj and other government departments at his camp office here on Friday.

The government prohibited driving tractors with cage wheels causing damage to blacktop and CC roads. He ordered officials to impose a fine of Rs 10,000 if anyone was found driving tractors with iron wheels on. If the same person was found violating the orders for the second time, a case would be registered against the tractor owners and the tractor would be confiscated.

He asked panchayat secretaries, MPOs to supervise so that none drives tractors with iron wheels on. The panchayat secretary should furnish tractors in the village and their registra-



tion numbers to the district panchayat officer. The panchayat secretary is saddled with the responsibilities of imposing fines and booking cases against the tractor owners.

If tractors were noticed on roads with iron wheels on, photos and videos should be captured and were to be dug, the permission from the relevant government department should be obtained. Otherwise, a case would be booked against such persons. He asked the people to cooperate with the government in this regard. The people should furnish information and help the

police register complaints. The police, district panchayat raj, transport, R and B, RWS, municipalities and other relevant government departments should take responsibility in this regard. He asked the officials to give wide publicity in villages, mandals, municipalities to sensitise people about it by getting the news by beating drums.

District Panchayat Officer Rajeshwar, DSP Mohan Reddy, district transport officer Swamy, RWS executive engineer Damodar Rao, R and B executive engineer Bhaskar and others took part in the meeting.

Tiger spotted on Srisaillam road

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

Some pilgrims have reportedly spotted a tiger in the surrounding areas of the Rajiv Gandhi tiger project on the Srisaillam - Hyderabad highway on Friday. The pilgrims said they heard the roars of a tiger from the bushes at Vatavarlalpal village. The passengers who spotted the tiger feared and rushed into their vehicles. The number of leopards and



tigers has been increased in the recent past in the Nallamala forest area under the limits of the Rajiv Gandhi tiger project area. The local people said the wandering of wild animals is on the rise of late. However, there are no instances of attacking humans in the vicinity of the area.

The villagers said it became a common sight for them to have tigers, leopards, bears and other wild animals and no one will harm them. They also go silently

even if they observe people.

The forest officials admitted that the presence of wild animals like tigers, leopards and bears has been found and there are some instances where they attacked cattle in some areas. But, they never attacked humans. Usually, tigers drive other animals away from their territory for safety. Moreover, they wander miles together.

The tiger project is extended to thousands of kilometres from Mannanuru ghat road to Srisaillam surrounding areas in the Nallamala forest. It became routine for the wild animals to enter villages and roads.

Sangameshwara temple goes under Krishna waters

MALLEPALLI GOVERDHAN ■ NAGARKURNOOL

The Sangameshwara temple near Kollapur in the district fully went under Krishna water due to heavy inflows into the river due to heavy rains in the upper riparian states.

Heavy rains were experienced on Wednesday and Thursday under the influence of a low-pressure area. Heavy inflows into Almati, Narayanpur in Karnataka forced to discharge of floodwater leading to water level rising in the Jurala project, Srisaillam project



and Nagarjuna Sagar project.

The Sangameshwara temple will remain open for darshan to devotees while remaining underwater for over eight

months. To catch a glimpse of the temple deity, devotees turned out in large numbers as the temple will remain under the water for the greater part of the



year. The water level in Somasila is rising by every minute. Therefore, the temple priests gave an opportunity to witness the deity specially and per-

formed special pujas. They took steps to relocate the temple deities and performed the pujas for the last time standing in neck-deep water.

INDIA CORNER

Ajit Pawar speaks with Rajnath Singh over Maha flood situation

Maharashtra deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday spoke to Defense Minister Rajnath Singh on the worsening flood situation in the state. Singh assured the help of defense forces in the rescue and relief operations, a statement by Pawar's office said. Army and Navy teams have already been deployed in the state. Maharashtra Relief and Rehabilitation Secretary Aseem Gupta has been appointed as the nodal officer for coordination with the Defense Ministry, the statement added. District guardian ministers and local elected representatives have been asked to stay put in the flood-hit districts till the situation is normal. Raigad guardian minister Aditi Tatkare, Ratnagiri guardian minister Anil Parab, Sindhudurg guardian minister Uday Samant, Satara guardian minister Balasaheb Patil and all MLAs from these areas have been asked to remain available to participate in and oversee the rescue and relief operations, the release said. Heavy rains are battering the coastal Konkan and parts of Western Maharashtra for the last two days.

Don't indulge in politics over Covid vax: Mandaviya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday appealed to Opposition parties not to play politics on the issue of COVID-19 vaccines and asserted that everyone should work together to ensure people are vaccinated against coronavirus.

Responding to supplementaries during Question Hour in Lok Sabha, the minister said the government is still in talks with US company Pfizer with respect to making its vaccine available in India.

"There should be no politics on the issue of COVID and vaccination. The prime minister has said this several times," Mandaviya said in response to a question asked by Shiv Sena MP Rahul Shewale.

"I will also not want to indulge in politics on this issue but I want to present the facts," he said, adding that the prime minister till date has held over 20 meetings and discussions with the state governments and chief ministers.

He said some opposition-ruled states raised the issue that health is a state subject and they should



be taken into confidence.

"Many said Health is a state subject, states said we also need permission to buy vaccines. We said that we have no problem with this. The states said that we want to go out for tender to buy the vaccine. Modi ji said that we are ready to do whatever help is needed," the Health minister said.

He said accordingly, the states were allowed to buy 25 per cent and 25 per cent by the private (sector). The Centre was to procure 50 per cent for the people.

"For the 25 per cent, states

issued tenders and we said we will provide all possible help. The suppliers were limited and the Indian government too was holding talks," he said.

Many issued global tenders. But there were only two Indian companies which had started vaccine manufacturing, the Serum Institute of India (Covishield) and Bharat Biotech (Covaxin), Mandaviya said.

He added that Moderna has registered in India and taken permission. Johnson and Johnson has tied up with Biological E and work

on technology transfer has begun.

"With Pfizer, the Indian government was holding talks with it. But the company said it will not deal with the states and the Indian government is holding talks with us. Even today, an experts group is holding talks with the company," Mandaviya said.

In a meeting with the states, the chief ministers said they were not getting adequate supply of vaccines and the Centre should procure 25 per cent, which the states were to earlier acquire, of the vaccines.

So a new policy came into being from June 21 under which the Centre decided to vaccinate all the citizens, he said.

"The issue is about politics. There should be no politics on this issue. Our goal is to vaccinate 100 per cent people above the age of 18 years. We all need to work on it together. It is not the time to indulge in politics," Mandaviya, who assumed charge of the Health ministry earlier this month following a Cabinet reshuffle, said.

He said those spreading confusion should be stopped from doing so and the public should be connected with the free vaccination campaign.

Any attempt of booth-capturing, bogus voting should be dealt with iron hands: SC

Any attempt of booth capturing or bogus voting should be dealt with iron hands because it ultimately affects the rule of law and democracy, the Supreme Court said on Friday while dismissing an appeal of a man convicted for rioting at a poll booth in Jharkhand. Referring to its earlier verdicts, a bench of Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justice M R Shah said freedom of voting is part of freedom of expression. "The essence of the electoral system should be to ensure freedom of voters to exercise their free choice. Therefore, any attempt of booth capturing or bogus voting should be dealt with iron hands because it ultimately affects rule of law and democracy," the bench said. The apex court said the secrecy of casting votes is necessary for strengthening the democracy. Observing that in elections to the Lok Sabha and state legislatures maintenance of secrecy is a must, the bench said in democracies where direct elections take place it is important to ensure that voter casts his vote without fear and being victimised if his vote is disclosed.



Rahul Gandhi should submit his phone for probe: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday dared Rahul Gandhi to submit his phone for investigation if he believes it was tapped, and asserted that no one's phone has been tapped illegally by the Modi government.

BJP spokesperson Rajyavardhan Rathore told reporters that the Congress is determined to stall Parliament for one reason or another after being rejected twice by people in Lok Sabha polls of 2014 and 2019.

Amid a row over the suspected Pegasus snooping, Gandhi had said earlier that all his phones were tapped.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah allegedly used the Pegasus spyware against India and its institutions, and "the only word for this is treason," Gandhi charged. Rathore said everybody has the right to what they want in a democracy.

Gandhi should submit his phone to probe agency, and investigation will take place as per the Indian Penal Code (IPC), he said.

3 cases registered for violation of HC order on animal sacrifice for Bakri Eid

At least three cases have been registered so far against people who violated the Bombay High Court's order by offering animal sacrifice at temporary slaughterhouses for Bakri Eid in Bhiwandi of Maharashtra's Thane district, an official said on Friday. The three offences have been registered under sections 188 (disobeying order issued by a public servant), 429 (mischievous by killing, maiming cattle) among other provisions of the IPC, Cruelty to Animals Act, Maharashtra Police Act and Disaster Management Rules, at Shanti Nagar and Narpoli police stations, the official said. The Bombay High Court had earlier set aside an order issued by the commissioner of the Bhiwandi Nizampur Municipal Corporation (BNMC) permitting the setting up of 38 temporary slaughterhouses for offering animal sacrifice for Bakri Eid. The court had stated that these temporary spaces were not licensed slaughterhouses and hence, could not be allowed to operate, as the ritual can take place only at designated, pre-licensed slaughterhouses, in accordance with law.



PEGASUS SNOOPING ROW

Oppn MPs protest in Parliament; demand SC-monitored probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several Opposition MPs, including Congress' Rahul Gandhi, on Friday protested against the government inside Parliament complex over the Pegasus snooping issue and demanded a Supreme Court-monitored judicial probe into the matter.

Besides Gandhi, a host of senior Congress MPs like Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, party's leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, KC Venugopal and Shashi Tharoor, DMK's Kanimozhi and Shiv Sena's Priyanka Chaturvedi, were present during the protest in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue inside Parliament complex.

Carrying a banner which read "#PegasusSnoopGate We demand Supreme Court Monitored Judicial Probe", the MPs raised slogans like "ye jasoosi bandh karo (stop this spying)".

Opposition parties have stalled proceedings in Parliament alleging the union government's involvement in the alleged snooping following reports that nearly 300 mobile phone numbers including of journalists, activists, opposition leaders from India and even of union ministers figured in a list of potential

snooping targets by Israel's NSO group which sells its Pegasus spyware only to "vetted" governments and government agencies.

The government and the ruling BJP have dismissed the Pegasus Project reports as concocted and evidence-less.

The media reports have been published by The Wire in collaboration with 16 other international publications including the Washington Post, The Guardian and Le Monde, as media partners to an investigation conducted by Paris-based media non-profit organisation Forbidden Stories and rights group Amnesty International.

CENTRAL VISTA AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT

‘Only 22 heritage trees relocated’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Only 22 heritage trees had to be relocated because of the Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project, the government informed Parliament on Friday.

The redevelopment project of the Central Vista -- the power corridor of the country -- includes the revamping of the three-km-long Rajpath from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate. It also envisages a new triangular Parliament building, a Common Central Secretariat and new residences for the prime minister and the vice president.

Responding to a question in Lok Sabha on the relocation of



trees to the Badarpur Eco-Park, Union Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav said according to information received from the Central Public Works Department, "only 22 number of trees have been relocated from the Central Vista Avenue to the eco-park, Badarpur, and there is no other proposal to relocate trees

from the Central Vista Avenue to Badarpur".

He said there is a proposal to plant 10 saplings for every tree uprooted or removed, and the compensatory plantation will be done at the Badarpur Eco-Park, Badarpur.

On another query on census of trees, Yadav said, "As per available information, no tree census has been conducted in the recent past."

"However, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) carries out sample plot based regular inventory of trees in forests and outside forests in the country under its National Forest Inventory Programme," he said.

Venkaiah flays tearing of copy of Minister's statement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Friday described the snatching and tearing of the copy of the IT Minister's statement in the House as an assault on the country's parliamentary democracy.

Expressing anguish over the frequent disruptions in the House after the laying of papers, Naidu made a passionate appeal to members to allow the smooth functioning of the House so that more meaningful discussions like the one on COVID-19 issue could be held.

He also posed several questions to the members to ponder over the developments that have taken place in the House.

Referring to the statement of IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on the Pegasus spyware issue, Naidu said he had made it clear in the business advisory committee meeting that members may seek clarifications which would have enabled them address their concerns in the matter. "But unfortunately, the proceedings of the House hit a new low with the papers being snatched from the Minister and torn into pieces and thrown in the air. Such actions are a clear assault on our parliamentary democracy," he said in the House.

Bhabha Atomic centre scientist develops superabsorbent cotton to tackle oil spills

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The city-based nuclear research institute BARC on Friday said it has developed a cotton-based superabsorbent which will help tackle oil spills on water.

The cotton is highly efficient super-hydrophobic or water disliking and also super-oleophilic or oil liking, and has been developed using radiation technology, an official statement said.

"There is no absorbent currently available that can remove floating oil from water surface and sediment oil (underwater) simultaneously," A K Mohanty,

the director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, said.

He added that the 'superabsorbent cotton' was developed by Sudhendu Ray Chowdhury, a scientist working BARC's Isotope and Radiation Application division. The innovation has already received a national award from the Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers in 2019.

One gram of the material can pick up a minimum of 1.5 kg of oil from water media which can be collected by simple squeezing or compression from the superabsorbent cotton, it said.

The cotton is biodegradable



and can be used up to 50-100 times, it added.

The statement said the material was developed by bio-inspired molecular-scale surface engineering through tuning of

surface roughness or topography and surface energy with the help of radiation assisted covalent integration.

The cotton can be deployed to remove toxic organic liquids such as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, chloroform, dichloromethane, tributyl phosphate (TBP), triphenyl phosphate (TPP) from industrial or municipal waste water, the statement said.

It can also be used for separation of various oily solvents in industry or laboratory setups and cleaning of solid surfaces in oil stations and spillage on road.

Covid-19 patient dies after hospital collects his sperm

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

A day after a Vadodra-based private hospital collected the sperm of a COVID-19 patient as per the Gujarat High Court's directions following a plea filed by his wife, the man died. The lawyer of the man's wife gave this information on Friday. The 32-year-old man was on life support at Sterling Hospital as he was suffering from multi-organ failure following coronavirus infection.

Porn films case: Court extends Raj Kundra's custody

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A court in Mumbai on Friday extended till July 27 the police custody of businessman Raj Kundra in a case related to alleged creation of pornographic films and publishing them through some apps. Kundra, husband of actor Shilpa Shetty, was arrested on the night of July 19 by the city police's crime branch after being booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act.

Rlys lost 2,903 employees due to Covid-19: Minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Railways has lost 2,903 employees due to COVID-19, minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed Parliament on Friday. In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, he said settlement of dues has been made with families of deceased Railway employees in 2,782 cases. "Indian Railways has a policy for giving appointment on compassionate ground to dependents of Railway servants who lose their lives in the course of duty or die in harness or are medically incapacitated.

Priests body demands representation in management of temples, writes to Modi

PNS ■ MADHURA

Representation of the Akhil Bhartiya Tirth Purohit Mahasabha in the management of temples and religious places should be made mandatory, the priests' body urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday.

"Instructions may be given for the representation of Akhil Bhartiya Tirth Purohit Mahasabha in the management of temples and religious places," Mahesh Pathak, National President of the body said in a letter to the prime minister.

The tirth purohits are facing harassment from the administration, Pathak said as he highlighted the alleged neglect of tirth purohits of Uttarakhand

Twelve smart cities with cultural, religious and ancient backgrounds are currently being developed in the country. Since the officials are not familiar with the traditions, culture and ancient back-

ground of the cities, the basic purpose of the renovation is defeated, Pathak said.

To overcome the problem, constitutional representation of the mahasabha would not only prove to be a boon but the local administration too would get a shot in the arm by getting expert opinions, he said.

It is expected that the prime minister would consider the suggestions given in the letter and give an order for the representation of the body in the matters related to tirth, temples, culture and religion to retain the basic character of religious places that

would inspire the next generation.

At present, the tirth purohits are facing harassment from the administration, Pathak said as he highlighted the alleged neglect of tirth purohits of Uttarakhand who are deprived of their ancestral rights.

However, the priests' body chief thanked Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami for taking prompt action on his letter and appointing a high power committee to decide the future of Devasthanam board.

The body of priests had on July 19 wrote to Dhami, demanding decommission of the board.

J&K police shoots down drone carrying IED material in Jammu, uncovers terror plot

PNS ■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir police averted a cross-border terror plot by shooting down a drone carrying improvised explosive device (IED) material weighing five kg in the border belt of Jammu district on Friday, officials said.

Following information about a drone flying over the border belt of Kanachak along the International Border (IB), a quick reaction team (QRT) of the police swung into action and shot it down using anti-drone strategy in the early hours, they added.

"At about 1 am, the drone



made a low flight to release the payload (IED), when it was shot down," Additional Director General of police (ADGP) Mukesh Singh told reporters here.

He said the drone was carrying a payload of five-kg IED material in a semi-assembled state and only wires had to be connected to it to trigger a blast.

According to a preliminary analysis, the flying object was a hexa m-copter with six wings and had a GPS device and a flight controller, the officer said. "A possible IED blast has been prevented," he added. There is a one-digit difference in the serial number of this drone and the drone shot down in Kathua last year, which points towards the fact that terrorist organisations across the border such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) have acquired flight controllers and are sending drones with arms and IEDs to the Indian side, the ADGP said.



Castle in the air

The Delhi High Court has told political leaders that they must honour the promises they make

It took 89 pages of a Delhi High Court judgment to tell politicians holding high positions in Governments that they cannot go on making promises to people and not honour these. The judgment, in a case relating to a promise made by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, sends the message that it is important to bridge the gap between law and morality and let the authorities, who are either elected to public positions or who hold positions of power, realise that they “are answerable to the people, especially once they undertake or agree to do or not to do a particular thing” and that the citizens would expect that the Government would implement the promises made. The judgment, by Justice Prathiba M Singh, opens with a telling comment that reflects the mood of the society: “The saying ‘Promises are meant to be broken’ is well known in the social context.” The judgment unambiguously says that promises made by the Government or its officials are “judicially enforceable” if these are broken. The judgment reminds the political leaders of things enshrined in the business of governance but forgotten in the melee of politics. One is that good governance requires the said trust to be maintained between those who govern and those who are governed. Two, the sustenance of this trust coupled with the legal certainty of an assurance given, cements the relationship between the citizen and the Government.



Three, citizens repose a lot of trust in a promise made by those who hold Government positions and an assurance given is like an undertaking that is compatible with public duty. One powerful conclusion is derived from the judgment: Once a representation is made by a high-ranking official, it comes within the scope of its authority. It will have a far-reaching impact on the Indian polity which is used to most politicians in power resorting to populism as forethought and governance as an afterthought. A cursory glance through a day's newspapers will throw up scores of promises made by elected representatives of the people that are meant to remain unfulfilled. The present case relates to some poor labourers petitioning the court that Kejriwal should be asked to fulfil his promise of paying the house rent on their behalf if they were unable to pay it because of COVID-19 exigencies. Kejriwal did make that promise in March 2020 but did not pursue the matter further. The court correctly observes, in the context of the case, “that ‘puffing’ which may be permissible in commercial advertising, ought not to be recognisable and permissible in governance”. The judgment is a serious caution to politicians for whom people are merely voters, not citizens. There are millions of political and electoral promises that remain ignored because there is no law to punish politicians, in power or seeking to be in power, who routinely evade accountability. The judgment should prod those in power to desist from playing with people's legitimate expectations.

PICTALK



Jab-seekers wait in a queue to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, at a district hospital in Noida

PTI

Glitz and guts

The Tokyo Olympics have started. Only blood, sweat and tears will lead to glory

The greatest sporting spectacle in the world has begun in Japan, even though under the scary shadow of the pernicious SARS-Cov-2 virus. Over the next two weeks, the best athletes from around the world will compete in 33 sports and 46 disciplines. As always in the 125-year modern history of the Olympics, the global audience will be wowed by the superhuman performances of the athletes, wondering how some



people — with the same number of limbs, developed more or less in the same proportion and living on the same planet as us — can achieve the seemingly unattainable or near-impossible. But, put in a nutshell, that's what the Games are about. However, never before in the history of the modern Olympics have the Games ever been organised in an odd-numbered year even though these have survived boycotts, natural calamities and man-made wars. Another first is that no spectators would be present inside stadia, thanks to the raging COVID-19 pandemic. Think about it, the world's biggest sporting stage, and not a single soul to cheer

the athletes, say, the fastest woman and man on Earth? In a way, it's poignant.

Focusing on India, a total of only 20 Indian athletes from seven sports (besides six officials) participated in the opening parade on Friday evening. India is being represented by more than 125 athletes in this instalment of the Olympics, with the overall contingent size being 128 members. The parade number was deliberately thinned owing to COVID-19 concerns and the deputy chef de mission had already made it clear that the athletes who have competitions lined up on Saturday — primarily, archery, hockey, shooting and badminton — would stay away from the opening ceremony festivities. From the men's hockey team, only captain Manpreet Singh participated in the event as he was India's flag-bearer along with pugilist MC Mary Kom when Team India proudly walked out into the stadium at number 21st as per the Japanese alphabetical order. The expectations of 130 crore Indians must be weighing heavy on the Indian contingent as it tries for the first time ever to take its medals tally into double digits. So far, our best showing was in the 2012 London Olympics, where Indian athletes managed to scoop up six medals, though none of them was gold. Hopefully, things will turn better this time around. Meanwhile, let the Games begin!

The human-animal conflict on the rise

There's an urgent need to stop designating animals as 'vermin' as it takes the protective shield of the wildlife Act away from animals



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

A practice that continues despite strong and reasoned opposition is that of proclaiming species of wild animals as “vermin” and thus putting them out of the ambit of the protective umbrella of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the principal instrument for protecting wild animals in India. The wild boar and nilgai have been proclaimed as vermin in Uttarakhand, the nilgai and boar in some districts of Bihar, and the rhesus macaque in parts of Himachal Pradesh.

The Act does not define the term “vermin” in terms of what it connotes. It just states in Section 62: “The Central Government may by notification declare any wild animal other than those specified in Schedule I and Part II of Schedule II to be vermin for any area and for such period as may be specified therein and so long as such notification is in force, such wild animal shall be deemed to have been included in Schedule V.” Animals included in Schedule V can be freely hunted.

The Central Government declares an animal as vermin following requests from State Governments and the ground which has been invariably cited is that it causes damage to crops and poses a danger to human life. There have no doubt been cases in which the Centre has withheld permission. The fundamental question, however, is whether there should at all be a provision for designating an animal as “vermin”.

There are several reasons for asking this. For one thing, an article by Anupam Chakravarty, Rajeshwari Ganesan and Rajit Sengupta, published under the heading ‘Enemies of the state?’ in the *DownToEarth* on June 15, 2016, cites animal rights groups as saying that the drive for killing them underway was based on popular perception rather than data. The country had no data both on the populations of animals proposed to be killed and the extent of crop damage they were supposed to be causing. The article stated that, in fact, Uttarakhand's proposal on the basis of which the Centre permitted the killing of wild boars, clearly said, “There is no scientific survey or census of the wild boar population that has



been carried out. However, since the crop damage caused by wild boar is increasing, the wild boar is estimated to be overpopulated.”

Further, experience shows that once killing is permitted, villagers or designated hunters have frequently not followed the methods prescribed. An example is the case in Kerala where a pregnant cow elephant died following several days of intense agony after she had bitten on a pineapple filled with explosives. Enquiries revealed that the pineapple was intended to kill a wild boar which, as a species, had been declared “vermin”. Also, such a barbaric way of killing was not permitted even in the case of wild boars.

State Governments have doubtless laid down restrictions on the methods and guidelines governing killings — such as only rifles and pistols to be used and no killing of injured animals running away to forests, and hunting only after receiving permission from the forest department concerned and the village *pradhan*. But who is to ensure compliance? The fact is, methods that are not permitted are often used. These include laying out live wires



THE LOSS OF THE VEGETATION THEY FEED ON FOLLOWING THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR HABITATS THROUGH ENCROACHMENT BY EXPANDING HUMAN SETTLEMENTS, ROADS AND INDUSTRIES, AS WELL AS DROUGHTS AND FOREST FIRES, HAS DRIVEN THEM TO AGRICULTURAL FIELDS FOR FOOD

for animals to be electrocuted, trapping them for murder and poisoning them. There is no guarantee that animals other than those declared as “vermin” would not come into contact with such wires or consume the poison.

The argument that State forest department personnel should watch out for the transgressors and deal harshly with them hardly holds water. It would take a very large number of people and vehicles for doing that. Given that most forest departments have to make do with numerically inadequate staff, deployment on such an errand would leave them with very few people to carry out essential functions like curbing poaching and preventing illegal felling of trees. The result may be a serious diminution of protected species like elephants (for tusks), rhinos (for their horns) and tigers for their body parts which are sought for the manufacture of so-called aphrodisiacs.

Apart from the fact that declaring an entire species of wildlife as vermin is contrary to the spirit and content of Article 51 A (g) of the Constitution which enjoins upon both the Government

and all citizens to show compassion to all living creatures, animals can hardly be blamed for damaging standing crops and attacking people. The loss of the vegetation they feed on following the destruction of their habitats through encroachment by expanding human settlements, roads and industries, as well as droughts and forest fires, has driven them to agricultural fields for food.

Humans do not realise that their own predatory exploitation of nature is increasing areas of human-animal conflict and making non-human species extinct at the rate of 3,000 a year. In this process, they are also destroying the environment and the conditions that have made human life possible. They need to realise that they are not the lords of the universe and must live in harmony with the world around them, including plants and animals. The Greek sophist Protagoras' famous aphorism “Man is the measure of all things” needs to be amended to read, “Humans are the preservers and protectors of all things.”

(The author is Consulting Editor, *The Pioneer*. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPPN MUST PLAY ITS CARDS WELL

Sir — This has reference to your editorial on ‘*Rallying forces*’ (July 23). “I will win Bengal with one leg and Delhi with two legs,” claimed Didi. NCP leader Sharad Pawar has ruled out to be the consensus presidential candidate with an eye on the Prime Minister's post in case of a fractured mandate in the 2024 general election. The coming together of the Opposition leaders is a mirage. Though they have different ideologies, every State's prominent Opposition leader has an eye on the Prime Minister's chair. It was a failed attempt for them earlier in 2019 too. They have to really unite, sinking their differences, to fight the BJP.

Furthermore, the coalition form of Government is a failure in our country. Corruption always compromises strict and honest adherence to the coalition dharma. To be fair to it, the BJP has no serious corruption charges against it in the past seven years of its rule. But the ruling party has failed to arrest the fuel price hike, spurt in the prices of essential commodities, handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Pegasus expose is embarrassing it now. The Opposition does not put in a strong effort to highlight the Government's shortcomings and misses. But it disrupts Parliament, thus wasting the taxpayers' money, which won't help these leaders. Moreover, even a united Opposition lacks a leader of mass appeal at the national level.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

LESSONS FROM BHAGEERATHI AMMA'S LIFE

Sir — At the age of 107 years and India's one of the first recipients of the prestigious Nari Shakti Puraskar by the Union Government for her exceptional contribution towards women's empowerment, Kerala's “oldest learner” Bhageerathi Amma is no more. Famous as Akshara Muthashi, or Literacy Grandmother, Bhageerathi Amma inspired many by passing the Level Four equivalency examinations at the age of 105, conducted by the State-run Kerala State Literacy Mission (KSLM) in 2019.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had

The Govt has only bombastic claims



More than 4,15,000 people died owing to COVID-19 (thereby leaving at least 16,00,000 family members in insoluble grief, many of them turned orphans or lost the sole bread-earner), hundreds succumbed to the “Long March” and millions found themselves jobless with many of them compelled to kill themselves. But how disgracefully do the who's who of the BJP and the Union Government boast about their “impeccable fight” against COVID and “glorious victory” over the pandemic! So when the party's top leadership asserts that the Pegasus expose is nothing but an “international design” to “defame” the country because of the “success” it had against COVID, it is extremely hard to resist bouts of laughter.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

also spoken about her during his 62nd episode of his *Mann Ki Baat* programme. In her examination at Kollam, she came out with flying colours with 205 out of a total of 275 marks and full marks in mathematics. As she went on till 107 years of age, she had recently began preparing for her Level Seven exam through digital classes, but one sorrow remains that Amma left without fulfilling the dream of passing the 10th standard equivalency exam. Bhageerathi Amma was one of the few learners in the world who taught others that age is no bar in education. Amma, you are still living in our hearts. May your soul rest in peace and may your movement find success!

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

PINARAYI MUST CLEAN UP HIS CABINET

Sir — It refers to the editorial, ‘*A stitch in time*’. When Kerala Chief Minister

Pinarayi Vijayan can take the tough decision of not inducting former Health Minister KK Shailja in his Government (while it is to be noted that she was one of the best performing Minister in the last five years) after creating history of sorts in the last 45 years by winning back-to-back elections and retaining power, then he should not have had any issue in ousting Forest Minister AK Saseendran. Ultimately, Pinarayi Vijayan is in the early days of his second term in succession and he should not allow the Opposition parties any issue on a platter that the latter could use to criticise him. Moreover, when he is not at the mercy of other parties for his Government's survival, then there is no reason for him to not act strictly and set a strong precedent.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I am an Opposition leader and I raise issues of public. This is an attack on that. This is an attack on the voice of the people.

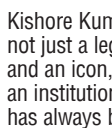


Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



I denounce that the (US) State Department is exercising offensive and humiliating pressures on European countries.

Cuba's Foreign Affairs Minister — Bruno Rodriguez



Kishore Kumar is not just a legend and an icon, he is an institution. He has always been a beacon of inspiration for me.

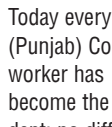


Actor-singer — Ayushmann Khurrana



During our playing days, both foreign and Indian coaches were given equal opportunities. The same can be followed now.

Former Indian football striker — IM Vijayan



Today every (Punjab) Congress worker has become the president; no difference between leader and workers.



Punjab Congress' new president — Navjot Singh Sidhu

FIRST COLUMN

RAGHURAJPUR
PATTACHITRA

Painting murals to welcome tourists
back to their village



RAKHI GHOSH

After a gap of nearly six months, Abakash Nayak, 54, a seasoned Pattachitra artist of Raghurajpur, the nationally acclaimed heritage village in Odisha's Puri district has picked up his brush, but this time to paint on the walls of his house. He is painting Lord Ganesh on one wall and Ardhanariswara (a traditional form of Lord Shiva and Parvati) on another. "I am happy like the rest of the artists of Raghurajpur village that we are being asked to paint murals to decorate the walls of our houses. Once the lockdown will ease and tourists will start returning to our village, they will witness the fresh look of the village," he said. The artists of this village have been sitting idle with no work at hand since March last year after the nationwide lockdown was announced. Recently, the State government declared financial assistance of ₹10,000 to each of the 150-odd families to decorate the walls of their houses with Patta paintings, bringing smiles to their faces. In Raghurajpur



crafts village, almost all family members are involved in Patta painting, sculpture work, and paper masks. Patta paintings are made on a piece of cloth known as Patta, or on a dried palm leaf which is first covered with a mixture of gum and chalk. Over the prepared surface, colourful and intricate pictures of gods and goddesses, and scenes from mythological scriptures are painted. The village saw no tourists after March 2020. In November, some tourists started visiting, but the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in February spread among the artists. Banamali Maharana, a Shilpiguru awardee, recalls the times when visitors could see all the family members doing artwork, sitting on the porch of their houses. "We are artists... How are we supposed to pick up spade leaving paint and brush?"

The male members mainly do the painting work, while women prepare traditional colours, the base of the paper mask, and other additional work. Some women have also started Patta paintings. Earlier, they would earn between ₹15,000 and ₹20,000 per month. With overseas buyers, they would earn a little more. Now incomes have drastically dropped. Initially, they managed to make ends meet through loans but money lenders have now stopped giving them money. A few "kind-hearted" art lovers help them out financially. In 2019, Cyclone Fani devastated this artisans' village. All the artwork was damaged. When they began to restart their art, the coronavirus struck. Some started selling vegetables, some opened "paan" shops, or started working as daily wage labourers. But the second wave put paid to these efforts too. Villagers are at present getting vaccinated to fight the virus. "Once unlock happens, the tourists will start coming to our village again. Our vaccination will send a message of reassurance to these tourists," said villager Jitendra who believes that the government should also arrange a vaccination drive for the artists. Raghurajpur is now preparing to welcome tourists with murals on walls. The Department of Language, Literature and Culture in association with Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi has come up with an innovative idea to encourage and support the artists. Each family will receive ₹10,000 as financial assistance while the best five will be awarded after being selected by a special committee. Meanwhile, the younger generation is exploring selling the artwork online. Many have also shifted to the virtual mode to teach Pattachitra-making online. They want the government to train them and arrange for a platform to sell their products to e-commerce companies.

(The writer is an independent journalist from Odisha. The views expressed are personal.)

Cairn looking for arbitration money?

Cairn Energy has submitted a detailed series of proposals to the Indian Government for settlement of the case



SHIVAJI SARKAR

On the very same day that Prime Minister Narendra Modi effected a massive reconstitution of his council of ministers, India got in the shock in the form of a French court freezing residential properties belonging to the Indian government in Paris following a retrospective tax dispute with British power and energy giant Cairn Energy.

The decision will impact 20 properties valued at Euro 20 million (₹177 crore), as part of a guarantee of the debt owed to Cairn that exited India a few years ago. The company with a market capitalisation of £755 million (about ₹7,800 crore) - has filed cases in several countries to pursue the unpaid international arbitration award of \$1.7 billion (₹12,750 crore). The company also filed cases in New York, seeking judicial confirmation that Air India can be classed as the alter ego of the Indian state and thereby jointly liable for the arbitral award.

The French court decision is unfortunate as it is feared it can start a new diplomatic conflict and it also impinges on the sovereignty of the country. It might create an image that India can be taken lightly by MNCs and other private players.

And that is what exactly happened. A case similar to Cairn is that of Devas Multimedia, floated by ex-ISRO executives. It had entered into a deal with ISRO's Antrix Corp. and the National Company Law Tribunal said the 2005 spectrum lease deal was fraudulent. Deutsche Telekom later picked up its stake.

Devas moved an arbitration tribunal saying that its multi-million-dollar investments lost value because of the annulment. In 2020 the tribunal awarded Devas \$1.2 billion. It is now seeking payment from India (now stayed by Supreme Court) in a New York court, asking Air India to pay the amount or forfeit its property, including planes, cargo handling, equipment, and artwork.

In both cases, the authorities in India bungled in pursuing the case. In the case of Cairn and Devas, they moved the courts in Germany and The Hague even as the Indian arguments on jurisdiction and criminality in two arbitrations under Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) under India-Mauritius and India-Germany agreements were lost.

Cairn and Devas have chosen flagship Air India planes and its prime property as a pressure tactic to force India into payment negotiations. Trying to seize planes or property to realise unpaid dues may be an extreme tactic but there are precedents. Aircraft are valuable, mobile, and relatively easy to sell. A few years ago, US hedge fund Elliott Capital Management seized an Argentine naval vessel to collect on bonds on which the country defaulted in 2001.

The Cairn matter is one of the irrational tax system. The company is in dis-



THE FRENCH COURT'S DECISION IS UNFORTUNATE AS IT IS FEARED IT CAN START A NEW DIPLOMATIC CONFLICT AND IT ALSO IMPINGES ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE COUNTRY. IT MIGHT CREATE AN IMAGE THAT INDIA CAN BE TAKEN LIGHTLY BY MNCs AND OTHER PRIVATE PLAYERS

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)



pute with the government over a 2014 retrospective tax demand. The income-tax department seized a 10 per cent stake in Indian operations that Cairn was trying to sell. After a long dispute, it went for international arbitration and Cairn won the \$ 1.7 billion award.

The issue of high taxation, as recently mentioned by President Ramnath Kovind, retrospective tax, and confusion on predating taxes is an unresolved quagmire. There is an OECD move to have a global minimum tax on corporates at 15 per cent or higher. The UPA government introduced the controversial retrospective tax in March 2012. The NDA II was expected to correct it after 2014 but the bureaucratic system continued with the supposed oddity.

The Supreme Court of India on January 20, 2012 ruled in favour of Vodafone overturning a 2010 decision of the Bombay High Court which ruled that Vodafone was liable to retrospectively pay \$2 billion income-tax because Indian capital gains taxes (CGT) applied on the share transfers between two non-resident entities.

But the smitten tax officials took a different route to circumvent the SC ruling with the introduction of the retrospective tax in March 2012, allowing the government to levy CGT — a move that was piloted by former finance minister Pranab Mukherjee in 2012.

In March 2018 the then finance minister, the late Arun Jaitley, said that the decision to tax Vodafone retrospectively by UPA was erroneous and also that the "present government will not be going down that path". On July 18,

2014, he had said that India would not levy any tax with a retrospective effect that creates an additional burden. But Jaitley made no move to repeal the 2011 law.

The statements of Jaitley and Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledging not to use retrospective taxation to overturn on Cairn Energy were used by a three-member tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague on December 20, 2020, to rule that the 2006 reorganisation of Cairn Energy's India business before listing on local bourses was not "unlawful tax avoidance" and ordered the tax authorities to drop the tax demand. This did not happen due to bureaucratic audacity.

Cairn has moved for implementation of the arbitration award in several jurisdictions on different continents, including the US, the UK, Canada, Singapore, Mauritius, France, and the Netherlands as the company intends to focus on high-value assets. Cairn has submitted detailed series of proposals to the Indian government for settlement of the case. The NDA government is now opposing its stand apparently under pressure of officials.

It rattles India. Would the country lose its flagship aircraft carrier and other prime assets? Technically it may be so but authorities say that they are yet to receive a notice or communication from the French court and the government would vigorously defend its case. It translates into more litigations as well as negotiations. Director of Cairn's corporate communication David Nisbet says that the company is keen on an agreed settlement with India and keep the

trust of its shareholders.

So, it has identified \$70-billion worth of Indian assets to retrieve the \$1.7 billion award. However, an international company knows that while it is important to contest governments, it also needs their goodwill to be in business.

The government is also in negotiations since January 2021, even before the present French order was flashed. It may give Cairn Energy one of the surrendered oilfields — Ratna R-series — in the Arabian Sea that was taken away from Essar-Premier Oil in 2016 instead of an arbitration payment. Cairn had spudded the biggest inland oil wells in Barmer, indicated in a survey by NGRI. It exited the country after it was given ₹10247 crore retro-tax demand. Apparently, the government wants that the biggest oil company with one of the lowest operational costs come back to India to shore up its image as also create a show window for the international investors.

It is also looking at the other option of giving it the Barmer oilfield. Vedanta, which now operates the field, has so far has not agreed to the government conditions for extending its contract. Under Vedanta, Rajasthan oilfields have seen a steady decline in output. Cairn has protested against the high \$9 cess per barrel on the oil produced.

The bureaucrats had the issues mired in a web. A political decision to annul retro-tax under Prime Minister Narendra Modi can ensure that a Cairn, Vodafone, Devas, or Vedanta is not repeated and bureaucrats do not muddy the waters.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

NARENDRA MODI AND AMIT SHAH USED THE PEGASUS SPYWARE AGAINST INDIA AND ITS INSTITUTIONS, AND THE ONLY WORD FOR IT IS TREASON.
— FORMER CONGRESS PRESIDENT
RAHUL GANDHI



THE CONGRESS IS DETERMINED TO STALL THE HOUSE FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER AFTER BEING REJECTED TWICE BY PEOPLE IN 2014 AND 2019.
— BJP SPOKESPERSON
RAJYAVARDHAN RATHORE

Rejuvenating agricultural marketing through cooperatives

Farmer aggregation is necessary to organise them, reduce transaction costs and enable members to share information & take collective decisions

Agricultural and allied activities continue to be the backbone of the Indian economy supporting the livelihood of 60 per cent of the population and contributing 1/6th of GDP. It used to account for more than half of GDP in 1951.

Half of the arable area continues to depend on the monsoon for irrigation. The proportion of gross irrigated area to total cropped area could increase from 31 per cent in 1984-85 to only 45 per cent, as per the agriculture census of 2010-11. The total operated area under agriculture decreased from 16 crore hectares in 2010-11 to 15.8 crore hectares in 2015-16.

With succession not based on primogeniture, population explosion has resulted in frag-



SUBHASH C. PANDEY

(The writer is former Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, GOI. The views expressed are personal.)

mentation of landholdings. Total operational holdings increased from 13.8 crore in 2010-11 to 14.6 crore in 2015-16. The average size of an operational holding declined to 1.08 hectares in 2015-16 from 1.15 hectares in 2010-11.

Small and marginal farmers suffer from the absence of economies of scale, access to information, and their inability to participate in the price discovery mechanism. Their participation is restricted by poor vertical and horizontal linkages, limited access to the market, and poor information flow along the value chain. The challenge now is to optimize benefits through effective and efficient means of aggregation models.

Farmer aggregation assumes significance due to



the shift of Indian agriculture towards high-value commodities as a result of the growing importance of the agri-food market caused by liberalization, globalization, improved purchasing power, demand for safe and quality food, and expansion of niche markets.

Integrating small farmers with agricultural markets is a big challenge. Many forms of farmer producer organizations have been experimented with like cooperatives, self-help

groups, Farmer Producer Companies, and commodity interest groups to aggregate farmers to help them benefit from economies of scale and to link them to the markets.

Contract farming and direct marketing are other institutional interventions that can be undertaken by organised groups of farmers. I have come across even Whatsapp groups being used to connect farmers and consumers, bypassing middlemen and getting better prices for farmers. A Farmer Producer Company (FPC) seems to be the most useful for the aggregation of small farmers. The FPCs offer more benefits compared to other formats of aggregation. Its members are able to leverage their collective strength and bargaining power to access financial and non-

financial inputs and services and appropriate technologies leading to a reduction in transaction costs. They can tap high-value markets and enter into partnerships with private entities on equitable terms.

The performance of cooperatives has been generally poor with the exception of cooperative sugar factories and dairy cooperatives in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Amalsad cooperative Society for sapota and farming cooperative Gambhira in Gujarat, MAHAGRAPHES in Maharashtra, HOPCOMS and CAMPCO in Karnataka, Mulkanoor women's cooperative groups in combined Andhra Pradesh, etc., have performed well. These successful models could not be emulated elsewhere in the

country. In Budget 2019-20, the government announced new central sector schemes to facilitate the formation and promotion of 10,000 new Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and handholding of each FPO for five years from its aggregation and formation.

Rainfall deficit, unseasonal rains, floods are natural and continuing risks. Agricultural production has increased but productivity is generally lower than international benchmarks. Water-use efficiency is particularly low. Some progressive farmers are de-risking themselves by diversifying their produce. However, many relatively well-off farmers continue with water-guzzling crops like rice and sugarcane in water-defi-

cient regions. How to incentivize farmers to move away from the over-production of cereals (particularly rice and wheat)? How to go about agricultural diversification to boost oilseeds, protein, and fruits/vegetable production? These are policy challenges.

Rejuvenation of our agricultural sector needs appropriate diversification and value-addition and loosening of outdated controls on agricultural markets. It is hoped that protests against the farm laws - misguided or mischievous or partly both - abate soon and a sensible farmer leadership works on connecting farmers with FPOs. Farmers' apprehensions about the entry of big corporates can be addressed if they become members of the FPOs.

DIGITAL & SUSTAINABLE TRADE FACILITATION

India witnessing significant improvement in UNESCAP score

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has seen a "significant improvement" in the UNESCAP's Global Survey on Digital & Sustainable Trade Facilitation with a 90.32 per cent score.

After evaluation of 143 economies, the Survey 2021 has highlighted India's significant improvement in the scores on all five key indicators -- transparency, formalities, institutional arrangement and cooperation, paperless trade and cross-border paperless trade.

India has scored 90.32 per cent in the global survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation. This is a remarkable jump from 78.49 per cent in 2019.

Under the transparency indicator, the country scored 100 per cent in 2021, up from 93.33 per cent in 2019. The score for 'paperless trade'



improved to 96.3 per cent in 2021, from 81.48 per cent in 2019. The score in the institutional arrangement and cooperation indicator improved to 88.89 per cent, from 66.67 per cent in 2019.

In a statement, the Finance Ministry said that India has seen "significant improvement"

in the score in United Nations' Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has been at forefront of path breaking reforms under the umbrella of 'Turan' Customs to usher in a Faceless, Paperless and Contactless Customs by way of

a series of reforms, it said.

"This has had a direct impact in terms of the improvement in the UNESCAP rankings on digital and sustainable trade facilitation," the ministry added.

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) serves as the

United Nations' regional hub promoting cooperation among countries to achieve inclusive and sustainable development.

Further, during the Covid19 pandemic, Customs formations have made all efforts to expedite Covid-related imports such as Oxygen related equipment, life-saving medicines, vaccines etc. A dedicated single window COVID-19 24*7 helpdesk for EXIM trade was created on the CBIC website to facilitate quick resolution of issue(s) faced by importers, the finance ministry said.

The Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation is conducted every two years by UNESCAP. The 2021 Survey includes an assessment of 58 trade facilitation measures covered by the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement. A higher score for a country also helps businesses in their investment decisions.

Textile Ministry likely to get Cabinet nod for MITRA scheme

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The textile ministry is in the process of obtaining approval of the Union Cabinet for the proposed Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA) scheme, under which seven such parks will be set up in the country over the next three years, Parliament was informed on Friday.

Minister of State for Textiles Darshana Jardosh said the scheme was announced in Union Budget 2021-22.

"Ministry of Textiles is in the process of obtaining approval of the Cabinet for the proposed scheme. Once, the proposed scheme is approved and modalities are finalized, the details of location, government funding structure etc. will be decided," she said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

In a separate reply, the minister said during the pandemic, CCI (Cotton Corporation of India) procured 20.72 lakh bales valuing Rs 5,615 crore from 4 lakh cotton farmers.

However, during the entire cotton season 2019-20, CCI



made a record procurement of 105.15 lakh bales (equivalent to around 546.80 lakh quintal kapas) and an amount of Rs 28,500 crore was disbursed to around 21.50 lakh cotton farmers directly into their bank accounts, she said.

"During current cotton season 2020-21 (October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021), CCI opened more than 450 procurement centres in all cotton

growing state. CCI continued its procurement of cotton under MSP operations since beginning of season to avoid the eventuality of distress sale by farmers and has procured 91.89 lakh bales so far (equivalent to around 482 lakh quintal kapas)," Jardosh said.

CCI disbursed an amount of Rs 26,700 crore to around 19 lakh cotton farmers, she added.



Sensex ends 139 pts higher

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex rose 139 points on Friday following gains in ICICI Bank, ITC and SBI amid a largely positive trend in global markets.

The 30-share BSE index ended 138.59 points or 0.26 per cent higher at 52,975.80, while the broader NSE Nifty advanced 32 points or 0.20 per cent to 15,856.05.

ICICI Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising over 3 per cent, followed by ITC, SBI, HCL Tech, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv and Tech Mahindra.

On the other hand, L&T, HUL, Reliance Industries and NTPC were among the laggards. Domestic market traded range-bound but extended

gains moderately on sustained rebound in financials, said Binod Modi, Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities.

"Improved prospects of credit growth rebound with visible pickup in economy and comfortable valuations bode well for financials. However, it was not a broad-based rally as midcap and smallcap indices lagged as profit booking was visible in many counters," he noted.

A sharp recovery in global markets along with buying on dips propelled domestic equities to see sharp rebound in the last two days, Modi added.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Hong Kong were in the red, while Seoul ended with gains.

Gold climbs Rs 256; silver jumps Rs 662

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold in the national capital on Friday rose Rs 256 to Rs 46,698 per 10 gram amid supportive global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had in the previous trade closed at Rs 46,442 per 10 grams.

Silver also jumped Rs 662 to Rs 66,111 per kg, from Rs 65,449 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was trading in the green at USD 1,808 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 25.33 per ounce.

HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, "Gold prices continued its upside on Friday after gaining above USD 1,800 on Thursday evening session with fall in US treasury yields."



Timely refund by online retailers must be a criterion: Nasscom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rationalising obligations in line with activities of relevant entities, and limiting fallback liability of online retailers to ensuring timely refund to consumers are among the recommendations suggested by Nasscom to the proposed e-commerce rules.

The IT industry body on Friday said its recommendations on the proposed e-commerce rules "focus on strengthening consumer protection, ensuring that the obligations are proportionate to the underlying risks and are unambiguous".

The draft e-commerce rules released by the government on June 21 propose to ban fraudulent flash sales and mis-selling of goods and services on e-commerce platforms. Appointments of chief compliance officer/grievance redressal officer are among the key amendments proposed under the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020.

Nasscom said some of the



proposed amendments "appear to be beyond the scope of the Consumer Protection Act 2019 (COPA19) and are instead a subject matter of either the Competition Act, 2002 or the Information Technology Act, 2000...in our submission, we undertook a clause-by-clause review of the proposed amendments and suggested the way forward".

The government on Monday extended till August 5 the deadline for public comments on pro-

posed amendments to the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020. Earlier, the last date for public comments on the draft e-commerce rules was July 6.

Some of the recommendations include removal of the word 'own' from the definition of an e-commerce entity.

"This is with the aim of excluding from the scope those technology entities that own the digital platform and license/provide it to e-commerce companies.

Rupee pares early losses, settles 6 paise higher at 74.40/USD

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Indian rupee pared early losses to close 6 paise higher at 74.40 against the US dollar on Friday following gains in the domestic equities.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic currency witnessed heavy volatility. The local unit opened weak at 74.55 a dollar and touched a low of 74.58 in morning trade.

The local unit recovered later and touched a high of 74.37 during the day. It finally closed at 74.40 against the American currency, registering a rise of 6 paise over its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 74.46.



Biocon Q1 net profit declines 35 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Biotechnology major Biocon has reported a 35.39 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit at Rs 108.4 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2021 mainly on account of its share of loss in associate startup entity Bicara Therapeutics Inc.

The company had posted

a net profit of Rs 167.8 crore for the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, Biocon said in a late night filing on Thursday.

Consolidated revenue of the company stood at Rs 1,807.8 crore for the quarter under consideration. It was Rs 1,712.1 crore for the same period a year ago, it added.

Persistent to hire 2,000 freshers in FY-2022

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Mid-sized IT player Persistent Systems is looking to hire 2,000 freshers in 2021-22 and will recruit lateral entries as per business growth, a senior official said on Friday.

The company also flagged concerns about pressures on attrition returning back in the information technology industry as the business sees an overall improvement due to greater focus on digitalization.

The Pune-based company had reported a 68 per cent growth in its June quarter net at Rs 151.2 crore late on Thursday.

"We will be hiring 2,000 freshers in FY22 and will hire laterals as per the business growth," the company's chief financial officer Sunil Sapre



told PTI over a call.

Its chief executive Sandeep Kalra said typically a fresher is trained for six months before being put on a project.

Sapre said in the last three quarters, it has hired 4,200 people, which included 3,500 lateral hires, and added that the

fresher to lateral hires ratio will not be the same any more.

Kalra said sequential pressures are being observed on the attrition front as it happens whenever the business environment is good in the sector. "There will be pressure on the talent side," he said.

Today is a big day for us, a new 'Day Zero': Zomato CEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As Zomato made a stellar debut on Dalal Street, its Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said this was a big day. Shares of the firm listed at nearly 53 per cent premium in its debut trade against its issue price of Rs 76. With this rally, its market valuation went past the Rs 1-lakh-crore mark on BSE.

Earlier in the day, he also said in a blog post, "Today is a big day for us. A new Day Zero. But we couldn't have gotten here without the incredible efforts of India's entire internet ecosystem."

In the blog titled, "Letter from Deepi", he said he was a firm believer in India, and where the country will be in the future, adding that "India is a tough market to operate in, but



if you are building to succeed in India, you are already an exception."

He believes Zomato and Swiggy are two of the best food delivery apps in the world today. "We have a long way to

go before we can call ourselves world class by our customers' standards, but we are determined to get there."

Zomato's over 10-year journey has not always been smooth. It has lived through

many ups and downs - something not every company has the privilege of living long enough to do, he added.

"...We have found ourselves managing times of crisis on different occasions in much the

same way - impatiently staying focused on the long term, executing relentlessly, and committing ourselves to doing the very best we can do today," Goyal said.

Even in its hardest times, the company has had half of its tech/engineering team work on long-term initiatives, he added.

"We are going to relentlessly focus on 10 years out and beyond, and are not going to alter our course for short term profits at the cost of long term success of the company," Goyal said.

The tremendous response to the company's IPO, "gives us the confidence that the world is full of investors who appreciate the magnitude of investments we are making, and take a long term view of our business," he added.

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and Zomato is no exception, he said, noting that hundreds of people have selflessly played a part in making Zomato what it is today.

He also thanked the investors who have stood by the company through thick and thin.

"Jo's prolific growth has set all of us up for unprecedented scale. Flipkart, Amazon, Ola, Uber, Paytm - have also over the years, collectively laid the railroads that are enabling companies like ours to build the India of the future," Goyal said.

Zomato stands proudly and humbly on the shoulders of giants, and thanks everyone for giving it, and so many other startups, the opportunity to look ahead into the future, he added.

MONEY MATTERS

Maruti Nexa completes 6 yrs with cumulative sales of 14 lakh units

Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) on Friday said its premium sales network Nexa has crossed 14 lakh sales milestone in six years of coming into existence. With the first showroom in 2015, Nexa has touched the imagination of young and aspirational customers and the



testimony to this is that nearly half of the customers are under 35 years of age, the auto major said. Nexa has attracted first time buyers, which makes up to nearly 70 per cent of its total sales, it added. MSI currently has over 380 Nexa outlets spread across about 234 cities in the country. "Driven by innovation, Nexa marks the first initiative by an automobile company to go beyond selling cars and create new formats of car buying experiences," MSI Senior Executive Director (Marketing and Sales) Shashank Srivastava said in a statement. With over 380 showrooms across the country, the premium sales network has helped the company attract a new set of customers who were earlier not considering a Maruti Suzuki vehicle, he added.

Govt approves 792 private food processing projects

As many as 792 projects out of 818 have been approved for setting up food processing industries by the private sector, with approved grants-in-aid of Rs 5,792 crore so far, the government informed Parliament on Friday.



"Government has been consistently encouraging and incentivising increased private sector investment for the overall development of the food processing sector of the country to promote value addition in agricultural and allied sectors and reduce wastage," Minister of the State for Food Processing Industries Prahlaad Singh Patel said. The minister in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha also said the government has recently taken three major initiatives in order to further increase private sector participation in the sector. Firstly, the government has approved a Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the food processing sector with an outlay of Rs 10,900 crore to support the creation of global food manufacturing champions and support Indian brands of food products in international markets.

Exports rise 45 pc during July 1-21: Comm Min data

The country's exports grew 45.13 per cent to USD 22.48 billion during July 1-21 on account of healthy growth in sectors such as gems and jewellery, petroleum and engineering, according to the provisional commerce ministry data. Imports also rose 64.82 per cent to USD 31.77 billion in the said period, leaving a trade deficit of USD 9.29 billion. Exports of gems and jewellery, petroleum and engineering during July 1-21 stood at USD 424.5 million, USD 923.33 million and USD 551.4 million, respectively, the data showed. Imports of petroleum, crude and products rose by about 77.5 per cent to USD 1.16 billion. During the period, exports to the US, UAE and Brazil increased by 51 per cent to USD 493.24 million; 127 per cent to USD 373.36 million; and 212 per cent to USD 144.5 million, respectively.



Sebi consent not mandatory for compounding of offences

The Supreme Court Friday held that the consent of the market regulator Sebi is not mandatory for the compounding of offences under section 24A of the Sebi Act but taking views of the expert body is necessary. A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and M R Shah said though Sebi is not conferred with any authority to veto a decision for proceeding in trial offences, it is a regulatory and prosecuting agency and the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) and the courts must obtain its views since it is an expert body. The apex court said eliciting views of Sebi is necessary in the interest of the stability of the securities market and protection of investors. "Before taking any decision to compound an offence punishable under section 24A of the Act or the court must obtain views of Sebi for furnishing guidance to its decision. These views unless manifestly mala fide must be accorded high degree of deference. The court must be wary of substituting its own wisdom on the gravity of the offence or the impact on the markets while discarding the expert opinion," the bench said.



SHIKHA DUGGAL

An individual with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social, cultural, and environmental challenges, Nayonika Roy hailing from Ranchi, has worked for women's rights and safety under the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Delhi and MV Foundation, Hyderabad. Ambitious and persistent, she's tackling major issues and offering new ideas for systems-level change in our city through 'Soch for Change'.

She who moved to the city of Hyderabad to pursue her higher studies in the year 2016, barely knew would impact the lives of so many people across the city. Simultaneously, the instant lure that the city was offering her made her decide to stay here for a lifetime thereafter. "I love Hyderabad, I have always hated huge cities because of their lack of culture. But Hyderabad is that one city that makes me feel like a small-town girl while also giving me the comfort of a metropolitan city. Moving to a new home here was very exciting! Many who have never lived in a big city have had the desire to eventually succumb to the lure of city life, and find themselves living in a much more concentrated area than they experience in the suburbs. I, for one, feel the big city life is not for everyone, nonetheless, Hyderabad made me feel like one of its own," says the outspoken young woman.

Even though city living has its inconveniences, it makes up for these inconveniences with all that it has to offer. Hyderabad having a major cultural center that has vibrant art and music scenes, a wider variety of food, several places of interest such as museums, events like concerts, and a diverse population with a shared experience of living — all this made the changemaker stay back! “My ideas about the



city were mostly positive. When I was moving here, I was told about its famous Biryani, the rich street food that actually made my inner foodie scream its lungs out, and of course the pearl stores. My heart goes with the food, and in no way do I feel that the city could have ever offered me more. Biryani is not the only delicacy that this ancient city has to offer. The land of Nizams doesn't let its food lovers down, it stands out for its unique creations and beloved contributions to the culinary world," she adds.

Nayonika encountered many new faces every day. Meeting and talking to new people who have had very different life experiences than hers, gave her a refreshing and new perspective. Going back to her remembrance of where she's from, she tells, "I was born and brought up in Ranchi. I have spent eighteen years of my life there. For the last eight years, I have lived in Cuttack, Hyderabad, and Delhi, but Hyderabad is my most favourite city to live in. I consider this to be my home! It is a city that makes me feel

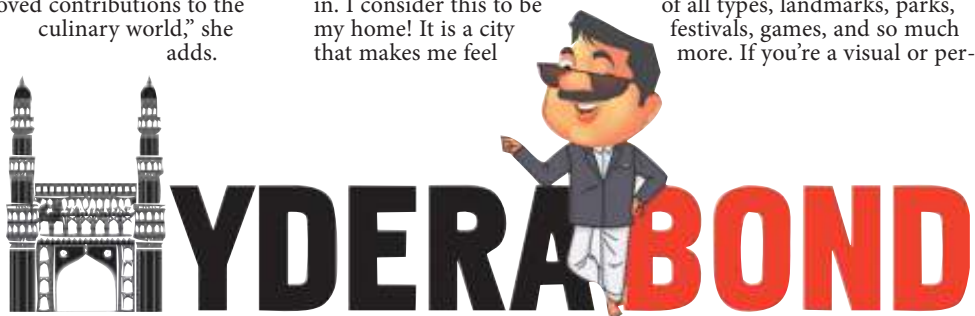
safe, I got my first job in this city and it is the place where I decided to stay independent and make a living. Every city is made by the people who live there. Hyderabad is different because of this exact reason. People are friendly here and they go beyond their capacity to help each other out." There is always something to do in this city which keeps people of all different interests from getting bored. A lively nightlife, different types of food to try, shows of all types, landmarks, parks, festivals, games, and so much more. If you're a visual or per-

formance artist or a musician, opportunities are aplenty!

Whenever she thinks about Hyderabad, Shilpamaram is what fills her thoughts. She recalls, "I was in my tenth grade when I first visited the city. I was on a government scholarship for dance, and we had our seven days' workshop at Shilpamaram. This place remains very close to my heart. In the last couple of years, I have performed at Shilpamaram several times and the stage and the place hold too many memories. In 2018, when I started working with Voice 4 Girls at Hyderabad, I applied for the Day of Girl Challenge conducted by the British Deputy High Commission. That year I was chosen as the winner from Telangana! It definitely would not have happened if I was not in Hyderabad!"

Nayonika feels the city is more welcoming than many people believe it to be, and if you go to the same places and do the same activities, you will quickly meet new people who have similar interests and came to live in the city for the same reasons as you. “One of the most important people that I met here in Hyderabad is the Anusha Bharadwaj, Executive Director of the Soch for Change NGO, who has not just been a strong mentor to me but has also always lend me a friendly ear through all the times I was feeling low and was away from home. At times, working in the social sector can turn out to be immensely difficult, as it’s not just about the work that you do but also about how your work impacts other people in the community.”

She who routinely works in such a big city knows that commuting is a hassle. Because it has more people and neighbourhoods, traffic is likely to occur which makes navigating through the city more difficult for her. But ultimately, she considers this city to be a pot full of emotions that have always led her on to a beautiful path!



The sound of music



another stringed instrument, the guitar.

Recently, they made headlines for their work on Amit Masurkar's *Sherni*, headlined by Vidya Balan, which won accolades not just for its hard-hitting performances and gripping narrative but also for its haunting background score. Just a fortnight after the release of the film, the pair were in the news for their work on the score for *Hungama Hai Kyon Barpa* from Ray, an anthology based on the works of Satyajit Ray. Going through their itinerary, we knew we had to talk to them before they get any bigger than they already are.

Not much is known about how their collaboration came to be and when we ask them Benedict shares that ever since they were introduced to each other by another musician, Salome Rebello, they got along really well. "It wasn't one definite moment that initiated our alliance. We both floated the idea

in different contexts... about trying different things we were interested in that had come up in conversation. The first instance I remember was Benedict coming in to join the rehearsal for a play we were developing. We workshopped viola and acting improv together and it went incredibly well. This led to more conversations and here we are today," adds Naren, with a smile.

Indeed, the conversations led to an official collaboration in 2010 for Anurag Kashyap's *That Girl In Yellow Boots*, but how did that happen?

Naren reveals, "I had worked on the music for a theatre piece Anurag had produced, *The Skeleton Woman* by Kalki Koechlin and Prashant Prakash. He heard the music and asked me to score the film. As soon as he did, I asked Benedict if he'd like to work on it with me."

While most of us have adapted (more or less) to the WFH culture over the past year in light of the pandemic, the two have been

working remotely all along. And they have been doing it splendidly.

Known for stitching their genre-bending music according to the director's vision, Benedict says that it is just how they work. "We embark on a voyage of discovering new sounds, playing with different elements, with each project. However, it has to be said that we enter the realms of the unknown with our working styles in place — which we've spent time refining — and with those foundations, we can then work individually with each director to realise his/her vision of what the music should be like," he reveals. Naren goes on to add, "With each project, our process changes slightly with the director we work with. However, our journey always starts by gaining clarity on what role music needs to play in the film and what we instinctively feel usually works. It is always about finding musical solutions to the right questions. There is trial and error but it's directed in a specific direction with the hope of



finding what we're looking for."

When we ask them if they have any favourites that they regard as the cream of the lot from their growing repertoire of composition, Benedict has a very fitting response, "Impossible to pick one, as you take a great deal from each project. In any project, there are always elements you're thrilled with and things you'd like to change, but that's the nature of the work. Plus, importantly, every project is so different. If I listen to *Paatal Lok* one day, Ray the next, and Tryst the day after, I'll be entering drastically different worlds, all of which serve a certain purpose."

As we wrap up our conversation, Naren shares that both of them spend time making their own music. "While Benedict produces a lot of singles and albums, we are currently working on a body of work as a duo for release outside of the scoring arena," he tells us.

We don't press for more information since there is no doubt they have a nice surprise in store for us.



On the heels of the release of her latest single *Aise Na They*, artist and producer Sona Mohapatra made her debut appearance on the Times Square Billboard in New York!

The track *Aise Na They* has been composed by Ram Sampath with lyrics by Amitabh Bhattacharya and distributed by Paris-based music distribution and marketing service Believe. The song's narrative revolves around a relationship that has lost its fizz, but a sense of optimism is infused in the track through the lovely sound of the hills with pop-rock blended with ethereal flutes and tingling mandolins.

As part of this feat, she has been handpicked for the Spotify Equal campaign and will lead the Indian leg of the global campaign for the entire month of July. Her single will feature all this month on the Equal playlist as she joins other global artists such as Meryl (France), Bowkylion (Thailand), Nadin Amizah (Indonesia), and Anikv (Russia) from the roster of Paris-based leading independent digital music distribution and artist services company, Believe.

Artist and producer Sona Mohapatra said, "To be woken up in the middle of the night to see photographs of my face on a billboard covering a skyscraper in one of my favourite cities New York was a surreal feeling. To be one of the first independent musicians to be given this place is a pop-culture milestone because it paves the way for artistic expression of various hues and colours free from cookie-cutter formulas in musical mainstream success. I have been consis-

tently releasing original music for many years, have fought many battles for IP and residuals for artists and it has been exhilarating, exhausting too but now, with my indie label Omgrown Music partnering with a global name like Believe, I truly feel optimistic about the future of the music scene in India and more so for other independent voices like mine. To celebrate this achievement, I am dropping a single *Ek Din – Manhattan Memories*, a *dilnot*, heartbreak love song which would be a perfect companion for a long highway drive or a dance party! We are slowly coming out of a very tough time together as a society but this phase in India has been the very best for independent music releases without the big bollywood force of Bollywood taking away all the media and audience attention with its big promotional budgets! This billboard is a validation of that constant hustle of never giving up on the power of music and self-belief. My allies have stood by me through thick and thin and I am grateful for their belief.”

Launched globally earlier this year to celebrate female talent across the world, the Spotify Equal campaign aims to put the spotlight on women in music across the world. The initiative features specially curated playlists across 50 countries while the Spotify Equal global playlist features music from selected artists from across the world.

Every month, the streaming platform announces new artists for the campaign, all of whom are featured in this playlist, and on the cover of their respective, local playlists.



Akhanda climax set in a temple in Tamil Nadu



Akhanda, Balakrishna, and Boyapati Srinu's crazy combo's third movie is on shooting mode. The latest schedule of the film is said to be shot at a temple in Tamilnadu. Currently, the actor is shooting for the climax fight at the temple itself. Stunt master Shiva has designed the climax fight and the unit opined that it would be a highlight episode for the film like his previous stunts in *Simha* and *Legend*, which were massive hits. Fans of Balakrishna

Nandamuri are eagerly waiting for *Akhanda*. The teasers released so far have received tremendous responses from fans. Expecting a hat-trick of hits, Boyapati and Balakrishna are working hard for this movie. Balakrishna himself didn't have a big hit after *Legend*, so fans are can't wait for *Akhanda* to break that.

Srikanth, Pragya Jaiswal, and Poorna will be seen playing key roles in the film. S.Thaman has composed music for the film that is being bankrolled by Miriyala Ravindar Reddy of *Jaya Janaki Nayaka* fame.



RADHE SHYAM INCHING TOWARDS COMPLETION

Actress Pooja Hegde, who will soon be seen in the multilingual love story *Radhe Shyam*, alongside actor Prabhas, says that the film has almost finished shooting. The film, which is directed by Radha Krishna Kumar has treated fans with only a teaser so far. Sharing details on *Radhe Shyam*, the actress said: "We are almost towards the end. We have around a week or 10 days' worth of shoot left, and then we will wrap. Once shutters open and things are good to go, the producers will decide when they want to release it."

This is the first time Pooja has been paired opposite Prabhas. While the actress is tight-lipped about her role, she is excited to be part of a love story.

"I don't know if I can talk about the role right now. Maybe closer to the release, I can. The film is a very mature love story, I would say. It's quite interesting to see Prabhas do a romantic film after so many films filled with action. I myself don't think I have done a proper love story in a long time. So, it's exciting for me," she says.

Pooja has been doing her bit for society through her charity table organisation All About Love, for almost a



year now. Talking about launching the organisation, Pooja says: "It has been in the making for a long time. I have always been giving back on a personal front, in whatever way I could. I wanted to create a culture, where you donate a percentage of income and give back to society with love. I have set aside a certain percentage for charity. It's something I want to push people to do in whatever they can. I think any act done out of love can really change someone's life and that is what the name All About Love, is about."

Pooja has projects in Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil film industries. In Bollywood, she will be seen alongside Salman Khan in *Kabhi Eid Kabhi Diwali* and Ranveer Singh's *Cirkus*.

In Telugu, she will be seen in *Radhe Shyam*, and will be seen sharing screen space with Vijay in the much-awaited Tamil film *Beast*.



Tuck Jagadish likely to release on August 13

Natural star Nani-starrer *Tuck Jagadish*, whose release had been postponed owing to the Covid induced lockdown, is said to hit the big screens on August 13. Though there is no official announcement yet, the buzz is that *Amazon Prime Video* has locked the deal for Rs 40 crores. The discussion about whether the movie can be released in theatres and OTT at the same time is currently on. Distributors are in two minds, given pulling the crowds to theatres to crowds amid the pandemic not being a small thing. But in the

view of the producers, releasing both will be a profitable one. Within a few days, we are told, an official statement will be made by the producers.

Along with Nani, Jagapathi Babu, Ritu Varma, and Aishwarya Rajesh constitute the lead cast in the film. S.Thaman has given the music for the film.

After super hit movies like *Ninnu Kori*, and *Majili*, director Shiva Nirvana is eagerly waiting for his third film *Tuck Jagadish* to hit screens.



Sharath Marar to produce Naga Chaithanya's OTT debut



Sharath Marar, entrepreneur and producer in the Telugu film industry, who has produced movies like *Sardar Gabbar Singh*, *Badri*, and many others, and also the owner of South Parade, which mostly dealt with commercials on the small screen, is now all set to



work with Akkineni Naga Chaitanya, according to the latest buzz. We have already reported that Naga Chaitanya is soon going to make his digital debut. Sources say that Naga Chaitanya's OTT project will be an original film and it will be bankrolled by Sharath Marar. Reports have been

Allu Arjun surprises Ghani team

Stylish Star Allu Arjun has surprised the team of *Ghani* starring Varun Tej. In the film directed by Korrapati Kiran, Varun Tej will be seen as a boxer, whose shoot has already begun.

On Friday, the Icon star made a surprise visit to the sets of *Ghani* to cheer his cousin, actor Varun Tej and his elder brother Allu Bobby, who is one of the producers for the film.

Allu Arjun took interest in inquiring about the progress of the film. Director Korrapati Kiran has shown him a few videos and Bunny was extremely impressed by them. Earlier, the motion picture was released, and fans felt it was like a 'feast.'

Jagapathi Babu, Upendra, Suniel Shetty, and Naveen Chandra are playing key roles in the film. Saiee Manjrekar is playing the female lead role opposite Varun Tej. She has played lead roles in Salman's *Dabaang 3* and Adivi Sesh's *Major*. She is better known as the daughter of Bollywood director and actor Mahesh Manjrekar.



Rangamarthanda, a test for Krishna Vamsi

Creative director Krishna Vamsi, we hear, is coming up with an emotional and family drama with his next project. *Rangamarthanda* is going to resume shooting in a few days. The makers are planning to release the film in August itself. We're told that *Amazon Prime Video* is already in talks with the producer. This movie is a remake of *Nata Samrat*, a Marathi movie, that had Nana Patekar play the lead role. The film has got received huge applause in Marathi. But the story is an emotional drama, just like K. Viswanath's movie, and was focused on a stage artist's life. Nana Patekar is an artist, who plays

Shakespeare's dramas in the film. The question now is, how will Krishna Vamsi deal with this subject, for he is known to make action entertainers. Will he be able to change his orientation to Viswanath's mode? A confident film unit say that though it is a family drama, it will have Vamsi's touch.

Prakash Raj is reprising Nana Patekar's role, while Ramya Krishna plays his wife. Comedian Brahmanandam, Dr Rajasekhara's daughter Sivamika, Anasuya, Rahul Sipligunj, and others will be seen essaying key roles in the film. Moreover, Maestro Ilayaraja gave music to this film! As we know, the songs of Krishna Vamsi's films were musical hits despite the fate of those movies. After *Chandamama* (2007), Krishna Vamsi hasn't been able to get his perfect hit, only *Govindudu Andarivadele* was able to make some mark after that. So Rangamarthanda will be a test for Krishna Vamsi for sure!

The Tokyo Olympics were declared open in an eerily empty stadium on Friday after defying a year's pandemic delay and lingering coronavirus threats that will make them perhaps the most unusual Games in history.

Japan's Emperor Naruhito made the announcement against the backdrop of thousands of vacant seats at Tokyo's 68,000-capacity Olympic Stadium, after Covid-19 forced organisers to ban spectators at all but a handful of venues.

"I declare open the Games of Tokyo," said the monarch, wearing a white surgical mask.

The stripped-down ceremony, simplified to reduce coronavirus risks, unfolded in front of fewer than 1,000 VIPs and several thousand athletes.

A reduced parade of about 5,700 athletes, far lower than the usual numbers, filed into the stadium, not all of them socially distanced but all wearing masks.

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach acknowledged the Games would be "very different from what all of us had imagined."

But "today is a moment of hope," he said in an address.

The 16-day Games, with 339 Gold medals across 33 sports, have a surreal air after the pandemic compelled organisers to make this the first Games with virtually no spectators.



INDIA'S SCHEDULE ON JULY 24 (ALL TIMES IST)

TIME	EVENTS	ATHLETES
05:00 AM IST	Shooting: 10m Air Rifle Women's Qualification	Apurvi Chandel & Elavenil Valarivan
06:00 AM IST	Archery: Mixed Team 1/8 Eliminations	Deepika Kumari & Pravin Jadhav
06:30 AM IST	Hockey: Men's Pool A	New Zealand vs India
07:15 AM IST	Shooting: 10m Air Rifle Women's Final	
07:30 AM IST	Rowing: Lightweight Men's Double Sculls Heat	Arjun Jat Lal & Arvind Singh
	Judo: Women 48 kg Elimination Round of 32	Shushila Devi Likhambam
08:30 AM IST	Table Tennis: Mixed Doubles Round of 16	Sharath Kamal & Manika Batra
08:50 AM IST	Badminton: Men's Doubles Group Stage	Satwiksairaj & Chirag Shetty
09:00 AM IST	Tennis: Men's Singles First Round	Sumit Nagal
09:30 AM IST	Badminton: Men's Singles Group Stage	B Sai Praneeth
	Shooting: 10m Air Pistol Men's Qualification	Abhishek Verma & Saurabh Chaudhary
10:20 AM IST	Weightlifting: Women's 49kg Final	Saikhom Mirabai Chanu
12:00 PM IST	Shooting: 10m Air Pistol Men's Final	
12:15 PM IST	Table Tennis: Women's Singles Round 1	Manika Batra
01:00 PM IST	Table Tennis: Women's Singles Round 1	Sutirtha Mukherjee
03:54 PM IST	Boxing: Men's 69kg - Round of 32	Vikas Krishan
05:15 PM IST	Hockey: Women's Pool A	Netherlands vs India
LIVE ON SONY TEN & SIX NETWORK		



After struggles, sacrifices & success, Indian shooters eye Olympic glory

Tokyo: Entering the Tokyo Olympics on the back of an unprecedented run that began sometime after the inexplicable meltdown in the Rio de Janeiro Games, Indian shooters bagging a medal or two, or even three to four, is a tangible reality.

All of the 15 shooters are capable of winning medals, but few are seen as sure shot to secure podium finishes in the events that start on Saturday.

One among them is the highly-skilled Saurabh Chaudhary, who will have a few Olympic and world champions standing in his way to glory at sport's biggest showpiece.

Alongside Abhishek Verma, Chaudhary will be part of the first competition day action in the men's 10m air pistol event.

But before that, the fate of Apurvi Chandel and Elavenil Valarivan — in the women's 10m air rifle event — will be decided. A good outing for either of them means India will have won their first medal in these Games.

Both Chandel and Elavenil will enter the competition with plenty to look forward to, despite the occasional blips here and there. The 21-year-old Elavenil, world number 1 and considered one of the country's finest rifle shooters after some fine performances since breaking into the senior team, will certainly fancy her chances.

On the second competition day, India will have the sensational Manu Baker and the hard-working Yashaswini Singh Deswal representing the country in the women's 10m air pis-



senior team in 2019. If these eight participants fire on the first two days, India can expect a handful of medals at the Games, which will make up for returning empty-handed from the 2016 Rio Games. In the middle and towards the end of the shooting events too, India have in its ranks strong contenders in the form of Rahi Sarnobat, Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, Anjum Moudgil, Tejaswini Sawant and the seasoned Sanjeev Rajput, besides the two skeet shooters in Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Angad Vir Singh Bajwa.

The likes of Sarnobat, who has won a Silver and Gold in the ISSF World Cups in New Delhi and Oisjek, Croatia respectively, world number one in 10m air rifle Divyansh Singh Panwar and Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar are all gunning for medals. PTI

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Mirabai favourite to open India's account

Tokyo: Former world champion Mirabai Chanu will be in focus for her high medal-winning chances at the Tokyo Olympics as the Indian hopes to exorcise the ghosts of a disappointing Rio Games and write a new chapter in the country's weightlifting history.

Competing in the 49kg category, Chanu is being considered a sure shot medal prospect for India as her personal best of 205kg is only second to China's Hou Zhihui's effort of 213kg in the eight-woman field.

The hype is similar to the one five years ago in Rio, where Chanu could manage only one lift from her six attempts and thus could not get an overall total in

women's 48kg event.

The diminutive Manipuri will desperately hope for a different script this time round, one that involves a podium.

While Chanu will have one eye on her competitors' barbells, the 26-year-old's main battle will be with herself. In recent times, her performance in the snatch section has often proved to be her downfall in important competitions.

Chanu has managed to match Zhihui, the favourite to win the Gold, in the clean and jerk category, but her personal best of 88kg in snatch pales in comparison to the Chinese lifter's world record effort of 96kg.

Even USA's Delacruz Jourdan Elizabeth has a better personal best — 89kg — than the Indian, while Aisah Windy Cantika of Indonesia had managed to pip Chanu to win a Bronze in the snatch section at the Asian championship in April.

It is expected that Chanu will try to better her world record lift of 119kg in the clean and jerk category, should the competition demand it.

Interestingly, Chanu has set the highest entry weight of 210kg, which is five kilograms more than her personal best, followed by Zhihui (205kg), who had lifted 213kg (96g+117kg) at the Asian championship. PTI

Indian archers brace up for Korean challenge

Tokyo: World No 1 Deepika Kumari was inconsistent but the male archers' performance was simply underwhelming in the Olympics' ranking rounds, prompting a rejig of India's mixed pair combination on a topsy-turvy day at the Yumenoshima Park on Friday.

The Koreans, who stayed away from all International competitions in the build-up to the Olympics since 2019, reigned supreme, including a top-three finish in the women's section where young sensation An San shattered a 25-year-old Olympic record.

The Indian men's team of Atanu Das, Pravin Jadhav and Tarundeep Rai, however, did not post particularly impressive scores and just about managed to sneak into top 10 in the team rankings.

Deepika slipped from fourth at the halfway mark to finish ninth with 663 points which was way below her best International ranking score of 686. "I feel my performance was good as well as bad...It was in between I would say," Deepika said.

Deepika's biggest challenge is likely to be in the last-eight where she might run into San who is making her Olympic debut. "I want to show my best performance here and I will show that in my next rounds," Deepika vowed to come back strong.

In fact, there will be Korea in waiting for the Indians in the quarterfinals of both men's team and mixed pair competition.



The mixed team, is the country's best bet to win an elusive Olympic medal in archery.

India had identical rankings of ninth in both men's team and mixed pair competitions.

Deepika will not partner her husband Das after the top Indian male archer slipped behind Olympic debutant Jadhav.

Jadhav was the best among the Indian trio with 656 points for a 31st place finish, three points ahead of Das, while Rai, in his third Olympics appearance, took the 37th spot among 64 archers.

India had the option to send entries of Das and Deepika, who recently won a Gold medal together at the Paris World Cup, but the federation went ahead with Jadhav based on his current form.

"Simply put, we picked Jadhav based on his current form, it's no rocket science," Archery Association of India official Virendra Sachdeva, who

is accompanying the team said. In all likelihood, the Indian mixed pair team would run into top seed Korea in the quarters after overcoming eighth-ranked Chinese Taipei.

Placed in the same half as India, top seed Korea will open their main event against 16th ranked Bangladesh.

The men's trio's combined performance was just enough to finish inside top-10 as they totalled 1961 for a ninth place finish in their first Olympic appearance since London 2012.

The Indian men's team might run into top seed Korea, who got a bye into the quarters, should they beat eighth-ranked Kazakhstan in the opening round.

In individual section, Jadhav will face 34th ranked Galsan Bazarzhapov of Russia, Das will take on Deng Yu-Cheng of Chinese Taipei, while Rai's opening challenge will be against Ukrainian Oleksii Hunbin. PTI

Hockey teams start campaign

PTI ■ TOKYO

The men would be seeking to reclaim a glorious past, while the women would be aiming to script some history of their own when the two Indian hockey teams begin their Olympic campaign on Saturday with expectations from both at a high.

Men will be up against eighth-ranked New Zealand, followed by the women's clash with the Netherlands.

With a current world ranking of four, the Indian men's are considered a bright medal prospect this time around in Tokyo.

ALL EYES ON VIKAS

The seasoned Vikas Krishan (69kg) will open India's boxing campaign on Saturday against local favourite Sewonrets Quincy Mensah Okazawa.

He will be the lone Indian boxer in action on the opening day of boxing competitions at the Ryogoku Kokugikan arena.

Can paddlers do the unthinkable again?



Tokyo: The Indian table tennis contingent produced an unthinkable performance at the Asian Games, considered as 'mini-Olympics' by the players. Three years down the line, can they pull off another miracle at the Tokyo Games?

Asian Games may have the presence of continental powerhouses like China, Korea and Japan but the Olympics are a different ball game altogether.

Nevertheless, India exceeded all expectations to win a men's team Bronze and mixed doubles Bronze in Jakarta, ending the country's medal drought at the Asian Games, but getting close

to even one medal here would be a gargantuan task.

Before the paddlers arrived in Tokyo, the only little hope was in the mixed doubles category but an opener against the world number one duo from Chinese Taipei has made the challenge a lot tougher for A Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra.

Sharath along with G Sathiyan has also been handed a tough draw in the men's singles competition.

The 20th seed is drawn to meet reigning champion Ma Long in round three provided he clears the second round (first round bye) in his fourth

Tennis players need miracle to go deep

Tokyo: Indian tennis players need no less than a miraculous performance to get close to the medal rounds as an under-prepared team of Sania Mirza and debutant Ankita Raina faces a tough Ukrainian challenge in the opener while Sumit Nagal has got a tough draw in the singles competition.

Mirza, who is making a record fourth Olympic appearance, and debutant Raina are going into the Olympics without playing a single competitive match together this year, which is far from ideal preparation. They will open their cam-

paign against Ukraine's twin sisters Nadiia and Lyudmyla Kichenok.

In the men's singles, Nagal is extremely lucky to get an entry into the Olympics but his recent performances do not inspire confidence and he faces Asian Games champion Denis Istomin in his first round. There is a possibility of him getting past the 34-year-old Uzbek but the Indian may next face world number two and Australian Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev from Russia and that could be end of the road for him. PTI

Olympics.

If Sathiyan, who will make his Olympics debut, clears the second round hurdle, he will face Japanese sensation and third seed Harimoto Tomokazu.

Manika and debutant Sutirtha Mukherjee will represent India in women's singles.

The unseeded Manika is expected to beat Britain's Tin-Tin Ho in the first round and is drawn to meet 20th seed Margaryta Pestoska in the second. Sutirtha, world number 98, plays 78th-ranked Linda Bergstrom from Sweden in the opening round. PTI

Rain break does the trick for SL

Colombo: India's young batsmen paid for their profligacy and inexperience as Sri Lanka's spinners made best use of a rain break to dismiss the visitors for a lowly 225 in 43.1 overs in the third and final ODI here on Friday.

With the series pocketed, India coach Rahul Dravid rejigged the bowling line-up along with a couple of changes in the batting order, but it was evident that the lack of game awareness became their undoing on the day.

The rain-break at the end of the 23rd over, which reduced the game to 47-overs per side, helped the home team. The pitch suddenly had a bit of freshness and the ball would both grip and skid, making life easier for the spinners, who rocked the middle-order.

The latest trend of young batters not being able to cope up with slow bowlers was on show as the middle-order looked clueless against left-arm spinner Praveen



Jayawickrama (3/59 in 10 overs) and off-spinner Akila Dananjaya (3/44 in 10 overs), who, in his second spell, blew away the lower middle order with turn and bounce.

However, Prithvi Shaw (49 off 49 balls) dazzled with his breathtaking array of strokes, while Sanju Samson again made batting look easy in his run-a-ball 46.

They added 74 runs in 13.2 overs and one can't fault anyone who was dreaming of something big as the duo injected life in a dead rubber.

However, after skipper Dasun Shanaka got one to skid and trapped Shaw, Manish Pandey's (11 off 19 balls) inclusion brought about a break in momentum.

Samson was in no mood to relent but an upish inside-out check drive was plucked by Avishka Fernando at extra-cover, like a fruit from the tree.

Post the break, when India resumed at 147 for three, the spinners suddenly started getting more turn and the rain had spiced up the pitch. PTI