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FUNDS FOR DIRECT CASH TRANSFER SCHEMES

Rs 700 cr reached wrong hands

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

A staggering sum of Rs 700 crore might have gone into the wrong hands so far this year under the various direct cash transfer schemes being implemented by the Andhra Pradesh government, a cursory verification by the Finance Department has established.

The Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy government has claimed it has doled out a sum of over Rs one lakh crore under various freebie schemes between June 2019 and June 2021.

When state Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath recently undertook a review of the cash flow situation, with top officials of his department, it was decided to go for a revalidation of all beneficiaries' data under different schemes to



plug the leaks.

A test check of some major schemes then exposed the gaping holes in the beneficiaries' data and indicated that "huge sums of

money" fell into the wrong accounts, authoritative sources in the Finance Department said.

"We have only just started but the basic findings itself are startling. We

now suspect that more than Rs 3,000 crore might have gone to dubious persons in the last two years," the sources told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

Prime among the annual schemes that entail a large sum of money to lakhs of beneficiaries are Amma Vodi (Rs 15,000 to each mother), PM Kisan Rythu Bharosa (Rs 13,500 to each farmer), Cheyuta (Rs 18,750 to each BC, ST, SC and minority woman over 45 years of age), Vahana Mitra (Rs 10,000 to each cab/auto driver) and Matsyakara Bharosa (Rs 10,000 to each fisherman).

On June 22, the Chief Minister clicked a computer button to transfer Rs 18,750 each to 23,41,827 beneficiaries under the Cheyuta scheme.

State envisages new startup ecosystem to boost employment

SNV SUDHIR

■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh is all set to create an ecosystem for startups that has potential to create future entrepreneurs. With an aim to produce the next billion-dollar startup from the state, government has designed a flagship programme, and fund of funds, access to market reports are some of the salient points of Andhra Pradesh's new IT policy.

Under the new IT policy, Andhra Pradesh government would launch a flagship startup promotion scheme for early stage startups. The flagship programme, 'Accelerate Startups in Andhra Pradesh (ASAP)', will be

launched soon. Offering plug and play office space, access to a network of investors, mentors and the state's trained talent pool will be part of ASAP. These provisions and other common shared services will be offered to startups at reasonable charges.

Besides the flagship programme a fund of funds of Rs 100 cr will be co-created in partnership with a consortium of Venture Capitals and Private Equity firms and universities, for funding startups in Andhra Pradesh.

Training programs for entrepreneurs with business ideas, to address knowledge gaps in areas including but not limited to understanding target market, business plan, tax, law, insurance,

financial planning, promoting business, sales, and service etc will also be conducted. Early stage startups in the state will also be provided with access to market reports and surveys.

"Incubation centres will be set up in areas notified by the government from time to time. The department will strive to conduct hackathons and workshops for startups based in the state, in collaboration with universities and colleges, to ensure continuous innovation and encourage the development of innovative solutions for G2C and G2B services and other government use cases," said a senior government official.

Babus not cut out for politics

SNCN ACHARYULU

■ HYDERABAD

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

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

In the combined Andhra Pradesh and even post bifurcation, some bureaucrats (both IAS & IPS) entered the political arena but faded

before making a mark.

In the combined Andhra Pradesh, former CBI director K Vijaya Rama Rao joined the Telugu Desam Party and contested from the Khairatabad Assembly constituency and defeated Congress mass leader P Janardhan Reddy in the 1999 Assembly elections. Later, Vijaya Rama Rao became a minister in former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu's cabinet. During the 1999 Assembly elections, Chandrababu did an experiment calling neutrals (Thatasthulu) into TDP and in the process retired IPS officer K Vijaya Rama Rao joined TDP and became a minister.

Panel to study TTD's hereditary archaka system

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

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

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

Devasthanams.

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

In the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, etc. also traditional hereditary Archakatvam is continuing.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Ashadha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Trayodashi 13:32

Nakshatram : Mula 16:25

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

Rahukalam : 1:59 pm - 3:35 pm

Yamagandam : 5:56 am - 7:32 am

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

Gulika : 9:09 am - 10:45 am

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 10:34 am - 12:02 pm

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

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly cloudy

Temp: 33/26

Humidity: 88%

Sunrise: 5:52 am

Sunset: 06:52 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated JULY 21, 2021 5:00 PM

Curfew in state extended till July 30

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The Covid Curfew in Andhra Pradesh has been extended till July 30.

"After a thorough review of the Covid-19 situation and keeping in view the decline in the number of positive cases, the government decided to extend the curfew upto July 30, from 10 pm to 6 am daily," Principal Secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singhal said in an order on Wednesday.

Aiming towards economic upliftment and improving the living standards of eligible women belonging to Kapu, Balija, Telaga and Ontari communities..

For the Second consecutive year..

YSR KAPU NESTHAM

Sri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Hon'ble Chief Minister will press the button to deposit **Rs. 490.86 Crores** directly in to bank accounts of **3,27,244 lakh** women beneficiaries of Kapu, Balija, Telaga and Ontari communities across the state, **Today..**

Rs. 75,000 financial assistance in 5 years at the rate of Rs.15,000 per year to eligible women in the age group of 45-60 years belonging to Kapu, Balija, Telaga and Ontari communities under "YSR Kapu Nestham"..

Jagananna Government has credited **Rs. 491.02 Crores** in to the accounts of **3,27,349** beneficiaries last year and an amount of **Rs. 490.86 Crores** is being given today to **3,27,244** poor women belonging to Kapu Communities.. The total assistance provided so far under **"YSR Kapu Nestham"** is **Rs. 981.88 Crores..**

Sri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy,
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Government of Andhra Pradesh

The previous Government has spent a meager amount of **Rs. 400 Crores** on an average per annum on Kapu, Balija, Telaga and Ontari communities through different schemes..

But our Jagananna Government, in just 2 years, has spent a whopping amount of **Rs. 12,126.78 Crores** to assist **59,63,308** beneficiaries belonging to Kapu communities.. The amount spent on an average is around **15 times more** than what was spent during the previous Government.

The Previous Government created ambiguity on social status of Kapus as to whether they are Ocs or Bcs.. Knowing fully well that subcategorization should not be done as per the Law, yet the previous Government went ahead, subcategorized EWS reservations, created legal complications and denied reservations as promised to Economically Weaker Sections.. Our Jagananna Government has corrected this situation and also has implemented **10% EWS** reservations in Education and Employment in true spirit. Jagananna Government is benefitting Kapu Communities through EWS reservation.

Benefits provided for the welfare of Kapu, Telaga and Ontari communities through various schemes by our Jagananna Government in these 2 years..		
Name of the Scheme	Beneficiaries	Net benefits (Rs. in Crores)
DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer)		
YSR Rythu Bharosa	7,85,700	2,550.19
YSR Pension Kanuka	4,11,331	2,384.91
Jagananna Amma Vodi	3,81,185	1,143.56
YSR Kapu Nestham	3,27,349	981.88
YSR Aasara	7,04,048	653.60
Jagananna Vidya Deevena	1,28,119	354.14
Dr. YSR Free Crop Insurance	3,04,451	371.25
Jagananna Vasathi Deevena	96,739	189.29
YSR Zero Intrest (SHG)	8,42,854	202.46
Input subsidy to Farmers	1,71,360	131.90
YSR Bima	8,151	132.87
YSR Sunna Vaddi Pantu Runalu (Farmers)	5,42,523	101.74
YSR Vahana Mithra	29,957	83.47
Overseas Studies Scheme (VVD)	533	29.45
Dr.YSR Aarogya Aasara	37,765	22.85
Jagananna Chedodu (Tailors)	14,021	14.02
YSR Nethanna Nestham	2,577	12.40
DBT Total	47,88,663	9,359.98
Non - DBT		
YSR-Jagananna House Sites	2,56,424	2,160.00
Dr. YSR Aarogyasri	1,16,797	289.02
YSR Sampurna Poshana	1,50,800	144.05
Jagananna Gorumudda	2,84,024	123.20
Jagananna Vidya Kanuka	3,66,600	50.53
Non - DBT Total	11,74,645	2,766.80
Total (DBT + Non - DBT)	59,63,308	12,126.78

Welfare of Kapu, Balija, Telaga and Ontari communities is the motto of Jagananna Government..

NOTE: Sri Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Hon'ble Chief Minister will distribute 'YSR Kapu Nestam' assistance by pressing the button at CM's Camp Office at 11 a.m on 22nd July, 2021. Do watch the programme live on all important news channels..

Sri Adapa Seshagiri
Hon'ble Chairman, Kapu Welfare & Development Corporation

For complaints & assistance - Dial **1902** Toll Free Number

Curfew in state extended...

Continued from Page 1

Prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC, preventing the gathering of more than five persons, will be imposed during non-curfew hours from 6 am to 10 pm, he said.

A penalty ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000 would be levied on shops and establishments that allowed any person without a face mask.

"If any gross violation occurs in following the COVID protocol in any market or commercial establishment, such establishments will be closed for a day or two, depending on the seriousness of the violation. Violation of instructions will also result in prosecution under various sections of Disaster Management Act and Section 188 of IPC," the official said.



Rs 700 cr reached wrong hands...

Continued from Page 1

But subsequently, payment amounting to Rs 168.17 crore has been stopped for 89,694 women as the government sought to verify the genuineness of the beneficiaries, sources in the Finance Department said.

On May 18, Jagan pressed the computer button to credit a sum of Rs 119.88 crore into the bank accounts of 1,19,875 fishermen under Matsyakara Bharosa.

But later the dole amounting Rs 21.73 crore was stopped for 21,736 perceived beneficiaries as officials smelt "something fishy" about their veracity.

The parched Anantapuramu district has 5,76,972 total beneficiaries under the PM Kisan scheme, for whom Rs 205.43 crore was distributed in 2020-21.

A physical verification of

Panel to study TTD's hereditary...

Continued from Page 1

Time to time, the government is also issuing orders on various occasions to streamline the hereditary Archakatvam system. By amending the Andhra Pradesh Charitable and Hindu Religious Institutions and Endowments Act, 1987, through A.P. Amendment Act, 33 of 2007, the government has revived the ancient hereditary Archakatvam system in all temples of the state and issued consequential orders to re-establish the traditional hereditary Archakatva system, the G O issued on Wednesday said.

"Government have examined all the above references and to institutionalise the issues hereby appoint a one man committee with Justice Dr. B. Siva Sankara Rao, to examine the service issues involved in the hereditary Archakatvam of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams and to suggest steps to the government to carryout effective implementation and any other issues incidental to or relating to hereditary Archaka system in Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams within a period of three months positively from the date of providing necessary paraphernalia," said the G O.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹150
Without Skin	₹210
Broiler at Farm	₹130

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	499
HYDERABAD	496
VISAKHAPATNAM	557
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.99
(IN HYDERABAD)	

Rs 344 cr Panchayat funds diverted to pay govt loans

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Rythu State President Marreddy Srinivasa Reddy on Wednesday accused the Jaganmohan Reddy government of 'snatching away' Rs. 344.93-cr of the 14th Finance Commission funds, originally meant for strengthening the Panchayat, and local bodies in the state.

Srinivasa Reddy lamented that the Chief Minister had reduced the sarpanches to the level of mere puppets while misusing the grama volunteers and district collectors to crush the Panchayat Raj system in Andhra Pradesh. Jagan had diverted the 14th Finance Commission funds to pay his government's debts, instead of using them for development of rural areas.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader said that the government diverted



Rs. 344.93-cr released by the Finance Commission to pay electricity arrears. These funds were meant for ensuring drinking water supply, maintenance of roads and sanitation measures in the local bodies.

It was against the rule to take away the 14th Finance commission funds to pay the electricity arrears.

Srinivasa Reddy termed it

as an attack on the concept of 'grama swaraj' with the sarpanches and people's representatives in local bodies being denied powers and funds. The Chief Minister should explain how the well being of the people in the local bodies could be ensured when their funds were being snatched away. The Jagan Reddy regime took over Rs. 3,300 cr loans from the

Central energy related organisations in the first phase. Citing this, the government has now diverted Rs. 344-cr of the Panchayats and local bodies.

The TDP leader pointed out that already, the sarpanches were in deep financial trouble as the government was not giving funds towards the works completed in the rural areas. The Jagan regime has turned totally indifferent to the cause of ensuring better living standards in villages, he said. In the name of decentralisation of power, the YSRCP leaders were destroying and demolishing all the existing systems, he added.

Srinivasa Reddy threatened that the TDP would launch another agitation if the Civil Supplies Minister would not ensure payment of dues to the food grain farmers by the end of July.

AP logs 2,527 new COVID-19 cases, 19 deaths

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

The number of active coronavirus cases in Andhra Pradesh increased marginally as fresh infections outnumbered recoveries in a day.

In the 24 hours ending 9 am on Wednesday, 2,527 fresh COVID-19 cases were reported in the state against 2,412 recoveries and 19 deaths.

The latest bulletin said the active caseload increased to 23,939 after a total of 19,09,613 recoveries and 13,197 deaths so far.

The gross positives touched 19,46,749.

The overall Covid-19 positivity rate stood at 8.2 per cent, recovery rate 98.1 per cent and mortality rate 0.68 per cent.

Though its weekly positivity rate has fallen below the five per cent mark after more than three months, East Godavari district continued to



report a higher number of fresh cases daily, with 515 more coming in 24 hours.

Chittoor logged 318, Prakasam 303, West Godavari 288, Krishna 249, SPS Nellore 206, Guntur 182, Visakhapatnam 133 and Kadapa 111. Only four districts added less than 70 new cases each in a day.

Chittoor recorded four fresh fatalities, Krishna and SPS

Nellore three each, East Godavari, Prakasam and West Godavari two each, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam one each.

Kadapa district also had one Covid-19 death on Wednesday, the first in a week. Vizianagaram district did not report any coronavirus toll in the last one week, as its total count stood at 668.

New JD of SEB assumes charge

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Additional SP Bindu Madhav Garikapati assumed charge as the Rural District Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) Joint Director on Wednesday at the SEB office at the Guntur Rural District Police Office. After taking over as Joint Director, Rural District SEB, he met Rural District SP Vishal Gunni and Urban SP Arif Afiz.

Bindu Madhav Garikapati, a member of the 2017 IPS batch, served as Assistant SP in the Andhra Pradesh Greyhounds Division for some time and then served as Assistant SP, Rampachodavaram, West Godavari District.

Priyanka slams Centre over 'no O² deaths'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Hitting out at the government, Priyanka Gandhi said, "No death due to lack of oxygen": Central Government. The deaths happened because -- in the pandemic year, the government increased oxygen exports by about 700 per cent."

The Congress general secretary alleged that the deaths

happened because the government did not arrange tankers to transport oxygen and ignoring the advice of the empowered group and a parliamentary committee, no arrangement was made to provide oxygen.

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
NOTIFICATION NO.11/2021-RC

1. This Notification is issued for 1 (one) post in the cadre of District Judge (Entry Level) under Direct Recruitment.

2. This Notification is issued in terms of the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Civil Appeal No.1867 of 2006, dated 04.01.2007.

3. Applications are invited for appointment to 1 (one) post earmarked to BC-B (Woman) for the post of District Judge (Entry Level) in the A.P. State Judicial Service under 25% quota to be made by Direct Recruitment.

4. Further Details viz., Detailed Notification, Proforma Application and Hall Tickets in original and duplicates are available in the official web site of High Court of Andhra Pradesh and can be accessed at "hc.ap.nic.in" from 21.07.2021 onwards.

5. Filled-in applications in prescribed proforma together with enclosures of the candidates should be submitted in the office of the Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Secretariat Buildings, Velagapudi, Guntur District on or before 06.08.2021, 5.00 p.m.

Dated: 21-07-2021

CHIEF SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

e-procurement Notice

e-Procurement Notice No: Tender Notice No: S404/CL/2021/ANMRU/2021-26/0000-517/2021 Dated: 20.07.2021.

Name of work: Design, Supply, Construction, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Sewage Treatment Plants & MLD - 2 Mes & 5 MLD 1 No. based on Open Technology (Technology Neutral) with Terminal Pumping Station and Inlet Works, MOC pond room, DGS set and all contingent Civil, Electrical, Mechanical and Instrumentation works with three months Trial Run and Post Completion Operations & Maintenance of entire Sewage Treatment Plant for 9 (nine) years including 02 (two) years Defect Liability Period at Channarayana Estimate Value: Rs.48.17 Crores Last date/Time receipt of Tenders: 13-08-2021 at 4:30 PM Name and Address of the Concerned: R Suresh Reddy, M.Tech, Supervising Engineer, Public Health Circle, Anantapuramu, Anantapuramu-515001 Call No: 9649055339 Further details can be seen @ 'e-procurement' website place: www.approcurement.gov.in

Sd/- R. SURESH REDDY SUPERVISING ENGINEER, PUBLIC HEALTH CIRCLE, ANANTAPURAMU

CL/PR R.O. No. : 3404-CL/ANMRU/11/02021-22 Dt: 20-07-2021

Babus not cut out for politics...

Continued from Page 1

But it was a one-time affair for Vijaya Rama Rao, who later unsuccessfully contested from the Khairatabad Assembly constituency. Congress leader P Janardhan Reddy defeated Vijaya Rama Rao.

Former bureaucrat and retired IAS officer Jayaprakash Narayan launched the Lok Satta political party and he won as MLA from the Kukatpally Assembly constituency and for him also it was a one-off affair.

Retired IAS officer Tamil Nadu former Chief Secretary P Rammohan Rao joined the Jana Sena and he was appointed as political advisor to the party. But Jana Sena itself failed to make a mark as a political party in the 2019

Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections.

Ex-IPS officer VV Lakshmi Narayana, formerly joint director of CBI, joined the Jana Sena party. He unsuccessfully contested on behalf of the Jana Sena as MP candidate from the Visakhapatnam Lok Sabha constituency in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Later Lakshminarayan quit Jana Sena party.

Recently Karnataka former chief secretary Ratna Prabha joined the BJP and unsuccessfully contested from the Tirupati Lok Sabha bye-election on behalf of BJP. Now Ratna Prabha is reportedly planning to quit BJP.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections, at least 20 All India Services and Group-1 officers

who had either retired or taken VRS contested on behalf of various political parties. Most of them unsuccessfully contested on behalf of Jana Sena. From Jana Sena party former IAS officer Thota Chandrasekhar contested from the Guntur West Assembly seat, former IRS officer Metta Rama Rao contested from the Srikakulam Lok Sabha seat, another ex-IRS officer Parthasarathy contested from the Prattipadu Assembly seat. Former IRTS officer Ravela Kishore Babu won as MLA on behalf of TDP in the 2014 Assembly elections from Vemuru and became minister in the Chandrababu cabinet. But for Ravela also it turned out to be a one-time affair as he unsuccessfully contested the 2019 Assembly elections

on behalf of Jana Sena. From YSR Congress, former IAS officer Iqbal (Hindupur Assembly seat); from TDP ex-IRS officer Malayadi (Bapatla Lok Sabha seat) and former IAS officer Ramanjaneyulu (Kodumur Assembly seat) contested unsuccessfully.

Plans of Praveen Kumar Former IPS officer Praveen Kumar is likely to launch a political party or a Dalit- and Bahujana-oriented forum. AP government advisor Akunuru Murali, a former IAS officer who also has taken voluntary retirement, is likely to join hands with Praveen Kumar. Murali belongs to Telangana. Teenmar Mallanna, a harsh critic of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, is also joining hands with Praveen Kumar, according to sources.

Heavy inflows into Krishna and Godavari basins

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

With extensive rains across Telangana, particularly in the catchment areas of the Krishna and Godavari basins, all the major projects in the State are brimming with heavy inflows.

The Jurala project continued to get flood inflows on Wednesday, though slightly to a less extent than what it received on Tuesday when 13 gates were opened. While on Tuesday the inflow was 1.05 lakh cusecs and outflow was at 88,051 cusecs, on Wednesday, the inflow was at 68,900 cusecs and outflow at 47,443 cusecs.

While the Full Reservoir Level of the Jurala project is 1,045 ft, it is now at 1,039.4 ft and its present storage capacity is 6.42 tmc ft, as against the full storage capacity of 9.66 tmc.

The Tungbhadra project inflows are at 44,616 cusecs, while the outflow is 4,486 cusecs. While the FRL is 1,433 ft, the present level is 1,620.5 ft with a storage capacity of 59.59 tmc, as against the full storage capacity of 100.86 tmc. It is likely to be filled soon, given the rain forecast for the next few days.

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

The Srisailem project storage has been steadily increasing and on Wednesday it received flood water inflow at 1,15,412 cusecs and the outflow is at 28,252. Against its FRL of 885 ft, the present level is at 842 ft and storage is at 65.73 tmc, as against the full storage capacity of 215

tmc.

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

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

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

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Centre picks Andhra Pradesh to implement Gram Ujala programme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government of India (GoI) has chosen Andhra Pradesh, along with four other states across the country to implement the Gram Ujala programme that will help lessen the burden of electricity bills on the rural households in the state and also peak time power demand substantially for the state power utilities.

Impressed with the rapid development in the rural areas for welfare of people in the state and proactive steps initiated by the state government on energy conservation, the Government of India is likely to invest Rs 450-cr for the implementation of Gram Ujala Programme in Andhra Pradesh.

Under this Programme, Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL), a wholly



owned subsidiary of Energy Efficiency Services Ltd of GoI contemplated to distribute around 4.4 crore LED bulbs to about 81.5 lakh rural house-

holds in Andhra Pradesh.

Most importantly Andhra Pradesh is one among the only five other states across the country selected by the Centre

to implement the Gram Ujala Programme.

It is worth mentioning here that LED is a highly energy efficient lighting technology. Residential LEDs use at least 75 per cent less energy and last 25 times longer than incandescent lighting in general. The LEDs emit very less heat compared to the incandescent bulbs and CFLs, which release 90 per cent and 80 per cent of their energy as heat respectively.

The biggest advantage of the Gram Ujala programme to be implemented by the Centre (CESL) with major support of Panchayat Raj and Rural Development in co-ordination with APSEEDCO, Energy department is that the rural households will be able to reduce their electricity bills to the tune of Rs.600 to 700 per annum. This programme will also help AP power sector to

reduce peak demand of 1,144 MW thus benefiting rural consumers as well as DISCOMs.

In this connection, disclosing the above, the Managing Director of CESL, Mahua Acharya, who met the Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development, Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy, discussed the launching of Gram Ujala Programme and requested the Minister for finalising convenient date and place.

CESL MD briefed the minister that five pro-active states in welfare and energy efficiency programmes such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, and Gujarat were selected to implement the Gram Ujala Programme and Andhra Pradesh was one among them. CESL has already launched the Gram Ujala Programme in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh will be the third State where the programme will be launched soon.

TDP leaders demand action against illegal mining in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Alleging illegal mining of bauxite in reserve forest area in Vizag and East Godavari districts, TDP leaders G Eswari, Vangalapudi Anita, Gummadi Sandhya Rani, Kidari Sravan Kumar and Nakka Anand Babu urged chief conservator of forests N Prateep Kumar to take action against the miners and also protect the forest land.

In a letter to Prateep Kumar, on Wednesday the TDP leaders said contrary to the Supreme Court's Samata judgment illegal mining was being carried out unhindered in scheduled areas of East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts. They said the government in Andhra Pradesh had been issuing mining permits to mine Laterite. However, in reality the ruling YSRCP leaders, in collusion with a section of government officials, were mining bauxite and were destroying the livelihoods of the tribal people and forest ecology, they said.

Stating that as per the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) report, any aluminous mineral ore containing more than 30 per cent aluminum is defined as bauxite, the TDP leaders added that the YSRCP-led government in order to circumvent



the Supreme Court's judgment was issuing mining permits for laterite.

"The mining mafia in collusion with a section of officials is indiscriminately mining bauxite and selling it to alumina refineries. Interestingly, the lands leased for so called laterite mining were not surveyed and do not have survey numbers. In order to pave the way for illegal mining and transportation, roads were laid in reserve forest area. For instance, in Rowthulapudi mandal of East Godavari district a road was laid from Challeru to beyond Dabbadi village that falls under the reserve forest area," they said in the letter.

The TDP leaders further added that a road was laid from Sarlanka in

Rowthulapudi mandal to Siripuram, which again came under the reserve forest area. The illegal construction of roads in the reserve forest area without any environment clearances was vivid enough to understand the reach of the mining mafia in Andhra Pradesh, they said.

"In this backdrop, we pray to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to conduct an inquiry into the illegal bauxite mining in the scheduled areas in Andhra Pradesh. It is pertinent to take severe action against the illegal mining mafia and officials in order to deter illegal mining in the future. Only a consistent effort from the Ministry would help not only in protecting the livelihoods of the tribal people, but also forest ecology," the TDP leaders added.

'104' Call Centre crosses 10 lakh tele-consultation calls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 104 Call Centre crossed 10 lakh outgoing tele-consultation calls, with doctors and callers speaking to each other since May 2021. This is in addition to 5.43 lakh incoming calls received at 104 since April 16 2021.

In view of the increase in Covid-19 cases, 104 Call Centre was revamped on April 16 at HCL Campus, Gannavaram and on May 13 at APIC Building, Mangala giri to take appropriate measures to handle the evolving situation in the state.

Doctors were hired to do remote tele-consultation and to evaluate 104 callers for Covid - 19 symptoms, to do virtual triaging and advice on further course of action like

testing, medical advice with or without prescription and hospital admission etc.

The 104 tele-consultations are being implemented from May 1, 2021 and the number of calls since inception, crossed 10 lakhs.

About 5,523 doctors were registered with 104 tele-consultation, including 1,132 specialist doctors as on date.

Trainings and webinars were done on Covid-19 protocol to all doctors and 104 tele-consultation mobile application was provided to all doctors.

Around 3,492 patients were spoken to by doctors through tele-consultation up to 4 pm on Wednesday and cumulatively 10,16,760 calls were made to patients so far since May 1.

Volunteer 'harassed' by cops for meeting Pawan Kalyan

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A volunteer attached to Amarareddy Nagar Colony Secretariat in Tadepalli of Guntur was allegedly harassed by the police for meeting Janasena president Pawan Kalyan.

However, the police denied the charge saying that volunteer Sivasree had obstructed the officers who had demolished her house on Tuesday night and once again Tadepalli police rushed her to the station.

She was allegedly detained in the name of interrogation. On coming to know of the development, the TDP, Janasena, and Left parties reached the Tadepalli police station in support of Sivasree. Police released Sivasree after the protest.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, Sivasree said that



Party, Janasena and Left parties demonstrated before the station in support of the young woman. The leaders alleged that the young woman was being harassed by making false allegations. They held a dharna in front of the station demanding justice for Sivasree. Police released Sivasree after the protest.

Speaking to the media on the occasion, Sivasree said that

he had resigned, unable to stand corruption in the State government. The woman alleged that the police threatened her as she met Janasena chief Pawan Kalyan to seek justice for the Amarareddy Nagar residents. The young woman sought to know what the fate of the rest of the women in the State would be as she, who lives next door to the CM, was subjected to harassment.

Despite 'Gau raksha' laws, cow slaughter goes on

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Activists of the Ongole unit of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal, Go Raksha Pramukh and BJP OBC Morcha have handed over to the police a gang that killed and sold cows on Kabela Road in Karuna Colony opposite the Srinivasa Cinema Hall and Power Office in the city.

The taluka SI alerted the large-scale sale of beef in Ongole city during Bakrid, according to information provided by VHP, Go Samrakshan Pramukh leaders. A person named Kotes and his accomplice, who were trying to kill the cows and sell the meat were taken into custody and taken to the taluka police station. The carcass of the cow was then taken to the government Veterinary Hospital for autopsy and the final rites were performed following the traditions.

Leading activists of VHP and Go Samrakshan said on the occasion that there were so



many sections in the Constitution such as Section 11, Section 6, IPC 428 and 429, Section 11 of the Go Sanrakshan Act, Cow-Animal Welfare Act 1977, CRPC 43, and they demanded to file cases under these sections against the cow beef sellers.

District Bajrang Dal convenor Y Sitaramaiah said there was a perception among Hindus that the government was lazy in not finding anyone who could kill the cow and sell the beef and conspire to eat it,

despite the number of Go Raksha laws and the number of Go Raksha centres in the country. He said that in the coming days, national-level protests and rallies would be organised until the law declaring the cow as a national animal is passed.

Among those who met the police officials were Go Raksha Pramukh Gaddam Srinivasan, BJP OBC Morcha leaders Tanikonda Suresh, VHP campaign chief Radha Ramana Gupta Jandhyam, BJP leaders and others.

Man arrested for murder of Dalit girl friend in Nalgonda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After tension prevailed in Koppole village of Nalgonda, Telangana, on Saturday as several anti-caste activists protested, accusing the police of covering up the alleged murder of a Dalit 17-year-old girl, the police officials arrested the accused on Tuesday and produced him in the court on Wednesday.

The girl belonged to the Mala community, categorised as Scheduled Caste. The arrested accused was identified as D Pavan, a 20-year-old man from the same village.

On July 12, the 17-year-old victim, who was sleeping with her grandmother in her house, was found missing around 11.45 pm. The next day, the girl's dead body was found in an open field on the outskirts of Koppole village. She was found with a shawl around her neck, indicating that she could have been strangled to death, a Dalit activist said. Several beer bottles and cigarette buds were also strewn around the crime

spot. There were some injury marks on the victim's genitals, raising suspicion of sexual assault.

The police initially registered a case under Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) Section 174.

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

The accused and the victim, who were distant relatives, were in a relationship. The victim went to Nalgonda to pursue Intermediate education. Since then Pavan started suspecting her character and started avoiding the victim. The parents of the victim tried to pacify the situation between them in a panchayat, but in vain. But, the victim did not give on relationship with Pavan and tried to marry him.

Injustice done to slain Chirala Dalit youth family

PNS ■ AMARAVATI

TDP National General Secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Wednesday condemned the fact that the Jaganmohan Reddy government did not arrest the cops involved in the killing of Chirala Dalit youth Kiran Kumar even though one year had passed since the ghastly incident took place in Prakasam district.

Lokesh demanded immediate arrest of the SI and the constables, who were responsible for the death of the Dalit youth. Kiran Kumar was beaten to death just for not wearing a face mask. What punishment should be given to the Chief Minister for not wearing the mask almost all the time? He asked.



In a statement issued here, Nara asked whether the Dalits had no right to live during the Jagan Reddy rule. The death of Kiran Kumar had left his parents without any support. The Chief Minister was perpetrating the atrocious Raja

Reddy constitution on the people. The government should give Rs. 50 lakh ex-gratia to the family members of Kiran Kumar without further wasting any time.

Nara Lokesh demanded that the YSRCP government

should explain how their regime could cut short the life of a young man who was looking after his parents and sisters very affectionately. Who would be answerable for the suffering and plight of the family of the deceased youth? He asked. The pain and the sufferings of the family in the past one year after the youth's death were indescribable. Not even disciplinary action was taken against the cops responsible for his death, he said.

Lokesh demanded that a full-fledged investigation into the circumstances that led to the beating and subsequent death of Kiran Kumar be initiated. How could anybody be beaten to death just for not wearing a face mask? He

asked. There were many doubts and suspicions over the incident. Some police officers had been behaving recklessly ever since Jagan Reddy became the Chief Minister of the state in 2019, he said.

Stating that the YSRCP leaders had become irresponsible, Nara Lokesh said that the Jagan Reddy regime had been crushing the rights that were given to the Dalits in the Constitution. Countless atrocities, attacks, tansures and humiliations happened to the weaker sections in the past 26 months of the YSRCP rule, he said.

The TDP MLC warned that the Chief Minister would have to pay a very heavy price if his regime went on oppressing the very Dalits with whose votes his party came to power.

New bride abducted by kin after inter-caste marriage

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The relatives of a new bride abducted her shortly after they sought police protection. The incident took place in Phirangipuram of Guntur district. A newly married young couple was forcibly separated and the girl was abducted, creating a sensation after the couple approached the district police officers seeking protection from their elders. The incident came to light after two days, when the groom revealed the issue to the media alleging police negligence.

A young man and a young woman from different social groups in Phirangipuram



mandal of Guntur district had been in love for some years. The couple got married on Monday at the Seshachalam Ashram in Nehru Nagar in Guntur city. The newlyweds then approached the district SP seeking protection. From there, the newlyweds went to Phirangipuram police station on SP orders. Police were asked to provide protection

from their relatives. The police called the elders of both the new bride and the bridegroom and counselled them as the newlyweds were major and not to harm them.

While the newlyweds were on their way home in an auto from the police station, some of the young woman's relatives attacked and abducted the bride. The groom once again lodged a complaint with the Phirangipuram police.

A case was registered and an investigation was started. Two days later, the groom alleged that the police were not trying to know the whereabouts of his wife.

10 RBI centres to impart fin edn to poor in Guntur

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Regional Director (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Reserve Bank of India, Hyderabad, K. Nikhila, inaugurated the Centre for Financial Literacy at Amaravati in Guntur district on Wednesday. Along with this, nine more CFL centres at Chilakaluripet, Narasaraopet, Mangalagiri, Sattenapalli, Tadepalli, Tenali, Macherla, Piduguralla and Bellamkonda in Guntur district were virtually opened from Amaravati.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to set up CFL centres in all the districts of the country by 2024 and as part of this, it has set up one such facility at Amaravati in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. It initially, decided to set up 10 CFL centres in the district. They were jointly managed by the Union Bank of India and the Society for Social Transformation, Kurnool (NGO). A CFL centre would be set up for three mandals.

These centres would educate the rural people in the respective mandals through CFL counsellors about the financial, banking and management practices, various facilities provided to them by banks, social security and welfare schemes provided by State and Central governments and various deposit schemes available in the banks. In the same way, awareness would be created to rural women and housewives about the need for home financing, saving and their availability.



Similarly, eligibility criteria and various types of loans provided by banks to various farmers, professionals, small traders, Self Help Group members etc. would be informed. Bank Business Correspondents (BC) would create awareness to rural people about the home Banking Services, Debit Cards (ATMs), Credit Cards, RTGS, NEFT, POS, Net Banking, Mobile Banking, SMS Alerts etc.

Awareness would be created to

bank customers about the nomination facility, its need and different types of accounts offered by banks and provide solutions to small problems faced by the bank customers.

Awareness will be created about the schemes like education loans, home loans, business loans, agricultural loans etc. offered by banks. Account holders were explained about the precautions to be taken at ATMs and when conducting online transactions.

Growing online scams, fraudulent phone calls and other precautions to be taken were also explained. Explains the precautions to be taken by the concerned person (nomination) related to the cash transfer in the account at the time of death of the client.

Union Bank of India has entered into an agreement with the Society for Social Transformation, Kurnool (NGO) for operating 10 Financial Literacy Centres in Guntur district. The CFL centre at Amaravati has been inaugurated by Sonali Sen Gupta, CGM, FIDD, Reserve Bank of India and explained to the public the importance and rights of clients about banks. The remaining nine centres were also launched in virtual mode.

V Brahmananda Reddy, Chief General Manager, Union Bank of India & Convenor, SLBC of Andhra Pradesh, Sudheer Kumar Jannawar, Chief General Manager, NABARD, Hyderabad, M. Yashoda Bai, General Manager, Financial Inclusion and Development, RBI, Hyderabad, P Rama Krishna Chowdary, General Manager, Financial Inclusion Department, UBI, Hyderabad, Sailaja Rani Deputy General Manager, Financial Inclusion & Development Department, RBI, Hyderabad, A. Ravi Kumar, Regional Head, Union Bank of India Guntur, T.Kameswara Rao Chairman Chaitanya Godavari Gramina Bank and Edara Rambabu, Lead Bank District Manager and others participated in the inauguration programme.

Devotional fervour marks Bakrid

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Muslims across the East Godavari district celebrated the Eid-al-Adha (Bakrid) festival with devotional zeal in remembrance of the sacrifice of the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) here on Wednesday.

Special prayers were held at the Jamia Masjid in Kakinada, the district headquarters, following the corona rules imposed by the government. Imam Abdul Razak Rizvi conducted the Eid prayers.

He prayed for peace for the souls of those who died of Corona and for Allah to save all from the Corona pandemic.



He then went on to appeal to the people to have compassion for the poor.

On the occasion, the chair-

man of the mosque committee, Ajazuddin, said that the Eid prayers were performed in accordance with the Corona

norms prescribed by the government. He greeted everyone while conveying the importance of Bakrid.

7-month-old baby raped?

PNS ■ GUNTUR

In a shocking incident, a seven-month-old baby has been allegedly raped at Bommanampadu in Macharla mandal of Guntur district.

Sources said, a woman put her baby to sleep in the cradle on Tuesday night. However, the baby was found missing on Wednesday morning.

The mother searched all around for the baby anxiously. Locals saw the baby lying unconscious in a desolate area not far from the house. The child was found with bruises on the lips and groin. She was immediately rushed to the Macherla Government Hospital for treatment and later shifted to Guntur GGH for better treatment.

VIMUKTI urges MPs to revise draft Bill against human trafficking

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

State-Level Forum of Sex Workers and Survivors of Trafficking wrote an open letter to all the MPs in the country urging them to incorporate necessary changes in the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021.

VIMUKTI, a State-level collective of survivors of sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation and women in prostitution, based in Andhra Pradesh, appealed to the MPs that the new draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care & Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021 is victim-centric, empowers the sur-

vivors and addresses the organised crime of human trafficking the way it deserves making it economically unviable. They urged Smriti Z Irani, Minister for Women & Child Welfare, to place the Bill before the Parliament in this monsoon session.

The leaders of VIMUKTI who are also members of the AP State Chapter of Indian Leadership Forum Against Trafficking (ILFAT), a national platform formed by the survivors and for the survivors of human trafficking, stated in their recommendation letter to MPs that Article 23 of the Constitution of India prohibits Trafficking of Persons and

some legislations deal with different forms of trafficking but to date they do not have comprehensive legislation that looks at the problem as an organised crime or as the fastest growing criminal enterprise.

They said the trafficking of human beings in India goes unabated with impunity and millions of lives are destroyed every day. "Every life lost in trafficking is one too many!" they observed.

They also appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and all the esteemed parliamentarians to unanimously pass the Bill and pave the way for a 'human trafficking-free India'.

Chatrasthapanotsavam performed to 'Srivari Padalu'

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The 'Chatrasthapanotsavam' at Narayanagiri Padalu, also known as Srivari Padalu, was performed with religious fervour at Tirumala on Wednesday.

According to temple legend, Narayanagiri is the highest peak in the Seshachalam ranges and it is believed that Sri Venkateswara Swamy has first placed his divine feet on this holy hill before he chose Tirumala as his dwelling place on the earth (Bhooloka). Even after several centuries "Srivari Padalu", (holy feet of Lord Venkateshwara) are clearly seen on this gigantic peak.

As part of this sacred festival, new traditional umbrella was brought and special pujas were performed to 'Srivari Padalu' situated on Mount Narayanagiri.

'Snapana Tirumanjanam' (celestial bath) was offered to



the holy feet with milk, curd, honey, tender coconut water and sandal paste amidst chanting of Vedic hymns. Later, a holy umbrella was kept near the 'Srivari Padalu'. Later, devotees were allowed and 'Prasadam' was also offered.

AEO Lakshmaiah, Parupattedar Gurappa, AVSO Pawan Kumar and others were present.

Poornahuti caps Varahi Navratri celebrations

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The Varahi Navratri festivities ended on a high note in Kakinada, the headquarters of East Godavari district, on Wednesday. The 'Homa Poornahuti' ceremony was held at Sri Iswaryambika Sametha Sundareswara Swamy temple.

The Poornahuti ceremony was presided over by 10 Vedic scholars from Ujjain. The founders of the shrine, Paripurnananda Saraswati Swami, worshiped and dropped 108 types of Sugandha Dravyas, such as herbs, fruits, Pindi Vantalu and silk cloths into the Homam as part of the 'Poornahuti'.

A 'pooja' was performed at the pavilions set up for the



'Varahi Navratri Mahotsav Mandapams' and the 'Sahasra Ghata Abhishekam' was performed for 'Aishwaryambika

Ammam' with water filled in 'Kalasas'.

Later, Paripurnananda Saraswati Swamiji honoured

the Vedic scholars. A large number of devotees and women participated in the devotional programme.

Jyeshthabishekam fete ends on a grand note

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The three-day Jyeshthabishekam festival concluded on a grand manner at the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD's) Sri Govindaraja Swamy temple here on Wednesday.

The procession deities of Sri Govindaraja and his Consorts Sridevi and Bhudevi were adorned in

glittering armour during the 'Kavacha Samarpana' ritual.

Later, 'Kavacha Pratista', 'Akshatarohanam' and 'Brahma Ghosha' were rendered followed by 'Asthnam' to the deities. Jyeshthabishekam is performed at every temple once a year when the armour adorning the deities is removed removed,

prayers are offered to them and again when the deities are adorned on the third day of the annual festival. The armour was removed on Monday, cleansed and special prayers were offered on Tuesday and Wednesday. Earlier, the armour ensemble was paraded inside the temple precincts in private, in view of the COVID-19 restrictions. 'Snapana

Tirumanjanam' (celestial bath) was performed to the deities by priests and the dazzling golden armour was adorned later.

Balaji Deekshitulu acted as the 'Kankana Bhattar' (executive priest), while the Pedda Jeeyangar and Chinna Jeeyangar participated in the ritual. Dy EO Rajendra and other temple staff were present.



Film theatres in crisis, workers in dilemma

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Going to the film theatre to watch a movie is still an exciting experience. Fans are usually anxious to watch the first show of their favorite actors and do everything they can to secure tickets. However, the movie buffs are denied such pleasure by the Coronavirus pandemic.

The trend of watching movies online has started. Even big producers are releasing movies on OTT platforms. They are in good demand now, dealing a major blow to theatre owners of 130 theatres in East Godavari district.

About 1,700 people were directly employed and some indirectly. They have been facing untold hardships during the Corona crisis. Whether the people accustomed to OTTs, will come back to the theatres is a million-dollar question. Will the OTT take the place of



theatres? Hard to say. The recently released Venkatesh starrer 'Narappa' has also been released on OTT. Theatres are in a state of irreversible damage under the Corona pandemic impact.

The government has allowed the opening of theatres. But, the exhibitors were concerned that running with 50 percent occupancy would only result in losses, making it difficult for them to pay electricity bills, employee salaries, and even maintenance. Also, after the lift-

The government did not waive the previous power bills. As a result, theatres could not open due to non-payment of bills. The same situation is prevailing now.

ing of Corona sanctions last year the government allowed 50 percent of seating capacity. With this, theatre owners

demand that the old electricity bills be waived. However, the government did not give permission for this. As a result, the-



atres could not open due to non-payment of electricity bills. The same situation is prevailing now.

It is said that the third wave is round the corner. Leading filmmaker and exhibitor Daggubati Suresh Babu recently stated that there are conditions for operating theatres. As a result, producers and distributors are not daring to release movies in theatres. With this, the people who are dependent on theatres for their livelihood are in a dilemma.

5 red sanders logs seized

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Anti-smuggling Task Force sleuths seized 5 red sanders logs weighing 200 kg even as smugglers managed to abscond during a combing operation held inside the Bhakrapet forest, near Tirupati, on Wednesday morning.

RI Bhaskar and his team of task force sleuths who undertook combing operations near Bhakrapet forest and Piler road where they spotted a group of red sanders smugglers carrying logs on their shoulders at Dhonakond Gammamma temple area.

The smugglers, who noticed that they were being rounded up by the police, abandoned the red sanders logs and escaped into the forest. Task force sleuths collected the red sanders logs and moved them to the RS timber depot in the city.

During the combing opera-



tions held inside the Bhakrapet forests in the last three days, the task force sleuths have managed to seize about 2 tons of precious logs.

CI Venkata Ravi Subramanyam, DRO Narasimha Rao and other police staff took part in the search operations.

INDIA CORNER

Professor held for making derogatory remarks against Smriti

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



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

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



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

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



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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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



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

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

Change in oxygen distribution policy by Centre led to disaster

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

With the AAP also targeting the Modi government over its

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

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

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

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

Landslides leave 150 people stranded

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

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

As traffic remained blocked

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

Landslides occurred at eight points along the high-

way on Tuesday bringing mounds of debris onto the road.

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

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

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

Modi govt wants to establish 'surveillance state': Mamata

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Aviation Ministry forms advisory groups to resolve challenges facing sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

India and its aviation sector were badly hit by the coronavirus

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

"The groups shall meet regular-

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

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

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



Tremors felt in parts of Rajasthan

PNS ■ BIKANER

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

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

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

PNS ■ JAMMU

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

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

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

Leopard kills boy in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh

PNS ■ UTTARAKHAN

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

Universities should discuss global challenges: V-P

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

mate.

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

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

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



through June this year.

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

from seven states. This suggests 3.4 million excess deaths.

Second, the researchers applied

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

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

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

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

each has merits and shortcomings.

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

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

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

Since official figures don't rep-

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

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

FIRST COLUMN

ECI AND PANDEMIC POLL BLAME

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



ABHINAV NARAYAN JHA ABHINAV K SHUKLA

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



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

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

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

Indian black money in western white banks



PRASHANT TEWARI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

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

— BJP SPOKESPERSON SAMBIT PATRA



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

— DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA

Coming out of the shadows

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

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

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

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



SURAVI SHARMA KUMAR

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

patients living in less efficient conditions.

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

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

Global stock markets mostly higher after W Street rebound

PNS ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

On Tuesday, the Dow and

the Nasdaq composite both gained 1.6 per cent.

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

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

Markets to remain under valuation pressure

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consumer durables industry to witness growth: Whirlpool India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Acknowledging that home appliances have moved from a passive space

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

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

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

'Passage of key bills crucial to move forward'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



Maruti crosses 50L sales milestone in rural India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

2019-20.

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

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

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

MONEY MATTERS

Growing investments in wearables segment: Qualcomm

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

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



YouTube adds Super Thanks to help creators earn more

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



Handicraft exports may record 10-15 pc growth

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



Bengaluru airport signs 10-year partnership with IBM

Bengaluru International Airport Limited (BIAL) -- operator of Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru -- has signed a ten-year partnership with IBM to create an "Airport in a Box" platform, which transforms technology, operations and customer experience. IBM Hybrid Cloud capabilities, Red Hat Automation and Kyndryl managed infrastructure services will help BIAL improve productivity, automate IT and reduce costs, an IBM statement said on Wednesday. BLR airport needed a nimble, scalable and cost-competitive technology and operations environment that can increase its agility and operational flexibility to handle future growth in passenger traffic, it said. To achieve this goal, BIAL has selected IBM Global Business Services, IBM hybrid cloud capabilities and Kyndryl, the new, independent company that will be created following the separation of IBM's Managed Infrastructure Services business, to design and implement a next generation architecture with robust and dynamic delivery model, the statement added.



Glenmark IPO to open on July 27th

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

"This prompted many financing entities to explore



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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

dealt under the old laws of respective states.

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

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

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

"It is not mere talk and guess work. The trend clearly shows that the real estate sector of our country will touch the figure of USD 1 trillion in the next 7-8 years," Mishra said, while emphasising the importance of this industry in the Indian economy.

Citing various reports of property consultants, the secretary said housing demand in the first quarter of this fiscal year has risen as compared to the year-ago period. Talking about the importance of this sector in employment generation, he said:

"Around 5.5 crore people were employed in the sector as per 2019 figure. Our predictions for

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

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

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

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

Arjun Kapoor starved during a Chelsea match in London!

When it comes to impressing fans and girls, we can't think of anyone but our 'Most Wanted Munda' aka Arjun Kapoor. He has been a part of many Bollywood films, and has never failed to experiment with his roles and characters. His versatility quotient is all set to surprise fans as this *Ki & Ka* actor will be seen cooking alongside none other than celebrity Chef Ranveer Brar on the season 3 of *Gobble's You Got Chef'd*.

Arjun Kapoor, who is seen making 'Shepherd's pie' along with Chef Brar has a funny connection to the dish from his past. During one of his film shoots in London, Arjun was invited by Abhishek Bachchan to watch a Chelsea Match at a stadium with him. The stadium had strict rules where one was



not allowed to wear a jersey in the box so Arjun covered his jersey by wearing a jacket over it and held on it throughout the match due to which he could not

eat. He starved throughout the match and ended up eating the same 'Shepherd's pie' with Jr. AB at a plush restaurant post the match. The pie was delicious and

became Arjun's top favourite delicacy. This whole incident not only made Arjun but even Chef Brar laugh wholeheartedly. Arjun shares, "Food has

always brought immense joy to me and everyone in my family, and I have been fortunate enough to have been surrounded by the most lovely women who have not only instilled values but also fed me with the most lip smacking food. Today, this show has given me an opportunity to be on the other side of the table by helping unleash the inner chef in me. It has been an absolutely fun ride sharing screen space with Chef Ranveer Brar, I cannot wait for the viewers to watch the episode."

Since the episode revolves around food flavours from London, the duo will be seen baking the famous Shepherd's Pie. The episode will see Arjun Kapoor highlight football and food as his weaknesses, he also shares some funny yet memorable experiences he had while on his trip to London.

Theatre stalwart Urmil Kumar Thapliyal no more

Renowned theatre director, satirist and eminent columnist Urmil Kumar Thapliyal passed away after a prolonged illness. He was 78.

His family said that Thapliyal was suffering from intestinal cancer and had been in and out of medical facilities for some time now. He returned home on July 17 after being discharged from the hospital, but breathed his last at his residence on

Tuesday late evening. He is survived by his wife Bina Thapliyal, 70, son Ritesh Thapliyal, daughter Ritun Mishra and son-in-law Satyendra Mishra. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has con-doled the death of the well-known theatre artist and litterateur.

In his condolence message, the Chief Minister said that Thapliyal enriched the world of theatre and literature with his talent. "It is difficult to com-



pensate for the loss caused to the art and literary world by the

death of Urmil Kumar Thapliyal," he said in a statement.

Raj Kundra is a director in 9 companies

Armsprime Media, the company at the centre of the controversy, which led to the arrest of businessman Raj Kundra on charges of making pornographic content and publishing them through mobile applications, has two directors -- Sanjay Kumar Tripathy and Saurabh Kushwah.

Armsprime Media Private Limited is a private company incorporated in February 2019. It is classified as a non-government company registered with the Registrar of Companies, Mumbai. With an authorised share capital of Rs 10 lakh, the company is involved in sporting and other recreational activities.

Armsprime Media

Private Limited's annual general meeting (AGM) was last held on September 25, 2019 and as per the records of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA), its balance sheet was last filed on March 31, 2019.

The directors of Armsprime Media Private Limited are Sanjay Kumar Tripathy and Saurabh Kushwah.

Sanjay Tripathi is also a director on Invesco Asset Management India, Spartech Ventures, Travxo Technologies, Agilio Digital Solutions and Agilio Labs.

Raj Kundra aka Ripu Sudan Kundra, the husband of actress Shilpa Shetty, is listed as a director in as many as nine companies.

He is a director of

Shilpa Yog Private Limited, known for the actress' name, but Shetty is not a director.

The other companies where Kundra is listed as a director include Cinemation Media Works, Bastian Hospitality, Kundra Constructions, J.L. Stream, Aqua Energy Beverages, Viaan Industries, Whole and Them Some Private Limited and Clearcom Private Media.

Both Kundra and Shetty were directors in Kundra Constructions but the company has now been struck off the rolls.

Shilpa Shetty Kundra is listed as a director in as many as 23 companies. She has been director of some companies in the past, which have been struck off the rolls now.



Viola Davis' memoir *Finding Me* to release in August

Oscar winner Viola Davis will be coming out with her memoir *Finding Me* on August 19.

Davis' book will be released by HarperOne, an imprint of HarperCollins, according to The Hollywood Reporter.

The book will be published in partnership with Ebony Magazine Publishing.

In the memoir, Davis traces her rise from growing up in poverty and family violence in Rhode Island to becoming one of the world's most critically-acclaimed actors in Hollywood.

"I believe that our stories, and the courage to share them, is the most powerful empathet-



ic tool we have. This is my story ... straight no chaser," the 55-year-old actor said in a statement.

The actor started as a theatre artiste in the 1990s before venturing into movies with small appearances in films such as *Out of Sight*, *King Headley II*, *Solaris* and *Syriana*.

She later found critical acclaim for her performances in 2008 movie *Doubt* and 2011's *The Help*.

Davis won an Oscar for her starring role in the 2016 film adaptation of August Wilson's drama *Fences*, which was directed by co-star Denzel Washington.

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

NANCY

GINGER MEGGS

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

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

DOWN

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

SOLUTION

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

HOME AMID THE GREENERY

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



Imagine walking into lush green gardens in your backyard where you can both enjoy the scenic view and pick some leaves off plants with medicinal value. If you think this kind of living is possible only in the suburbs or in the woods, you got it wrong. SMR Vinay City, Hyderabad's first herbal gated community located on Bollaram Road, Miyapur, developed across 5+ acres of land, comprising 512 flats, is home to over 37 species of plants that have medicinal values. Surrounded by open spaces on its three sides and a man-made lake on one side, there was a rampant increase in mosquito breeding, which worsened during the monsoons and winters. "As soon as team Parivartan entered into SMRVC Management Association, we requested Mr GBK Rao, CMD of Pragathi Resorts to make our community free of mosquitoes. He immediately entrusted this job to his expert Makkala Ramarao. He, along with his other members like

Dr Vijay, Venugopal, and others visited our community, and conducted a detailed survey of it. They demarcated several areas and clearly suggested what and where we should plant the saplings. Finally, we have decided to plant 3,700 saplings in our entire community, which includes herbal, medicinal, aromatic, mosquito repellent, and leaf decoction plants," shares King Johnson, a resident of the community. Although it is easy to plant saplings, the bigger task is to maintain them and keep them alive, which is a hectic job indeed! To take this up, the society has invited like-minded homemakers from the community. "Six women came forward from the community and started a green group which was led by architect and interior designer K Himabindu, under my supervision. The group members actively took part in the programmes and ensured the plants stayed healthy. Within two months, the group could plant all 3,700 saplings in over five acres of

land," he tells us. It sounds exciting to live in a community that has medicinally rich plants, unlike other places where saplings are just there to enhance the beauty of the place. However, having over 3,700 saplings comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Explaining the same, Johnson shares, "Planting herbal plants is a wonderful way to enjoy the sights, smells and also taste of a wide variety of plants. In the olden days, we could cure many ailments with the help of these medicinal plants. Old is gold. Those remedies were practiced by generations to cure problems such as stomach infections, strengthening the immune system, and more. Herbal plants can enhance our health in many ways. It is a stress reliever and mood enhancer for treating minor disorders.

Some plants can treat digestive problems like constipation and abdominal spasms, enhance the respiratory system to treat cold and cough, sinusitis, etc. Some plants can improve or lower blood pressure, treat cancer and kidney problems. Some plants can be used to treat diabetes, etc. The only disadvantage is we must use them under proper guidance. Some herbal plants are toxic in nature, if not cultivated under proper care and guidance. One must be aware of its uses. To understand this, we have arranged name boards for major plants." Dr Poonam Singh and Tulasi Konidela, residents of SMRVC shares, "These plants release a refreshing aroma while we take a stroll in the community. This aroma is so therapeutic that it instantly refreshes one's mind. The elderly in the community enjoy the sunrise and sunsets, just sitting at the temple in the community and watching these plants shine bright. After the plantation drive, the mosquito menace reduced to a great extent. Earlier, during the rainy season, mosquitoes wouldn't let us live in peace, but it drastically reduced due to the green plantation programme."

The community is home to plants like costus speciosus, plectranthus amboinicus, pimenta dioica, piper betle, piper longum, cymbopogon flexuosus, and many more. Residents of the community have been an inspiration to many around them, they request fellow community beings to come forward and plant saplings that are aromatic, and medicinally rich.

Using steroids carefully



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

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

What is a steroid?

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

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

Do steroids raise blood sugar levels?



beverages like preserved or canned juices.

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

Always remember:

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

(The writer, Apeksha Ekbote, is the Chief Dietician, at NephroPlus.)

TIPS TO LIVE A POCKET-FRIENDLY SUSTAINABLE LIFE



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'India responded like champions'

PTI ■ COLOMBO

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"We had talked about that,



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

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

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

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

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

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

FORGOTTEN HOW TO WIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



he said talking about his mindset in the middle.

'JUSTIFIED PROMOTION'

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

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

Bhuvneshwar said at the post-match virtual press conference.

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

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

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

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

Injured Avesh all but out of Eng tour



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Nottingham.

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

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

VIRAT BACK IN NETS

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

GILL BACK HOME

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

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

Stokes, Buttler, Bairstow, Sam back for India Tests

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

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

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

Jofra Archer, recuperating



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

included.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sindhu will be among favourites for Gold in Tokyo: Gopichand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

players have a good opportunity to better their performance.

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

with the venue as well," he said.

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



Starc Carey Oz to win

AFP ■ BARBADOS

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

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

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

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

Brisbane picked to host 2032 Olympics

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Indian athletes' participation in opening ceremony to be bare minimum

PTI ■ TOKYO

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

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

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

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



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

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

"The ceremony is likely to last till midnight so it is better that they rest for their events the following day," he added.

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

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

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

World leaders from 15 nations to attend Games opening

PTI ■ TOKYO

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

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

Around 70 cabinet-level officials are also set to visit

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

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

compete the day after the opening ceremony.

India have named men's hockey captain Manpreet Singh and six-time world champion woman boxer M C Mary Kom as the flag-bearers for the opening ceremony.

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

on Saturday.

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

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



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

AP

spare.

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

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

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

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

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

shortpasses

BOXERS TRAINING AT VILLAGE

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

AUS EQUESTRIAN BANNED

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

3 +VES OUT OF OLYMPICS

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

DD SPORTS TO BROADCAST

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

JHINGAN WINS TOP PRIZE

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

SWEDEN STUN US

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

ALIA BHATT BACK ON RRR SETS



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



Vishal injures self while performing stunts



It is known that Vishal has teamed up with debutant Thu Pa Saravanan, known for his short film *Edhu Thevaiyo Adhuvu Dharmam*, for their next film, tentatively titled *Vishal 31*. According to the latest update, Vishal injured himself while performing the stunt for the climax scene. Vishal suffered a severe back injury on the sets of this upcoming film. Sources say that when he was performing the climax stunt sequence, his back was badly hurt, like it happened earlier too. Varma, his therapist who took care of the treatment last time fixed it this time too. Vishal and Dimple Hayathi are playing the lead roles in the film and some big names from Kollywood too have been roped in to essay some crucial roles. Touted to be an action thriller, Vishal has performed some risky stunt sequences for the film. Earlier he luckily escaped with a minor injury while shooting for an action scene. Vishal will next be seen in *Enemy*, which is being directed by Anand Shankar. The shoot of *Enemy* has been wrapped up and is all ready to be released. Vishal also has work to complete for his debut directorial *Thupparivalan 2*, and it has been on hold for a long time.

Rajamouli-Mahesh film to be set against backdrop of Africa



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

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



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

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

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

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

Khushbu's Twitter account hacked



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

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

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

Arulnithi's next a mystery thriller titled *Dejavu*



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

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

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