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**Eicher Motors**  
to develop range of EVs

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**Vijayan hails PH staff**  
for tackling Nipah, Covid

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**Pegasus maker says**  
millions sleep well at night

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## In brief

### Vatican reveals property holdings for the first time

The Vatican released information on its real estate holdings for the first time on Saturday, revealing it owns more than 5,000 properties as part of its most detailed financial disclosures ever. The information was contained in two documents, a consolidated financial statement for 2020 for the Holy See and the first-ever public budget for the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See (APSA). APSA, a sort of general accounting office, manages real estate and investments, pays salaries, and acts as a purchasing office and human resources department. Between the two documents - each with an unprecedented number of pie charts, graphs and maps - and two explanatory interviews, the Vatican issued more than 50 pages of financial material.

### ICSE Class 10, 12 results out; No merit list this year

The Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations, or ICSE, has declared the ICSE Class 10th and ISC Class 12th results on Saturday. The ICSE had canceled the exams for both the classes this year in view of the aggressive second wave of COVID-19. The result has been prepared on the basis of an alternate assessment policy decided by the board. Board Chief Executive and Secretary Gerry Arathoon on Friday, July 23, informed that, unlike previous years, the option of rechecking of ICSE and ISC answer scripts will not be available this year as the candidates have been awarded "imputed marks".

### Sitharaman: Honest taxpayers deserve to be recognised

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday said honest taxpayers deserve to be recognised for dutifully paying their due share of taxes and appreciated the Income Tax Department for successful implementation of various reforms. In her message to the I-T Department on the 161st anniversary of Income Tax Day, she complimented the department for continuing to work towards simplifying its procedures and processes, and making its functioning hassle-free, fair and transparent. She also lauded taxpayers for discharging their compliance obligations despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, an official statement said.

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

#### Month & Paksham:

Ashadha & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

**Tithi** : Dwitiya 28:03

**Nakshatram**: Shrawana 11:17

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

**Rahukalam**: 5:11 pm - 6:48 pm

**Yamagandam**: 12:22 pm - 1:58 pm

**Variyam**: 3:09 pm - 4:41 pm

**Gulika**: 3:35 pm - 5:11 pm

**Good Time**: (to start any important work)

**Amritakalam**: 12:24 am - 1:57 am

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

### VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly cloudy

Temp: 34

Humidity: 63%

Sunrise: 5:53 am

Sunset: 6:51 pm

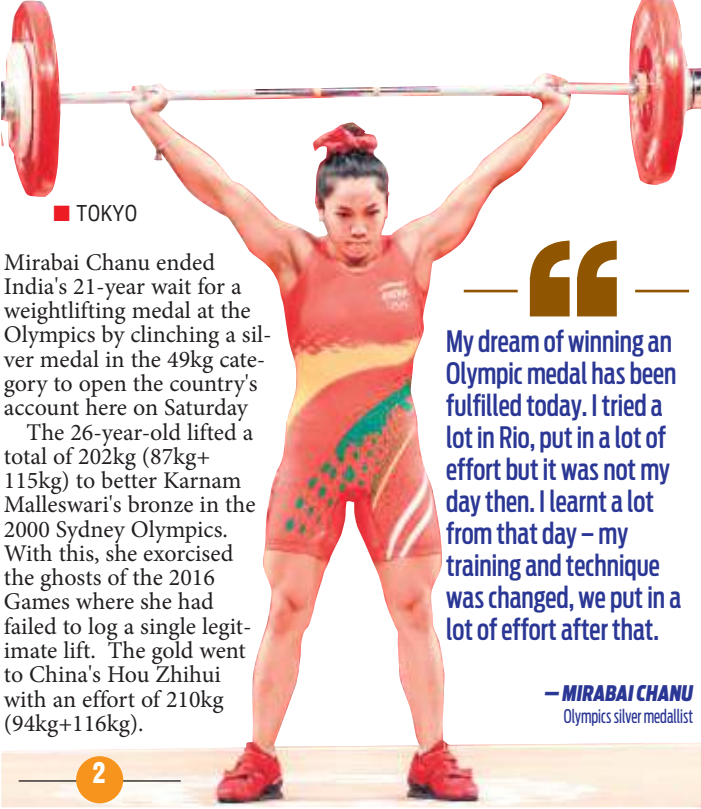
Current Weather Conditions

Updated July 25, 2021 5:00 PM

## OBTUSE ANGLE



# Sensational Mirabai snatches Silver at Tokyo



■ TOKYO

Mirabai Chanu ended India's 21-year wait for a weightlifting medal at the Olympics by clinching a silver medal in the 49kg category to open the country's account here on Saturday. The 26-year-old lifted a total of 202kg (87kg+115kg) to better Karnam Malleswari's bronze in the 2000 Sydney Olympics. With this, she exorcised the ghosts of the 2016 Games where she had failed to log a single legitimate lift. The gold went to China's Hou Zhihui with an effort of 210kg (94kg+116kg).

“My dream of winning an Olympic medal has been fulfilled today. I tried a lot in Rio, put in a lot of effort but it was not my day then. I learnt a lot from that day - my training and technique was changed, we put in a lot of effort after that.”

— MIRABAI CHANU  
Olympics silver medalist

# TDP men welcome to quit: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government Advisor (Public Affairs) and YSRCP general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Saturday said that no one was stopping TDP MPs and MLAs from resigning from their posts and they can do so 'happily'.

Addressing the media here on Saturday, he said that TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu has been 'unnecessarily' throwing challenges to YSRCP MPs to submit their resignations in support of the protests against the proposed privatisation of the Vizag Steel Plant. He said that if the TDP MPs and MLAs wished to resign, then they should do it without hesitation.

Ramakrishna Reddy recalled that YSRCP MPs resigned from their posts in 2018 demanding



Special Category Status for AP and those resignations were accepted. He said that TDP MPs can do the same for their demands if they have commitment and dedication towards the issues.

Responding to the objections by TDP against the State government appointing 40 advisors, Ramakris-

hna Reddy recalled that there the previous TDP government had appointed 100 people to advise it. "In fact, apart from these 100 advisors, the TDP government had hired about 200 to 300 consultants, which was a sheer waste of public money."

He said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has appointed advisors according to needs only without wasting public money. Ramakrishna Reddy reiterated that Amaravati was a mammoth scam in which fly-by-night operators in the guise of realtors helped TDP leaders make money.

He said that if they were aware that the capital would be coming up in the middle of Guntur-Vijayawada, they would have then bought lands at Nagarjuna University or other areas.

2

## UAPA, sedition law misused to stifle dissent, say former SC judges

2

# Brazil suspends Covaxin studies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Brazil has suspended the clinical studies of Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine, Covaxin following termination of the company's agreement with its partner there, the South American Country's health regulator said.

Bharat Biotech on Friday announced cancellation of the MoU it signed with Precisa Medicamentos and Envixia Pharmaceuticals LLC for its COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin for the

Brazilian market.

The termination of the pact comes after the deal with the Brazilian government for supply of 20 million doses of the vaccine landed in controversy and attracted investigation by authorities in that country.

"In The Coordination of Clinical Research at Anvisa (Copec/GGMED) determined this Friday (23/7) the precautionary suspension of clinical studies of the Covaxin vaccine in Brazil. The suspension was carried out

as a result of a statement from the Indian company Bharat Biotech Limited International, sent to Anvisa on Friday (23/7)," Anvisa, the Brazilian health regulator said on Friday.

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

2

# Edu needs need to be reconfigured, says Kasturirangan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Eminent space scientist K Kasturirangan on Saturday stressed the need for reconfiguring the education needs of the future to meet the targets of Sustainable Development Goals-2030 and to create a just and equitable society.

Kasturirangan, who headed the committee that drafted the National Education Policy-2020, noted that the new policy has been crafted to ensure that it touched the life of every citizen, consistent with their needs.

The NEP-2020 laid down an end-to-end educational roadmap for the country with an integrated yet flexible approach to education, he noted.

The former chairman of ISRO delivered a lecture on 'Creating a vibrant knowledge society: an Indian strategy for 21st Century', as part of the distinguished lecture series organized by SRM University-AP. Pointing out that the last education policy was drafted 30 years ago, Kasturirangan said India now needed an education system aligned with the aspirational goals of every citizen,

while remaining rooted to its value systems and ethos.

The NEP-2020 has been crafted consistent with the needs of citizens, as the demand for a knowledge society and economy called for the need to acquire new skills on a regular basis. "Providing quality education and creating lifelong learning opportunities for all, leading to full and productive employment and decent work as enlisted in the SDGs-2030 is the thrust of NEP-2020," he observed.

The former Rajya Sabha mem-

ber emphasised that vocational education should be integrated with undergraduate education.

"We tend to have a narrow perception of vocational education, but the NEP-2020 heralds its growth. Vocational education is an integral part of the larger education system," he remarked.

An integrated higher education system that included professional and vocational education was the need of the hour, he added.

2

These numbers leave both Jagan and KCR with enough votes in the Presidential poll to make a difference.

It may be recalled that in 2019, speaking to the media for the first time as Chief Minister, Jagan had said that it was unfortunate that the YSRCP did not have the chance to decide the Prime Minister as the BJP got the required majority on its own. He went on to add that he believed that KCR too thought that the TRS could play a crucial role in deciding the Prime Minister after 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

Both KCR and Jagan had believed that neither the BJP-led NDA nor the Congress-led UPA would get the strength to form the government at the Centre.

It's another matter altogether that their calculations went awry.

From then on, the official stand of both the TRS and YSRCP has been 'equidistance from both BJP and Congress. Unofficially, both these parties are supporting the NDA government at Centre when their help is needed.

2

# NBW, Rs 50K fine on Finance Spl Secy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has issued a non-bailable warrant, besides imposing a fine of Rs 50,000 on State Finance Special Secretary J Satyanarayana for alleged contempt of court.

The High Court had earlier issued instructions in respect of arrears to be paid to Kalidindi panchayat in AP. Despite executing the order, Finance Secretary Satyanarayana reached the court late for the hearing of the case.

Holding Satyanarayana in contempt of court, Justice B Devanand

issued a non-bailable arrest warrant against him besides imposing a fine of Rs 50,000.

Soon after, a recall petition was filed by Advocate-General S Sriram, on behalf of the Finance Secretary.

A two-judge bench of Justices C Praveen Kumar and B Krishna Mohan suspended execution of the non-bailable warrant, effectively stopping imprisonment of the Finance Secretary till July 26, the next date of hearing, in lieu of an additional fine of Rs 10,000.



## MAKING A MARK



Governor Biswabasan Harichandan, along with the First Lady, plants a sapling in the premises of the Raj Bhavan at Vijayawada on Saturday to mark the completion of two years in office.





# Infertility complaint by Covid patients is a short-term issue

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

People who made a complete recovery from Covid have been facing issues related to conceiving due to low sperm count. However, they need not worry too much since this phenomenon is temporary, say health experts. “Due to fever induced by Covid infection, the sperm count among some males drops drastically. For the sperm count to be revived, it would take about two months,” said Dr Sujatha Vellanki, a fertility specialist.

Speaking on the eve of World IVF Day on July 25, Dr Sujatha said that both the first and second waves of Covid have created nightmares for many families who desire a child. She said that new findings revealed that the sperm count in males who were infected showed a drastic drop post recovery due to high body temperatures. “Also, many people who were leading a normal life till then have been identified as diabetics after getting

infected by the deadly virus,” Dr Sujatha said. She said that couples desiring a child but are finding it difficult in getting conceived can now get the latest IVF treatment staying at home, without even visiting the hospital. “We have observed in many cases that if the woman is in her late 30s, it takes a lot more time and effort to achieve pregnancy. Though there are many possibilities to treat infertility, couples should make a conscious effort to conceive without putting it off,” Dr

Sujatha said. She said that an SOP has been developed, adhering to the international standards of Covid safety protocols. This includes providing IVF treatment through a contactless engagement schedule drastically reducing the visits. “IVF journey during the pre Covid period involved about 14 to 16 visits by the patient to the clinic. With IVF at home, clinic visits are now curtailed to four while the rest of the treatment is rendered at home,” she added.

## AP logs 2,174 Covid cases

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

AP reported 2,174 fresh cases of coronavirus, 2,737 recoveries and 18 deaths in 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday. The total positives stood at 19,52,513, a health department bulletin said. The active cases slid to 22,358 after a total of 19,16,914 recoveries and 13,241 deaths, it said. East Godavari added 418 fresh cases to its count while Chittoor reported 329, Krishna 248, SPS Nellore 246, Prakasam 233, West Godavari 209, Guntur 132 and Visakhapatnam, 103. Five districts reported less than 90 cases each, with Kurnool logging just eight in a day.

# UAPA, sedition law misused to stifle dissent, say former SC judges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Four former Supreme Court judges Saturday batted for repeal of penal provision on sedition and stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) saying these are usually misused to stifle dissent and quell the voices which ask questions from the government. Referring to the death of 84-year-old Father Stan Swamy, booked under UAPA, in jail, one of the judges Aftab Alam said, “I submit, UAPA has failed us on both counts: National security and Constitutional Freedoms.” Justice Alam, and fellow former judges Deepak Gupta, Madan B Lokur, and Gopal Gowda spoke at a public discussion on a topic “Democracy, dissent and draconian law - should UAPA and sedition law should have a place in the statute books?”

While Justice Alam said the process of trial becomes a punishment for many in such cases, Justice Lokur was of the view that there should be a system of compensation for those who are wrongfully implicated and later acquitted. Echoing the same view, Justice Gupta expressed that these draconian laws have no place in a democracy. Notably, Justice Gowda was of the opinion that the legislations have now become a weapon against dissent and that they need to be abrogated.

“One of the criticisms of the UAPA is that it has a very low rate of conviction but a high rate of pendency. It is the process that becomes the punishment,” said Justice Alam. Quoting the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, he said that 2,361 UAPA cases were pending in trial in 2019 out of which 113 were disposed of with conviction in 33 cases, acquittal in 64, and discharge in 16 which brings the rate of conviction to 29.2 percent. “If compared against the number of cases registered or people arrested, the rate of conviction comes down to 2 percent, and the pendency rate increases to 98 percent,” the former apex court judge rued. He said that the UAPA has failed the country on two counts - national security and constitutional freedom and must be repealed. Concurring with Justice Alam, Justice Gupta elaborated on the misuse of the sedition law and UAPA and said that it has been made harsher and harsher over time and should be shown the door as soon as possible. “In a democracy, dissent is essential and draconian laws have no place. In the last few years, laws have been misused to stifle dissent and quell the voices which ask questions from the government,” he said. Alluding to the death of UAPA accused Stan Swamy and arrest of a man in Manipur

# Farmers’ death at Delhi borders: Tomar statement draws criticism

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The SAD on Saturday sought an apology from Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar for saying in Parliament that his government has no record of farmers who died at Delhi borders during the course of the agitation against the Centre’s farm laws. Tomar had made the statement on Friday. Farmers have been camping at Delhi borders since late November, demanding the repeal of the laws. Former Union minister and Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Harsimrat Kaur Badal expressed shock at the statement and said, “This anti-farmer attitude of the NDA government is responsible for the plight of farmers who have

not only been stonewalled for eight months, but even their deaths are not being recognised”. The SAD condemns this anti-human attitude and requests the agriculture minister to apologise to farmers for this statement and assure the country that the ‘annadaata’ will not be humiliated in this manner again in Parliament, she said in a statement, adding that the government refused to recognise the death of over 550 farmers by “feigning ignorance”. The SAD leader said the NDA government had also made it clear in Parliament that it was functioning in a dictatorial manner and had not even cared to conduct any study to ascertain the apprehensions in minds of farmers

about the three farm laws. Tomar’s assertion that no study has been conducted on this issue proves that this government is committed to fulfilling its pact with the corporations and will not even take any feedback from farmers on the three farm laws. This is against the very essence of democracy, said the Bathinda MP. The SAD leader demanded that the government drop this intransigent attitude and take into account the objections raised by farmers. “If the government does this, it will automatically understand the need to repeal the three black laws and will not keep demanding that the farmers discuss the provisions of the three laws,” Harsimrat said.

# Veerraju starts off on BJP’s ‘temple yatra’

Continued from page 1

He also alleged that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy has failed to fulfil the promises he had made to the people of Andhra Pradesh before the Assembly elections. He also accused Jagan of giving priority to promotion of Christianity in the State and neglecting the Hindu faith. “Hindus in Andhra Pradesh are in distress as the State government failed to check the attacks on temples,” Veerraju said. He added that the State govern-

ment failed to nab the culprits behind the desecration of temples in the State for the last one year. Veerraju reminded that Jagan had assured government employees that he would scrap the Contributory Pension Scheme if the YSRCP was voted to power and neglected it after winning the elections. The BJP leader said the State government is also not paying the retirement benefits to the government employees and added that Rs 3000 crore retirement benefits are yet to be cleared.

# Sensational Mirabai snatches Silver at Tokyo

Continued from page 1

Aisah Windy Cantika of Indonesia took home the bronze with an effort of 194kg (84kg+110kg) Considered her weakness in the run up to the marquee event, Chanu attempted 84kg in her first snatch attempt. The Manipuri took her time and cleanly heaved the barbell She lifted 87kg in her next attempt and raised the weight to 89kg, which was one 1kg more than her personal best of 88kg that she had lifted at the national championship last year. However, she was unable to



better her personal best and settled for 87kg in the snatch event only behind leader Zhihui, who created a new

Olympic record with an effort of 94kg. The Chinese lifter also holds the world mark (96kg) in the category. In the clean jerk, Chanu, the world record holder in the section, lifted 110kg and 115kg in the first two attempts However, she was unable to raise 117kg in her final attempt but it was enough to fetch her a medal and open India’s account The diminutive Manipuri broke down after realising that she has secured a medal and hugged her coach in jubilation She later broke into a dance too to celebrate the historic podium finish.

# Edu needs need to be reconfigured..

Continued from page 1

Kasturirangan said the regulatory mechanism of higher education would be overhauled with key functions like regulation, accreditation, funding and academic standard- setting conducted by independent bodies under the umbrella of a new Higher Education Commission of India. “The HECI Bill to be introduced in the monsoon session of Parliament is eagerly awaited. Regulation, under the charge of a National Education Regulatory Council, will be light, but tight,” Kasturirangan remarked. AP Education Minister A Suresh said the state government was in full support of the NEP-2020. Indian Science Congress Association president Vijayalakshmi Saxena, SRM-AP Pro-Vice Chancellor D Narayana Rao, Vice-Chancellor V S Rao and others attended.

## Rs 700 cr tax...

Continued from page 1

“During the search, it was found that they have been operating several companies in the names of their employees, which have been used for booking bogus expenses and routing of funds.. Several of the employees, whose names were used as shareholders and directors, have admitted that they were not aware of such companies,” the tax department said in a statement.

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹210
Without Skin	₹200
Broiler at Farm	₹130

EGG RATES ₹/100	
VIJAYAWADA	480
HYDERABAD	477
VISAKHAPATNAM	470
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.80

# KCR, Jagan hold the key to India’s next President

Continued from page 1

It may also be mentioned here that in the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament, the YSRCP has changed its tack, and has been doing its best to corner the BJP. On its part, the TRS too is

trying to create problems for the NDA government in Parliament by stalling the business. The change of tack by these two political parties will undoubtedly give the BJP leadership some sleepless nights as the day of the Presidential elections draws nearer.

# India urges G20 nations to bring down emissions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has urged the G20 countries to bring down per capita emissions to the global average by 2030 in view of the fast-depleting available carbon space. In the two-day environment ministerial meet at the 16th G20 Summit held in Naples, Italy, Union Environment Minister Bhopender Yadav, who led the Indian delegation, said, “We have noted the pledges made by some countries to achieve Net Zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for carbon neutrality by or around mid-century. However, this may not be adequate in view of fast depleting available carbon space. Therefore, and keeping in

view the legitimate need of developing countries to grow, we urge G20 countries to commit to bringing down per capita emissions to global average by 2030, the minister asked the G20 nations. In a joint G20 Energy-Climate Ministerial Communiqué, the G20 nations acknowledged the importance of science-based approach in policy making. “We acknowledge that the Covid-19 crisis has reaffirmed the importance of science-based approach in policymaking. We emphasise the serious warning coming from the global scientific community, that this must be the decade of action to address the urgent challenges of climate change and its linkages with biodiver-

sity loss and human health. “We thus resolve to work together to ensure that our collective international commitments, as well as national actions, remain informed by the best available science,” the nations said. The countries also said they recall and reaffirm the commitment made by developed countries, to the goal of mobilising jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020 and annually through 2025 to address the needs of developing countries, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, and those funds may come from a wide variety of sources, public and private, bilateral, and multilateral, including alternative sources.

# TDP men welcome to quit: Sajjala

Continued from page 1

“It is not surprising that they chose to buy land somewhere in a remote village about 20 km away Uddandaryanipalem where there was not even a proper road? No one can stop the investigation into the Amaravati lands scam,” the senior YSRCP leader said. Ramakrishna Reddy said that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy is making all efforts to protect Visakhapatnam Steel Plant and demanded the Andhra Pradesh BJP leaders to pressurise Prime Minister Narendra Modi to stop the privatisation process by conveying the sentiments of the people.

# Brazil suspends Covaxin studies

Continued from page 1

“Anvisa received this Friday (23/7) a statement from the company Bharat Biotech, via e-mail, informing that Precise Comercializao de Medicamentos Ltda. is no longer authorized to represent Bharat in Brazil,” the Brazilian regulator said. There are two processes of the company related to the regularisation of Covaxin in Brazil- an application for authorisation for emergency use and a protocol for conducting clinical research in that country. Based on the communication made by Bharat Biotech, Anvisa will reassess the processes underway at the Agency and adopt the relevant measures, it said.

The clinical trials of Covaxin in Brazil did not commence. On February 26, Bharat Biotech Ltd had said it signed an agreement with the Brazilian government for the supply of 20 million doses of Covaxin during the second and third quarters of 2021. Following the graft allegations and subsequent inquiry by the authorities, the Brazilian government had earlier suspended Covaxin’s order temporarily. Bharat Biotech will continue to work diligently with Anvisa, the Brazilian drug regulatory body to complete the regulatory approval process for Covaxin, Bharat Biotech said on Friday while announcing the termination of its pact with its Brazilian partners.

# Godavari in spate in TS, AP on alert

Continued from page 1

The present storage is at 6.34 tmc against the full storage of 9.66 tmc and the inflow was at 3.3 lakh cusecs and outflow at 3.72 lakh cusecs. Tungabhadra’s storage capacity touched 74.58 tmc (full storage 100.86 tmc) with the inflow at 1.16 lakh cusecs and the outflow at 6,823 cusecs. The water level in Srisailem project has been steadily increasing. On Saturday, the level reached 855 ft as against the FRL of 885 ft and the storage capacity is now at 93.58 tmc as against the full capacity of 215 tmc. The inflow into the reservoir was at 3.7 lakh cusecs and the outflow at 25,427 cusecs. In the Nagarjuna Sagar project, the water level rose to 537 ft (590 ft) and the present capacity is at 182 tmc (312 tmc). Pulichintala is at 43.6 tmc storage capacity (45.77 tmc). In the Godavari basin, the present level in SRSP is at 1,089 tmc (1091 tmc) and the storage capacity at 80.14 tmc (90.31 tmc) with inflows at 75,980 cusecs and the outflow at 57,980 cusecs. The water level in SripadaYellampally is at 480 ft (FRL 485 ft) and the present storage is at 16.11 tmc (20.18 tmc) and the inflow is at 1.71 lakh cusecs and outflow at 1.01 lakh cusecs. Other projects in Godavari basin- Singur, Nizam Sagar, Mid Manair, Lower Manair and Kaddam are also getting steady inflows and the storage levels are increasing in LMD and Kaddam.

# Bouncers: Can they be a law unto themselves?

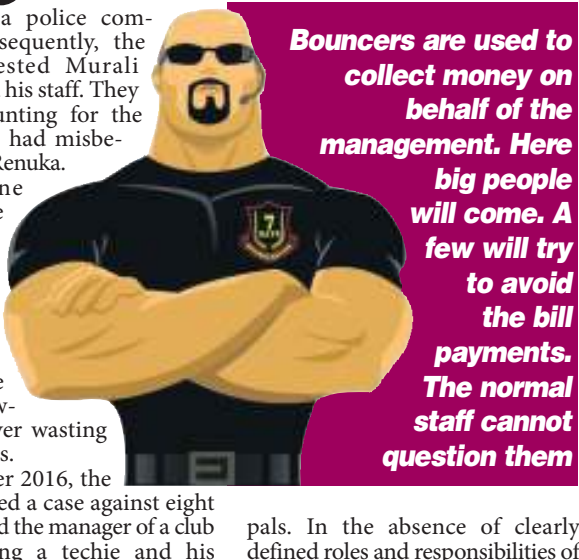
G RAVI KIRAN ■ HYDERABAD

Pub and bar security bouncers look formidable and often intimidating. Yet, their functions are usually defined: age verification, crowd control, dress code enforcement, intervening in altercations, administering first aid, and, in some cases, ejecting from the establishment patrons who cause disturbances or fights. The manner in which such security personnel accomplish their duties is crucial. However, in the twin cities, of late questions are being raised about the responsibility of bouncers in pubs and bars and the limits to which they can go within the bounds of law. On12th June, Renuka and her husband Shiva went to a pub in

Begumpet. While dancing on the floor, one of the side dancers reportedly misbehaved with her. An argument ensued between them, but none of the bouncers intervened. Nobody even warned the dancer who had misbehaved. Finding themselves in a helpless situation, the couple left the pub. Renuka, seething with anger at the indignity she suffered, did not want to leave the deviant dancer. She met the Manager of the pub, Murali Krishna, along with her sister Sony, and demanded to see the CCTV footage to nail the accused. But, the Manager was reluctant to give the footage, since he feared the management would land in a soup. To scare away the women, Murali Krishna and his staff, including bouncers, attacked Renuka and Sony. The victims

then filed a police complaint. Subsequently, the police arrested Murali Krishna and his staff. They are now hunting for the dancer who had misbehaved with Renuka. In June 2019, three persons were allegedly thrashed by bouncers at a pub in Jubilee Hills, following a tiff over wasting tissue papers. In October 2016, the police booked a case against eight bouncers and the manager of a club for assaulting a techie and his

pals. In the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities of



bouncers in pubs, many clients of pubs and bars now feel the dire need for regulating the duties of bouncers as per rules applicable to them from the security standpoint. V. Madhu, a customer of a pub, said: “The bouncers are used to collect money on behalf of the management. Here big people will come. A few will try to avoid the bill payments. The normal staff cannot question them. Then bouncers will enter the scene and they will collect the money by hook or crook. At the same time, if any person who is close to the management or having influence is disturbing others, these bouncers will not care. They will treat the customers as per their status.” The head of a security agency said: “Actually, we suggest they

learn martial arts, instead of building unnecessary muscle power. But they do not follow it. They would like to display their huge personalities. A few bouncers are used to having close relations with high status people and participating in settlements also. If it comes to our notice, we will take action, but the management itself hides all these things from us”. The police also cannot object as the management hires them through security agencies. Unless and until a customer comes forward and complains, the police cannot enter any premises just like that and question anyone. The customers are demanding that the management should protect them first. Accordingly, the roles and responsibilities of bouncers should be regulated, they say.

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**BITCOIN FRAUD**  
1 held for cheating  
people of Rs 3 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Detective Department of Hyderabad Cyber Crimes Police have arrested a person who cheated people to the tune of Rs 3.1 lakhs under the pretext of selling bitcoins.

The accused person identified as Akshay Gowda, 25, a resident of Bangalore was arrested on Friday and brought to city on Saturday.

A complaint was lodged by P Manish Reddy, a resident of Hyderabad on April 8 stating that he was cheated to the tune of Rs 3,14,526 through online on the pretext of selling bitcoins. Hence, he requested to register a case.

After registering the case, the Detective Department of the Cyber Crime wing has taken up the investigation and have found that the accused had technical expertise and cheated many people in the name of bitcoin trading.

The modus operandi was that the accused made friendship with the bitcoin traders through binance and Wzrix websites. Initially, the accused sold bitcoins to the online traders by receiving money to his bank account.

# Govt banking AP future on NEP-2020, says Adimulapu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Stating that education should have equality, accessibility, affordability, accountability and reachability, State Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh on Saturday said that the Andhra Pradesh government is taking steps towards implementing the National Education Policy-2020.

Addressing at a webinar 'Creating a Vibrant Knowledge Society - An Indian Strategy for 21st Century' organised by SRM University here, Suresh said that the State government, under the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, has accepted the concept and recommendations of National Education Policy-2020.

"The State government has introduced several novel programmes and schemes to bring education to everyone, and NEP-2020's recommendations have aided to take their schemes forward," he said.

Suresh said that the State Government has further introduced full fee reimbursement for students from families



Below the Poverty Line. "People who were denied education for centuries now can find their voices. Not a single child will be denied education. Hence, the Government of Andhra Pradesh has allocated 17 per cent of its budget, i.e. nearly Rs 30,000 crore, to education. We are currently spending 2-3 per cent of GSDP one education which is very close to what has been prescribed in the NEP-2020," the Minister said.

Prof D Narayana Rao, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, SRM

University, said that NEP was poised to yield outstanding results in the fields of Higher Education, research, innovation and Science and Technology development in the country.

Prof Narayana Rao said that NEP-2020 could be a game-changer for education in the country. He also opined that no country has achieved self-reliance without education of high quality.

Dr Kasturirangan asserted that over the next decade,

India would have the highest population of young people in the world, more than 50 per cent below the age of 35 years aspiring for high-quality education.

He explained the role of universities, degree colleges, the importance of open and distance education and the role of teachers. "Teachers are the pillars of the successful implementation of NEP-2020. The new policy has facilitated the teachers and revised their roles to achieve the goal," Dr Kasturirangan said.

Dr Vijayalakshmi Saxena, in the special address, said that the previous policy on education was decades old. "With the changing time, the policy also needed to be improvised. NEP-2020 has filled the void and came up with suggestions for the making of the 21st century," she said.

Dr Saxena said, "As educators, it is our duty to bring youngsters to take up new challenges. The vision of Indian Education, as mentioned in the policy, is to touch everyone's life, consistent with their needs and necessities."

# Govt wants baseline tests before schools reopen: teachers unhappy

C PRADEEP KUMAR  
■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has given instruction to the School Education Department to conduct baseline tests on students of Classes 1 to 10 from July 27 to July 31 across the state. The students will complete the baseline test at home and the teachers will disseminate the test paper to the parents so that the children do not have to be physically present in school.

The proceedings issued by the government pertaining to the conduct of baseline tests say that the question paper will be given to the parents and the students will write the test sitting at home.

The test will be conducted from July 27 to 30 and the answer papers will be collected from July 28 to August 3. Evaluation of the paper will begin from August 4 to 10 and the result will be declared later.

Meanwhile, doubts have been aired by headmasters of some schools on conducting the test effectively on such short notice as a few schools across the state have student strength of 300 to 500. Organising the test at such short notice would be an uphill



task, said the headmasters.

Andhra Pradesh Teachers Federation secretary T Nagaraju said that the State government has made it clear that the schools will be reopened from August 16, it would be better if the baseline test was conducted after the schools reopen as was the practice earlier.

"By conducting the test by making the students write at home will not yield any good result as there will be no supervision of the teacher or anyone at home. On the other hand, the student might get the help from family members and ultimately, this will not help teachers

assess the calibre of the student," Nagaraju said.

V Swapna, a teacher, said that the entire process was a tedious exercise and distributing the question papers and collecting the answer papers and evaluating and updating the details of the marks of students on the official website of the education department was very hectic. "Most of the staff are engaged in various government programmes and this work would be an additional burden," she said. "It would be better to conduct the baseline tests after schools reopen," Swapna said.



# Shakambari fete at Durga temple concludes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The three-day annual Shakambari celebrations at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy temple atop Indrakeeladri ended on Saturday.

On the last day, Civil Supplies Minister Kodali Venkateswara Rao, along with his family visited the temple and offered special pujas.

Temple Executive Officer D Bhramaramba, Trust Board chairman P Somi Naidu,

Trust Board members, priests and others welcome the Minister. After the special pujas, the temple EO presented the portrait of the presiding deity and prasadam to the Minister.

Meanwhile, a large number

of devotees visited the temple during the three days to take part in the Shakambari celebrations. Devotees, priests, officials and other dignitaries prayed to the Goddess for the wellbeing of the people of Andhra Pradesh and performed

pujas for bountiful rainfall in the State. Nearly 50 tonnes of vegetables, fruits, leaves and flowers were used to decorate the deity and other parts of the temple on Indrakeeladri as part of the Shakambari celebrations.

# Cops invoke PD Act against two chain snatchers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As part of ongoing drive against habitual offenders to create sense of safety and security to the public, especially women, the Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat invoked proceedings under PD Act against two habitual and notorious chain snatching offenders, hailing from Nalgonda district and detained them in Central Prison at Cherlapally on Saturday.

The accused Kethavath Narsingh and Islavath Vignesh are relatives. They initially worked in hotels and as their earnings could not suffice to meet their lavish expenses, they hatched a plan to snatch chains. They used to move on bikes in the colonies and select elderly women to execute their plan easily.

In April, they committed two offences in the limits of Meerpet PS in a week.

# Govt using liquor to get loans: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP spokesperson Syed Rafi on Saturday said that the YS Jaganmohan Reddy government was 'shamelessly' trying to use the addiction of drunks in the State to take loans worth Rs 25,000 crore.

Rafi alleged that Finance Minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy was roaming the streets of Delhi to get these massive loans by showing Rs 20,000 crore in annual revenue to the State from liquor sales. "It was high time that the Chief Minister explained to women whether he was committed to his slogan of credibility and the promise he made in the YSRCP manifesto to phase out liquor," Rafi said.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader alleged that Jaganmohan Reddy's "betrayals and misdeeds" in his capacity as the Chief Minister were setting new records. "While the Chief



Minister promised a steady reduction in liquor consumption in his five-year term, the fact is that there has been a steady rise in Excise revenue in the past two years. The present rulers spoke of shutting down belt shops but later they opened mobile liquor shops," he stated.

Rafi said that YSRCP activists were freely roaming to all corners of the State to sell liquor bottles on their motorcycles.

"The Chief Minister's relatives are involved in manufacturing spurious liquor and selling it to fill their pockets. In the past two years, over Rs 10,000 crore in illegal revenue has flown into Jagan's personal Tadepalli treasury," he alleged.

# Biz houses urged to help contain Covid

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Warning that stern action will be initiated against anyone found violating Covid guidelines, Krishna district Collector J Nivas and Vijayawada Police Commissioner B Srinivasulu on Saturday said that the responsibility of adhering to protocols also lies on trading and business associations.

A meeting chaired by Nivas and Srinivasulu was held with representatives of trading and business associations, hotel associations, residential welfare associations and Rythu Bazaar committee at Tummalapalli Kalakshetram on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion,



the Collector said that all the business people should ensure that Covid guidelines are followed strictly to contain the spread of the virus. This alert was being given for the business people to be more cautious and imposing fines was

not within their rights. He said the owners of business establishment should form a committee and follow the guidelines strictly. Violation of Covid rules for first time will be a warning and a second violation will attract penalties to

the tune of Rs 10,000 to 25,000, said the Collector.

He said in the wake of warnings of Covid third wave, Section 144 will be in force from July 22 to 30.

Criminal cases will be booked on hospitals if found violating Covid rules for the second time and this has been clearly mentioned in GO 371. If business people fail to follow Covid guidelines strictly, they run the risk of the business establishment being shut down, said the Collector.

The police commissioner said that Covid spread can be contained by social distance and wearing masks in public places.

# Governor celebrates 2 years in office

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Expressing immense pleasure at completing two years as Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Biswabasan Harichandan on Saturday said that he would never forget the love and affection he received from the people of the State. He thanked the State government and the entire team of Raj Bhavan staff for the two years.

Speaking to officers and staff members of Raj Bhavan and officials of Indian Red Cross Society, AP State Branch, who met him on the occasion, Harichandan said that the AP State Branch of Indian Red Cross Society has broken all



records in tree plantation and blood donation and they have done a lot of work even during the difficult Covid pandemic. The Governor said that he

had instructed the Red Cross Society officials to make it a mission to ensure that no life is lost in the State for want of blood.

Harichandan planted saplings in the Raj Bhavan premises to mark the completion of two years in office on Saturday. Due to Covid-19 restrictions no programmes were organised on the occasion.

A Shyam Prasad, Joint Secretary to Governor, officers and staff members of Raj Bhavan met the Governor and greeted him on the occasion.

Dr A Sridhar Reddy, Chairman and AK Parida, General Secretary of AP State Branch of Indian Red Cross Society, were among those who met the Governor and extended greetings on the occasion.



# Counting of votes for Eluru Municipal Corporation today

- Decks cleared for counting with HC lifting stay orders
- EC Nilam Sawhney makes suggestions over counting

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector Kartikeya Mishra has said that all arrangements have been made for the counting of votes for the Eluru Municipal Corporation elections to be held on Sunday. On Saturday, the Collector inspected the counting arrangements at CR Reddy Engineering College at Vaturl of Eluru suburb.

It may be recalled that the elections for all municipalities and corporations were held on March 10 across Andhra Pradesh. Following a petition filed by Janasena leaders in the High Court alleging that there are so many anomalies in the preparation of voters' list, the court issued stay orders and directed the Election Commission to stop counting votes on March 14. As the High court vacated the stay order 15 days ago, the Election Commission ordered to hold counting of votes on July 25 (Sunday).

The Collector said that the Eluru Municipal Corporation election counting staff had completed the training programme and the permits have been given to the counting agents. He said all arrangements have been completed as per the Election Commission



## EC Nilam Sawhney inspects counting centre

Meanwhile, State Election Commissioner Nilam Sawhney also inspected the counting centre of the Eluru municipal corporation at CR Reddy Engineering College on Saturday afternoon. District Collector Kartikeya Mishra, DIG KV Mohan Rao and district SP Rahul Dev Sharma welcomed Nilam Sawhney at the counting centre by presenting bouquets.

She made several suggestions to the officials over conducting the counting. Collector Mishra explained the measures taken for the counting. SP Sharma told her that security has been stepped up and prohibitory orders under Section 144 were promulgated in the area till the counting of votes.

regulations.

The collector warned that all candidates, agents and the counting staff should wear masks and face shields and those who are not following the Covid instructions will not be allowed into the counting hall. Mishra inspected the counting centre, the reception centre, observatory room, strong room, lighting in the counting

hall 1,2,3,4, counting table arrangements, barricades, mike system, and CCTV cameras. Joint Collector K Venkataramana Reddy, DRO David Raju, Eluru RDO Panabaka Rachna, Eluru DSP Dr Dilip Kiran, Eluru Municipal Commissioner Chandrasekhar, Eluru Tasildar Somasekhar and others participated.

# East Godavari going for curfew again

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Though the normalcy prevailed after the second tranche of the coronavirus across Andhra Pradesh, the people of East Godavari are still waging a war against the pandemic as there is no let-up in the number of cases. As the fear of the corona subsided, people are roaming in groups as if there is no threat of the pandemic. The district authorities have been forced to reinforce curfew again. The state and the Central governments are empowered to impose restrictions under curfew where more than 10 per cent of positive cases were registered.

East Godavari district has been exempted from strict curfew in the past and all districts were being subjected to impose night curfew. Crowds flock to liquor stores, meat shops, temples and prayer halls in the district. As the people became adamant in following the Covid regulations, the cases are also gradually increasing in the district.

The curfew has already been imposed in P Gannavaram mandal of the district from 6 am to 2 pm till the end of this month. The curfew regulations are also imposed in Razole mandal from Friday. According to reports, 12 corona cases were reported in Bobbili Lanka village in



Sithanagaram mandal of the district and 8 in Vangalapudi, PHC Dr Chaitanya said.

The district administration announced that the lockdown was implemented in two villages from 6 pm to 6 am since most of the patients are involved in the catering business. Unknowingly, they spread the disease leading to a gradual increase in the cases. So, curfew restrictions became imminent.

About 3500 beds were being set up in public and private hospitals across the district in the wake of the third wave warnings which is likely to hit from August onwards. Meanwhile, District Collector Muralidhar Reddy has been transferred and he was replaced by Harikiran, who was transferred from Kadapa as the new Collector. It became a topic now how the new Collector will tackle the Covid situation.



**The curfew has already been imposed in P Gannavaram mandal of the district from 6 am to 2 pm till the end of this month. The curfew regulations are also imposed in Razole mandal from Friday.**

## UNIVERSAL TEACHER



State BJP president Somu Veerajulu performing a special puja for Sai Baba at a temple on the occasion of Guru Purnima at Purushothapattanam in Guntur district on Saturday.

# Rich tributes paid to poet Gurram Jashua

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Rich tributes are paid to popular Telugu poet Gurram Jashua on the occasion of his 50th death anniversary in Guntur district on Saturday. Many literary people and people's representatives paid homage to him on the occasion.

Born at Chatragaddapadu in Vinukonda mandal of Guntur district, Gurram Jashua is a Legendary figure in the Telugu literary world. With his immense wisdom and through the struggle he faced due to caste-based discrimination, Joshua has written the poetry with a universal approach. For his contribution to the Telugu poetry and society, he was called the "Poet of the Millennium" for his timeless pieces of poetry and literature.

Home Minister Mekatoti Sucharita laid flowers at the portrait of Jashua and paid tributes. Education Minister



Suresh garlanded the statue of Jashua at Nagarampalem and paid floral tributes to him.

Speaking at a memorial function, Suresh lauded Joshua as a great poet who spread the Dalits' anguish and created awareness on the social evils such as superstition and untouchability through his literature. Dokka Manikya Varaprasad, who presided over

the meeting, said that Palnadu district should be named as Joshua district for one of the newly formed districts in the state.

MLAs Sheikh Mustafa, Maddala Giridhar, MLCs Lella Appireddy, KS Lakshmana Rao, Kalpa Latha Reddy, Mayor Kavati Manohar Naidu, Joint Collector Prashanthi, Chairman of the Madya

Vimochana Prachara Committee, V Lakshmana Reddy and others participated.

In Vinukonda, the birthplace of Joshua, the MLA Bolla Brahmanayudu paid homage to Jashua at his statue on the Narasaraopeta Road. Lutheran Church Welfare society paid rich tributes by placing flowers at Joshua Memorial Tomb in Anandapeta.

## TOKYO OLYMPICS

# 5k-run taken out in Guntur to cheer for India

PNS ■ GUNTUR

District Collector Vivek Yadav flagged off the 'Cheer for India' Tokyo Olympic 5k run on Saturday under the auspices of the Nehru Yuva Kendra. The 5K run, which started from the Collectorate reached the Nehru Youth Center via Government General Hospital, Kothapet and Old Bus Stand. More than 200 youth volunteers, officers and amateur runners participated in the run.

On this occasion, East MLA Sheikh Mustafa, who was the chief guest at the event, said he wanted athletes from the state to showcase their talent and achieve medals at the Tokyo Olympics and bring recognition to the nation and the state.

Nehru Yuva Kendra State Director, BJ Prasanna, Mayor



Kavati Manohar Naidu, Joint Collectors Dinesh Kumar, Sridhar Reddy, Step CEO Srinivas Reddy, RDO Bhaskar Reddy, Nehru Yuva Kendra District Officer, Kiranmayi Devireddy, NCC Officer Praveen Kumar and others were present on the occasion.

# Desam leaders stage protest over bad roads



PNS ■ ONGOLE

Telugu Desam Party Ongole Parliament Constituency in charge Dr Nukasani Balaji has criticized Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for making the roads full of potholes and raising corrupt practices.

In Prakasam district Kanigiri, TDP in-charge Dr Mukku Ugra Narasimha Reddy organized a unique programme 'Corruption at every step of Jagan's rule, potholes at every step of the road'. As part of it, TDP in-charges from Ongole constituencies and TDP leaders repaired the potholes on roads by filling with mud in

Kanigiri town holding shovels and fur uniquely.

TDP leader Balaji said that the roads across the district were in bad condition and the people's representatives and officials were not bothered. The TDP would take up public issues and question the government until they are resolved. Kondapi MLA Dr Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy said the state was entrapped in corruption under the rule of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. It did not care even if the roads and potholes were causing many problems to the commuters and motorists. They demanded that public issues should be resolved

on a war footing.

Kanigiri TDP in-charge Ugra Narasimhareddy said that all the roads in Kanigiri constituency were miserable and people and motorists were facing many problems with potholes at every step and even the rural roads were very bad. Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the places where houses were being built in the ambitious Jagananna Colonies were facing ponds and people did not want to enter into the houses.

Giddalur constituency TDP in-charge former MLA Muthumula Ashok Reddy expressed their protest by filling potholes in several parts of Giddalur. Darsi TDP coordinator Pamidi Ramesh, Markapuram TDP in-charge Kandula Narayana Reddy, Yerragonda Palam TDP in-charge Eriksen Babu, Kusuma Kumari and TDP leaders of Ongole, Kanigiri, Giddalur, Darshi, Markapuram, Y Palam and Kondepi constituencies and activists participated in the protest.

# Guntur TDP leaders on protest over potholes

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Telugu Desam Party on Saturday staged protests against the poor condition of roads in Guntur district. Two protest programmes are organized under the aegis of TDP in Guntur city on Saturday.

East constituency in-charge Nasir led a protest at potholed roads on the Donka road, while west constituency in-charge Kovelamoodi Ravindra organized a protest by taking up paddy transplantation on the waterlogged potholes in the middle of the Palakaluru road.

Former minister Pathipati Pulla Rao, who participated in the programme alleged that the YSRCP government was creating a crisis in the name of welfare. It had not spent a single rupee on

roads and the existing roads had been laid during the last TDP regime. Since the government is not clearing the pending bills for the works done during the previous government, no contractor is coming forward to do the work, though the tenders were called. The roads in the state have become impassable, he said.

Guntur Parliamentary Party President Tenali Sravan Kumar said that the government's negligence in the development of roads, which were a symbol of civilization, was atrocious. The burden of taxes on the people was greater than the welfare. Meanwhile, TDP activists protested against the bad condition of roads in several constituencies in Guntur district as per the call given by the party leadership.



# Apply on the day of wedding and get a house in 45 days!

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

In an innovative initiative, the state government launched a programme for the newly married couple who can apply for a house on the day of their marriage under the scheme 'Navaratnalu - Pedalandariki illu' and get a house within 45 days and the process is going on, Cherukuvada Sri Ranganath Raju, Minister for Housing said on Saturday.

The Minister along with West Godavari District Joint Collector (Housing) G Sooraj Dhananjay on Saturday inspected the layouts of Muthyalamma Jagananna Housing Colony in Yendagandi village of Undi Mandal interacted with the beneficiaries and issued directions to the authorities. He directed the officials that the beneficiaries should take steps to ensure that the house-warming events were celebrated by March 31 and the authorities should make continuous efforts to realise the dream of the shelterless people.

Later, Ranganatha Raju told media persons that he visited the layouts of the Jagananna Colony in Yendagandi village in the mandal. The beneficiaries in the layouts were speedily constructing houses. About 429 houses were under construction in four layouts in the village alone. He said he had brought to the notice of the Chief Minister that the area was frequently flooded due to the Red Canal and he responded immedi-

## Give suggestions, not criticism!



ELURU:

Minister of State for Housing Cherukuvada Sri Ranganatharaju said that the Jagananna colonies were being developed as model colonies with all infrastructure facilities and asked the scribes to give suggestions to make Maha Yagna a success for providing houses to the critically poor people. Speaking at a media conference at the local Zilla Parishad hostel on Saturday, Minister Sri Ranganatha Raju said that some newspapers were creating confusion and fear among the beneficiaries as they were carrying out a programme of land acquisition to give houses to about 31 lakh people. He said housing construction was already in full swing in Jagananna colonies across the state. "Initially, we are carrying out 15.60 lakh houses. Of these, about 3.27 lakh houses have opted for Option 3 of hiring an officer for every 20 beneficiaries to carry out the house building programme" he added.

ately and agreed to fill the area for over two meters.

The Housing Minister said his government was focusing on welfare and development and efforts are on to complete the housing and make it a model colony. About 30 lakh families across the state have been provided with houses and 3 lakh Tdco houses were sanctioned. A total of 33 lakh houses are under construction at various levels. The government was spending Rs 12,000 crore on the housing scheme. The housing colonies were not coming and they were constantly monitoring the progress of housing works by visiting all the districts across the state, he added.

Ranganatha Raju said that special attention has been laid to housing and one IAS officer has

been appointed for each district and special officers for each division and constituency. People who gave their pattas during the previous governments are going to own the houses by realizing their dream of owning a house. Measures like land acquisition, filling, electricity, drinking water connection, underground drainage and CC roads were being taken up and a decent infrastructure and model colonies will be developed.

Department of Housing PD Alluri Rama Raju, Tahsildar A Krishna Jyoti, Housing Department EE John Moses, DEB Venkata Ramana, RWSDE Kedanand, MPDO NY Gangadhara Rao, village sarpanch G Chinna Krishna Murthy and others were present.



RAIDS ON MEDIA GROUPS

# CBDT probing ₹2,200-cr ‘fictitious transactions’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBDT on Saturday claimed to have detected ‘fictitious transactions’ of Rs 2,200 crore after the Income Tax Department carried out multi-city raids against the Dainik Bhaskar media group early this week.

It said the searches that were launched on July 22 in nine cities like Bhopal, Indore, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Noida and some others are “continuing and further investigations are in progress.”

The voluminous material found during the search operations is being examined,” the CBDT statement issued here said.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) frames policy for the IT Department.

While the statement did not name the group, official sources identified it to be the Bhopal headquartered Dainik Bhaskar group which is involved in various business sectors like media, power, textiles and real estate

with a group turnover of more than Rs 6,000 crore per annum. “Cyclical trading and transfer of funds among group companies engaged in unrelated businesses to the tune of Rs 2,200 crore has been found.

“The enquiries have confirmed that these have been fictitious transactions without any actual movement or delivery of goods. The tax effect and violation of other laws are being examined,” the statement alleged.

The media group, on the day of the raids, had posted a message on its website saying the government was scared of its true journalism. From bodies in river Ganga to Corona deaths, the group that brought the real numbers in front of the country is being raided by the government, it alleged in a message in Hindi.

“I am independent because I am Bhaskar. Only the readers’ will matters in Bhaskar,” it had said. The CBDT statement alleged that the group has more than 100 companies including the holding and subsidiary com-

panies and that they have been operating several companies in the names of their employees that have been used for booking ‘bogus’ expenses and routing of funds.

“During the search, several of the employees, whose names were used as shareholders and directors, have admitted that they were not aware of such companies and had given their Aadhaar card and digital signature to the employer in good faith.

“Some were found to be relatives, who had willingly and knowingly signed the papers but had no knowledge or control of the business activities of the companies, in which they were supposed to be directors and shareholders,” the CBDT claimed.

Such companies, it alleged, have been used for multiple purposes like “booking bogus expenses” and “siphoning off” the profits from listed companies, routing of funds so siphoned into their closely held companies to make investments, making of circular transactions etc.

# Decided in Rio Olympics itself that I will prove: Chanu

PNS ■ TOKYO

An Olympic medal finally around her neck, star Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu on Saturday said she can finally take a break at home without worrying about training after managing just five trips to her place in Manipur in the last five years.

“I have just been home for five days in the past five years. Now I will go with this medal,” said Chanu, whose family is based in Nongpok Kakching village about 20 kilometres from Imphal.

“I will now go home and eat food made by my mother,” she added.

Chanu revealed that after the Rio Games debacle she changed her training and technique completely so that she could redeem herself in Tokyo.

Competing in her second Olympics, Chanu claimed the silver medal in the 49kg category with a total of 202kg (87kg+115kg). It was India’s second Olympic medal in the sport after Karnam Malleswari’s bronze that came 21 years ago at the Sydney Games.

“My dream of winning an Olympic medal has been fulfilled today. I tried a lot in Rio,

## Prez congratulates Mirabai for winning silver medal

**DELHI:** President Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday congratulated Mirabai Chanu for winning a silver medal in weightlifting in the Tokyo Olympics. Chanu, 26, ended India’s 21-year

wait for a weightlifting medal at the Olympics by clinching the silver medal in the 49 kg category to open the country’s account in Tokyo on Saturday. “Heartiest

congratulations to Mirabai Chanu for starting the medal tally for India in the Tokyo Olympics 2020 by winning silver medal in weightlifting,” Kovind tweeted.

## Vice president hails Mirabai Chanu

**DELHI:** Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday congratulated weightlifter Mirabai Chanu for winning the silver medal for the country in Tokyo Olympics and said it had given Team India a fantastic start at the games. Chanu ended India’s 21-year wait for a weightlifting medal at the Olympics by clinching a silver medal in the 49 kg category to open the country’s account in Tokyo. “Heartily congratulations to Mirabai Chanu for winning a silver medal in 49 kg weightlifting competition and giving TeamIndia a fantastic start at the Tokyo Olympics2020. The nation is very proud of her achievement. My best wishes for her future endeavours,” Naidu said.



## India is proud of her daughter: Rahul

**DELHI:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday lauded weightlifter Mirabai Chanu for winning the first medal for the country in Tokyo Olympics and said India is proud of her daughter. “Congratulations to Mirabai Chanu for our country’s first medal on the very first day. India is proud of her daughter,” he said on Twitter. Chanu ended India’s 21-year wait for a weightlifting medal at the Olympics by clinching a silver medal in the 49 kg category to open the country’s account in Tokyo on Saturday. It was also the first time that India managed to win a medal on the opening day of competitions.

put in a lot of effort but it was not my day then. I thought that day only that I will prove myself in Tokyo,” Chanu said during a virtual press conference organised by the Sports Authority of India (SAI).

Considered a strong medal

contender five years ago in Rio as well, Chanu buckled under pressure in the women’s 48kg event and failed to log a legitimate lift.

“I learnt a lot from that day -- my training and technique was changed, we put in a lot of

effort after that.

“I was very sad after Rio, there was a lot of pressure on me and I got nervous, I couldn’t understand anything for days but then coach sir and the federation counselled me, told me that I have a lot of poten-

# Rs 2.55 cr ex gratia to kin of 17 scribes who died of Covid

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has sanctioned an ex-gratia of Rs 2.55 crore to the family members of 17 working journalists of the state who died due to COVID-19, an official release said.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approved a proposal in this regard put-forth by the Information and Public Relations (I&PR) Department on Friday. An assistance of Rs15 lakh each has been sanctioned for the families of 17 working journalists of the state, who died due to the infection.

The list of journalists who have been sanctioned ex-gratia include four from Bhubaneswar. They are—Manas Jaypuria from Zee Odisha, Basanta Das (Freelance), Bijayan Laxmi Mohanty (Aijkali), Pritiman Mohapatra (Times of India).

Three journalists from Bolangir - Subhansu Sekhara Mishra (Sambad), Jateesh Chandra Khamari (Sambad) and Kailash Chandra Sahoo (Pragatibadi) are also in the list.

Similarly, Gobind Behera (TV News 6 Web), Pradeep Kishore Sahu (Sambad), Kishore Chandra Dash (Samaj), Naresh Kumar Behera (Odisha Files), Ratnakar Moharana (Kalinga

**This financial assistance will be disbursed to the next of kin of the deceased journalists from the Journalist Welfare Fund.**

Jyoti), Nandini, Nilaya Ranjan Pattnaik, (Block Correspondent), Karunakar Sahoo (Anupam Bharat) were from Ganjam districts, whose family members will get the benefits.

Moreover, the next of kin of Bhanuprakash Rath (Naxatra TV) from Kalahandi and Ashok Kumar Sahoo (Manthan) and Pravat Kumar Routray (Loka Sampark) from Jajpur district would get the assistance. This financial assistance will be disbursed to the next of kin of the deceased journalists from the Journalist Welfare Fund.

Few such cases have been received by the Information and Public Relations Department which will be disbursed after due verification, sources said. After required enquiry at the district level, eligible applications will be considered for disbursement of the ex-gratia compassionate assistance, an official said.

# Gujarat: Four minors among nine killed in LPG explosion

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Four children and five others have succumbed to severe burn injuries they had suffered in an explosion and fire that was triggered by leakage of gas from an LPG cylinder in a room on the outskirts of Gujarat’s Ahmedabad city, a police official said on Saturday.

The incident had occurred on the night of July 20. While eight victims - labourers and their family members - died in the last couple of days during treatment, another one succumbed on Saturday. All of them were from Madhya Pradesh, he said.

“Leakage of gas from an LPG

cylinder had triggered explosion and fire, in which 10 persons, including children and women, had suffered severe burn injuries. The incident has claimed the lives of nine of them so far. They were undergoing treatment at the civil hospital,” inspector P R Jadeja of Aslali police station said.

Three persons died during treatment on Thursday, five others succumbed on Friday and one more on Saturday morning, he said.

The labourers and their family members were sleeping in the small room when the gas from their cylinder started leaking. When their neighbour knocked

on their door to alert them about it, one of the labourers got up and switched on the light, which triggered a spark and led to the explosion due to concentration of gas, another police official said.

The 10 injured persons included the neighbour who had come to alert them, and all of them were rushed to the civil hospital for treatment, he said.

The deceased have been identified as Rampyari Ahirwar (56), Rajubhai Ahirwar (31), Sonu Ahirwar (21), Seema Ahirwar (25), Sarju Ahirwar (22), Vaishali (7), Nitesh (6), Payal (4), and Akash (2), all natives of Guna district in Madhya Pradesh, the inspector added.

# Buddha’s teachings more relevant now as humanity faces Covid crisis: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that Lord Buddha’s ideas are all the more relevant now as humanity faces the COVID-19 crisis and asserted that India has shown how to face even the most difficult challenge by following the path shown by the founder of Buddhism.

In his message at Ashadha Purnima and a Dhamma Chakra Day programme, which marks the day when Buddha gave his first sermon after attain-



ing enlightenment, he said the world has felt the power of Lord Buddha’s teachings in times of tragedy.

“The entire world is moving in solidarity following the teach-

ings of the Buddha. In this, the ‘care with prayer’ initiative of the International Buddhist Confederation is praiseworthy,” the prime minister said.

Quoting ‘Dhamm Pada’, Modi said enmity does not quell enmity but is rather won over with love and a big heart.

“In times of tragedy, the world has felt this power of love and harmony. As this knowledge of Buddha, this experience of humanity gets enriched, the world will touch new heights of success and prosperity,” he added.

# Vijayan hails PH staff for tackling Nipah, Covid

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala was able to face the challenges posed by Nipah and COVID-19 due to the admirable efforts of the State public healthdepartment, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said on Saturday.

He was speaking at the online inauguration of several projects and schemes, worth Rs 25 crore, which have begun or will begin soon.

He said that the state’s public health infrastructure has been appreciated by many countries and its work is something to be proud of as thoughts “admirable efforts”, Kerala was able to face and deal with challenges posed by diseases like Nipah and COVID-19.

In order to further strengthen the health infrastructure, the previous government had decided to convert 886 primary health cen-



tres (PHCs) in the state into family health centres, he said.

As of now 480 PHCs have been converted to family health centres whose main feature was provid-

ing specialised treatment and facilities to the public at the primary level, he said.

He further said that the family health centres will have more doctors, OPD facilities will be available till evening and they will have labs and other testing systems.

Besides the PHCs, over 1600 health sub centres have been converted to health and wellness centres, where better medical

facilities and treatment would be available to the general public, he added.

Apart from the family health centres and the health and wellness centres, the other schemes and projects which were inaugurated included a welfare scheme for pregnant tribal women, a vaccine storage facility in Ernakulam and various baby care centres in various hospitals in the state.

dated July 20, 2020 makes it clear that there is no scope for any recalculation/re-computation of AGR dues.

“Even at the time of passing of the order dated July 20, 2020, an attempt was made to seek recalculation and reassessment, as recorded in the order, which was rejected by this Court outright,” the bench said.

The top court in September last year had given a time period of 10 years to telecom service providers struggling to pay Rs 93,520 crores of AGR-related dues to clear their outstanding amount to the government.

During the hearing on the applications on July 19, the bench had referred to an earlier order passed by the apex court in the matter and observed that it said no re-assessment of AGR-related dues can be done.

One of the lawyers represent-

ing a telecom firm had contended that they were not blaming the Department of

Telecommunications (DoT) for it as there are arithmetical entries and they want to place the entries before the department so that they can re-consider it.

In its September last year order, the apex court had said that telecom operators shall make the payment of 10 percent of the total dues as demanded by the DoT by March 31, 2021 and the rest amount to be paid in yearly installments commencing from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2031.

The top court, which had held that demand raised by the DoT in respect of AGR dues will be final, had said there shall be no dispute raised by the telcos and there shall not be any re-assessment.

The apex court had in October 2019 delivered its verdict on the AGR issue.

## BSY directs in-charge Ministers to stay put in rain-hit districts



and monitor the relief and rescue operations there. The Chief Minister will himself be travelling to rain and flood affected border district of Belagavi in north Karnataka on Sunday, to assess the situation there. “The Chief Minister this morning spoke to district in-charge Ministers and Deputy Commissioners of various districts and gathered information about the rain and flood situation there. He has directed the in-charge Ministers to stay put in their respective districts,” the CMO said in a statement, which also informed about Yediyurappa’s travel to Belagavi on Sunday.

## Maha considering relaxations for fully-vaccinated people



The Maharashtra government is considering granting exemptions from coronavirus-induced restrictions to the fully-vaccinated people, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said on Saturday. Speaking to reporters, Pawar also said the government was mulling an extension of the timings of shops and restaurants from the current deadline of 4 pm. He said a decision on granting relaxations on the weekends is likely next week. “The state is thinking of granting relaxations to those people who have got both doses of COVID-19 vaccine. This will encourage citizens to get inoculated,” he said. Pawar said demands are raised to extend the timings of shops and restaurants from 4 pm to 7 pm. “We are thinking of extending the timing for shops and restaurants but the final decision will be taken by the CM. We are meeting with experts on Monday after which a decision will be taken on relaxations on weekends,” the deputy CM said.



# Country will continue to attract high foreign investments: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday expressed confidence that India will continue to attract high foreign direct investment (FDIs) in the current financial year.

He said India has received highest ever FDI in the Covid-impacted 2020, in contrast with a shrinkage in investment inflows globally.

In 2020-21, FDI into the country grew by 19 per cent to USD 59.63 billion. Total FDI, including equity, re-invested earnings and capital, rose 10 per cent to USD 81.72 billion during 2020-21 as against USD 74.39 billion in 2019-20.

"This year, we are very confident that we will continue this streak of seven continuous years of historic highs in our



foreign investments," Goyal said at the CII-Horasis India Meeting webinar.

Similarly, he said, India's exports too are recording healthy growth and would reach USD 400 billion by the end of the current financial

year.

During July 1-21, export crossed USD 22 billion and it is 'poised to cross USD 32-33 billion by end of the month (July), which means our run rate is on track to achieve USD 400 billion of exports tar-

get for the first time ever".

Further, he said that currently India is in talks with 16 countries including the UK, the EU, Australia, Canada, and the UAE for trade agreements.

With some countries, India is working for early harvest agreements which will allow the country to quickly identify areas of mutual interest and progress negotiations faster towards a comprehensive economic partnership agreement, or FTAs, the minister said.

"We have focused our efforts on a few very promising agreements where I can clearly see huge comparative advantages for India to get market access and the ability to trade both in goods and services in a much bigger way. The UK, EU, Australia, Canada, UAE are countries with whom we can very quickly expand our dis-

cussions and engagements," he added.

India has inked FTAs with several countries, including Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and ASEAN members.

Under such agreements, two trading partners significantly reduce or eliminate import/customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them.

Talking about vaccination, he said the government had permitted the private sector to procure 25 per cent of Covid-19 vaccines but they are not buying.

"CII should take a lead and get all of you to ensure that you take that 25 per cent vaccines... Some industry group said we will do one crore vaccinations...Nobody has gone to Bihar, North East, Jharkhand to run campaigns to remove vaccine hesitancy," he said.

## Odisha's seafood exports cross Rs 3,000 crore

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Odisha government has decided to frame a dynamic and facilitating policy for tapping the available potential of brackish water aquaculture as the sector has recorded a significant growth in the last 10 years, an official said.

The decision in this regard was taken at a meeting held on digital mode under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary S C Mohapatra on Friday.

Secretary Fisheries and Animal Resource Development R Raghu Prasad said that there was significant growth in the sector over the last 10 years. The production of brackish water fish has increased from 11,460 MT in 2011-12 to 97,125 MT in the year 2020-21 thereby marking a record growth of 747.51 per cent.

The area under brackish water aquaculture also increased from 5,860 hectares to 17,780 hectares during the same period, he said.

The seafood export value from Odisha also increased from Rs 801 crore in the year 2011-12 to Rs 3,107 crore in



the year 2020-21 despite the economic slowdown caused by COVID-19. The quantum of export in the year 2011-12 was around 21,311 MT which increased to 60,718 MT in the year 2020-21.

"Odisha seafood has caught the global market more particularly in Japan, China, USA, countries in the European Union, South East Asia and the Middle East," said Prasad.

He also said: "There is greater potential of brackish aquaculture in the state both in the government and private land. The sector also can attract more private investments".

Keeping the potential of the sector, the chief secretary directed the departments of Revenue and Disaster Management, Fisheries and Animal Resources Development, Forest and Environment department and the Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation to work out a dynamic and facilitating policy for tapping the available potential of brackish water aquaculture in the state. IDCO was directed to identify the potential land in different districts and develop a land bank for the purpose in close coordination with fishery officers and respective collectors.



## 'India to become \$5 trn economy in 5-10 years'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The country is in an exciting phase of growth and the economy is expected to add USD 2.5 trillion in the next 5-10 years, Paytm founder and CEO Vijay Shekhar Sharma said on Saturday.

"If this country's economy is USD 2.5 trillion today. In next 5-10 years, you will see another USD 2.5 trillion. It took 70 years for us to make it USD 2.5 trillion ... Now only in 10 years all that history will be recreated and doubled.

"It's an amazing, inspiring moment for us to be in India and lucky to be in India," Sharma said while speaking at a 2-day virtual youth conclave organised by IMC Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

He said one should never hesitate to do what they feel very strongly about even if it seems small.

"When somebody makes you feel that you're solo, that's just the way you handle the adversity. And once you are a success, all these adversities will become the folklores, so you should never feel bad about it," he added.

Meanwhile, Arin Capital Chairman Mohandas Pai in another session of the conclave said, new business models can come up as the wide distribution network is no longer the limiting factor for businesses. "So your business models can come up, you can start a business and produce something in India and sell to the whole world cheaply," he added.



## Avigna to invest Rs 837 cr to build industrial parks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Avigna Industrial & Logistics Park on Saturday said it will invest Rs 837 crore in Tamil Nadu to develop industrial parks.

The company has signed a MoU with the Tamil Nadu government for an investment of Rs 837 crore in the state, Avigna said in a statement.

The agreement has been signed between Managing Director Rajasekaran S and

Executive Director Abhijit Verma from Avigna Group and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin.

"We are pleased to announce this collaboration with the State Government and look forward to not only develop industrial parks but also bring economic development to the people of the state by generating employment opportunities," said Abhijit Verma, Executive Director and CEO of Avigna Group.

## Over 620 products see price after trade margin regulation on medical devices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Around 620 brands have witnessed reduction in prices so far with the government capping trade margins on five critical medical devices such as pulse oximeter and digital thermometer, used extensively in the treatment and prevention of Covid-19, at 70 per cent with effect from July 20, Chemicals and Fertilisers ministry said on Saturday.

On July 13, the National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority (NPPA) had invoked extraordinary powers under the Paragraph 19 of DPCO, 2013, to put a cap on trade margin of five medical devices -- oximeter, glucometer, BP monitor, nebuliser and digital thermometer.



The margin was capped up to 70 per cent on Price to Distributor (PTD) level.

"Pursuant there to, a total of 684 products/brands of these medical devices have been reported as on July 23, 2021 and 620 products/brands (91 per cent) have reported down-

ward revision of MRP," Chemicals and Fertilisers ministry said in a statement.

The maximum downward revision has been reported by an imported brand of pulse oximeter, showing reduction of Rs 2,95,375 per unit, it added.

The downward revision of

## 'Rise of e-commerce creating opportunities for retailers'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rising prominence of e-commerce is creating opportunities for every retailer and the long-term outlook for the industry looks positive, supported by rising income, favourable demographics and increasing urbanisation, said Spencer's Retail Chairman Sanjiv Goenka.

The future of retail lies in 'Omni-Channel' approach, which means converging sales through both physical stores and online, according to the latest annual report of Spencer's Retail.

Besides, consumer lifestyles have undergone a "massive change" after the pandemic, leading to the emergence of newer articles of consumption even as the importance of some other "diminished".

"Rising prominence of e-commerce is creating opportunities for every retailer and this trend is likely to continue. Retailers could leverage digital channels (e-commerce), enabling them to reach out to



more consumers," said Goenka while addressing shareholders.

Talking about Spencer's e-commerce business, Goenka said it has witnessed multifold growth in the online space.

"There is a huge opportunity, not only through the current model which is achieving rapid growth but it can also scale up much further by adding multiple products, markets, and new geogra-

phies," he added. "During 2020-21, it also pioneered in phone and WhatsApp Chatbot ordering, along with various tie-ups, including Uber, Swiggy, Dunzo, RWAs and others to strengthen its Out-Of-Store channel. Spencer's has witnessed 6.5x growth in their e-commerce business from 2018-19 and 4.5x growth from 2019-20," the annual report said.

### MONEY MATTERS

## TVS Motor launches electric scooter in Kochi

TVS Motor Company, manufacturer of two and three-wheelers globally, on Saturday announced the launch of their TVS iQube Electric scooter in Kochi. Kerala Transport Minister Antony Raju and Joint Managing Director of TVS Motor Company, Sudarshan Venu,



jointly launched the scooter. "TVS iQube Electric is a green and connected, urbanscooter powered by an advanced electric drivetrain and next-gen TVS SmartXconnect platform," the company said in a release. Venu said the TVS Motor company was transforming into digital age company offering world class Green and Connected products. He said the TVS iQube Electric ecosystem is built around digital platforms that enable complete digital retail experience to customers. "As India moves ahead, its mobility solutions would increasingly be experience-led, and nowhere is this felt sharper than among the youth of India. Our focus on India's youth is embodied in the first of the TVS electric portfolio.

## Runaya sets up aluminium dross processing unit

An aluminium dross processing and refining unit has been established at Odisha's Jharsuguda by Runaya, one of the country's fastest growing manufacturing start-ups. A company official claimed that the unit at Jharsuguda is India's first integrated aluminium dross



processing unit. The facility established at an investment of Rs 64.43 crore was inaugurated by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday. This will provide an end-to-end green and sustainable solution for recovery of aluminium from dross and processing residual waste to manufacture steel slag conditioners. "Odisha is fast emerging as the manufacturing hub of Eastern India and has enabled the growth of industries in the state. We have always endeavoured to provide a hassle-free and smooth business environment for the investors in Odisha. I assure continued facilitation and support from the state government," Patnaik said after inaugurating the project.

## Assam's small tea growers demand MSP for green leaves

Small tea growers of Assam have urged the state government to fix a minimum support price for their produce as the low price realisation has been a longstanding issue for them, a statement said. Small tea growers sell their crops to bought leaf factories (BLFs). During an interaction with Industry and Commerce Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary on Thursday, representatives of small tea growers' associations of the state raised the issue of low price realisation and sought the MSP for their produce in the peak and lean seasons. They requested the state government to fix a fair price or minimum rate of their tea leaves. The issue of overpriced manure and challenges of the small tea growers of Assam were raised in the meeting, the statement said on Friday. "There will be no compromise on the quality of tea leaves and fair price," the minister said, adding that their grievances will be addressed.



## Eicher Motors to develop range of EVs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eicher Motors is developing a complete range of electric bikes in order to cater to different set of customers across various markets, as per a top company official.

Royal Enfield, which sells models like Classic, Bullet, Himalayan, Interceptor INT 650, Continental GT 650 and Meteor 350 in the country, is a part of Eicher Motors.

"The EV segment is gaining momentum with positive policy action. With an eye on the future, we are strategically working on developing our future EV products, while we continue to work on our internal combustion engine offerings," Eicher Motors Managing Director Siddhartha Lal said in the company's Annual Report for 2020-21.



Informing the company shareholders, he noted that the company has capabilities in

product development and manufacturing, coupled with a strong brand and an extensive

distribution network.

"We are leveraging all that with our keen understanding of

consumers to develop a complete range of premium electric vehicles and services for global markets, in our inimitable style of modern classic motorcycles," Lal noted. A leader in the 250cc-750 cc bike segment, the Chennai-based Royal Enfield sold a total of 6,09,403 motorcycles in the last fiscal.

Besides, the bike business under Royal Enfield, Eicher also has presence in the commercial vehicle space through VE Commercial Vehicles, a joint venture with the Volvo group. The JV produces trucks, buses, engines and engineering components.

Lal noted that while the auto major maintains immense focus on our long-term strategic business plans and goals, it strongly believes in developing an overarching Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)

vision, with renewed commitments, targets and direction - which will be extended to its partners as well.

Eicher has made improvements in energy consumption and waste management systems, two of the manufacturing units have been certified water positive, and the company steadily increases its renewable energy component as well.

"Our future commitment will be aligned with the global call for action against climate change and support the sector transition to a low carbon economy. Our development and CSR programmes will be linked to ESG action," Lal said.

The company strives to build trust and leave a positive impact not only in its own manufacturing units, but across the entire product value chain, he stated.





IF YOU CARRY JOY IN  
YOUR HEART, YOU  
CAN HEAL ANY  
MOMENT  
—CARLOS SANTANA

# NEED TO BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR RURAL INDIA

If more private companies perceive rural development during and beyond disasters as a market investment, instead of an evangelist or missionary ad-hoc project, we will be able to better support our rural regions

**STILETTOS**


**MINIMA  
CHATTERJI**

With the tragic second wave of Covid-19 in India done and dusted, malls and restaurants in cities are once again thronging with customers. However, in rural India the devastating effect of Covid-19 this time round has been so grave that the mood there might take far longer to pick up.

By May 2021, one in every two cases was in India's rural areas, while states like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan had 75% of their cases in rural areas. Exposing the weakness of the public healthcare system, rural India only had 40% of the beds in the country even when it is home to 70% of India's population. In fact the number of hospital beds per 10000 population between 2010 and 2020 reduced from 9 to 5.

I spent much of last month leading the philanthropic effort of a consortium of partners to establish more Covid care facilities in rural parts of India. It has been challenging to raise funds for Covid relief in the second wave as charitable funds for health care in India have dried up while government regulations have clamped down on international funds coming in to the NGOs in the country.

Secondly, given the intensity of this wave, only ICU beds or at least beds equipped with oxygen concentrators were mostly needed in the second wave, pushing up the effort and cost of equipment procurement. Thirdly, many individuals and organisations including established not-for-profits were no longer contributing to the cause voluntarily but instead leveraged the desperate situation of the second wave to make a buck.

Nonetheless with the support of local NGO iBihar and its founder Anis Bari, the sustained efforts of Anant National University, besides my own firm Sustain Labs, we managed to establish 13 Covid care facilities in rural Bihar.



It is indeed easy and not incorrect to blame the government as state governments with higher expenditure on health had lower confirmed cases of Covid. However, at a time when the government has demonstrated substantial inertia in effectively managing the pandemic in the country, the civil society must (and has!) step up. With management expertise, wide distribution networks in the country, human resources at disposal, the private sector has an especially strong role to play in disaster management in rural India. Corporations hold enormous influence within their domains and communities around their factories and depots that are often located in remote or rural areas. In this context, government effectiveness in rural areas can thus be strengthened by leveraging existing private

sector capacities, reach and core competencies.

There is a need to emphasize greater market driven ways for the private sector to support rural development in India, during and beyond disasters. A balanced approach to driving market driven rural development strategies ensure that the development is sustained as stakeholders see incentives to do so. CSR funds alone, on the other hand, are undependable as it runs dry exactly at the time of socio-economic crisis such as the current pandemic, which is ironically when it is most needed.

There are at least three ways that the private sector can play a central role in managing disasters better in rural India.

First, through the investments they make and the decisions they take, companies directly impact the

**THERE IS A NEED  
TO EMPHASIZE  
GREATER MARKET  
DRIVEN WAYS FOR  
THE PRIVATE  
SECTOR TO  
SUPPORT RURAL  
DEVELOPMENT IN  
INDIA**

world around us. Establishing markets in rural regions and offering affordable products and services to rural India is a market opportunity. For example, Visaka Industries Limited is a Hyderabad based diversified company that manufactures asbestos cement roofing sheets, building products and textile yarn, in ways that established it as a primarily green business. Further, 90% of Visaka's asbestos sheets, 30% of VBoard products, and 20% of its ATUM solar roofing are sold in rural and semi-urban parts of the country, thus enhancing the quality of life of rural communities.

Similarly, ICICI too has a substantial rural presence. 650 of ICICI's rural branches are in previously unbanked villages and which also promote entrepreneurship among women by developing

tailored financing and loan options catering to rural India. During disasters such as the ongoing pandemic, the reach and institutionalised presence of companies in these rural areas are of paramount importance for providing sustained livelihood and disaster relief to people.

Secondly, rural India still needs to be better connected to cities via roads, highways, and also telecommunications. Goods for relief work (and beyond) need to be transported by roads to villages and this becomes difficult to do if road infrastructure is inadequate. Until June this year we also saw that the vaccination distribution exclusively relied on a digital portal for booking vaccination slots for a significant population of the country, which became an impediment for India to achieve universal immu-

nisation. Ultimately on June 2, 2021, the Supreme Court asked the government to explain how the use of the CoWin app for booking slots is going to overcome the digital divide in rural and urban India, following which offline channels of vaccine booking were introduced. This again is an opportunity for the private sector to step in and build physical and digital infrastructure that connects rural India better to the rest of the country. Indeed the government needs to also prioritise the development of infrastructure projects, make approvals more efficient, besides tightening quality control.

Third, we need more public private partnerships. Disasters by themselves are beyond anyone's control. However, the preparation and response to them can be managed so that the human and economic losses can be minimised or eliminated. This is why, whereas states have the overall responsibility to drive disaster recovery and mitigation efforts it must be understood as a shared task between the government and relevant stakeholders. Currently the Indian private sector provides disaster support in a less systematic and more ad-hoc manner. Far more strategic and planned partnerships between the government and the private sector for rural development and disaster mitigation and recovery remains an area for improvement.

If more private companies perceive rural development during and beyond disasters as a market investment, instead of an evangelist or missionary ad-hoc project alone, we will be able to better support our rural regions and not lose as many lives during disasters.

*The writer is the CEO of Sustain Labs, a company that transforms companies towards being sustainable and profitable.*

*She is the author of Indian Instincts: Essays on Freedom & Equality in India, and a Global Leadership Fellow at the World Economic Forum*

# Changing demographic profiles & women

The formation and the break-up of a society determine the consequences of a radical shift in external forces. For instance, the negligible say of women in the USA before the 1800s prompted women leaders to band together to promote a new, separate women's rights movement and change the direction of Abolitionist Movement of the 1830s.

Generations upon generations, the gender equality rhetoric has filled the gap of responsibilities and rights through gradual and profound movements around the globe. However, the 21st-century demographic picture is still blurry for women, which face constant denial of individual rights and powers.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been the greatest peacetime disruptor of years of progress in demographics of the society, especially in India, where there only 943 females per 1000 males. Moreover, in 2020, India ranked at 189th position out of 201 countries in terms of female to male ratio. In a society where 77% of parents prefer a male child over a female, this disproportion in the gender ratio has had profound implications in the lives of an average Indian woman during the pandemic.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, DIVORCE & CHILD CUSTODY

With only 66% women literate as compared to 83% men in India, the social awareness among women is at the lowest, which makes them incapable of voicing their power against domestic abuse. Indian women filed more domestic violence complaints than recorded in a similar period in the last 10 years. But even this unusual spurt is only the tip of the iceberg as 86% of women who experience domestic violence do not seek help in India. Social isolation amid the pandemic has also caused circumstances where victims and aggressors cannot separate, and there are fewer options

Closing the gender gap in digital inclusion is an urgent priority in the pandemic. This involves a special focus on women-owned enterprises under the stimulus programmers, write **RAJESH MEHTA & UDDESHYA GOEL**

for women to escape their conditions, especially in the rural regions.

Despite this fact, post first wave, India saw a nearly three-fold increase in cases pertaining to divorce and child custody being filed. From an average of 1,280 cases in a month, their numbers went up to it 3,480 during the lockdown. This has placed them in a situation where they have to face social denial and the increased financial burden of their child individually.

## THE SECOND SHIFT AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

A study by McKinsey found mothers are more than three times as likely, compared with fathers, to meet the majority of the demands for housework and caregiving during the pandemic. In addition, they are more than one and a half times as likely as fathers to spend three or more hours per day on these activities.

This "second shift" is where women complete their day of paid work and then spend another full shift doing work at home supporting children, families and at-home tasks. This dynamic has been exacerbated by the limits and lockdowns associated with the pandemic.

Naturally, this has brought detrimental effects on the mental fitness of working women, which constitutes 21% of the total workforce in India. According to a *LinkedIn* survey, the pandemic is taking a toll on the emotional well-being of India's working women as 47% report they are experiencing more stress. For men, this number stood at 38%, pointing towards a disproportionate impact on women.



## JOB LOSSES AND POVERTY

Female job loss rates due to Covid-19 are about 1.8 times higher than male job loss rates globally, at 5.7% versus 3.1% respectively. Moreover, 4.5% of

women's employment is at risk in the pandemic globally, compared with 3.8% of men's employment. This is because women are over-represented in industries that are likely to experience the greatest

declines because of the pandemic. These include hospitality and foodservice, retail, education and manufacturing.

As a direct consequence, the pandemic will push 96 million

people into extreme poverty by 2021, 47 millions of whom are women and girls, widening the gender poverty gap.

## WIDENING ENTREPRENEURIAL GAP

In India, women-owned a little over 20% of all micro, small and medium businesses compared to nearly 80% among men in FY21. The crisis has made family resources scarce for women, such as financial capital to invest in businesses or digital devices that families must now share as children's schooling has gone online. This has brought a disproportionate impact on female entrepreneurship, including women-owned microenterprises in developing countries like India

## THE LOST FUTURE TALENTS

The cascading effect of pandemic-induced economic insecurity is not just the income losses but also the rippling effect of years of education denied to women and girls. Impacts on education and employment have long-lasting consequences that, if unaddressed, will reverse hard-won gains in gender equality.

According to a UNESCO estimate, a total of 11 million girls may leave school by the end of the Covid crisis; evidence from previous crises suggests that many will not return.

Lack of education and economic insecurity also increases the risk of gender-based violence. Without sufficient economic resources, women are unable to escape abusive partners and face a greater threat of sexual exploitation, trafficking and teen pregnancy.

These consequences won't disappear when the pandemic subsides: women and girls are likely to experience long-term set-

backs in workforce participation and income. The fallout will be most severe for the most vulnerable women, those who are rarely in the headlines: migrant workers, refugees, marginalised racial and ethnic groups, single-parent households, youth and the poorest of the poor.

## DIRECT INTERVENTIONS

The challenge is huge but the cause is even gargantuan. Direct interventions are needed to draw an inflection point in the current demographic status to bring a fundamental change down the line. This mandates addressing attitudinal biases. Any drive toward gender parity arguably starts with efforts to change entrenched, widespread attitudes about women's role in society. This is an extremely difficult and complex challenge that will require all stakeholders to play a sustained part over the long term.

Addressing unpaid child care cannot be overstated. There is an immediate requirement of reducing the gender imbalance in responsibility for care. This involves employer- or state-funded provision of childcare or tax policies that encourage both spouses to work and a professionalised childcare industry, with public-financing support to enable women to work and create employment for others

Interventions are also required to address digital and financial inclusion. Closing the gender gap in digital inclusion is an urgent priority in the pandemic. This involves a special focus on women-owned enterprises under the stimulus programmers. Tax burdens should be eased and where possible, governments should source food, personal protection equipment, and other essential supplies from women-led businesses.

*Mehta is a consultant in Market Entry, Innovation & Public Policy and Goel is a researcher with interest in public policy, international business and capital markets*







Support system for rural India

If more private companies perceive rural development as a market investment, we will be able to better support our rural regions

7



9

Education on pandemic mode

Education has gone through many changes in the last one-and-a-half-year. However, the question remains

For marriage to be a success, every woman and every man should have her and his own bathroom. The end  
— Catherine Zeta-Jones



Identifying a passive aggressive partner could be the first step towards curbing the hostility growing between you and your partner, writes NIDHI UPADHYAY

# HOW FINE IS 'I AM FINE'?

We all use 'I am fine' as the most powerful means to avoid any potentially costly confrontations, be it with a spouse, with your colleague at work agrees with your constructive feedback in the meeting to avoid confrontation and later forgets to copy you in an important email? What if your usually punctual spouse doesn't show up on time for a dinner date simply because he or she disagreed with your choice of restaurant? And what if you have noticed a pattern in this behaviour but every time you try to bring it up with your spouse you are dismissed for reading too much between the lines?

While developing the characters for *That Night*, I accidentally stumbled upon an interesting article about passive aggression in a marriage and how sometimes what might appear like a difference of opinion on the surface could be a classical setup for passive aggressive relationship. Although the partner exhibiting such behaviour in a relationship might not be a full-fledged, card carrying passive aggressive personality, but he or she could be a member of the club, subtly abusing the partner emotionally and sometimes physically too.

According to WebMD: Passive-aggressive behaviour is when you express negative feelings indirectly instead of openly talking about them. During World War II, when soldiers wouldn't follow officers' orders, experts described them as "passive-aggressive." Someone who uses passive aggression may feel angry, resentful, or frustrated, but they act neutral, pleasant, or even cheerful. They then find indirect ways to show how they really feel.

We all might show a streak of passive aggression at times, however, when this repetitive sulking, backhanded compliment, withdrawal, or manipulation becomes a way of life, it can result into grave consequences in a relationship, especially in a marriage. Identifying a passive aggressive partner could be the first step towards curbing the hostility growing between you and your partner.

While each passive-aggressive spouse might operate differently, but they all have one thing in common: they avoid confrontation, and often these individuals appear and behave outwardly supportive or content, which makes it all the more difficult to spot them. However, identifying a behavioural pattern can serve as a key differentiator between a momentary angry acceptance and a passive aggression in a relationship.

## RECOGNISING PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Below are some red flags that can help you identify a harmless sulking from a hostile one.

- **Disguised Verbal Hostility:** 'I'm Just Saying' a sentence that sounds so harmless can be your partner's coping mechanism developed over the years to express his or her angry feelings without being affirmative about it.

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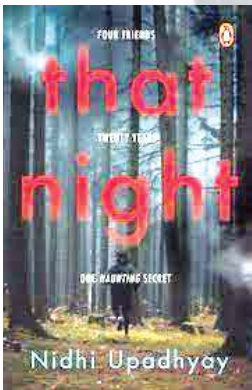
- **Disguised Hostile Humour:** 'Can't You Take a Joke?' The backhanded compliment or sarcasm could be another powerful weapon often used by a passive aggressive partner, especially in the instances when they are confronted about their demeaning act. Playing a victim card 'that it was meant to be a joke' is their knee-jerk reaction to avoid any uncomfortable conversations.
- **Guilt-Baiting:** 'You were taking so long to finish that call with your mom that I started the match instead.' Aggressive passive spouses are an expert at wielding guilt as a weapon to show their disagreement or hostility. They inadvertently or skilfully manipulate and coerce you into an agreement by attacking your vulnerable spots.
- **Disguised Psychological Manipulation:** 'I think you need to go for a yoga class to manage your stress.' Passive aggressive spouse usually have a tendency to change your perception by spinning the whole blame on you for being the inconsiderate or the short tempered one.
- **Stonewalling:** Avoiding responsibility, duty, and obligations and withdrawing from a relationship is another trick up the sleeves of these individuals. It's their way of maintaining power and control by imposing many hurdles for you to jump through.

While the phrases such as 'I am just saying,' 'It was a joke' and the silent treatment are invariably part of every marriage, it should not be a breeding ground for hostility that leaves the receiving partner shattered and confused about her or his own worth in a relationship. Unfortunately, often these tricky psychological manoeuvres take absolutely no planning on your passive-aggressive partner's part. On the contrary, they are acting on pure instincts. Hence identifying the cause for such behaviour could work as a powerful tool to stop such manoeuvres in the track.

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## POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

- **Upbringing:** Voicing your strong opinion was(is) often categorised as disrespectful in most Indian households. However, a constant suppression of opinion during the formative years can impact adversely, pushing an individual to find ways to passively channel their anger or frustration.
- **Sense of powerlessness:** A manipulation in a marriage can often be a side-effect of tussle of power between the partners, especially when one partner feels out of control in a situation or area where his or her spouse is enjoying success. This sense of insecurity can fuel underhanded tactics to sabotage the partner's success and emotional wellbeing, sometimes without even realising it. This power hunger can also manifest into establishing their territories by subtle emotional and physical abuse.



“WHILE EACH PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE SPOUSE MIGHT OPERATE DIFFERENTLY, BUT THEY ALL HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON: THEY AVOID CONFRONTATION, AND OFTEN THESE INDIVIDUALS APPEAR AND BEHAVE OUTWARDLY SUPPORTIVE OR CONTENT, WHICH MAKES IT ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT TO SPOT THEM. HOWEVER, IDENTIFYING A BEHAVIOURAL PATTERN CAN SERVE AS A KEY DIFFERENTIATOR BETWEEN A MOMENTARY ANGRY ACCEPTANCE AND A PASSIVE AGGRESSION IN A RELATIONSHIP”



- **Inability to accept their own emotion:** Passive aggression is a personality disorder, and these individuals cannot approach situations, feelings, relationships or communication directly. They are often unaware of what they are doing, and when confronted, they refuse to acknowledge both the behaviour and the results.
- **Low self-esteem:** The passive-aggressive partner often feels that he or she is the one at the receiving end, inadvertently playing the victim card. These individuals often operate out of a deep sense of insecurity, and they persistently feed their negative emotions to justify their actions, sometimes to the extent of demeaning the partner in an attempt to elevate themselves.
- **Buried feelings of inadequacy and injustice:** Often words like 'it's unfair' can be passive aggressive person's way of communicating that the spouse has some kind of unfair advantage over them in a relationship. It could be in career, relationships at work and family, or kids.

## HOW TO COPE WITH PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Once you have identified a classical pattern of passive aggression in your spouse, the most critical step is to protect your and your partner's emotional wellbeing. The following few steps can act as a crucial steppingstone in bringing your relationship back to a healthy track.

- **Accepting the situation:** It's painful to accept that your spouse is operating within a passive-aggressive pattern, especially, because these individuals have a tendency to manipulate your emotions by displaying sacrifices made by them in a relationship. They usually go an extra length to prove that their love for their spouse is unmatched. But if you notice a concrete pattern in the sugar-coated humiliation or purposeful withdrawal to punish you, it's time to trust your instincts and accept the reality.
- **Identify the trigger:** There is no excuse for aggression and abuse of any form in a marriage. However, knowing the reason for this aggression can help you predict the behaviour pattern of your spouse. Also, sometimes the issue can be as trivial as your spouse fearing to hurt your feelings and thus, he or she inadvertently finds an underhanded way to express his or her dislike. Understanding the triggers can minimize the potential damage to your relationships.
- **Don't justify your spouse's behaviour:** The chances are that you have been manipulated enough in a relationship by now that you tend to find flaws in you than in the spouse who appears so nice and non-confrontational. So, train yourself to stop inwardly justifying or finding excuses for your spouse's unacceptable behaviour.
- **Stay calm and keep your anger in control:** It's essential to keep a check on your emotions, especially when the passive aggressive spouse is acting up. If you can recognise triggers of your own anger and get a control of your reactions, you are less likely to get psychologically manipulated or gaslighted by the partner.

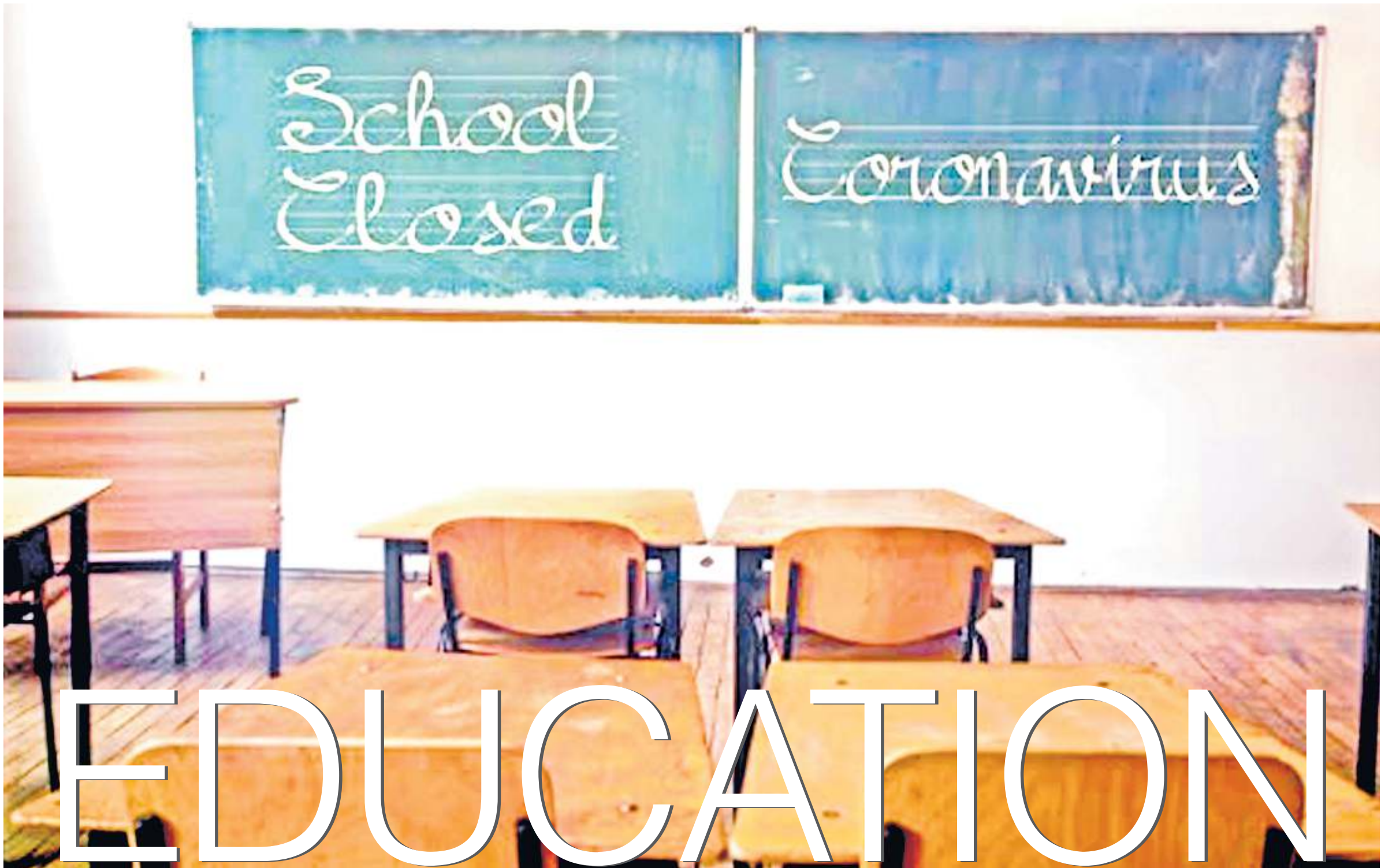
tions, especially when the passive aggressive spouse is acting up. If you can recognise triggers of your own anger and get a control of your reactions, you are less likely to get psychologically manipulated or gaslighted by the partner.

- **Establishing a healthy channel of communication:** It is important to approach your spouse with vulnerability and empathy as passive aggressive individuals are hypersensitive and often operate from low self-esteem or sense of insecurity. You can help them by wording their angry feelings in a way that it doesn't appear judgmental yet factual. Share with your spouse how his or her behaviour hurts you but do it without placing the blame on them.
- **Set healthy boundaries and ground rules:** It hurts deeply to accept that your spouse might not have your best interest in mind always. However, it is important to set boundaries to protect yourself from any form of emotional or physical abuse. By drawing a clear list of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour might help you and your partner identify the patterns you've been experiencing. Also, setup consequences for the next time he or she does the same thing and don't back down if they demean you.
- **Seek help of a marriage therapist:** It never hurts to seek help of a good marriage therapist. With the right approach and professional support, you can overcome passive-aggressive patterns and manipulations in a relationship to build a happier, healthier marriage together.

However, even after repetitive efforts at your end, if your partner still believes that you are at fault, in that case, you might be forced to take the tough decision of saving yourself from any form of emotional abuse. If despite all your love and patience your partner is persistently falling back to his or her old ways of demeaning you or manipulating you, or they refuse to seek help, it's time to walk out of a relationship that is ruining you (and your partner) inside out. Because marriage should not be about turning yourself inside out, it should also be about loving yourself and defining your own worth in a relationship, and it can only happen when the boundaries about what is acceptable and not are defined clearly for both the partners. And if something unacceptable still finds its way into your marriage, time and again, despite all your efforts, perhaps walking away from a relationship would be a better idea. Because these episodes of withdrawal, aggression, abuse and manipulation are a double-edged sword that wounds you and your partner, too. So, before you fall out of love with yourself and with your partner seek help.

The writer is an engineer-turned-headhunter. *That Night*, published by Penguin, is her debut novel





# ON PANDEMIC MODE

Education has gone through many changes in the last one-and-a-half-year. However, the question remains unanswered on their permanency. Experts tell MUSBA HASHMI that it is the entire system that needs an overhaul for better results

In March last year schools' gates were shut, hoping to open in a few months, but that month never came. It has been more than 18 months into the pandemic, and it remains unclear when physical classrooms will resume — though, it will not become part of history.

From online classes to no Boards, the education sector had seen several unprecedented changes during this period. Were these for the better is a question still unanswered.

### 50:50 SCENARIO

However, the constant to and fro in Boards or school assessment decisions has exposed several fault lines in the education sector. Amid all the noise, students are left confused regarding their future. "The pandemic has, indeed, exposed fault lines and fundamental flaws in the education sector that existed even earlier. We must take this opportunity to not merely sail through the pandemic but to reform the system from scratch based on sound scientific principles of what constitutes good learning," says Dr Jamshed Bharucha, Founding Vice Chancellor, Sai University. He adds that the 50-50 formula on CBSE Boards is an understandable decision under crisis circumstances, but it should spur systemic reform for the future.

However, Bharucha says, "I would be interested to hear the explanation of why Class X and Class XI are given equal weightage, given that students are conditioned to view 11th as less important.

Students should not be penalised for not having taken 11th exams seriously, which has been the cynical message communicated to them by the system."

Prof Dheeraj Sanghi, VC Designate, JK Lakshmiipat University, believes that as a short term measure to reduce anxiety and stress in students, this is a welcome move. But this does not address the issue of quality at all.

On the other hand, Dr Sanjay Govind Patil, Associate Dean & Director — RICS School of Built Environment, Amity University, Mumbai, says that it is a much-appreciated step to help break down the syllabus. "I fully vouch for this move because it will break down the entire assessment into small parts; hence, learning will be much better. Students' shortcomings in the previous part exam could be overcome in the next exam through a robust feedback mechanism, thus achieving a better learning outcome," opines Patil.

### RE-ENERGISE SYSTEM

High-stakes exams, Bharucha says, have no empirical support in research on learning. The learning tends to be transient, devoid of meaningful context, and does not transfer well to the kinds of problems students will have to solve as professionals. Research shows that, if administered frequently — with feedback after each exam and repeated testing of the same material in different ways — exams can be powerful tools for learning, not just for assessment. "The system has failed students by contin-

uing to rely on high-stakes examinations. Why should a single mark on a single high school exam be the measure of what you've learned throughout high school? Why should it determine what you can and cannot do in the future? Research on how the brain learns is completely at odds with this system of learning and assessment," says Bharucha.

He adds that the CBSE Board decisions for this batch are understandable, but they are band-aids; they should be followed by meaningful steps to re-energise, mentor, and empower students whose education got disrupted and lives thrown into confusion. Most of these students, probably, will adjust and be fine. But, some may fall between the cracks of this rigid system of narrow credentialing and career channelling.

### TIME TO NURTURE

"The Board should establish a committee consisting of a broad range of stakeholders — including students — to hear the concerns of students who have been adversely affected and to propose ways to get these students back on track in life. A nation has a responsibility to ensure that every single child should have a productive path forward," says Bharucha.

The Board should also establish a diverse blue-ribbon committee to implement NEP recommendations at the high school level. The goal should be to enable students' unique talents and shortcomings and give them the fundamental cognitive tools to pursue their dreams. Society benefits when all talent is unleashed — in all its messy but glorious diversity.

"There is no empirical basis for forcing students to make irreversible choices between streams. A student may love math and literature, computers and music, biology and economics. It's the unforeseen combinations of ideas that will trigger future innovations — and continuous innovation is what drives economies. We, as educators, are deeply mistaken if we believe we know which branches of knowledge are in the best interests of our children to know," adds Bharucha.

Sanghi says that the problems of quality in education were well-known much before the pandemic. "I feel that the problems of quality in the school education sector were well-known much before the pandemic. The Annual State of Education Report (ASER) has been telling us how poorly our students have been performing even with our standards. As far as international standards are concerned, we have not even participated in the Program for International Students Assessment (PISA)," says Sanghi.

### TECHNOLOGY MYTH BUSTED

Yet, the pandemic has exposed one myth which was that technology would solve all our problems. "There is no doubt that technology can help, but we have seen during the pandemic that access to technology is limited. We may take pride in having the largest number of mobile phone users with Internet access or the high-



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— PROF DHEERAJ SANGHI, VC DESIGNATE, JK LAKSHMIIPAT UNIVERSITY

est per capita data consumption, but all this is skewed, and the poor still has little access to online education. If we want to depend on technology to improve the quality of our education, we will have to seriously think about how underprivileged sections of our society can get access to both devices and data, and perhaps space where they can study peacefully," adds Sanghi.

Being compelled to teach online has highlighted the known weakness of passive forms of learning in which teachers speak and students listen. To keep the attention of students online, teachers have had to make the online sessions more interactive.

"But active and interactive learning should be the norm even in the physical classroom. In a physical classroom, a student can be physically present but mentally absent. Only by having students actively engaged (speaking, solving problems, collaborating, creating) in the classroom can meaningful and enduring learning be optimised. So, let's come out of the pandemic with an agenda for fundamental reform that is more than a temporary crisis fix," says Bharucha.

### PLAN FOR POST-PANDEMIC

Since we are amid a pandemic of the kind that hasn't happened in the world for 100 years, Sanghi says, there is going to be an emergency response, and the decisions will change as the trajectory of the virus changes.

"So, confusions will happen, and that would cause anxiety and stress amongst the students. We need to work on two aspects. One, what to do while the pandemic is still a threat, and education will continue to see disruptions. And second, what to do when the pandemic threat has sufficiently faded, and we are back to some normalcy," he says.

In the current scenario, experts believe that we must keep some semblance of education going, at least what is considered as more important aspects of it, so we have reduced syllabus, easier exams, teacher training in online education, access to technology for the poor and so on.

"When we finally open up, we may need to redesign the curriculum of the next few years. Maybe some fresher courses. Each school Board will have to plan the post-pandemic scenario carefully. It should not happen that they now want to cover both — what was left during the pandemic and the usual syllabus of the next classes. That would be too much of a burden on students," opines Sanghi.

### BRING HONESTY IN EVALUATION

Experts say that there are many issues in every aspect of school education. And we do need to rethink the whole education process holistically. However, few simple things can improve the quality of education in the short term drastically.

"One idea is to ensure that the marks printed on the board marksheet reflect the educational attainments of the students. And, I am

not referring to this year's process where you get some marks assigned based on your performance in something completely different. Even in pre-Covid times, CBSE would add lots of marks to the actual marks obtained by the students; this is beside the practical marks where the whole country seems to get perfect scores. And that is on top of having easy papers and an extremely liberal grading. It may be noted that CBSE has the reputation of being one of the best school boards in India. If we can bring in honesty in evaluation by the boards, there will be a lot of pressure within the system to perform better," says Sanghi.

He adds that the boards cannot be honest since there is competition among the school boards to be more dishonest than the others - a race to the bottom. "They justify it on the grounds that if one board tries to be honest, its students will face difficulty in gaining admissions in universities that only look at Class XII marks. Also, if one State board tries to be honest, the pass percentage in that State would go down, leading to political issues. And frankly, there is no political constituency for quality education. There is only a lip service paid to the quality," he says.

### MULTIPLE BOARDS REQUIRED

The changes, Sanghi says, should begin with having a large number of school boards. "Maybe every district should have one. There may be some school boards that are State-wide and a few which are national. By having 100s of small school boards, it would be possible for some boards to do experiments in improving quality that may succeed, and others could learn from it. Also, political pressures would be lower on individual boards if they all affect a smaller number of students," opines Sanghi.

Second, there could be a few standardised tests in various subjects that would be optional for students. Students will take those tests only if the university they seek considers these test scores as one of the inputs in deciding admissions. "Universities should develop admission strategies that consider multiple parameters (and unlike the popular perception, it is possible to have a completely objective system that considers multiple parameters). If the admissions are based on standardised tests and other achievements of the students, we could start the admission process six months early. Students can be offered admission before the Board exams, and they will then take those exams in a stress-free fashion," adds Sanghi.

Bharucha thinks, "In the future, continuous modes of assessment should be adopted (bi-weekly or monthly). Research shows that frequent assessment produces more enduring learning than a single assessment at the end; this will not be the last pandemic, nor will it be the last crisis that disrupts our lives. Learning and assessment must both be continuous. At any given cross-section in time, the student, the school, and the Board should know where a student stands."



## IndiGo, SpiceJet staff arrested for smuggling Gold



Seven persons, including four staffers of IndiGo and SpiceJet airlines, were arrested by the customs officials at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport here for allegedly smuggling into the country gold worth Rs 72.46 lakh, an official statement said on Saturday. Three persons were intercepted by the customs officials after their arrival from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday, it said. Detailed personal and baggage search of the two passengers resulted in the recovery of two gold bar pieces and one gold biscuit collectively weighing 517.2 grams and valued at Rs 22.89 lakh, the statement issued by the customs department said. One of the passengers has admitted to have handed over 160 grams of gold to IndiGo airline staff, it said. On the basis of interrogation, it has transpired that three members of a syndicate of IndiGo airline and one member of SpiceJet were also involved in smuggling of gold and they have also admitted their involvement in smuggling of 960 grams gold previously, the statement said. The total value of the smuggled goods including previously smuggled gold comes to Rs 72.46 lakh, it added.

## PEGASUS MAKER SAYS MILLIONS SLEEP WELL AT NIGHT

Amid the raging controversy over its surveillance software Pegasus, Israeli cyber security company NSO Group has defended itself by saying that millions of people around the world sleep well at night and walk in the streets safely due to such technologies available with intelligence and law enforcement agencies. The company also stated that it does not operate the technology nor does it have access to the data collected by its clients. The alleged use of the Pegasus software to spy on journalists, human rights defenders, politicians and others in a number of countries, including India, has triggered concerns over issues relating to privacy. Politicians, rights activists and journalists were among those targeted with phone spyware sold to various governments by the Israeli firm, according to an international media consortium. "Millions of people around the world are sleeping well at night, and safely walking in the streets, thanks to Pegasus and similar technologies which help intelligence agencies and law enforcement agencies around the world to prevent and investigate crime, terrorism, and paedophilia rings that are hiding under the umbrella of end-to-end encryption apps," a spokesperson for NSO said. "NSO, together with many of the other cyber intelligence companies in the world, provides cyber intelligence tools for governments

because law enforcement agencies around the world are in the dark and there's no regulatory solution that allows them to monitor malicious acts on instant messaging and social media", the company said. On the controversy around its snooping software that has rocked the world, the spokesperson asserted that "NSO does not operate the technology, nor do we have visibility to the data collected". "We are doing our best to help create a safer world," it said. NSO in a written response to PTI in October 2019, when the issue first came to the limelight with reports of misuse in India, had said that it considers "any other use of our products than to prevent serious crime and terrorism a misuse, which is contractually prohibited". "We take action if we detect any misuse. This technology is rooted in the protection of human rights - including the right to life, security and bodily integrity - and that's why we have sought alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, to make sure our products are respecting all fundamental human rights," it said, a stand its executives still maintain. Without confirming, or denying, if the software was sold to India, the company had said

that its "products are licensed to government intelligence and law enforcement agencies for the sole purpose of preventing and investigating terror and serious crime". "To protect the ongoing public safety missions of its agency customers and given significant legal and contractual constraints, NSO Group is not able to disclose who is or is not a client or discuss specific uses of its technology," the written statement had said. Amid the latest controversy, Israel has established a committee to review the allegations of misuse of the NSO group's surveillance software and hinted at a possible "review of the whole matter of giving licences". "The defence establishment appointed a review committee made up of a number of bodies," lawmaker Ram Ben-Barak, the head of Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, told Army Radio on Thursday. "When

they finish their review, we'll demand to see the results and assess whether we need to make corrections," Ben-Barak, who earlier was the former deputy head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, added. Israel's priority was "to review this whole matter of giving licences", he stressed. NSO's chief executive, Shalev Hulio, welcomed the move, telling Army Radio that he would "be very pleased if there were an investigation so that we'd be able to clear our name".



## 'Erotica' is not 'porn': Shilpa



Actor Shilpa Shetty has said she was unaware of the exact nature of content on 'Hotshots' - the mobile app via which her husband, Raj Kundra, is accused of streaming pornographic content - Mumbai Police sources have told news agency ANI. Police sources told ANI that Ms Shetty said it was another accused - London-based Pradeep Bakshi, Kundra's brother-in-law - who was involved with the app. She also stressed the difference between 'erotica' and 'pornography', and said Kundra was not involved in producing pornographic content. Police recorded Ms Shetty's statement yesterday evening as they questioned her. They were checking if she knew about her husband's alleged link to the pornographic films, sources said. Also yesterday Kundra, who was arrested this week, was sent to police custody till July 27. Police said they had seized 48 TB worth of images and videos, most of which is adult content. Police also said they had a record of transactions - from an account in Yes Bank registered to Mr Kundra to one in the United Bank of Africa. They suspect money from sale of pornographic content was used for online betting. Rs 7.5 crore has been seized so far. During yesterday's hearing his lawyer, Abad Ponda, had objected to classifying the seized content as 'pornography'. Mr Ponda said the content could not come under Section 67 of the IT Act - for which bail is not allowed - as similar material is available on OTT platforms like Netflix. It can be covered only under Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code - which deals with "lascivious" material, he said, adding "no further custody is needed". Kundra has denied any wrongdoing, and has also named Pradeep Bakshi as the key figure.



## FB, YouTube 'judge, jury & executioner' on vaccine misinformation: White House

The White House has said YouTube, not just Facebook, on its list of social media platforms officials say are responsible for an alarming spread of misinformation about COVID vaccines and are not doing enough to stop it, sources familiar with the administration's thinking said. The criticism comes just a week after President Joe Biden called Facebook and other social media companies "killers" for failing to slow the spread of misinformation about vaccines. He has since softened his tone. A senior administration official said one of the key problems is "inconsistent enforcement." YouTube - a unit of Alphabet Inc's Google - and Facebook get to decide what qualifies as misinformation on their platforms. But the results have left the White House unhappy. "Facebook and YouTube... are the judge, the jury and the executioner when it comes to what is

going on in their platforms," an administration official said, describing their approach to COVID misinformation. "They get to grade their own homework." Some of the main pieces of vaccine misinformation the Biden administration is fighting include that the COVID-19 vaccines are ineffective, false claims that they carry microchips and that they hurt women's fertility, the official said. Social media companies have come under fire recently from Biden, his press secretary, Jen Psaki, and Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, who have all said the spread of lies about vaccines is making it harder to fight the pandemic and save lives. A recent report from the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), which has also been highlighted by the White House, showed 12 anti-vaccine accounts are spreading nearly two-thirds of anti-vaccine misinformation online.

## CBI raids 40 locations, Sr IAS officer's home in J&K gun licence scam

The CBI raided 40 locations across Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi this morning, including the residence of senior J&K IAS officer Shahid Iqbal Choudhary in Srinagar, in connection with the illegal sale of gun licenses. In J&K the raids took place in Srinagar, Udhampur, Rajouri, Anantnag and Baramulla. Choudhary is currently Secretary (Tribal Affairs) and CEO Mission Youth, J&K. He previously served as the Deputy Commissioner of Kathua, Reasi, Rajouri and Udhampur districts, during which time he allegedly issued thousands of licenses - under fake names - to people in other states and UTs. At least eight former Deputy Commissioners are being investigated by the central agency. Since 2012 over two lakh gun licenses have been issued illegally from J&K. It is believed to be India's biggest gun license racket. Last year two officials, including IAS officer Rajiv Ranjan, were arrested by the CBI. Mr Ranjan and Itrat Hussain Rafiqi, during their tenures as Deputy Commissioner of Kupwara district, allegedly illegally issued several such licences. In February last year the agency arrested a private individual who was "involved in various financial transactions with other co-accused, including public servants". The CBI has previously said it has unearthed a "deep-rooted conspiracy" in this matter. The scam was first discovered by Rajasthan's Anti-Terror Squad in 2017, when they arrested Mr Ranjan's brother and others working as middlemen for gun dealers.

## 138 dead in Maha rain fury, 90,000 moved to safety

At least 138 people have died in rain-related incidents, including multiple landslides, in Maharashtra. The deaths include 36 who died in a landslide in the coastal Raigad district, about 70 km from state capital Mumbai. Several districts - primarily the Konkan region - have been receiving incessant rain over the past few days, leaving thousands stranded in floods and landslides. "138 accidental deaths reported in Maharashtra due to rain and other monsoon-related incidents," Maharashtra Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation, Vijay Wadetiwar, said. Satara district in Western Maharashtra has also been battered by rain and several people have been swept away by floodwaters, an official was reported as saying by

news agency PTI. The official put the death count in Satara at 27. Other fatalities include those reported from eastern districts such as Gondia and Chandrapur, he said. "Rainfall in various parts of the state often coinciding with high tides and also discharge from dams led to various regions... getting inundated," the Maharashtra government said in a press release. At least 84,452 people, including over 40,000 in Kolhapur district, were shifted to safer places in Western Maharashtra's Pune division, officials said. At least 54 villages have been completely affected due to the floods while 821 were partially affected in Kolhapur, where the Panchganga river is flowing at a level higher than that witnessed during the peak of floods in 2019, officials said.

## 'WE WANT TO DO, BUT...': Elon Musk's reply on launching Tesla in India

Tesla Inc is likely to set up a factory in India if successful with imported vehicles, Chief Executive Elon Musk said on Twitter, after the company wrote to Indian ministries seeking a big reduction in import duties on electric vehicles, according to two sources with knowledge of the matter. The electric-car maker's pitch to lower duties, however, is likely to face resistance from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration which has championed high import taxes for many industries in a bid to boost local manufacturing. "We want to do so, but import duties are the highest in the world by far of any large country," Musk said in reply to a tweet about launching the company's cars in India. "But we are hopeful that there will be at least a temporary tariff relief for electric vehicles," Musk added.

Other luxury automakers in India have also lobbied the government in the past to lower taxes on imported cars but have had little success due to opposition from rivals with domestic operations. Tesla, which aims to begin sales in India this year, said in a letter to ministries and the country's leading think-tank Niti Aayog that slashing federal taxes on imports of fully

assembled electric cars to 40% would be more appropriate, according to the sources. That compares with current rates of 60% for cars priced below \$40,000 and 100% for those above \$40,000.

